

Verdell Burdine Rutherford Park named after prominent and beloved Black female leader

Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) announced in June that the former Lynchview Park in east Portland has been renamed Verdell Burdine Rutherford Park. It is the first Portland park named after a prominent and beloved Black female leader. The park covers nearly 8 acres in the Centennial neighborhood near S.E. 167th and Market Street, just west of Patrick Lynch Elementary School.

Before his passing in January 2020, former parks commissioner Nick Fish directed a naming committee of nine community members from the Centennial neighborhood, the Rosewood Initiative, and Patrick Lynch Elementary School to recommend a new name. After reviewing multiple options, the committee chose to honor Verdell Burdine Rutherford.

Verdell Burdine (pronounced bur-DYE-n) was born in Oklahoma in 1913. She moved with her family that same year to Oregon, hoping to obtain farmland under the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909. Upon arrival, however, they learned that Black people were prohibited from owning free land in Oregon.

In 1936, Verdell married Otto Rutherford and settled in Portland. Together, they were leaders of the Oregon chapter of the NAACP, a national civil-rights organization, and oversaw one of the NAACP's biggest victories — the passage of the Public Accommodations Act of 1953, which outlawed discrimination in public



places on the basis of race, religion, or national origin.

Rutherford was also a historian of the Black community in Portland. In 2011, a decade after Verdell's passing, her daughter, Charlotte, gifted her historical collection to Portland State University. It remains accessible for academic research and public use as desired by Verdell.

"Mom rightfully considered herself a local historian," said Charlotte. "She was that and so very much more: a beautiful woman with a kind heart and a wonderful sense of humor; a very good cook, especially her yeast rolls; and most importantly to and for me, a loving, supportive, and inspirational mother. She was a hardworking volunteer and com-

munity activist who did not seek the limelight, but she would have accepted this honor humbly, knowing that this park will provide a place for the community to gather together."

"I am honored to recognize Verdell Burdine Rutherford's role as a leader and historian for the Black community by selecting her name for the first Portland park named after a Black woman," said Portland mayor Wheeler. "This renaming is an important way to recognize her contributions to Portland and to show that Portland is learning from its racist past to create a more equitable future."

PP&R recently completed construction on significant park improvements at the park, thanks to funding from the 2014

ICONIC OREGONIAN HONORED. A park in east Portland has been renamed Verdell Burdine Rutherford Park, the first Portland park named after a prominent and beloved Black female leader. Located near S.E. 167th and Market Street, it covers nearly 8 acres. (Photo/Naim Hasan Photography, courtesy of Portland Parks & Recreation)

Parks Replacement Bond and Parks System Development Charges. Improvements include a new playground, picnic shelter, paved pathways, a Portland Loo (expected to be open in Summer 2020), public art, and a renovated grass soccer field.

"This new park name and its improvements create a more welcoming and much-needed community space for the Centennial neighborhood," said PP&R director Adena Long.

Due to the current COVID-19 situation, there are restrictions and/or closures on many sites. All PP&R playgrounds are currently closed. All parks, natural areas, and trails remain open. PP&R asks park users to please follow all public health guidelines and maintain six feet of social distancing with others, including park staff who are working. For updated information on closures and cancellations, visit <www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/COVID-19>.

A community celebration at Verdell Burdine Rutherford Park will be held at a later date. To learn more, visit <www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/73739>.

Red panda Mei Mei gives birth to a tiny cub at the Oregon Zoo

What's cuter than a red panda? How about a baby red panda? Fluffy four-year-old Mei Mei has given birth to a cub at the Oregon Zoo.

The new arrival entered the world June 18 and weighs about half a pound. Mom and baby are doing well in their behind-the-scenes maternity den, according to zoo animal-care staff.

"We're very happy for Mei Mei, and it's terrific to see her taking such good care of her baby," said animal curator Amy Cutting, who oversees the zoo's red panda area. "There's still a lot that could happen, so we're being cautious and giving her as much privacy as possible. So far she seems to be doing just fine."

Red panda cubs are born blind, their eyes opening after a few weeks, and they typically don't leave their maternity den for a few months after birth. Animal-care staff are taking a hands-off approach, monitoring Mei Mei and her cub via a surveillance camera to make sure all is going well.

"We'll be watching closely," Cutting said. "The first few weeks are especially important. Our staff is dedicated to giving Mei Mei everything she needs to be a successful mom. So far, she's doing great on her own, and the fact



that she's successfully raised cubs in the past is encouraging."

Mei Mei and Moshu, the cub's father, are no strangers to the parenting game. The pair — who both came to Oregon in 2019 on a recommendation for red pandas from the Species Survival Plan of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums — also produced two cubs at the Nashville Zoo in 2017.

Red pandas are considered an endangered species, with

RED PANDA CUB. Four-year-old red panda Mei Mei has given birth to a cub (pictured) at the Oregon Zoo. (Photo/Nicole Nicassio-Hiskey, courtesy of the Oregon Zoo)

populations declining by about 50% in the past 20 years. While exact numbers are uncertain, some estimates indicate as few as 2,500 may be left in the wild. In addition to habitat loss and fragmentation, red pandas also face threats from poaching and the illegal wildlife trade.

Though they share part of their name with giant pandas, red pandas are in a class all by themselves: The sharp-toothed, ring-tailed omnivores are the only members of the Ailuridae family. Found in the montane forests of the Himalayas and major mountain ranges of southwestern China (Nepal, India, Bhutan, China, and Myanmar), their striking red, white, and black fur provides camouflage in the shadowed nooks of the trees amongst reddish moss and white lichens.

To learn more about the red pandas at the Oregon Zoo, visit <www.oregonzoo.org/discover/animals/red-panda>. To view video, go to <<https://youtu.be/MdVevczaPP4>>.

The Oregon Zoo is planning to re-open soon. For more information, call (503) 226-1561 or visit <www.oregonzoo.org>.

Health science grads go from online to the frontline

As colleges transitioned to learning online this spring in response to COVID-19, this year's healthcare graduates went from learning during a world pandemic to working the frontlines of one.

On March 1, governor Brown declared a state of emergency in response to the new coronavirus. She issued executive order No. 20-09 on March 8, suspending higher education in-person instruction through April 28. Her subsequent order on April 7 extended remote operations and online learning through June 13.

In the span of just 20 days, Clackamas Community College (CCC) went from the declaration of state of emergency to the start of spring term, where instructors were expected to teach online and employees to work from home. This was a monumental task for CCC, like all the colleges across the state.

This was also a challenge for students finishing their degrees in healthcare fields, who typically need to complete required clinical, laboratory, and other in-person instruction for their degrees and certificates. Most healthcare classes were moved online spring term, but the governor's executive order had an

exemption for healthcare classes that could not be conducted remotely if Oregon Health Authority guidelines could be met.

To keep students on track to graduate, CCC mailed lab kits to students and created virtual simulations for classes being offered online. For the classes held in person, CCC had rigorous cleaning procedures, daily temperature and health checks, and required masks and physical distancing. "My instructors never failed to tell us, 'Wash your hands' and 'PPE (personal protection equipment) on,'" Rosidee Wicke, a Happy Valley resident and CCC graduate, said.

For dental student Anya Alexander of Oregon City, navigating online classes was not difficult. However, "not being able to go into lab was a hard adjustment. Dental assisting is such a hands-on career, so not being able to physically touch instruments and go through procedures made things complicated. Our instructors did a terrific job trying to make the drastic change in our learning environment easier."

Nursing student Bailey Funston of Milwaukie was challenged to complete her required 220 hours of working in a clinical setting when COVID-19 hit. "With the

pandemic, clinical sites were not an option. To make up these 220 hours, my nursing class had to complete online virtual nursing simulation and online case studies," she said. "Although this is not ideal, I definitely feel that this clinical work will help in studying for the NCLEX [National Council Licensure Examination]."

Last month, colleges and universities in Oregon were provided guidelines from the Higher Education Coordinating Commission and the Oregon Health Authority for returning to campus and in-person instruction. CCC is currently working on its plan to safely re-open the college and return to the classroom in stages.

"Our priority is our career technical education classes, particularly those in the health sciences," Cynthia Risan, dean of technology, applied science, and public services, said. "There is a demand for these frontline healthcare professionals, who are risking themselves every day to keep the community safe."

Clackamas Community College's nursing program has long been a sought-after program for those aspiring to enter the healthcare field. Nursing students at

CCC learn relevant and prevalent health needs of the population, including health promotion, chronic illness management, care of the acutely ill, and end-of-life care.

"I knew that CCC's nursing program was one of the best programs in the state and student passing rate for the NCLEX was quite high," Funston said. "Faculty has done an amazing job with preparing us to be frontline workers because they have really [helped] meld our critical thinking, problem solving, and nursing judgement. All of these attributes are absolutely necessary to properly care for patients."

During her final term of nursing school at CCC, Funston worked on-call as a certified nursing assistant at Providence Portland Medical Center. She primarily worked in the surgical units but worked one shift on a COVID-19-positive floor. "This was my first time within this environment, and it further solidified my belief that I want to be a nurse and help sick individuals in their most vulnerable state," she said.

Though some may not think of dentistry as a necessity during a pandemic or that dental workers are essential employees,

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