

The

# Portland Upside

positive people, positive stories

April 2010 – No. 12

[portlandupside.com](http://portlandupside.com)

## A common bond

### Breast cancer survivors swim together and support one another

By Patty Rubin  
*The Portland Upside*

**A**bout ten years ago I met the group of ladies at Howard Hall pool in the locker room as they were dressing after their swim. I could tell there was something special about them; I just didn't yet know what it was. They swim every Thursday morning from ten to eleven o'clock and then go out to lunch together. They are, if one considers age alone, what you would call senior citizens.

We struck up a conversation. One teased, in a Phyllis Diller sort of way, about her husband and his habit of cluttering up the garage with too many used golf clubs and carts. Another talked about how cold it was in the locker room as she shuffled off to get a warm shower.

The group that brought these ladies together is not really exclusive and it is one that any woman would prefer not to belong to... It is called Encore. Formed in Portland, Oregon, in 1981 by the late Virginia Schrunk and the late Mildred Perrin, Encore is a support group for women who've had breast cancer.

I looked forward to seeing the women every week

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Photo by Steve Hambuchen, [stevehambuchen.com](http://stevehambuchen.com)

(Left to right) Pat McGee, Dorothy Burns, Mary Schifferdecker, Pauline Gieber, Eva Hahn, and Claudia Pfenning built close relationships beyond their weekly swim to stay healthy.

## Man helps others memorialize family, friends

By Deb Stone  
*The Portland Upside*

**I**magine yourself in the picturesque city of Kalmar situated in southeast Sweden near the Baltic Sea. You are wondering why your grandfather left this industrial city in 1928, making his way to the United States. You wonder where his body was laid to rest. That's where the Find A Grave website comes in.

Jim Tipton founded Find A Grave in 1995, creating the website as an offshoot of his own hobby of visiting the gravesites of famous individuals. The site became popular with genealogists when it expanded to house millions of records of non-famous individuals.

These records are created, edited and maintained by volunteer contributors. Consumers are not charged to search for family records or to make requests for photographs. Volunteers create memorials, update information, upload photographs and place virtual flowers on memorials for free.

Before the Internet age, researching genealogists spent hours writing letters to record repositories, visiting libraries to scan microfiche, or traveling to places where earlier generations made their lives. It was an expensive hobby. But the Internet greatly expanded information access and spread from urban to rural areas, creating communication byways across international lines. Sites grew into million dollar industries charging annual membership fees to access historical information.

In 2004, broadband Internet expanded to include almost all areas of Sweden. In early April 2009, Inger Sylén Johanson, of Kalmar, Sweden, had been looking for information about her grandfather, Jon Söderberg. She found an old letter where he was mentioned by

*Continued on page 4*



Photo by Robert Holcomb

Bill Myers has voluntarily taken over 13,000 photos of gravestones around Portland and made them available on the Web for others to see.



**Brenda Maldonado, coordinator of the Multicultural Center at PCC Rock Creek, inspires and encourages students to find their own voices to make a difference.**

## Finding her voice

By Meryl Lipman  
*The Portland Upside*

**D**epending on the day or event, the contents of Brenda Maldonado's car say much about the work she does in her multiple roles at Portland Community College (PCC).

On January 22, her beleaguered Subaru carried 8,300 pounds of food to the Oregon Food Bank in Hillsboro. Brenda got the idea for an MLK food drive at the PCC Rock Creek Campus after reading a statistic on increasing hunger in Washington County. She challenged her students to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King Day by doing service, "to see poverty as more than a conversation."

As PCC Rock Creek's Multicultural Center & Retention Coordinator, she convinced 105 students and 20 staffers to sacrifice their vacation day, January 18th, to stand outside supermarkets collecting food cans for Oregon Food Bank.

When Brenda arrived at PCC four years ago, she challenged herself to expand the campus' multicultural center, which she says consisted of "students sitting all over my desk." For the ambi-

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## From the editors

By Rob & Sara Bednark  
*The Portland Upside*

“How’s the paper going?” is a common question we get asked nowadays. We answer a variety of ways depending on the day, how well we know the person asking the question and how close we are to a publication deadline.

Truthfully, it is going well.

We are pleased with the quality of the publication we are putting out. Each month many new and committed readers pick up the printed version of the Upside around the Portland metro area and many more visit our website to read the online version. We’re getting great feedback from our readers, advertisers and the subjects of our articles. The number of volunteers who write, photograph and distribute for the Portland Upside is growing and becoming more diverse.

But the truth is, also, that our funds are running out. From the beginning, we’ve focused on keeping our expenses low and we’ve been able to create 12 great issues, financed not only from advertis-

ing, sponsorship, and donations, but primarily from our savings account.

We love publishing the Upside but we need more financial support to continue supplying Portland with the best good news in town. If you enjoy reading it and want to see it continue, please support the Upside with a donation, sponsorship, or advertising.

*Go online to [portlandupside.com](http://portlandupside.com) to donate or get more info about advertising and sponsorship. Contact Sara & Rob at 503-663-1526 or [editors@portlandupside.com](mailto:editors@portlandupside.com) Or send your donation to The Portland Upside, 10013 SE Eastmont Dr, Damascus, OR 97089*

## What people are saying about The Portland Upside

“A friend just sent me a copy of your paper. I read every word. What a breath of fresh air!”

Beth Enos, Portland, Oregon

“Someone is leaving your newspaper in our office and I must say it’s so nice to discover a change! I gladly read The Portland Upside, it’s simple being is a joy. You’ve got the ideas that a lot of us are searching for and it’s like a reward from front page to last.”

Stephen W. O’Curran, Gresham, Oregon

“I just came across The Portland Upside this week and said to myself, ‘Finally, a newspaper with a heart, positive thoughts and positive stories that make everyone that read it develop a smile of hope.’ Congratulations on your achievement.”

Veronica Esagui, West Linn, Oregon

Send your comments to [editors@portlandupside.com](mailto:editors@portlandupside.com)

### Faces of the Upside

*A few of April's writers, distributors and volunteers*



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*Hope and healing beyond traditional therapy*

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## Mortgages, marriage, and making time

By Matt Elerding  
*The Portland Upside*

**H**ello Matt, it's Jack."

"Jack! Good to hear your voice. How are you?"

"Um, not so good. Diane and I are getting a divorce. I need to do a refinance in order to buy-out her half of the equity."

"Oh man, I am so sorry to hear that, Jack. What happened?"

"You know, Matt. I'm not entirely sure..."

And so it begins. A failed marriage results in a new mortgage loan.

I write about fifty of these 'divorce loans' a year, about one per week on average. It is a sad and humbling process fraught with emotion, anger and fear. I have handled countless numbers of these loans and I suspect I will handle countless more.

But no matter how many times my phone rings or my email chimes as the result of a divorce, it is a part of my job that saddens me to the bone. It is something I will never get used to.

So I started asking why. I really wanted to know. Why does this happen on such a consistent basis? I would ask this question of the poor soul on the other end of the phone line. I would ask them what went wrong.

It's not my business, of course. It's certainly not part of the loan process, but if I felt I had enough of a connection and rapport with the client, I would begin to peel back the layers of onion, tears and all, to find out just what, exactly, went wrong.

Surprisingly, it's not the biggies we have come to expect. People Magazine and Inside Edition would have us believe that "irreconcilable differences" involve infidelity, drug and alcohol addiction, verbal and physical abuse, or the intoxicating allure of too many



Photo by Briena Sash, sashphotography.com

trips to the blackjack tables. But after 12 years of writing these painful loans I have found the real culprit, the surreptitious killer of marital bliss, is the lack of communication.

While this seemingly simple explanation may elicit a "Well, duh!" from the peanut gallery, I have found that it is the most common reason I receive when I ask the question. More often than not it is the growing apart of two people that eventually has them calling a cavalcade of characters to help them divvy up the fine china and the Visa card balance—the lawyer to file the divorce, the realtor to sell the family home, and the loan officer to write the mortgage.

It seems comically ironic that at a time when communication whistles around the globe in a nanosecond and we are all armed with Batman utility belts dangling Black-

Berrys and iPhones, Facebook and Twitter, half of all marriages fizzle due to a lack of communication.

It is only now that I have file cabinets filled with the loans of irreconcilable differences, that I have begun to appreciate the depth of what it means to communicate with one's spouse.

About six years ago own marriage began to veer off the smooth ride of the paved interstate and on to a bumpy and unfamiliar road of frustration and sadness. I was working too much, grumpy all the time, and before long I came home to a wife who was fed up with the path we were on.

Desperate to find a solution to the unravelling of my own home-life, I hired a personal coach. I dove headlong into a series of conference calls, challenging assignments, and browbeating accountability. I was ab-

solutely determined to get my life, and my wife, back.

One of my assignments was to schedule Date Night into my calendar. I was given explicit directions that I was NOT to simply 'try and schedule a date night every now and then' but rather, I was to schedule this into my life as a non-negotiable activity. I was to treat this calendared event like a meeting with the ever-important client. I was NOT to miss or reschedule it.

Everything changed.

Marriage is an extraordinarily difficult dance, a do-se-do of patience, humility and forgiveness. Ah, but when we learn the moves and manage to boogie our way into a groove of understanding, selflessness and, above all, communication, we discover the critical secret of marriages that last a lifetime. I don't care if it sounds corny, but Date Night is one of the best things I have done for my marriage in a very, very long time.

Now do me just one favor. Reach down and unclip that cell phone from your Batman utility belt and call the one you love. With all the hopeless romanticism my aching heart can muster, I promise you that good things will happen.

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*Matt Elerding grew up in Sitka, Alaska, and attended the University of Portland and Notre Dame. He lives in Battle Ground, Washington, with his wife, Heather and his two children, Gage and Abi. He can be reached at Info@ElerdingTeam.com*

### In My Pocket

I took you with me in my pocket,  
folded but not crumpled,  
to see the canyon and the mule deer,  
to hear the Imnaha River  
sing to rock, grass and limb:  
rush, rush, don't hurry  
rush, rush, don't hurry.

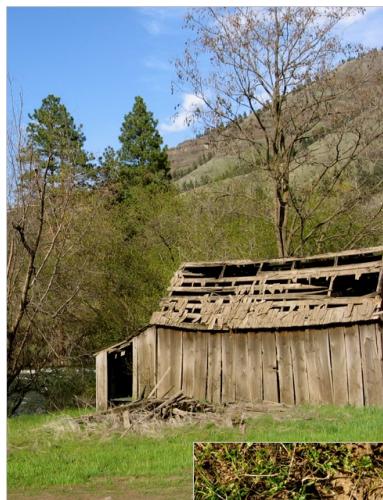
I worked my way up a crumbling path.  
The sun, barely awake,  
had not yet poured its warm glaze  
down the canyon wall.  
Even with you in my pocket,  
I was afraid of falling.  
When I reached the top  
I felt winded and hot,  
but proud.  
You said nothing,  
but, as I sat down to take in the view,  
I could feel you there,  
paper thin and folded against my hip.

After a bit, I stood up, turned and faced the wild rose forest.  
Teasing out the paths that centuries of cattle had  
beaten into the sod with their hooves,  
I joined one that headed toward a verdant saddle,  
hoping for water.

The sun rose higher and  
warmed the breeze, but not much.  
When I looked down at my boots,  
hoof prints mingled in the hard dirt:  
cow, deer, and elk,  
and I thought to myself,  
"how lucky are we?  
me with my eyes and bones here in this land,  
you in my pocket,  
on this cloud free day,  
with summer just around the bend."

*Julianna Waters is a therapist and writer who lives in Portland with her husband, terrier and two cats. She's an award winning songwriter, co-founder of Heart and Hammer Music, and lives for long, slow walks in wild places. She can be reached at juliannawaters@comcast.net*

Photos by Julianna Waters



By Julianna Waters

## The kindness game

*"Life is short, and we have but little time to gladden the hearts of those who travel this way with us. Oh, be swift to love. Make haste to be kind."*

*-Henri Frederic Amiel*

By Galen Pearl  
The Portland Upside

Sometimes my daughter Mia, like most any high school kid, is focused on herself. A while back, I thought it might do her some good to think outside of her own life. So I came up with a game.

Each day we compete to see who can do the most nice things for other people. It could be something as simple as smiling at someone as you pass by, or saying something encouraging. If you do something nice for someone in your family, you get double points, because we often overlook those closest to us. At the end of the day we compare notes to see who won.

Playing the game is fun. I go through my day a little differently when I am actively seeking opportunities to be kind. I catch myself smiling more, greeting people, listening more attentively, offering to help a little more quickly, finding something nice to say. I wrote out a compliment card for someone who helped me at the store. Mia ate lunch with

a student from another country who was often isolated.

One day, Mia called me as she walked home from school to ask for directions to a certain address. When she got home she explained that she had seen a young woman looking distressed and crossed the street to ask if she needed help. The young woman was developmentally disabled and had gotten off at the wrong bus stop on her way home. She was disoriented and couldn't figure out how to get home.

After I gave Mia directions over the phone, she walked the young woman all the way home, even though it was quite a bit out of her way. I could see that Mia felt compassion for this young woman and was pleased to be able to help her. Because I have two sons, Mia's brothers, with autism, her kindness was especially meaningful. I would like to believe that someone would do the same for them if they were lost. When she told me the story, I readily conceded the game for that day, for the whole week.



Photo by Jozelin Garcia

Galen Pearl has lived in Portland for 20 years. She is developing a program to help form habits to grow a joyful spirit. You can learn more about it on her blog 10stepstofindingyourhappyplace.blogspot.com or contact her at galenpearl@gmail.com

### Find a grave

Continued from page 1

name, and she was able to discern that he had served in WW I for the United States. He had returned to Sweden and had a son. Then he had immigrated to the U.S. for the remainder of his life. She posted a request on the Find A Grave website for a volunteer to locate and photograph his gravesite in Portland, Oregon.

"After a few days," writes Johanson's husband Chris, "an email arrived with the photo from the cemetery."

The photo was taken by Bill Myers. Bill is one of 400,000 volunteers who provide free information and photographs in response to requests on Find A Grave. When a person like Inger posts a request, the website automatically sends an email to registered members within 25 miles of the requested gravesite. Those volunteers can choose to claim the request—that is, promise to visit and photograph the site within two weeks. If nobody claims the request, it remains posted on Find A Grave until someone chooses to fill it.

Bill has volunteered with Find A Grave since 2001, following the death of his first wife, Julee Jo Rea Myers, who passed away at age 45 from brain cancer. Bill wanted to memorialize her short life for their children and her extended family. While many funeral home websites offer a memorial page for family members to post the obituary and photograph of a loved one, the sites often require payment to maintain the online tribute. Bill joined Find A Grave and created a permanent, free, memorial page where family and friends can see her photographs, leave messages of condolence, and place virtual flowers at her site.

Each memorial provides space for birth and death records, names of children and parents, a biography, up to five photographs, and room for messages and virtual gifts. The person who creates the record owns the memorial and maintains control over the information on that page. In many cases, such as Julee's page, a family member owns the record. But other memorials are created by strangers like Bill as a good deed paid forward.

Once Bill completed Julee's memorial page, he realized there were probably many individuals who might like photographs of their family members' final resting places. He



Photo by Robert Holcomb

was so moved by the history evoked at the Lake Oswego Pioneer Cemetery where Julee was buried that he decided to photograph all the headstones in the cemetery. He wanted to add them to Find A Grave. In order to post a photograph, he had to create a memorial page for each individual, entering the data from the headstone.

People searching Find A Grave on their own began contacting him to ask that a memorial he had created be transferred to them because the deceased person was a relative of theirs. Find A Grave permits the original creator of a memorial to transfer a page to another member for ongoing maintenance.

Bill also began receiving requests for photographs of cemetery plots in the Portland area from individuals living across the United States. He would stop at cemeteries on his way to and from work to fill those requests.

"Willamette National is so large and tons of requests come in," Bill says. "So I hit that on the way home."

River View Cemetery, on the hill overlooking the Sellwood Bridge, always has requests. He stops there often, too.

Bill is a U.S. Army veteran and he respects individuals who have served in the military. He decided to photograph all the headstones for Spanish American War veterans at River View Cemetery. He took two photographs of each headstone—about 600 photos in all—and created memorial sites on Find A Grave for each of the veterans. He then uploaded their headstone pictures, even offering a CD of all the photographs to the cemetery itself.

Photographing headstones may not seem like an interesting hobby to some, but Bill's background is in the color print industry where he started with letter press, learned paste-up and film stripping, then made the transition to digital media, learning to edit, clean, and tweak photos. He now operates Bill's Photo Restoration and Archiving where he restores aged or damaged photos. Offering CDs of historical photographs seemed like a natural progression.

As a volunteer, Bill has added over 4,575 memorials to Find A Grave and uploaded over 13,000 photographs. He has claimed and filled over 412 photograph requests from family members around the world, including the one from Inger Johanson.

"I read her request," says Bill, "so I slacked it down."

He eventually located John Soderberg's grave in Willamette National Cemetery. The photograph of his headstone reads: JOHN SODERBERG, PVT, US ARMY, Jun. 9, 1889 – Dec. 6, 1974.

"This photo means a lot to my wife," wrote Chris Johanson. "It was the first time she had something tangible...to prove there was a person, a grandfather who had lived, even though far away from Sweden."

Not all photograph requests are for family members. Bill has filled requests for those who wondered what happened to a buddy who served beside them in combat, and for individuals who wanted to list the final resting place for a classmate in the program of a class reunion.

"We are preparing for our 50th high school reunion," wrote Nancy Phillips from Des Moines, Iowa. "and Marvin Harner was one of our classmates."

Given the finite nature of human life, there is no end to the number of potential requests. As of March 2010, the Find A Grave site claims to host over 43 million records which may be accessed free at any time.



Photo by Robert Holcomb

Bill Myers spends many hours helping others memorialize family and friends by photographing gravestones and uploading them to the findagrave.com website.

Find out more about Find A Grave at [findagrave.com](http://findagrave.com). Visit Bill Myer's Photo Restoration & Archiving at [billsphotorestore.com](http://billsphotorestore.com), or contact Bill at [bill@billsphotorestore.com](mailto:bill@billsphotorestore.com) or 971-832-1465.

Deb Stone is a freelance writer from Beavercreek, Oregon, whose work has appeared in The Oregonian, The Portland Tribune, Asylum, Oregon Gourmet Foods, Poetic Voices, Kid-Bits and Willamette Writers.

## Donna Smith, a voice for urban farming



By Cathy McQueeney  
*The Portland Upside*

**I**t was at a family farmer and rancher community grassroots meeting that I met Donna Smith. My husband and I had driven in to Portland to attend the January meeting. We wanted to see what this Agricultural Reclamation Act (ARA) gathering was all about.

As a relative newcomer to the farming community, I was more of a listener than a participant in the meeting. Among the many interesting things I heard that night, Donna's unique approach to farming in urban Portland stood out.

An increasingly visible presence in many Portland neighborhoods, Donna is co-owner of Your Backyard Farmer, a successful business that brings an innovative approach to community supported agriculture through urban backyard farming.

For the past five years, Donna, and her business partner, Robyn Streeter, have created small, sustainable organic farms in people's yards. They help urban farmers grow fresh, in-season produce right at home, utilizing the homeowners' own land.

I approached Donna in the parking lot after the meeting to get her business card for a friend I know would love to have a mini-farm at her home. I also wanted to congratulate her on volunteering to be a farmer and rancher delegate in Corvallis representing the Portland area (see insert).

She told me it was a very big night for her. For the first time she had really felt included by other farmers, who often discounted her micro-scale urban agriculture as merely "gardening."

"We've always known that we were farmers because we were growing food. No matter if it was 25 acres or 400 square feet, a farmer farms food," Donna explained to me.

For years she felt that her work wasn't recognized as a viable part of the farming community. But this evening was

The Agricultural Reclamation Act (ARA) is a tool designed to give family-scale farmers and ranchers a voice in shaping Oregon's future food and agricultural policy.

On Sunday, February 28th, over 60 farmers and ranchers came together for the first annual Farmer and Rancher Delegation in Corvallis. Local Portland farmer and entrepreneur, Donna Smith, was among them.

A final version of the ARA, drafted by the farmers and ranchers who attended the meeting, will be approved and made public in May. To learn more about the Agricultural Reclamation Act, visit the Friends of Family Farmers website at [friendsoffamilyfarmers.org](http://friendsoffamilyfarmers.org)

Donna was able to join right in and advocate for urban agriculture as a way of addressing this issue.

With 67 individual small farms under cultivation this spring in the Portland metro area, and 27 consulting clients across the U.S., Canada and Australia starting similar farming ventures, Donna Smith and Your Backyard Farmer believe the future is now.

"We're losing acreage annually to urbanization and erosion. People have lost the knowledge of how to grow their own food, have stopped teaching their children. We need

different.

"Michael Moss [of Friends of Family Farmers] reinforced to me specifically that I have a voice and a right to use it and to bring it forward and he asked me to attend the Delegation. I said yes, even though I didn't know what I would say or do, but I wanted to have a voice."

I was certainly surprised to learn that Donna has not been viewed as a "farmer." She so clearly seems like one to me. Imagine my reaction when I learned that not only has the traditional agriculture community been slow to recognize her status, the State of Oregon has no definition of a "farmer" or "farm," so she doesn't even enjoy legal recognition, an issue that came up at their grass roots meetings as well as at the Delegation.

I caught up again with Donna after the Delegation convened. I wanted to find out just what she said and accomplished.

She was excited about the opportunity and described the discussions as "so passionate and so fresh," remembering the inclusiveness she felt.

"A string runs straight through us," she said, "connecting us all—a room full of passionate farmers."

While Donna attended primarily to ensure that urban agriculture was part of the dialogue and included in the Agricultural Reclamation Act, she was delighted to discover that others shared her view. Returning to her seat after a short break, she overheard a fellow delegate, a small family farmer from the Eugene area explaining to another farmer from Canby that urban agriculture was "the wave of the future."

In an afternoon break out session where young and beginning farmers talked about the lack of available and affordable land to farm,

Donna Smith (right) and Robyn Streeter (left), co-owners of Your Backyard Farmer, tend to one of their 67 backyard farms in the Portland area.



food. We can bring food home again so that we all know where our food comes from. Urban agriculture will be a crucial piece of reclaiming and rebuilding our food system."

"I think that if we do not bring food back into the cities, we're going to have safety, security and sustainability issues. We have to protect ourselves and our communities better, have our food sources closer to home, grow food specific to our area, not thousands of miles away."

To learn more about Donna Smith and Your Backyard Farmer, visit [yourbackyardfarmer.com](http://yourbackyardfarmer.com), email [farmers@yourbackyardfarmer.com](mailto:farmers@yourbackyardfarmer.com) or call Donna at 503-449-2402

Cathy McQueeney owns Blue Flower Family Farm in the Willamette Valley where she raises Shetland sheep, a variety of chickens and fruits, vegetables and herbs using a sustainable, biointensive model. Contact her at [cathymcq5@yahoo.com](mailto:cathymcq5@yahoo.com)



Photo by Colin Anderson, [farmtoforkresearch.com](http://farmtoforkresearch.com)

As a delegate representing Portland urban agriculture, Donna Smith (center) signs the Agricultural Reclamation Act at the first annual Farmer and Rancher Delegates Meeting.

### Submission of the month

Send us your photo, doodle, cartoon, poem, haiku, drawing, artwork, essay, quote, etc.; something that you find positive. Email it to [editors@portlandupsidemagazine.com](mailto:editors@portlandupsidemagazine.com) or mail it to us by April 20. One or more submissions will be chosen to appear in the May issue of The Portland Upside. Please include your name, email address and phone number in case we need to contact you.

### A surprise quilt



We are students in Art Class at The Bridge, a special residential community in Beaverton, Oregon. Last Fall, we made quilts. We used fabric markers to draw pictures on some of the squares. The Blockbusters Quilt Club quilted the quilts for us. We each made a quilt for ourselves. In addition, we all worked together to make a quilt for our resident manager. We kept it a secret and surprised her. She loves her quilt. Here is a photo of the quilt, our resident manager and us.

### 10 Steps to Finding Your Happy Place (and Staying There)

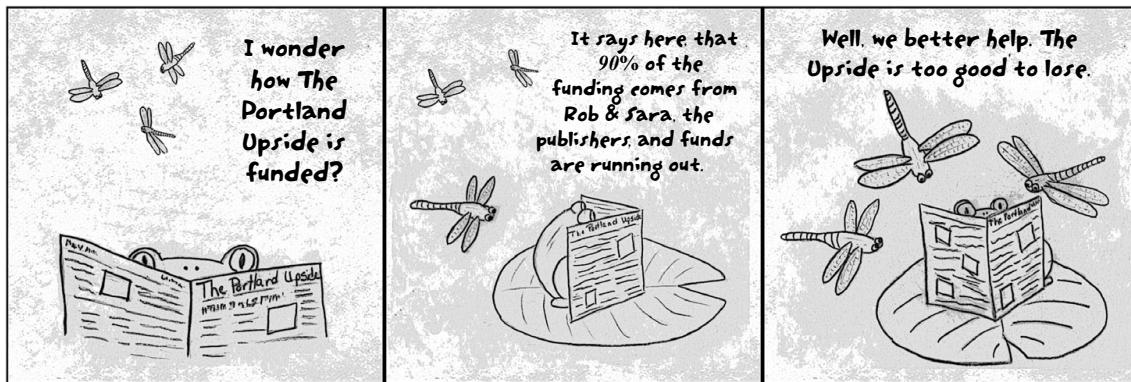
A program to develop habits to grow a joyful spirit.

[10stepstofindingyourhappyplace.blogspot.com](http://10stepstofindingyourhappyplace.blogspot.com)

Have an idea for an article you'd like to write for The Portland Upside?

We would like to hear it.

Email or call Rob & Sara [editors@portlandupsidemagazine.com](mailto:editors@portlandupsidemagazine.com)  
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### Brenda Maldonado

*Continued from page 1*

tious 30-year-old, advocacy meant pressing the college administration for money, an office, and a room for the students. The Rock Creek Multicultural Center is now a thriving hub of languages, music, food and conversation.

Brenda also introduced PCC to Semana de la Raza, a Latino culture and advocacy celebration that has grown over three years to become a district-wide community event at the Rock Creek campus. Every December Brenda rallies students, faculty, and staff, as well as speakers, artists and musicians for the April festival. She scrunches in her own and others' budgets, negotiates with administrators, and cajoles sponsors and booking agents to secure Teatro Milagro, Michelle Serros, Juanita Bordas and others to come to Rock Creek.

The growth of Semana has not been without trials. Rock Creek's Associate Dean of Students, Heather Lang, recalls an incident two years ago when the festival banner was vandalized with hate slurs. Brenda gathered her student volunteers and asked what they wanted to do. With her help, they organized an impromptu speak-out on campus that empowered everyone.

"Brenda handled it with such patience and grace," says Heather.

Patience and grace may have been survival tools for Brenda in her youth. Deaf for the first five years of her life after an ear infection, she was shuttled between her native Puerto Rico and Pennsylvania for surgeries. When her hearing was restored, she learned to speak Spanish and English at the same time.

The family moved often, as her father was, at different times, a minister and a soldier in the U.S. military. When Brenda was a teenager, her grandmother, the rock of the family, suffered a stroke, and her father came out as a gay man living with HIV. Her mother has spent a lifetime struggling with mental illness and she was often violent in those early years. Brenda also remembers sleeping on the floor most nights.

"The family was very poor," she says.

Brenda admits that her job at PCC provides a unique vehicle for "inside work." She has partnered with veterans' groups, anti-poverty campaigns, and the campus' Gay Straight Alliance, but she says she is not ready to take a platform on child abuse. "It's still too raw," she says. "Some day..."



**Brenda Maldonado celebrates with PCC graduates at their multicultural graduation ceremony (top left), enjoys a snowboarding trip to Mt. Hood (top right), volunteers to clear brush by Vernonia (bottom left), and relaxes with her dogs at home (bottom right).**

As a hearing-impaired, non-verbal child, Brenda concedes that her work helping students find their voices could be a grand metaphor. "I see a lot of students who are voiceless. I see a lot of dim lights who've been told they won't amount to anything. But I see amazing human beings so I push them. I'm a pusher," she laughs.

Brenda embraces difficult discussions while helping students find their voices. She is involved with Rock Creek's "Open Mind – Open Mic" and a more structured series of round tables called "Courageous Conversations." She mentors several PCC programs including Oregon Leadership Institute, in which Latino first generation col-

activation off campus, improve herself and have a little fun.

Over spring break she plans to do first aid at the Arizona-Mexico border because she believes medical care is a right, even for desperate Mexicans crossing into the U.S. illegally.

And one Thursday a month Brenda packs her car full of books and an overnight case, and heads to Silver Falls where she's finding her own voice by studying for a PhD in Education with an emphasis on community college leadership.

Brenda is not all business, however. Although she will gladly trade vacation days for service work, there are non-negotiable times when Brenda's car is reserved for her snowboard and shredding the slopes on Mt. Hood with a posse of boarder friends.

In February she put together a ski trip and lessons for 20 of her students. Several had never before seen snow.

"Combining my two loves, my students and snowboarding, was pretty darn cool," she says.

Indeed, dressed most days in jeans and a t-shirt, Brenda's students see her as approachable and just plain cool. She is like them, only older and farther along on her path.

And although she works and studies full time, Heather Lang says she has never heard Brenda complain.

"Brenda just doesn't put that energy out there," says Heather.

Brenda's strategy for success may well be that she takes great care with her voice, avoiding negativity. She sums it up best:

"I'm not interested in drama and I don't want to fall into a victim mentality, so I don't engage. I don't care who's talking about whom. I care if they're hungry or safe at home."



lege students mentor high school students from similar backgrounds. She also mentors international students, as well as graduates of her programs. She even organizes a multicultural graduation ceremony for international students and others whose families might be overwhelmed by the large PCC graduation at the Rose Garden Arena.

Yet Brenda still finds time to take her

*Meryl Lipman has a masters in writing from PSU and has worked for Portland Community College since 2003. In her spare time she loves to travel and jump out of airplanes.*

## From the bike lane

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By Jen Bond

**B**iking has changed our lives in countless ways, helping us to adopt healthier lifestyles, make new friends, explore new places, feel young again and even conquer our addictions. Our bikes give us freedom, fresh air, exercise, focus and fun! Sure, we replace parts, do maintenance on them, or even have to buy new bikes occasionally, but they seem to give back so much more than they demand.

I recently asked friends, acquaintances, and random Portland bicyclists about the positive things that biking adds to their lives. The overwhelming response was heartfelt gratitude. Here are a few of the responses.

"To me, cycling is not just a mode of transportation or weekend activity. Somehow, it has worked its way into every aspect of my life." —W.B.

"Biking keeps me healthy despite my debaucherous lifestyle." —B.H.

"Traveling by bicycle is so different from any other mode of transportation. After trying it, I don't think I'd travel any other way. You get to meet really interesting people, observe wildlife, be in contact with nature, feel the wind on your face and the sun on your skin. It reminds you of what is possible in the world, with just a

little effort and an open mind." —A.M.

"Biking enables me to exercise regularly while both grounding and slowing my energy. Being around the youth as a teacher, it also provides a positive model of making progressive and easy changes in our collective lifestyles. Most of the time my bike rides are liberating as well." —R.M.

"I love mountain biking on 'The Hide and Seek' trail with my dog Otto right on my wheel, trying not to go so fast that I crash. Going from banked turn to banked turn, it's like a Hotwheels course for bikes. I'm always wishing the trail was longer, and soon it will be!" —J.B.

"Cycling helped me kick my habit." —J.D.

"Biking is a great way to spend time with my kids. We all have fun, laugh and see things we would never see from a car!" —J.M.

"I love riding my bike around Portland in the springtime, along streets lined with beautiful fragrant flowering trees, the petals drifting around me in the breeze, seeing all the other smiling bicyclists and thinking how very lucky I am." —H.M.

"Bicycling kept me out of the army and jail." —Z.B.

"Biking is the closest thing to flying that we humans will ever experience." —K.Z.

"Riding my bike allows me to explore new places while searching for cute sheep, goats and donkeys." —A.C.

"Biking keeps my life grounded, and more simple. It keeps me a little out of the mainstream, and helps give me a perspective that I would not have if I mainly drove. Bikes slow you down, and let you experience your surroundings. Riding lets you say 'good morning' to the people you see, gets you breathing fresh air and gets your systems working. Biking excites your cerebral spinal fluid, and connects both sides of the brain. Your balance,

coordination and awareness improve. Bicycling helps young people develop, and old people stay young. Bikes are so energy efficient, that riding somehow seems like cheating. I have personally noticed all of this, and try to appreciate it every time I ride." —D.G.

"Riding my bike makes me feel as free as a bird, powered by youthful energy, fast and light and full of the joy of simply being and moving, without a care in the world." —J.B.

"Biking is my anti-drug!" —J.P.

"Ever since I started riding a bike, I fell in love with cycling and it has completely changed my life. I don't know what I would do without it. I just love it!" —N.O.

"The sun, the sky and two tires on the road. That makes a great day!" —S.H.

"The one thing that cycling has brought to my life is a lifestyle. Of course Portland has helped cultivate that. It seems like I have always ridden bikes, but it never became a lifestyle until I moved to Portland. I still own a car, but that's mainly just to ski and mountain bike. Biking is my transportation, my living and my recreation. I never get tired of my bikes. I ride all of them, but my favorite is always my mountain bike." —D.D.

Thanks to everyone who shared their thoughts about biking with me. Happy pedaling!

Visit River City Bicycles at 706 SE MLK Blvd, Portland, Oregon, 503-233-5973; or online at [rivercitybicycles.com](http://rivercitybicycles.com)

If you have a biking story you'd like to share with Jen, email it to [fromthebikelane@yahoo.com](mailto:fromthebikelane@yahoo.com)

Jen Bond is a River City Bicycles employee, cycle-tourist and all-around bike-enthusiast.



## Swimmers

Continued from page 1

and admired the positive way they savored each moment of their daily lives. The group consisted of Pat McGee, Dorothy Burns, Pauline Gieber, Eva Hahn, Mary Schifferdecker, and Claudia Pfenning. They began swimming at the YMCA pool until their lifeguard made an inquiry with the University of Portland for the private use of the Howard Hall pool.

Their purpose was not as much about swimming as about each other.

I had lunch with Pat, Pauline and Dorothy at their regular weekly haunt, the Fishwife on Lombard. As we sat together, I began to ask some questions meant to capture their stories and the horrors they felt about breast cancer. I wanted them to talk about themselves. But they kept going back to the same thing, their friendship and how much they meant to each other. Fear and pity were only present in my imagination. I put aside my questions and just listened.

Pauline, sweet and pensive, cute and quiet, was long retired from the Kaiser Pharmacy. At 88, she was the oldest of the group. Her breast cancer came in 1981. She now spends the afternoons quietly with her husband or watching TV. She doesn't swim anymore, but shows up each week to support the others.

Pat, funny and interesting, outgoing and beautiful, is the youngest at 71 years old. She was diagnosed in 1980 and

right from the start let her doctor know she wanted reconstructive surgery. This was not the norm for all women at that time. She learned to stick up for herself while working for the railroad.

"You didn't get any information until the doctor said this is what you are going to do," Pat said.

Dorothy, sensitive, lovely, charming and bright, is 82 years old. She lost her husband two years ago, and celebrates birthdays and holidays regularly now with her friends. Although Dorothy could not remember the exact year she was diagnosed with breast cancer, she figured it was probably 1986. The corners of her eyes filled with tears as she spoke about a member of their extended group whose cancer had returned.

Eva Hahn could not join her friends because she had recently had a stroke. She did, however, send her written reflection.

"Because each of us has had breast cancer, we understand what that means. So we have understanding. We are interested in each other's lives and we depend on each other. We try to comfort each other when life deals us sorrow. We are grateful to have each other, and while we are not grateful for breast cancer, it has brought us together."

**"We are grateful to have each other, and while we are not grateful for breast cancer, it has brought us together."**

*Five years have passed since I wrote this article and still the memories of the mornings at the pool will be with me forever. Pauline and Mary have passed away. Pat and Dorothy continued to swim until a few years ago when they could no longer get in and out of the pool. They keep active and see each other when they can.*

*On my last visit the glow of their joy for life still inspires me and reminds me of the beauty of the human spirit.*

*Patty Rubin grew up in Portland and attended the University of Portland. She has a son and a daughter. She taught English in middle school and now works at the University of Portland. She is working on a series of positive essays for a book.*

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## Picturing a better world for at-risk teens

By Brian Schaeperkoetter  
*The Portland Upside*

In Portland we pride ourselves on the culture of creativity that defines and unites us. Thanks to the inspiration of Donna Lee Holmes and the Focus on Youth program, even our city's most at-risk population has the chance to share their talents, express their creativity and be successful.

Focus on Youth is a nonprofit organization that works to keep inner-city teens on the path to graduation by using photography and mentoring to inspire them to achieve academic success. The program develops not only photographic skills and creativity, but also encourages students to focus on goal

**Focus on Youth encourages students to find beauty in a world that hasn't always treated them kind.** Pictured below are Focus on Youth students from the Portland International Community School.



setting, personal responsibility and involvement within their community.

"The difference in the kids is phenomenal," says Donna Lee, who founded the program in 2003.

"They're excited about learning digital photography and computer software programs. They are thrilled to be going on location shoots with the mentors and exploring places they have never been before. They can't wait to get to the studio and look at the photographs they have taken. When you give them a camera, they start seeing beauty they never saw before."

Donna Lee pairs each student with a professional photographer who mentors, coaches, encourages and instructs.

Schools, agencies and other nonprofits refer the students, ages 14 to 20 years old. They come from backgrounds that are culturally and ethnically diverse, economically disadvantaged and socially difficult. Many are recent immigrants who face hardships including poverty, limited English skills, racism and homophobia.

"In the process of learning photography," says Donna Lee, "they not only see the world differently, they begin to see themselves differently, and that is a very positive thing."

Through Focus on Youth, students learn the patience and self-discipline that photography demands, the same skills that help them in life.

To find out more about Focus on Youth, visit [focusonyouth.org](http://focusonyouth.org) or call 503-341-6878.



"My world turned upside down" photo by Focus on Youth student Hannah Beazley.

*Focus on Youth will hold its first annual art auction on May 1, 2010 at the Pacific Northwest College of Art. The funds raised will help provide scholarships for at-risk, low-income students to take photography classes for free. Details are available on their website.*



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# The Portland Upside

positive people, positive stories

March 2010

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## Never too old to succeed

*Dream of learning to read realized after 40 years of patience and persistence*

By Deb Stone  
*The Portland Upside*

Merry Gilbertson attended the first grade near Milan, Minnesota, in 1956. Being successful in school was so important to her family that she never questioned it. Of course, she would go to St. Olaf College. That's what people in her family did. And first, she would learn to read.

Everyone learns to read, right? Wrong. According to the U.S. Department of Education, in 2003, 14% of Americans over the age of sixteen—30 million adults—could not perform tasks that required simple reading.

The year Merry started first grade, Marcella "Marcy" Kamis was born in Roswell, New Mexico. She was the firstborn daughter of a Caucasian woman and a Navajo man. Her father, an Air Force pilot, was so proud of his daughter he called her his little *Belladonna* (beautiful lady).

But once she turned two, Marcy would not hear the endearment again. Her mother took her to live with a new stepfather, where Marcy doesn't remember them ever calling



Photo by Robert Holcomb

**Marcy Kamis (right) was one of the 30 million American adults who can't read, but because of her courage and belief in herself, she found a teacher in Merry Gilbertson (left) and is now a successful reader.**

her by name. They called her Stupid or Idiot or a string of expletives. The family moved often to avoid eviction. Each year another child was born. Each year, school became a

greater burden.

"When a teacher knows you can't read and they continue to call on you, it's humiliating," Marcy said.

Still, she tried to do what was expected. She went to school, came home, and helped with chores.

By 1972, Merry Gilbertson was attending St. Olaf College where she shared a room in an old Tudor building with leaded glass windows and large open beams. That same year, Marcy's family moved to a three-room shack near Canby, Oregon, where the 11 children slept body-to-body across piles of clothes. At Canby High School, Marcy failed all of her ninth grade classes except sewing and choir. She didn't need to read to pass those.

When the school called about Marcy's inability to read, her mother pulled her from school and sent her to work in the fields where she weeded hops by hand, and trained them on upright supports. When hops season ended, strawberry season began. After that she picked raspberries, cucumbers and green beans. She worked in the field all day, gave the cash to her mother each afternoon and went about her chores.

In 1977, Merry finished her Master's Degree in Special Education. Marcy had two

*Continued on page 7*

## A tale of two Robs

By Matt Eldering  
*The Portland Upside*

In my job as a mortgage loan officer I write occasional articles, essays and blog posts on the current state of this unraveling industry. But I just don't have it in me to pen another depressing manifesto about the current state of real estate and mortgage lending.

Even if you're not directly tied to the real estate world, you understand that we've all been through a rough period of change these past couple of years. And if you've been touched at all by this change, then this story is meant for you.

It's a story about two guys named Rob.

I met the first Rob in the spring of 2007 when we both added the role of Little League Dad to our parental résumés, a title that carries brimming levels of responsibility, leadership, and above all, an unbelievable amount of time.

"Baseball Rob" and I arrived every Tuesday afternoon, the trunks of our cars crammed with baseball mitts, bats and dirty cleats that would forever decimate the resale value of our automobiles. We escorted our young soldiers onto the battlefield and did our best to teach them the ways of the world on that hallowed ground known simply as The Baseball Diamond.

While neither of us was an official coach of the Red Sox, we both looked forward to our duty as the unpaid helper coaches of this ferocious gaggle of fearless 10-year-old boys. Under the guise of coordinating baseball drills and handing out juice-boxes, my new friend and I secretly etched new chapters into the book of memories with our sons.

On that field, deep in the heart of Battle Ground, Washington, I grew to admire, respect and love this man. He worked hard in his role as a regional manager, treasured his beautiful wife and found time to shower his five children with immeasurable amounts of affection. Baseball Rob made

me want to be a better man.

Meanwhile, an equally incredible man—I'll call him Realtor Rob—came into my life. He too demonstrated all the qualities that should be printed in the textbook on how to be an amazing human being. He sold real estate for a living and had been doing quite well. Rob oozed effervescence and all who encountered him knew that it was genuine and true. Despite an unwavering commitment to his career, he always managed to strike the perfect balance that allowed him to love his wife and be a role model to his three adoring children.

Shortly after we became friends, Realtor Rob randomly asked me one day if I had a favorite song. I answered his question with a raised eyebrow and we moved on. A few weeks later I called his cell phone and was greeted, not with the standard ring of an incoming call, but with the soothng reverie of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata. My song. I

*Continued on page 4*

**While doing his Little League Dad duties of encouraging his young son to keep his chin up, "Baseball Rob" unknowingly becomes an inspiration to his close friends.**



Photo by Matt Eldering

## How does she do it?

*Many households set out one can of garbage each week. Jeanne Roy produces only one can per year.*

By Cody Dollowitch  
*The Portland Upside*

Jeanne Roy is a full time volunteer and co-founder of The Center for Earth Leadership. She also cut the amount of garbage she produces to one can per year. When she's not teaching, developing curriculum, planning events, or recruiting for her organization, you might find her composting in her yard or skiing on Mt. Hood. The Portland Upside recently caught up with Jeanne for a short interview.

**Portland Upside:** When did you start trying to produce less garbage?

**Jeanne Roy:** It started in 1971 when my husband and I dramatically changed our lifestyle, or at least our outlook. I can remember in the 1970's when companies stopped packaging cottage cheese in wax paper cartons and started packaging it in plastic containers. When the containers started to pile up I knew it was time to make a change.

In 1987 my husband and I formed a recycling organization and we've been limiting our consumption ever since. When our three kids were at home we had it down to four cans a year. When they moved out we got it down to about one.

**Upside:** Why did you decide to try to make less garbage?

**Jeanne:** In trying to reduce my impact on the planet, I think it is easier to control what I consume than it is to control other things I don't always have control of, like housing or transportation.

**Upside:** So what are some steps readers can take to reduce the amount of garbage they make?

**Jeanne:** You can start by recycling curbside and taking

*Continued on page 6*

# The Portland Upside

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## From the editors

By Rob & Sara Bednark  
*The Portland Upside*

**S**ince the beginning, The Portland Upside has been an act of faith. Would we be able to create a newspaper out of our home? Would anyone like a paper with all positive stories? Yes, and yes.

But one of the crucial unknowns was would we get enough content to fill an eight-page paper every month? And

thankfully for 11 issues the answer has also been "yes."

Each month is a new adventure for us. We start with a blank document, a request for articles and no preconceived plans. Writers run ideas across our desk, then go home to write.

We have no idea what articles, poetry or photographs will be in the next issue until the submissions start filling our inbox—some expected, some a surprise. What we receive is then distilled into the issue you read.

Without our growing number of contributors and readers, we would never have learned about therapy horses in Oregon City ("Horses are the therapists at new riding center"), following your heart and the taste of chocolate at Alma

Chocolates ("Chocolate leads Sarah Hart in unexpected directions"), or the transformative power of learning to read ("Never too old to succeed").

Our wish is that everyone feels like they are a part of the Upside writing staff. So we invite all of you to send in your stories, poetry and photographs that highlight the positive side of Portland.

Sara & Rob

Send your submissions to [editors@portlandupside.com](mailto:editors@portlandupside.com) or contact us by phone at 503-663-1526. You can view our writer's guidelines and all of our past issues on our website, [portlandupside.com](http://portlandupside.com)

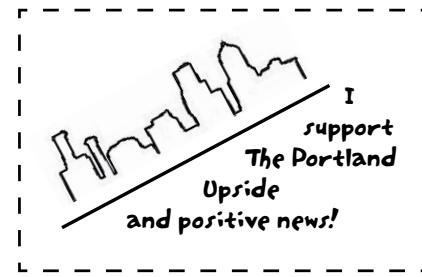
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## What people are saying about The Portland Upside

"I appreciate your  
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 focus more on the  
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 in the world, not just the  
 drama."

"I just love your  
 publication! I picked up  
 my first copy yesterday  
 and read the whole thing  
 non-stop."

"I love the paper, I read  
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 and I really think it's  
 about time we start  
 focusing on positive  
 stories!"

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### Faces of the Upside

*A few of March's  
 writers, distributors  
 and volunteers*



## The power of writing together

By Faye Powell  
*The Portland Upside*

**H**ow many beautiful stories languish in the hearts and minds of women who fear exposing their vulnerable words to others? How many critical teachers silence the nascent creativity of students, convinced they cannot write?

One mild January morning I join nine other women in a half-day Portland Women Writers (PWW) workshop at the Multnomah Village Garden Sanctuary located in a quiet southwest Portland neighborhood. We gather in a large room in which grey light streams through tall, wide windows. Buddhist paintings and statuettes on walls and windowsills create an ambiance of serenity as we sit in a circle with notebooks and pens poised. The theme is "Chiron: The Wounded Healer."

After we introduce ourselves, Emily Trinkaus, founder of PWW and Dawn Thompson, a workshop facilitator, explain that this workshop, like all PWW workshops, will operate on the premise that everyone is a writer, that everyone can access her own voice through the written word and that each of our voices is unique and brilliant.

In order to encourage us to go within and mine the jewels in our own stories, the facilitators suggest free-write prompts, such as "I am reconnecting ...," "My gifts are ...," and "I am healing ...." Then they invite us to share what we have written.

Trained in the Amherst Writers and Artists community writing method, Emily moved to Portland from New York in 2001. She found there wasn't a similar writing group here and she missed it, so in 2003 she established PWW which now offers a variety of workshops in which women writers of every level come together to write in a safe, supportive environment.

"When you get used to writing in groups and you go home and try to write by yourself, it's harder," Emily says.

PWW's primary goal is to create writing communities that promote healing and personal transformation, with less emphasis on publication. In our busy society, it is easy to feel isolated, and one of the positive benefits of PWW is that it brings Portland-area women together who otherwise would never meet.

For Dawn, a former staff member with Write Around Portland, writing stories is a sacred healing and transformative act.

"Anytime we have the opportunity to pause from our busy lives and to redirect our attention back inward," she says, "that sets a groundwork for really amazing things to take place. Writing allows us to share our story with ourselves and with others, and I think there is something inherently healing about that ... and to do it in our own voice."

Dawn continues, "I think there is something special that happens when a group of women come together. I think part of it has to do with the safety that's created for women ... that the safety and ease allow women to take perhaps more risks with their writing. It is a place where women really get to practice being themselves and find their unique voice."

Emily adds that by exploring one's wounds in a supportive group, women see they are not alone and that through the compassionate support of others in the group, self-acceptance can grow. She uses astrology—"a language of archetypes"—in her workshops because she views it as a way of observing oneself more objectively, both as a unique individual and also connected with something larger.

A couple of weeks later I am sitting in on one of Rhea

Wolf's weekly PWW workshops. Rhea, like Dawn, is a former Write Around Portland facilitator. On this evening seven women gather in the cozy living room of the host's Sellwood home. Over a period of two hours, Rhea leads us through four free-writes and readings.

When women write together there is a lot of laughter. Listening to one another, heads nod, "Yes! We've been there too." Rhea notes that in an eight-week workshop, women have time to create a safe, secure space where familiarity and trust can develop and where each person's authentic voice can flourish and be heard.

Facilitators and participants alike are unanimous in their enthusiasm for writing in community.

Jenni Miller began writing with PWW about a year-and-a-half ago.

She says, "Having spent time working on a few plays and some short stories, I wasn't quite sure what to do with it all. PWW offers a tremendously supportive environment, believes in the process of writing, in each individual's process, and facilitates sound solid feedback. Since that first class almost two years ago, I now have numerous pieces I am confidently working on... short stories, poems ... who would have ever thought!"

Dawn and Emily both stress the transformative power of sharing one's stories in a group of women.

"In a group of eight," Dawn points out, "it is common for two or three to be new writers. Therefore, the workshop is a perfect container for [starting to write] because we honor where anyone is in their own writing process. We all have a voice, and we all have words."

Another participant, Sara Hamill, says she appreciates that only positive feedback is permitted because a free-write is like "an infant child being presented to a group. One can request a critique of more mature writing later if one wishes. The only risk is showing up."

Traci Schatz describes the retreats and workshops as "life changing experiences."

"When I took my first PWW workshop," she says, "I hoped to get a chance to meet other women writers and carve out some dedicated time for my own writing. What I didn't expect was to be so influenced and moved by the writing the other women shared."

PWW offers workshops on a variety of themes including nature, poetry, astrology, sacred story, and embracing change. To accommodate different schedules and interests, there are one-day, three-day and weekly workshops. For writers who want to focus

on the craft of writing, a sister organization, Portland Writers, offers workshops for both experienced and beginning writers. In the spring, PWW will offer a three-day retreat at Silver Falls on the theme, "Freeing the Wild Feminine."

**"Writing allows us to share our story with ourselves and with others, and there is something inherently healing about that."**



**Emily Trinkaus (left), founder of Portland Women Writers and Dawn Thompson, offer a safe and inviting space where women can find and develop their authentic voices through writing.**

*For more information about Portland Women Writers, Portland Writers and the Amherst Writers and Artists see pdxwomenwriters.com, portlandwriters.com and amherstwriters.com*

*Faye Powell is a retired librarian who writes fiction and non-fiction. She can be contacted at phaysee1@gmail.com*

## From the bike lane

sponsored by



By Jen Bond

**A**fter moving to Portland ten years ago as a very casual cyclist, I've expanded my biking horizons beyond the occasional commute to work or brief ride through the park. I now include all kinds of cycling, and I've been amazed at the many cool and creative ways that Portlanders make bicycling a part of their lives.

Indeed, Portlanders use their bikes for everything from training to transportation. It brings me so much joy to see people from all walks of life out enjoying themselves on their bikes, getting exercise, breathing fresh air, soaking up the sunshine or smiling through the rain. While it's true that biking has many positive effects on our personal lives, and on the health and happiness of our community, the main motivation is that pedaling is fun!

For many of us, learning how to ride a bike as a child was one of our major early accomplishments, filled with excitement and the thrill of an emerging independence. That feeling of freedom brings many adults back to biking.

Recently, our friend, Maxwell Rush, owner-operator of Green Light Construction and Painting, stopped by the house to give us an estimate on some remodeling work, and I was excited to see him arrive by bicycle. It was a nice day, especially for February. Since he lives in the neighborhood, biking over to take measurements and discuss plans seemed way more fun than hopping in his pickup truck. We started talking about the irresistible allure of biking, and he related how he and his family incorporate biking into their busy lives whenever they can.

Maxwell had been pedaling around town on an old mountain bike until he stopped by River City Bicycles to get a commuter bike with a rack, pannier bags, and fenders. His new rig allows him to do more of his errands by bicycle. When the weather and time allow, he goes grocery shopping on two wheels or rides his 6-year-old daughter to school on her trail-a-bike. Her schoolbooks fit nicely in the pannier bag, and she gets to pedal if she feels like it, or just enjoy the ride if that's more her style. She's learning about the joys of biking with her dad, spending quality time with him during the forty-five minute ride to school, and becoming more used to being outside in less-than-perfect weather.

Maxwell's wife and 2-year-old have also jumped on the bicycle bandwagon, cruising along on a bike equipped with an extra-cycle, a seat and cargo option that makes her bike even more fun and versatile. Maxwell even plans to employ his carpentry skills to build an outdoor bike garage next to his house this summer. The addition will make it even easier for his family to use their bikes whenever they feel the urge to add a little bit more fun to their day.

Many of us have demanding schedules, and we all have different thresholds for cool rainy weather. Yet Maxwell and his family remind us that we can add biking to our lives in many different ways to reap the benefits of fitness, family-time, and mostly, fun!

*Visit River City Bicycles at 706 SE MLK Blvd., Portland, Oregon, 503-233-5973; or online at rivercitybicycles.com*

*Jen Bond is a River City Bicycles employee, cycle-tourist and all-around bike-enthusiast.*





**By Arнетta Guion**  
*The Portland Upside*

Every spring, Anatta Blackmarr and Edward Riddle live in a magic meadow of crocus blossoms.

They first discovered the woodland-style yard on occasional walks around the Southeast neighborhood of Oak Grove Heights, above the Willamette River. When the property, with its spacious oak-shaded yard, came on the market four years ago, they bought the cozy house and made plans to remodel. The big attraction for Anatta is the

## Sweet mystery of spring

mass of crocuses blooming in the lawn.

"To see it for the first time, I was astonished," says Blackmarr, formerly of the Bay Area in California.

Yet there is a bit of mystery. Anatta wonders how the crocuses came to be in the Portland area in the first place, and how they spread. Perhaps old-time gardeners shared the tiny bulbs, as gardeners will do. Or perhaps nature dispersed the seeds through birds or wind, once they were established.

"The bulbs are small, seem hardy and must have been planted when the house was built, probably in the 1950's," she conjectures.

After the winter temperatures warm and before the grass starts to grow, slender leaf blades come up. Then delicate pink crocus buds begin popping up everywhere. What happens next is an explosion of trumpet-like

blooms in a veritable carpet over the entire area.

The magic meadow among the native oaks and mossy basalt boulders peaks by mid-February. Both Anatta and Edward delight in sharing the view with passers-by.

"People stop and often come back. I think it is the coolest thing I've ever seen. Now the bees are humming in chorus with delight."

What variety are they? Who might have planted them and when? Perhaps you have an answer to the sweet mystery of these spring crocuses!

*Anatta has been a plant lover all her life. She advocates use of northwest native plants for low maintenance landscapes and gardens.*



Photos by Arнетta Guion

**Anatta Blackmarr delights in the thousands of crocus blooms that cover her yard each spring.**

### Submission of the month

Send us your photo, doodle, cartoon, poem, haiku, drawing, artwork, essay, quote, etc.; something that you find positive. Email it to [editors@portlandupsidemag.com](mailto:editors@portlandupsidemag.com) or mail it to us by March 20. One or more submissions will be chosen to appear in the April issue of The Portland Upside. Please include your name, email address and phone number in case we need to contact you.



Needle-felt artwork by Stacy Polson

**Two Robs**  
*Continued from page 1*

couldn't help smiling at the simple thoughtfulness of his gesture. Realtor Rob, like Baseball Rob, made me want to be a better person.

As 2007 unfolded, it looked as though our collective gravy train would be pulling into the station in dire need of a massive overhaul. The real estate market, that once unstoppable juggernaut, came to a grinding halt. Before long, virtually everyone—including those even loosely tied to real estate—was feeling an unaccustomed level of strain.

All around me I watched people fraught with stress and anxiety, unable to shake the palpable reality that the economy was contracting and nothing could be done to prevent it. Our incomes were suffering and those pesky monthly bills kept showing up with remarkable consistency.

Despite their positive outlook, the two Robs were feeling the pressures of the change.

Realtor Rob experienced a painful dip in his real estate business. His listings were not selling and his potential buyers had a difficult time obtaining financing. (Curses those mortgage bankers!) He was working twice as hard for half the income. He would eventually go through the painful experience of a short sale on his own residence and move his family into a rental home. A few weeks later his wife, and partner in business, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Never had I seen a friend bear such a tidal wave of bad news. Yet through every nightmare transaction and through all the unthinkable battles of his personal life, his bright smile and infectious demeanor never wavered. Not once.

Meanwhile, although not directly connected to real estate or banking, Baseball Rob was also feeling the pain of the souring economy as he struggled to make ends meet. His company was changing directions and he, too, faced financial difficulty. But with bootstrapping endurance, Rob showed me that perseverance is not merely a choice but an obligation. Around that same time Rob wasn't feeling very well and went to see his doctor. A week later he was diagnosed with cancer.

I watched as my dear friend battled melanoma for three long and painful months. I watched as his frightened wife and terrified children saw the

most important man in their lives dwindle to a frail human being incapable of walking and, eventually, unable to wrap his once strong arms around his family. Yet his spirit inexplicably seemed to grow stronger with each passing day.

My friend, bedridden and so weak he could barely muster a smile, had become the most monumental hero I had ever met.

The night before Rob died, I went to his bedside. I leaned over and kissed his brow and told him how much I loved him for helping me to realize what it meant to be a hero to so many people.

I feel so blessed that these Two Robs came into my life to show me a level of optimism I had never experienced. Here were two guys struggling with all the ills and setbacks that life can throw at you, yet they maintained a positive attitude. The two Robs showed me that for every chunk of bad, there are infinitely more nuggets of good, if you just look for them. And sometimes the things for which we should be most grateful are the things we don't even notice.

They taught me that there is good to be extracted out of



**"Realtor Rob"** with his wife and three children. Rob's gratitude and optimistic attitude in the midst of multiple setbacks inspires the author to focus on the good in life.

even the simplest of moments; like sitting in a restaurant, eating with your family, your five senses firing on all cylinders; watching your children scan the menu even though they can't yet read; the sound of the ballgame pouring from the TV mounted above; the smell of dinner wafting from the double doors of the kitchen; the contagious laughter of the toddler two tables over.

I'm not some Pollyanna; we're surrounded by bad stuff. It's everywhere. In our relationships, in our careers, in those we love and in those we don't know. There are jobs being cut, people losing their homes and parents exploiting their children to garner media attention. Make no mistake. Bad stuff abounds.

Maybe our existence isn't going to be all that we had imagined as kids fearlessly sprinting across playgrounds. The altered dreams and humbling realities of our lives are scattered up and down the I-5 corridor as we bumper-to-bumper our way to jobs that sometimes aren't very much fun. Sometimes we look around and feel like we're the only ones living in a constant state of fear, disappointment and regret for a life that is not always unfolding the way we had planned.

But I also believe that we all have glimpses of grandeur and hope for the years that remain, even if only for brief and inspired moments at a time.

I keep a picture of Baseball Rob tucked into the sun visor of my car. He is there as a constant reminder of the kind of man I aspire to be. And from time to time I call Realtor Rob's cell phone just to listen to the familiar notes of that soothing sonata and to remind myself that we're all in this together. That gives me hope, and that's a good thing.

*Matt Eldering grew up in Sitka, Alaska, and attended the University of Portland and Notre Dame. He lives in Battle Ground, Washington, with his wife, Heather and his two children, Gage and Abi. He can be reached at [Info@ElderingTeam.com](mailto:Info@ElderingTeam.com)*



**By Olivia Johnson**  
*The Portland Upside*

Sarah Hart has always had a passion for food. She treasures memories of visiting her grandparents' house as a little girl. They had grown up as rural farmers during the depression and were still very poor when Sarah and her family stayed with them.

"Making food was her way of expressing love," Sarah says of her grandmother Alma. "When we would visit, she was up before everyone else in the morning, making everyone's favorite pies."

Sarah inherited what she calls Alma's "spirit and generosity of expressing love through food." But instead of pies, Sarah found her niche in chocolates.

Sarah owns Alma Chocolates in Northeast Portland. Not only is the name significant because of her grandmother, Sarah has also discovered that *alma* means "soul" in Spanish and "to nourish" in Latin.

"Food is the basic way of nurturing people," according to Sarah.

But man cannot live on chocolate alone. Alma Chocolates also doubles as a café, serving espresso, tea, and homemade baked goods.

The tiny shop is cozy, decorated with handcrafted and antique displays featuring the work of a new local artist each month. Sarah proudly arranges a unique medley of caramels, sauces, toffees, barks, bars, bonbons, and of course chocolates, at the front counter, on worn wooden shelves, and wherever else they can fit. The unmistakable scent of melted chocolate blended with exotic spices wafts from the kitchen, which peeks from behind thick brown curtains.

To Sarah, making chocolate is an art.

"I always said that I wanted to be an artist, but it took me a while to find my form," she smiles.

Sarah uses only high-quality ingredients for her creations, all made in the compact kitchen in the back of her store. Coming up with new recipes is her favorite part of the job.

"I read cook books in bed like they're novels. I can picture how things will taste."

One particular challenge that thrills Sarah is to find the best way to pair uncommon spices with chocolate.

"It's like pairing food and wine...finding what is complementary and what is contrasting."

She recalls reading about how a fellow chocolatier couldn't figure out how to use cumin with a chocolate recipe.

"So, I said, 'I want to figure that out!'"

At other times, Sarah's friends can play her muse.



Photo by Rob Bedmark

**Sarah Hart's appreciation for the art of chocolate led her to start Alma Chocolates, where she creates interesting chocolate-spice blends and designs custom molds.**

eyed rabbits," Sarah explains, clearly tired of the monotonous way companies choose to market their chocolate.

Despite her love of food, Sarah never imagined becoming a chocolatier. The youngest of five children, she grew up in Springfield, Missouri. She attended Beloit College in Wisconsin for two years before moving to Eugene in 1986, where she received both Bachelor's and Master's degrees in English from the University of Oregon. She landed a teach-

#### Defining Love for The One I Love

You have often said that the definition of love is not to be found in any dictionary. At last, I have found myself in total agreement with you on that. It happens rarely, but you and I recognize it instantly when it does.

Making the effort to define this in private and in public word, it flies out of that cage of words like a canary, dandelion-colored, seeing that the door was again left open. You are correct: love for another, if genuine, always defines-- or redefines itself like a clove-colored wren abruptly chirping on a twig over to our right.

By Frederick G. Rodgers

Frederick has for a decade been retired from teaching English at all levels in the Portland area. His poetry has appeared in *Portland Review*, *West Coast Review*, *Alchemy* and *Mentor*.



Watercolor by Joyce Lovro Gabriel

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## Chocolate leads Sarah Hart in unexpected directions

"One of my friends really likes ginger so I invented a toffee with ginger in it."

But Sarah's most exclusive items are the gilded icon chocolates she began creating five years ago in her own kitchen. Made of solid dark chocolate, she sets the icons in custom-designed molds before gilding them with 23-karat edible gold leaf. There are jolly-looking buddhas, serene Virgin Marys, and half-human, half-elephant Ganesha gods from Hindu mythology.

Since chocolate is such an amazing ingredient, she believes that its presentation should match its importance.

"So much of what you could get was cheesy...just googly-

ing job at Eastern Michigan University and moved to Ypsilanti, Michigan, but returned to Portland in 1994.

She got a job at Papa Haydn restaurant and loved it.

"I come from a very academic family—everyone had gone to college—and working in the food industry was not viewed as a 'real' job," Sarah explains.

Nevertheless, she went on to work at L'Auberge Restaurant. But the idea to open a chocolate shop wouldn't leave Sarah alone.

"I listened to this voice inside asserting itself. It was like a string that was dangling in front of me, and I started pulling, and it kept going, doors kept opening."

Instead of enrolling in a culinary school she opted to have a seasoned chocolatier, Ian Titterton, teach her everything he knew about chocolate in the comfort of her own home. After many tests and experiments, Sarah began selling her chocolates at the Portland Farmer's Market.

She opened Alma Chocolates in 2006. Since then, Sarah has taken her business online and opened two mini locations at the Cork Wine Shops in Northeast and Northwest Portland. She also continues to sell her treats at the Portland Farmer's Market.

Although juggling her personal life and her business has been one of the biggest challenges, Sarah finds the time and resources to constantly stretch her skills as a chocolatier. This past year she traveled to France and took a bonbon-making class.

Sarah acknowledges the passion that drives her work ethic.

"I have always just loved that food is both creative and nurturing. It brings people together and creates community...it can be done with great love. I feel like we have a good reputation, and I want to keep pushing for that."

Indeed, it's a reputation worthy of Grandma Alma's gilded legacy.

Visit *Alma Chocolate* online at [almachocolate.com](http://almachocolate.com) or in person at 140 NE 28th Ave., Portland, Oregon, 503-517-0262.

*Olivia lives in SE Portland and is working on her BA in Journalism and Theology at Multnomah University. She loves reading restaurant reviews, traveling, Frank Sinatra and Stumptown coffee.*



**"Mooon"**

**"Moon."**

Your dad's finger points into the dark sky, teaching a name.

You echo it back, maybe an extra "o" or two.

**"Mooon."**

Morning whispers you awake, and over breakfast

(Skin smeared shiny with yogurt and banana)

You turn palms toward daylight and ask,

**"Mooon?"**

Your new word moves me to memory

Margaritas beneath a warm Chicago crescent, just before the plus sign

A bursting and anxious moon, nine months full

Blurry moons of sleepless nights, of breastfeeding and bottles

Moons that lulled us both into the luxury of sleep.

I dab your chin with a bib and explain simply  
about daytime, nighttime, the sun, the stars.

You smile. Maybe even understand.

Then you outstretch your arms and joyfully wonder, "**"Mooon?"**

And your word floats up like love floats

All those perfect o's, like eggs in an ovary

spilling into daydreamed moons of tomorrows

Wide-eyed Christmas eves

Giggling little girl sleepovers

Feverish that fold you into my arms

Late night talks, heartbreak with ice cream

These precious movements of life held permanent in our forever

**Mooon.**

By Jillian Starr

Photo by Marlene Andrejco

Jillian Starr writes screenplays, poetry and short stories and co-produces *Time Out: The Mother of All Comedies*. You can find out more about her at [jillianstarr.com](http://jillianstarr.com)

## Rediscovering adventure

**By Eleanor Wolf**  
*The Portland Upside*

One typical rainy day in Portland, five of my friends and I got together to catch up on one another's lives. It was too cold and windy to go out, so we decided to stay inside, perhaps to watch an old movie. Getting up to click on the TV after our tea and cookies, I suddenly heard myself ask, "What the heck are we doing?"

Dorothy, the most outspoken of us, looked up. "What do you mean?"

"I mean we could be doing so much more with our lives than just sitting here complaining and wasting time."

Now that I'd gotten everyone's attention, I continued.

"What if we started our own club?"

Everyone's eyes widened and after a moment of silence, Janette chimed, "Yeah...we could call it the Big Kids Club...you know, for the kid in all of us!"

Then Arte, the intellectual, asked, "Does that mean we'll all have to start acting crazy?"

For a moment we sat quietly, but I could practically hear the wheels turning.

"I think it's a great idea," said Susan. "I could sure use some play time."

"Hey, that's it! We could have a weekly play date!" I chimed. "I'll drag out my old Radio Flyer like I used to when I was a kid."

"You mean you have one of those too?" Janette laughed. "I've been trying to think up an excuse to pull mine out of the basement. It seems so lonely down there."

Well, that's how it all started a year ago. Just five women over 30 wondering what to do with themselves on a rainy day. From that two-hour session we came up with a series of ideas that have snowballed into a regular series of adventures.

All that's required in the club is to bring a journal and pen, a camera, and a sack lunch. We make up the rest as we go along. Membership is free. The only prerequisite is to be spontaneous.

We all have an inner child just waiting for a chance to go out and play. It doesn't have to cost an arm and a leg, either. A child has attributes that have long been forgotten in most of us. But if we think back, we realize that spontaneity and a sense of adventure are virtues worth rekindling.

For an idea of what our adventures are like, imagine a sunny day in Portland. We all wear our favorite color. Some of us go so far as to don a crazy hat. With our sack lunches and cameras, we pile into one car and then pick a direction. Our mission is to look for interesting places to stop. One of those places happens to be Washington Park and after our peanut butter sandwiches and fruit, we decide to take pictures.



Photo courtesy of Eleanor Wolf

**Eleanor Wolf dusts off her wagon in preparation for a day of adventure around Portland with her friends and fellow members of The Big Kids Club.**

"I'm going to write a poem," says Janette. "What do you think I should call it?"

"It's your poem," I point out. "Why are you asking us?"

"Wait a minute," Dorothy counters. "That's a great idea. Let's all write a poem together!"

So for the next twenty minutes, we each take turns adding a line.

Okay, so we didn't win any poetry contests, but that isn't the point. Our goal is to let go of our grown-up ideas for a day. A child doesn't worry over semantics or politics or the price of eggs. A child can find interesting things to do with the least amount of stimulus. She is in awe of the world around her. She speaks up for herself. That's what we're attempting to recapture—the fluid, free-thinking, joyous sense of simply being alive!

After we've written our poem, we head south on McLoughlin Boulevard toward Oregon City. When we get to Gladstone, we stop at Cross Park.

"Look at what I found!" Janette calls. "Just what I've been looking for."

Gathering around, we marvel at the smooth stone that has attracted her.

"Oh!" Dorothy coos. "I have to find one of those!"

Off she goes looking for the stone "with her name on it," as she puts it. Like ducks pecking at the ground, we fan out and begin hunting down our special stones. In the process, we find an assortment of treasures, bits of plastic and glass that can be used in the collage we've decided we'll create to commemorate our first fabulous day in the club.

To date, we've managed to write several children's stories, create a photographic journal of our adventures, and honor the beauty so abundant in the Portland area. We alternate homes when the weather doesn't cooperate. On those days we make cocoa and popcorn and watch children's movies. We blow up balloons, dance to crazy music and sing our hearts out. We've even inspired others to start their own clubs and to share ideas for interesting adventures of their own.

Portland is a small town, but it has so many nooks and crannies. If you'd like to join our club or just come to get new ideas, we're open to sharing in a big way. I'm certain we'll never run out of places to explore, things to discover, people to meet. Simon says, Go ahead! Unleash the child in yourself!

*Eleanor Wolf writes a weekly column for The Coast Times. She is a passionate advocate of living with presence of mind. She has two grown children and a grandson, and lives with her husband in Milwaukie, Oregon.*

### **Jeanne Roy**

*Continued from page 1*

what can't be recycled curbside, like books or electronics, to a recycling depot. Composting all of your yard debris and food is important.

The next big step is something I call pre-recycling, which means thinking about what is and isn't recyclable before making a purchase. For example, people can buy meat from a butcher rather than buying it prepackaged at a supermarket. Leaving packaging that isn't recyclable at retailers is a way to let retailers know how unnecessary extra packaging is.

Buying things in bulk and eliminating the use of disposables is important too. Of course there are certain exemptions to this rule, like toilet paper. It can be hard for people to give up disposables because of their relative convenience.

**Upside:** What have you enjoyed the most about reducing the amount of garbage you make?

**Jeanne:** The thing I've enjoyed the most is getting in my yard and turning over the compost. It puts me in touch with nature. It's great to keep the cycle in my own yard and not have to buy soil additives. It's also nice not to bother with the hassle that comes with garbage.

**Upside:** What's been the hardest part of reducing the amount

of garbage you produce?

**Jeanne:** It's hard not bringing home things that you can't recycle. But the hardest thing for me has been finding places that will use the things that I don't want around the house anymore. If you take something to Goodwill you never know if it's just going to end up in the garbage. It took me a long time to find a home for some of my children's old trophies, but I eventually found a trophy shop to donate them to.

**Upside:** Besides the amount of money you save on garbage removal, do you have any idea how much money you save by reducing the amount of garbage you make?

**Jeanne:** I have no idea on a dollar amount but when you buy in bulk you save so much money. I once figured out that buying popcorn in bulk is 14 times cheaper than buying it at the store, and there's a lot less packaging when you buy in bulk.

**Upside:** Thanks for taking the time to talk. Is there anything you would like to add?

**Jeanne:** Well, I'm really excited about a course that we offer at the Center for Earth Leadership called How to be an Agent of Change. The easiest places to change are the organizations we are already involved in. This class teaches people how they can make a big difference at their work or school.

*For more information or to enroll in classes you can reach the Center for Earth Leadership at 503-227-2315 or reach them on the web at earthleaders.org*

**Jeanne Roy has reduced her garbage output to one can per year by finding more recycling options and by making better buying decisions that eliminate excess waste.**



  
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**Never too old**  
*Continued from page 1*

sons by then, and struggled to make ends meet. When she turned 21, a Woodburn bar owner offered her a job. Marcy couldn't read the Oregon Liquor Control Commission test, so the owner took the test for her. Marcy worked days at the cannery, nights at the bar. She put in many hours and left her young sons with her mother for days. Conditions were not good. Welfare workers intervened.

Marcy was afraid she would lose her sons forever. When her boss suggested Marcy give her temporary custody of her oldest son Robert, Marcy signed the papers. She drove her youngest son Teddy to an aunt's home in Arizona. When Marcy called to visit with Robert, her boss explained that Robert was no longer Marcy's son. The papers she signed had granted an adoption.

Marcy struggled along for a few years. Her younger sister gave away several children of her own. When the sister became pregnant again, Marcy asked what she intended to do with the baby. Three months later, Marcy's sister placed baby Jessica in Marcy's arms. This time, Marcy paid for the adoption attorney herself, so she would know what the papers said.

Jessica was a precocious child. When she read her first grade primers aloud, Marcy followed along. By second grade, Jessica could read better than her mom could. Marcy enrolled her in piano and dance lessons. At six, she attended Starstruck Studio owned by Bill and Rose Holden.

"Times were tough," Rose said. "But Marcy would do whatever it took to make sure Jessica had music and dance."

Rose offered Marcy a job at the Oregon City Golf Course. Marcy could frame walls, hang sheetrock, repair plumbing, and lay tile. She could take orders and manage events. She had an uncanny knack to anticipate Rose's needs.

"If I said, 'gee, I'd like to...' she had it done," Rose remembers.

But Marcy's lack of tact sometimes rubbed others the wrong way. Rose thought it had to do with Marcy's inability to read. She paid for Marcy to attend Sylvan Learning Center. Still, Marcy did not learn to read. Reluctantly, Rose let Marcy go.

By then, Jessica was a member of the Oregon City High School dance team coached by Gail Hoskins.

"I never met anyone," says Gail, "who worked harder than Marcy."

Even though she worked two or three jobs, Marcy was the first to help at fundraisers. She never took a handout.

"I felt lucky," Gail says, "to see the vulnerable side of Marcy. There is so much more to her than her tough exterior."

Gail helped Marcy apply to be a substitute custodian for the Oregon City School District, where she eventually worked full

time. She didn't earn enough to pay Jessica's dance team fees, so she applied at K-Mart for a second job. The store director permitted Marcy to have someone read the evaluation questions to her.

She passed the test and was hired. She worked days at the high school and evenings and weekends at K-Mart.

Marcy had limited social skills, former

Oregon City High School Principal Carol Kemhus recalls.

"But she was grateful for any opportunity. She wanted to do things right. She took her responsibilities seriously. Sometimes, too seriously."

In hindsight, Marcy realizes she could be impatient and abrupt.

"Some of the kids called me Hall Nazi," Marcy says.

Although she did not recognize it at the time, she now believes she resented the students who loitered in halls instead of attending class. Didn't they know how lucky they were to be in school?

In 2004, Marcy, now 48, walked into a room where students received academic coaching to ask if someone would help her learn to read. Merry Gilbertson worked as the Special Education Coordinator. She agreed to do an informal assessment and found that Marcy's sound-symbol association was rudimentary. She appeared to have a visual processing disorder.

Marcy worried she had failed the test. "I'm never going to learn to read," she recalls.

However, Marcy was on Merry's mind.

"I kept thinking, 'I know how to help her,'" said Merry. "If I don't, who will?"

They began working together twice each week. Merry sat directly behind Marcy, and together they touched and said each letter sound aloud. The neurological effect of hearing, saying, and touching at the same time imprints the brain in a particular way. Before Marcy could read words with fluency, she needed to be able to have more

instantaneous recall of the sound associated with each letter.

"I thought she would give up on me," Marcy says. "But she kept coming back."

Together they worked on individual letters, then letter combinations. Three years later, Marcy read her first novel, *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls. She threw herself a fiftieth birthday party to celebrate her success and told everyone she had learned to read.

Knowing how to read is more than settling down with a good book. Marcy has developed the confidence to laugh at herself.

"When I first moved to Oregon," she says, "I used to see 'House For Sale' signs in people's yards. I always wondered why so many people had horses for sale. When Merry taught me the sound difference between o-u and o-r, I suddenly understood they were selling houses. You see why you believe you're dumb? If you can't make sense of the world because you can't read, you feel lost. When you learn to read, you hear conversations differently, so it changes your relationships."

**"There is someone out there, someone who is going to help you. It could take you years, but you've got to find them."**

K-Mart manager Kristi Bays says Marcy is more confident. She can now write layaway orders and take payments. She can adjust prices on the shelves for the weekly ad. She trains new employees.

Marcy continues to work at K-Mart and at Oregon City High School. Some days she works two eight-hour shifts back-to-back. Sometimes she still struggles to find the right tone of voice or words to use. She tries to stop and ask herself, "How would someone else say this?"

Not long ago her son Teddy asked why she did not answer the letters he had written to her as a child.

"I saved them all," she said, "but I didn't know how to read."

Last year she found the courage to return to the Navajo reservation to meet her father. For the first time in fifty years, he called her *Belladonna*.

When I asked what she would like non-readers to take away from this story, Marcy said, "They won't be reading it, will they?" After laughing, she said, "I want them to know that there is someone out there, some-



Photo by Robert Holcomb

**After 3 years of working with Merry Gilbertson (left), Marcy Kamis (right) was able to read her first novel, and has since discovered that knowing how to read has improved her self-image and her relationships with others.**

one who is going to help you. It could take you years, but you've got to find them."

Deb Stone is a freelance writer from Beavercreek, Oregon, whose work has appeared in *The Oregonian*, *The Portland Tribune*, *Asylum*, *Oregon Gourmet Foods*, *Poetic Voices*, *Kid-Bits* and *Willamette Writers*.

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## Horses used in therapy at new riding center

By Erika Weisensee  
*The Portland Upside*

**D**r. Suzanne Cleland-Zamudio is a surgeon, wife and mother of two teenaged sons. She works 50 to 60 hours a week, sometimes more. She is also writing a book about raising a son with autism. Suzanne has helped many people. Still, she felt something was missing and wanted to do more.

Two years ago after a vivid dream, Suzanne felt compelled to transform her family's land into something meaningful for the community. She sat down with her husband Genaro and explained her idea.

"He said, 'Let's do it!'" she remembers.

So despite an already busy life, they cashed in their retirement and set out to build a nonprofit, state-of-the-art therapeutic riding center to serve children and adults with a wide range of physical and mental disabilities.

Located in Oregon City, Sycamore Lane Therapeutic Riding Center sits on five beautiful acres of land near the Clackamas River. The Cleland-Zamudos live on the property, which they share with 11 horses, several goats, and a cat named Oreo.

Suzanne grew up at Sycamore Lane, raising and training Welsh and Arabian cross ponies with her family. In 1999 after returning from Minnesota where she completed her medical residency, she purchased the farm from her mother and moved her own family to the land of her childhood.

When Suzanne and Genaro started their project in 2008, the property needed a lot of work. They began by demolishing the decrepit 100-year-old chicken house with the help of 50 or 60 friends.

"It was like Extreme Makeover, chicken house edition," Suzanne says.

Within a few months, Suzanne's dream was taking shape. First, she constructed a fireproof barn to house the center's horses. The 120-by-60-foot covered arena came next, complete with a wheelchair ramp and harness to help lift wheelchair-bound riders to the horses. The property's old "birthing barn" became the center's new office and tack room. The facility was completed in July, 2009 and opened for lessons in August.

From the beginning, Suzanne was committed to "doing it right." Sycamore Lane instructors are trained and certified by the North American Riding For the Handicapped Association (NARHA) and the facility is wheelchair/ADA compliant. The center also utilizes the services of two hippotherapists, one occupational therapist and one physical therapist.

Hippotherapy involves traditional physical, occupational or speech therapy in conjunction with the multi-dimensional



Photos courtesy of Suzanne Cleland-Zamudio

**Sycamore Lane Riding Center in Oregon City, Oregon, offers therapeutic horseback riding for a wide range of physical and mental conditions.**

movement of a horse.

But naturally, the ten therapy horses are the center's stars. They are gentle animals, some with fascinating stories. Buster, for instance, rescued from Portland Meadows, came to Sycamore Lane with severe foot injuries. After careful attention from a veterinarian and a fitting with special shoes, he is now an excellent therapy horse. All the horses were carefully selected to adapt to many situations.

"They have to be okay with rattling hula hoops and other distractions," Suzanne explains.

While therapeutic riding is more popular on the East Coast, its benefits are not as well known in the West, with only a few other therapeutic riding centers in the Northwest.

Therapeutic riding is believed to be an effective therapy for a variety of mental and physical conditions, including autism spectrum disorder, sensory integration and speech-language dysfunctions, traumatic brain injuries, stroke and Alzheimer's disease. Patients receive treatment appropriate to their individual conditions and needs.

As Suzanne walks through her property, offering a tour of the arena, barn and tack room, she exudes passion and enthusiasm for her new calling.

"I wanted to serve a population that wasn't getting served," she says, "and I wanted to do it well."

She is grateful to the dedicated volunteers who help make the center's work possible and to the many people, including local contractors, who have donated funds, time, labor and materials.

"Starting up a nonprofit in the middle of a recession is not the easiest thing in the world," she adds.

As a rider herself, Suzanne knows well the effect horses have on human emotion. When her son Antonio was diagnosed with autism, she saw the positive impact riding had for him. At the age of five and a half, Antonio made miraculous progress and was able to be mainstreamed in school. While Suzanne can't explain her son's transformation, she is eloquent about her desire to help other families experience breakthroughs for their children.

"We've already seen a few miracles happen here," Suzanne says.

A couple of children have spoken their first words at the center. One of those children was atop his horse during a therapy session. He yelled, "Go!" to the surprise of his therapists and others in the arena who had never heard him speak before. Another child with a severe aversion to food ate his first solid food at the facility.

With about 18 riders—from children as young as three to middle-aged adults—Sycamore Lane is truly a place of inspiration and healing for everyone involved. And Suzanne has realized her dream to make a significant contribution to her community. Eventually she hopes to serve 40 to 60 riders per week.

For more information visit [sycamorelane.org](http://sycamorelane.org) or call 503-593-7084.

Erika Weisensee is a Portland-area writer. She teaches journalism and communication courses at the University of Portland.

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# Portland Upside

positive people, positive stories

February 2010

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## Living from the heart: three stories of giving



Photo by Barbara Sherman

**In the spirit of paying it forward, Mary Downer spends her weekends visiting with the homeless and handing out socks, hats and mittens.**

### Helping the homeless is Mary Downer's mission

By Barbara Sherman  
*The Regal Courier*

Homeless people have a friend in Mary Downer, who works by day as a dental assistant at Apple Tree Dentistry in King City and on weekends as a one-person rolling soup kitchen under bridges in Portland.

She can be found most weekends on the streets of downtown Portland, handing out hot beverages to homeless people to brighten their day and to let them know that someone cares about them.

This is a rather unusual way for a young person to spend her days off, but Downer, who graduated from high school in 2003, is on a mission to make a difference in people's lives.

Downer, a Tigard resident, has been the beneficiary of other people's goodwill when she needed it, and she wants to return the favor. She started cleaning the office of Dr. Toivo Sepp in 2002 while still in high school and started working in his Apple Tree Dentistry office two days after she graduated.

She got her state certificate to be a dental assistant in 2005, and two years after that, a life-changing event happened to her.

Downer was in the Tualatin Fred Meyer parking lot and noticed an elderly woman sitting in a car, but her purse and keys were on the pavement outside the vehicle.

"It was two weeks before Christmas, and people were walking by and not paying any attention," Downer said. "My antenna went up. I knocked on the door and handed her the purse and keys and asked if she was OK."

When the woman replied in the affirmative, Downer went into the store and told an employee about it. She learned later that the employee had done nothing about it, and when Downer went back outside, she got into the car with the woman.

"I had her try to put her gloves on, and she couldn't," Downer said. "She didn't know her name."

Downer got the woman's cell phone and called the last number on it, which turned out to be the woman's son.

An ambulance was called to take the woman to a hospital, and her granddaughters came and took charge of her belongings. The 86-year-old woman had had multiple strokes.

Continued on page 8

*Genny Nelson talks about the passion behind her life's work as a human rights advocate*

By Nikki Jardin  
*The Portland Upside*

Genny Nelson, co-founder of Sisters of the Road, retired in December after 30 years of active involvement with the Old Town nonprofit. She leaves behind a Portland institution known for its work not just as a cafe but as an advocate and community organizer for thousands of people experiencing homelessness and poverty in the Portland area.

Genny arrived in Old Town nearly four decades ago, during a time when it was known as Skid Road because its inhabitants were primarily end-of-the-line alcoholics and drug addicts. It was while working graveyard shifts at the Everett Street Service Center, a 24-hour men's shelter, that Genny found her community and the inspiration for her life's work. All these years later, despite witnessing the setbacks of people on the streets, she remains surprisingly optimistic and hopeful. Her demeanor, far from naïve, is open and welcoming. While talking with her it becomes easier to believe that someday there will be a place for everyone at the table.

**Portland Upside:** What inspired you about the people you were meeting while working at the shelter?

**Genny Nelson:** Well, first off you have to remember that it was a different time in the late 60's and early 70's. It wasn't Old Town Chinatown, it was pretty raw. At that time there was a lot going on down here both on the streets and politically. The Vietnam War was going on, so we had veterans but we also had conscientious objectors who were doing their Vietnam service down here. And these guys were truly community organizers. It was from them that I was



Photo courtesy of Sisters of the Road

**After nearly 40 years of advocating for Portland's homeless and underserved, Genny Nelson remains surprisingly hopeful and optimistic.**

taught that you don't do for anyone what they can do for themselves.

I worked the swing and graveyard shifts at the Everett Street Service Center which meant we would keep the coffee on and always made sure we had a can of tobacco and

*Continued on page 7*

*Alexa Levin volunteers to be puppy's first teacher in the Guide Dogs for the Blind program*

By Holly Shumway  
*The Portland Upside*

Fifteen-year-old Alexa Levin is well aware that her student, Delphine, might just steal her heart. A ten-week-old Labrador retriever, Delphine is in her first stages of training for the Guide Dogs for the Blind Program. Alexa, her "puppy raiser," is in charge of helping Delphine meet the initial training goals.

Several months before Delphine's arrival, Alexa and her mother, Jessica, joined a local group affiliated with Guide Dogs for the Blind, whose main campuses are in Boring, Oregon, and San Raphael, California. There are eight different groups in the Portland metropolitan area, throughout Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington counties. Within these groups, there are approximately 120 active puppy raisers.

Jessica happened across the volunteer opportunity and knew that Alexa was a perfect fit.

"Alexa is a natural with dogs. Even as a little girl, Alexa would spend long stretches of time with our family dog, Payton," says Jessica. "She would crawl under the dinner table, a favorite spot Payton occupied, and curl up beside him, putting her head on his abdomen. The two of them would stay like that for long stretches of time."

Unfortunately, the Levin family had to put Payton down several years ago due to medical complications.

"It was really hard for my family. We really missed him for a long time," Alexa shares.

Over the years, Alexa searched for opportunities to interact with dogs. She pet sat for neighbors, knowing she would eventually like to be responsible for her own dog again.

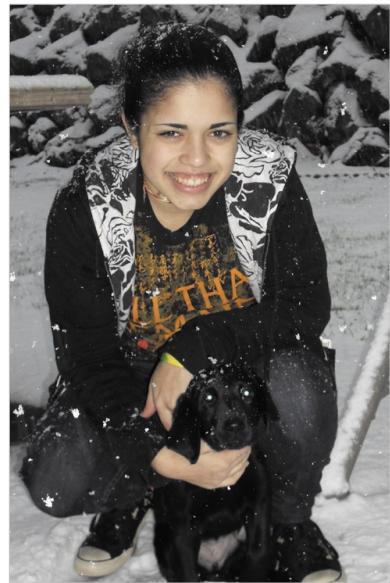


Photo by Jessica Levin

**For the next 18 months, Alexa is responsible for teaching Delphine basic skills in the puppy's journey through the Guide Dogs for the Blind program.**

*Continued on page 4*

# The Portland Upside

positive people, positive stories

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## From the editors

By Rob & Sara Bednark  
*The Portland Upside*

Why did we start this paper?

Although we are often asked this question, the answer never comes easily or simply.

The short answer is that we choose to create a paper that we want to read; one that we find uplifting without being preachy or gushy; a place where we don't have to sift through depressing headlines and stories to find the positive stuff; a reminder that people right here are doing things every day to uplift our local communities.

Another answer is that neither of us is working, we need an income and a purpose, and we want to do something meaningful. The idea of a positive newspaper feels like a worthwhile endeavor.

Producing each issue is time-consuming, frustrating, and often fills us with worry and anxiety. It pushes us well outside our comfort zones. But when we give each issue one last read-through before sending it off to the printing press, our effort is rewarded as our hearts are again touched by the stories.

We do it for the people in the Upside who remind us that goodness thrives in Portland.

We do it for the organizations that represent some of the best community-oriented ideas in the country.

We do it for the writers who volunteer their talent to write articles and poems that inspire and captivate our hearts.

We do it for the volunteers who distribute the Upside because they believe in the spirit of positive news.

We do it for the strangers who tell us how happy they are to see a positive paper like the Upside.

Regardless of our reasons for starting it, we hope you enjoy reading the Upside as much as we do.

Sara & Rob

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## What people are saying about The Portland Upside

"There are so many great things going on in our community and I'm so glad there's someone out there taking notice."

"A Facebook friend was complaining that he needed a break from the news since it was too depressing and another friend posted your website. Good!"

"I would like to help out with The Portland Upside. I think this is a great idea that is a long time coming. Congrats on making this happen!"

Send your comments to [editors@PortlandUpside.com](mailto:editors@PortlandUpside.com)



### Faces of the Upside

A few of February's writers, distributors and volunteers



# Love of food brings Portlanders, farmers together

*Local organizer creates an opportunity for Portland eaters to connect with the farmers who feed them*

By Cathy McQueeney  
*The Portland Upside*

Kelly Rees and Stephanie Turner are tightly wedged at a long table in the crowded community room of Roots Organic Brewery. They're astonished at the number of people who have shown up for tonight's monthly InFARMation (and Beer!) event hosted by Friends of Family Farmers. A diverse group is enjoying food and beverages while talking animatedly. Many gather at tables set up by Slow Food and The Oregon State Grange.

Permaculture design students, Kelly and Stephanie study with Toby Hemenway, author of *Gaia's Garden*. They have come tonight to learn about agricultural rules and regulations in Oregon and how they impact socially-responsible family farmers. Tonight's guest speaker is Anthony Boutard of Ayers Creek Organic Farm.

Like many people in the room this evening, Kelly and Stephanie are interested in local food production, sustainability and food security.

"We're learning how to take back control of our food sources," says Stephanie, a 50-year-old Portland resident who is slowly transforming her landscaped yard into a thriving food forest.

"I want to do whatever I can to preserve my right to buy healthy, local food, and protect the rights of family farmers to grow that food."

Indeed, the increasingly popular InFARMation (and Beer!) has attracted more than 200 people this evening, bringing together Oregon family farmers, urban consumers and the community in general. The topics change each month but focus on the issues facing family farmers and the connection between food and farms in our state. Attendees represent a wide range of interests, from consumers, chefs and farmers' market managers, to new farmers, established farmers and individuals exploring the idea of growing their own food.

Just over a year old, InFARMation is coordinated by Portland resident, Michele Knaus, a former chef and restaurant owner turned food advocate and educator. She is also a grassroots organizer for Friends of Family Farmers, an organization working to promote and protect socially-responsible agriculture in Oregon.

A lively woman with short auburn hair and an infectious grin, Michele is "obsessed with good food and alternative food systems." She appreciates the bounty of healthy and sustainable choices available to her in Portland.

"But if we want a guarantee that you and I will be able to continue to buy the meat, poultry, dairy and produce that has been raised to our standards by farmers with the same values that we have, we have to get involved with policy now," she warns the gathered audience.

"Folks who live in urban areas are stakeholders in our state's agriculture laws and policies, and we need to educate ourselves on what needs to happen to keep family farming viable now, ten years from now, and fifty years from now. When people talk about food issues, we want them to talk about food and farm issues."

Michele developed an interest in local food and sustainability as a young chef in New Mexico, where she trained with Lynn Walters at the Natural Café. Walters exposed her to the concept of "farm to table" or buying directly from farmers. Michele next moved east to Nashville, Tennessee, where she opened Grins, a café on the Vanderbilt University campus featuring seasonal and local foods. She moved to Portland in 2006 and taught culinary classes at In Good Taste cooking school while earning a Master of Education degree at Portland State University, where she focused on Food System Sustainability.

After completing her degree, Michele joined Friends of Family Farmers, a nonprofit organization founded in 2005 which advocates for socially-responsible agriculture in Oregon.

**Michele Knaus (left) coordinates the InFARMation (and Beer!) monthly gatherings to educate and build relationships between family farmers and the urban consumers of Portland.**



Photos courtesy of Friends of Family Farmers



egon. One of her first projects with Friends of Family Farmers was to develop a monthly event that would bring the sustainable farming community and the urban consumers of Portland together for meaningful dialogue. Thus InFARMation (and Beer!) was born.

It's hard to get near Michele after the speaker has finished his question-and-answer session. She knows many of the people here and everyone wants a chance to chat with her and to express their enthusiasm for the evening's meeting. Membership in Friends of Family Farmers is swelling, in part from successful get-togethers like this one.

I recognize firsthand that many new relationships are being forged as people mingle and talk about the ideas discussed tonight.

I've connected with Kyle Curtis, manager of the Montavilla Farmer's Market. He would like to feature some of the produce from our small family farm. I also extend invitations to the permaculture students to come and visit. I hope to learn something from them as well as to share my own experience as a fairly new biointensive farmer. They are

shocked at what they've learned tonight regarding the level of regulation under which small farmers have to operate and are surprised that so many things they'd thought "natural" or "normal" in a small farming community are actually illegal.

Tonight I also talk to some more established farmers who have offered me their expertise on seed saving and raising sheep. I've also made a date to discuss cheese making with a woman who wants to begin home-crafting her own goat cheeses.

Michele has been very happy with the response to Portland's InFARMations.

"Many people understand 'Eat local.' But the next level to learn about is what all it takes to make that even possible.

When it comes down to convenience versus conviction, having met the farmer and heard his or her story helps to push you more toward conviction. Bringing the farmers here and bringing the issues in from a different angle has been really helpful in putting a face on the issues. It also helps people connect with others in the community doing food-system related work.

"At almost every InFARMation I'll see a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) urban farmer from the area talking to a farmer in overalls who drove two hours to get here. I'll also see young urban people listening, taking it all in, and getting fired up. I get really excited seeing those connections made and light bulbs going off."

Besides organizing InFARMation (and Beer!), Michele also coordinates the iFarm Oregon database which brings together retiring farmers and farm mentors with new or aspiring farmers. The database screens farm land for sale or lease, work experiences and investment opportunities and matches them to interested parties in order to best meet the needs and interests of a growing number of participants in Oregon and beyond.

*More information about InFARMation (and Beer!) and iFarm Oregon can be found on the Friends of Family Farmers website at <http://friendsoffamilyfarmers.org>. Michele will happily connect with anyone who would like to contact her at Michele@friendsoffamilyfarmers.org*

*InFARMation (and Beer!) gatherings are the second Tuesday of every month at Roots Organic Brewery's event space at 1530 SE 7th Ave., Portland, OR from 5:30-8:30 p.m.*

*Cathy McQueeney owns Blue Flower Family Farm in the Willamette Valley where she raises Shetland sheep, a variety of chickens and fruits, vegetables and herbs using a sustainable, biointensive model. Contact her at cathyqm5@yahoo.com*

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## Artist champions importance of art at any age



Photos courtesy of Janet Louvau Holt

**Janet Louvau Holt will be exhibiting her artwork to benefit The Geezer Gallery's art therapy and instructional programs for seniors.**

**By Rachael Lorenz**  
*The Portland Upside*

“**Y**ou don’t have to give up just because you have a different number after your name,” says Janet Louvau Holt, one of the many accomplished senior artists on The Geezer Gallery roster for shows in the near future.

The Geezer Gallery envisions a future where each and every senior can create and experience joy through the arts, a future where becoming an elder is a process of positive change and new possibilities.

Janet’s words encourage senior citizens of the greater Portland area who will be given the opportunity to experience this exciting new way of growing old through art.

“It’s a wonderful opportunity,” she adds, knowing that part of the proceeds from the sale of her paintings will go to fund The Geezer Gallery’s art therapy and instructional programs.

Janet will also exhibit her work at the Grand Works Northwest Art Festival scheduled for May 22, 2010. The festival is a benefit to raise funds for Elders in Action’s Personal Advocate Program and The Geezer Gallery.

“It’s hard to know what one’s legacy is. I teach workshops every now and then and I taught in a retirement facility as a volunteer for eight years and that was very moving. I’ll never forget this one woman who had been injured by a bus. She told me that when she was in art class she never felt any pain. I like to think that art helps people get out from themselves.”

Janet made her first painting at twelve years old. She has painted ever since, only taking time out while raising her

family as sole breadwinner.

“I thought I would explode,” she says of that time.

Janet loves to draw and keep sketchbooks in which she tries to add at least one sketch per day. She starts her day doing the crossword puzzle, then sets to work in her studio, comfortably located on the lower level of her lovely home.

“I work at something every day. I don’t wait for a lightning bolt of inspiration. It’s my job.”

“I don’t work from photos. Doing a drawing puts the image into the mental computer so you can pull it out without looking at the sketch. And if I like it, I turn it into something that becomes a series. It’s important to work in a series because it shows that you really care about the subject.”

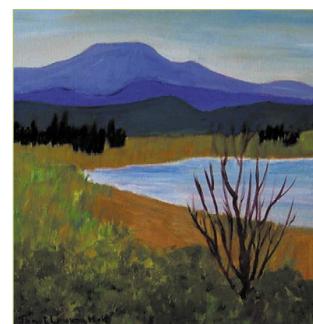
When asked if she has advice for budding artists, Janet replies, “Draw, draw, draw. If you have an assignment to do a painting you have two choices. You can do a painting that reflects a day when everything is going your way or a day that isn’t so good. What colors would you choose? What subject? Would you put your fingers right in the paint and scratch down with your fingernails? I like to get them to think for themselves.”

Janet has taught a number of art classes. She says there are always students who were told back in their elementary school days that they didn’t have talent because they didn’t stay within the lines.

“We’re not all Michelangelo, but we can all do something. Use your imagination. You have talent. Your job is to figure out what it is; music, science, literature, painting, sports, whatever. Take the time to investigate and find out what your special talent is, because you have it.”

When it comes to a vision for her work, Janet is clear.

“As I’m working I always like to think about how art reflects the times of the artist as well as the interest. So, when I think about our times, they’re busy, they’re fragmented, they’re loud. But there are also those lovely quiet times with family members, friends, loved ones that have an influence on the look of things. So I don’t want my work to all look the same. I love to experiment. And I expect to keep on doing that.”

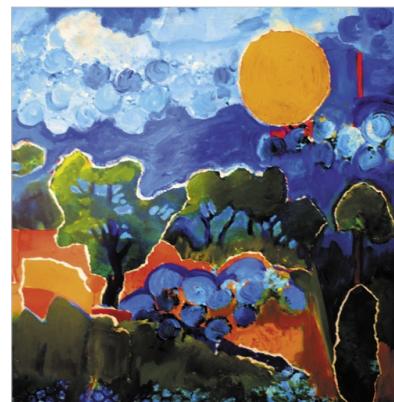


Janet’s paintings speak of nature and the beauty that surrounds us. Her use of color is extraordinarily moving. Brightly colored shapes jump from her canvases—trees, flowers, clouds and sun. In other paintings the colors are muted, speaking of beauty even when it’s dark, encouraging us to open our eyes and let it inside.

Janet’s work, one piece of which is featured in The Portland Art Museum’s permanent collection, holds wisdom for all ages, genders, and races.

“It’s very important, not just for artists, to actually go and look at art in galleries and museums. It’s part of our heritage and culture and also when we look at the art of other cultures we can see that we’re all in this together and celebrate the similarities and the differences.”

In March, Janet will open her home for an all-day exhibition of her work. Fifty percent of the sale of woodcuts, monotypes, acrylics and collages will go toward funding The Geezer Gallery.



**Through the use of brightly colored shapes and objects, Janet’s paintings speak of nature and the beauty that surrounds us.**

*To see more of Janet Louvau Holt’s work visit <http://janetlouvauholt.com>. Information about The Geezer Gallery can be found at <http://geezergallery.com>.*

*Rachael Lorenz is currently working on publishing a children’s book and workbook, “Madeline’s Art Studio . . . Sienna Learns To Paint.” The proceeds from this book will go toward funding The Geezer Gallery. Contact Rachael at 503-913-9255 or Rachael@geezergallery.com*

**Alexa Levin**  
*Continued from page 1*

“Dogs just lift up your spirits. When my mom told me about the chance to raise a puppy for the Guide Dog Program, I knew it was what I was looking for.”

On her path to becoming a puppy raiser Alexa attended weekly meetings to learn Guide Dog for the Blind training tips and techniques. She learned grooming and puppy

**Alexa Levin is one of 120 volunteer puppy raisers for Guide Dogs for the Blind in the Portland metro area.**



care to prepare her for the anticipated arrival of her trainee. She also worked with other puppies in the group to gain the skills necessary for her own puppy.

“The group offers on-going mentoring and support as well as practice for new puppy raisers. One thing the group does really well is teach raisers how to help their puppies avoid distractions.”

The puppies are exposed to distractions such as other pets and “career change dogs,” those dogs that did not meet the full requirements for the program, but who join the training sessions to try to steer the puppies off course. The trainers spend their time redirecting the puppies by using specific training principles that include proper tone of voice, leash and collar correction, and continuous praise for positive behavior.

Alexa received Delphine the week before Christmas.

“I found out that I would receive my own puppy a few weeks before her arrival. I counted down the days until she arrived. It was hard waiting for her. I was really excited!”

It is now Alexa’s responsibility to teach Delphine good house manners, basic obedience, and how to behave in social situations. Delphine will not receive her green jacket—the official announcement to the world that she is a Guide Dog in Training—until she grows into it. While at the moment Alexa carries a card identifying Delphine as a guide dog puppy in training, the jacket will enable the young dog to accompany Alexa to social events and to school.

Delphine’s readiness will be apparent in two ways.

First, she will need to grow in size to fit the jacket

tailored for six-month-old puppies. Second, she will need to grow into her abilities as a trained puppy, which will depend on Alexa’s dedication and persistence.

Alexa is experiencing first hand the awesome responsibility she has undertaken to help Delphine meet her goals.

“The first few weeks involved lots of middle of the night bathroom trips, but just this week, she made it all the way through the night. My mom, acting as my guardian, is part of the training. Mom does the training while I am at school. That helps quite a bit.”

Delphine will stay with Alexa for a period of 12 to 18 months. After that Delphine will return to one of the main campuses for pattern training, during which she will navigate and master the ten stages of guide dog training. Alexa will not be able to see her puppy during this phase of training but she will be invited to the graduation ceremony to hand over Delphine’s leash to the new owner.

Pulling Delphine closer Alexa says, “It will be difficult to say goodbye to Delphine when the time comes. I know she will be going into the program to help someone. Knowing this will make it easier. If it was just to say goodbye without knowing this, well, that would be a lot harder.”

*To find out more about becoming a puppy raiser for Guide Dogs for the Blind, go to <http://guidedogs.com> or call 800-295-4050.*

*Holly is balancing motherhood with graduate school but enjoys sharing the eventful stories community members carry.*

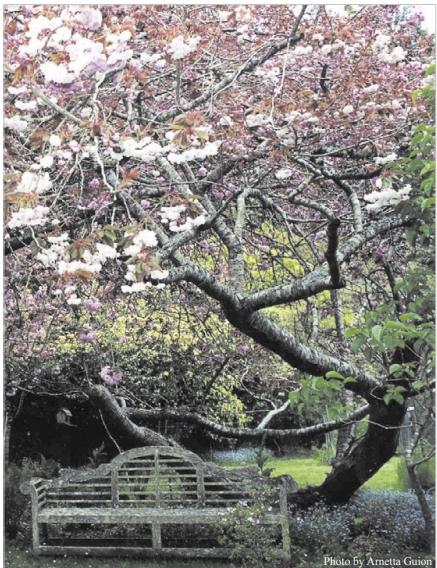


Photo by Arnetta Guion

Oft' in life we haven't clear direction  
And thinking can deprive us of connection  
With our own happy intuition's source,  
Obscuring the simplest obvious course.  
But when we commit to know our true desire  
And make the choice that sets our hearts afire,  
Life must follow our charms with all it's zest  
For we've become the part which all love best.  
We know this well but when we would control  
We drain the life of what's inspired our soul;  
Dither not with dread practicality,  
Step forth alive without conditions, free.  
Despite all schemes that we've been dreaming of,  
What more have we to offer but our Love?

By Charles Walsh

Charles Walsh is a wine lover, hiker/climber and poet. A Portland native, Charles was raised and educated here, though most of his professional life was spent in projects across the United States and in Europe.

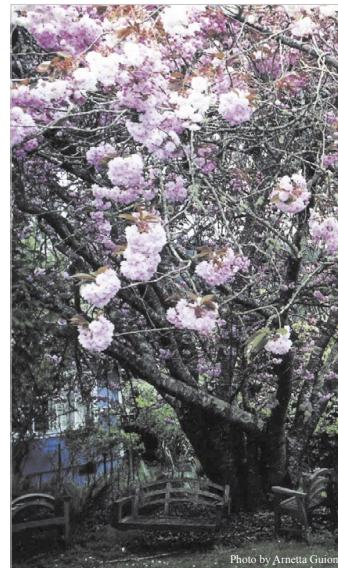


Photo by Arnetta Guion



Photo by Sitta Cole



Photo by Mike Aspros



Photo by Faye Powell

**The blooms**

Drop

And love stops

growing

When there are too many roots in a small container.

(capture) love - [cage it] and love will faint in the breathless air, grow brittle and crumble to an empty dust that falls away, lost... Forgotten in its own network of entwining

Beginnings

and

Endings

Better to cradle love on a woven frame of no preconceived boundaries. Let it send its new shoots to the warmth of the sun and new roots to places unseen. Watch it slip through the weave of its holder and mold a cover so complete yet.....

Free to express and to move as it must to flourish to bloom

And bloom again.....

&lt; an attempted tribute to ee cummings&gt;

By Andi Yates



Photo by Faye Powell

Andi was born in Louisville, KY, and migrated to Oregon in 1974. She found her poetic voice at 17 and has been writing lyrics, poems and short stories ever since.

**Heart Song**

There is a language of the heart,  
Bequeathed to us with our very first breath,  
Breathed into us with our very first cry,  
Possessed by us through a mother's kiss  
and a father's smile.

There is a language of the heart  
Soft as a breeze against our cheek,  
Gentle, quiet as a baby's dream,  
That knows no chains of hate or fear.

Light as cherry blossoms on an April morn,  
Sweet as a lover's sigh just before dawn,  
Our native tongue, our first heart song,  
Leads us back to our own true home.

By Faye Powell

Faye Powell is a retired librarian who writes fiction, nonfiction and, occasionally, poetry. She can be reached at phaysee1@gmail.com

## Sharing is in style at SE Portland Tool Library

*Community comes together to share tools, knowledge and reduce waste*

By Jeff Horne  
*The Portland Upside*

I moved to Southeast Portland from Los Angeles about two years ago. When I initially heard about Portland's tool libraries—mystical places where members of the community can borrow home and garden tools free of charge—I thought, "Wow, Portlanders are crazy!" And I wondered if it actually works.

In fact, the tool libraries in North and Northeast Portland are wildly successful. The library in Northeast Portland (NEPTL), for example, has up to 200 visitors a day during the summer months. Over 85 percent of the tools are donated, with such an abundance of gifts that NEPTL has generously re-gifted over 200 tools to help get a new library started in Southeast Portland.

Steve Couche, a Reed neighborhood resident, is leading the recent Southeast effort. He got the ball rolling by finding a space, securing some grant money and holding a meeting in early December. When neighbors heard about the effort to bring a tool library to Southeast, many went to the meeting and got on board. We have already secured an additional grant from the Rebuilding Center, created a website and Facebook page, and started other outreach efforts. We're now getting ready to renovate the space.

Why has Steve gone to all this trouble? "The tool library will help solidify neighborhood cohesiveness by being a gathering place for neighbors to borrow tools that other neighbors donated to the library. Workshops will empower people to make lifestyle changes to more sustainable practices like seed saving and rain barrel construction. And it will save us all money," he says with a smile.

**Charles Couche (left) has led the effort to start the SE Portland Tool Library, attracting other volunteers like Charles Reid (right) who recognize the value of sharing resources.**



Photo courtesy of SEPTL

### Check out our website!

<http://PortlandUpside.com>

...and find Portland's upside.



Photo courtesy of SEPTL

**Volunteers work on getting the SE Portland Tool Library ready while having some fun in the process. Left to right: Cedar, Charles Reid, Chris New (kneeling), Aaron Tarzman, Ginny Benware**

Sounds good to me!

How often do you purchase a specialized tool that you use only once and then, if you're lucky, use again ten years down the road? Having every person each purchase their own set of tools is a tremendous waste, in a time of diminishing natural resources. Does it make sense for me and every one of my neighbors to own an 18-foot ladder, tree pruners, and post diggers when there's almost no chance that we'll all be using these tools at the same time? Why not share? Isn't that one of the fundamental lessons we're taught as kids? Why did we forget?

"Don't people steal the tools?" you wonder. I asked the same thing. Apparently they do not. Tom Thompson of NEPTL says they've lost about a dozen tools of the 4,000 loaner tools they've handed out. Sounds like a pretty good ratio to me.

That's what the tool library is all about. It's a lesson in sharing and community which offers neighbors the chance to say, "Hey, I really need this tool, but once I'm done with it, it's going to sit in my garage and gather dust. I'm going to give it to the tool library. While I'm there, I might pick up a pipe wrench and some pliers for a plumbing project I have."

The Southeast Tool Library is an all-volunteer effort, which means the people involved want to create a new way of doing business in their community. Neighbors with spare tools donate inventory. Neighbors with free time help keep the library running smoothly. Neighbors with neither money nor time get a little relief by being able to borrow tools they'd otherwise have to buy.

Having free tools to borrow can also help beautify and maintain our neighborhoods by allowing folks access to tools they may not want to buy. Rather than ignoring much needed gutter repair or gardening work, they get the tools they need to get the job done. The library also plans to host workshops to empower do-it-yourself folks by connecting them with knowledgeable neighbors. Classes will emphasize sustainable projects and practices.

When's the Southeast Tool Library coming? We're getting closer to opening every day, with the estimated opening slated for May 2010. We will be housed at the St. David of Wales Episcopal Church, located at 2800 SE Harrison.

*Want to know more or get involved? Visit us online at our new website: <http://septl.org> Or contact Steve Couche at 503-232-0699 or steveco1948@comcast.net*

*Jeff Horne is a Southeast Portland resident, environmentalist, gardener and food security advocate. He's a board member of the Richmond Neighborhood Association where he is a co-chair of the Sustainability Committee. He is also co-founder of the Crappy Chess Players Club. Contact Jeff at mailjeff@yahoo.com*



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## Voices around town

*Why is positive news important to you?*

With such a steady diet of bad news, positive news is like dessert. You don't get it all the time, but when you do it's appreciated.

—Jacki Kane  
*Hawthorne neighborhood  
SE Portland, Oregon*

Negativity is fear-based; positivity breeds courage, heroism, and eventually fearlessness.

—Christopher Kai Bucci  
*Montavilla neighborhood  
SE Portland, Oregon*

What we hear and read matters, giving us a sense of the way the world is. If we hear nothing but crisis, violence, greed or intolerance, we might believe that represents all we have around us. Positive news—which is much more prevalent—must be shared to offer us insight into the truth of what we are surrounded by—willingness, optimism, hope and generosity.

—Amy Pearl  
*SW Portland, Oregon*

Positive news is better than Prozac. Not only does it serve to inspire, it also helps us to overcome our inertia, our fears, our separation anxieties and loneliness. It gives us avenues to turn our disparate mental and physical silos into community.

—Meryl Lipman  
*NE Portland, Oregon*

Positive news is crucial for maintaining a balanced perspective. In order to be productive citizens we have to know that our own random acts of kindness make a difference in the world. Hearing upbeat stories about our neighbors reminds us that a positive attitude has a large ripple effect.

—Carrie Ure  
*SW Portland, Oregon*

I believe that human beings are moved to act when they feel connected, inspired and hopeful. What better way is there to support social activism than by highlighting the people and organizations in our community and beyond that are devoting their lives to positive social change?

—Deb Delman  
*NE Portland, Oregon*

It's important because it opens the door and reminds us that there is positive news going on. There has to be as much positive as negative happening in the world. Dark and light balance out eventually and if we only see the dark, we are missing part of the picture.

—Deanne Belinoff  
*Concordia neighborhood  
NE Portland Oregon*

## How a lost phone and kind heart changed a day

By Nicole Morales  
*The Portland Upside*

**I**t happens to the best of us at the most inconvenient times.

You just left the office, market, or cafe and you're on your way home. You start the ignition, hop on your bike, or, like me, board the MAX. That's when you reach for your cell phone to check for new messages and the time. It's not there. You pat down all of your pockets and peer into your shoulder bag or purse. No sign of it.

After recovering from panic, you stop and think about what your mother told you to do at a time like this. Backtrack. So you return to the office to check your desk, you re-enter the market to inquire at the service counter, or you scuttle back across the street toward the cafe. Maybe it's on the table, you think to yourself. Nope.

Uneasy, you recall the last time you used your cell. Whom did I last talk to? What was I doing? How long ago was it?

For me it was 3:00 o'clock on a damp Friday afternoon. I checked the time because I didn't want to miss the vanpool to the MAX station. At 3:15, I jumped out of the van and dashed toward the platform. But blame it on



my wellies, the hood over my eyes, or the eager TriMet operator, I missed the train by seconds. How long will I be waiting, I wondered and reached for my cell. Uh oh!

It must be on the van, I thought, no longer miffed about missing the MAX. That's when my regular p.m. commute home turned into the mystery of my missing mobile.

My cell wasn't in the van. It had to be at work. So I went back. Nope. It wasn't on my

desk, and no one had seen it, including the tech guy who was in my office at noon installing software on the computer.

I was clueless. I rarely misplaced important things. Moreover, I began questioning everything having to do with my cell phone. Why am I so dependent on the darn thing? What if I need to make a call over the long weekend? Why didn't I opt for the insurance to replace lost and stolen phones? What if

someone swiped it and now has access to my personal information?

Thank goodness my questions needed no answers!

As it turned out, a Good Samaritan found my cell phone on the same sidewalk I sprinted across while running toward my missed train. That was two hours earlier.

So to this I say, "Thank you Ernie and your pug Betty. You picked up my phone, answered my call, and waited patiently for me to get back to the station. Most importantly, you solved the mystery. And for that I am grateful."

On behalf of all of us who have lost a cell phone, keys, wallet or other critical belonging, I dedicate this to those kind souls who returned a missed item to its rightful owner. People like you soothe our absentmindedness and give us days to remember.

*Nicole strives to connect people via multicultural education and writing. She teaches ESL at a private university outside of Portland and welcomes your inquiries at nmorales.writes@gmail.com*

**Genny Nelson**  
*Continued from page 1*

papers around for the guys. You could smoke everywhere back then, remember, and we would just be available all night to talk and to listen. Guys would tell stories, share political views, discuss literature and poetry. I mean, this was a really very different time and it was a gift to get that level of education so I could understand the issues that were affecting people on the streets.

**Upside:** What were you coming to understand?

**Genny:** I was taken instantly by the commonality between myself and the people in the neighborhood based at the time on my health issues (Nelson was diagnosed with diabetes as a child). I developed a kinship with other people's health issues and so my association was not just compassion. It truly felt like I was coming home when I came into this neighborhood. People invited me to be a part of their lives and to share our stories mutually. It was like being a part of an extended family.

**Upside:** What were some of the other influences that were at play during that time?

**Genny:** Okay, so there was the influence from the community organizers but there was also the Catholic Worker movement happening. I mean, Dorothy Day was still alive. I was reading all of her books and would read the newspaper when she was still writing for it. She became a mentor to me and I ended up starting a Catholic Worker house with this conviction that we should make room for people who have nowhere to go. I married one of those community organizers and adopted two children. In time, social workers began to know us, the police would drop people off and that was the life until the fall of 1978 when I divorced and needed to get back to work. As it turned out, a job had opened up at the shelter so I went back.

One of the things that we were noticing in the late 70's was the growing number of women on the streets.

**Upside:** Why was that?

**Genny:** Again, you have to remember that at that time women in this country were finally beginning to have con-

versations, women's liberation, right? A lot of these conversations were coming out of the privileged white community, but there were also poor women who were saying, "I don't have to take this." And when a woman needs to leave her home she is going to wind up where things are cheap. But it wasn't easy down here. There was only one domestic violence shelter in Portland at that time. For a long, long time people thought that women just didn't belong on Skid Road. But the reality was that they were here and there was no place for them to go. So I was experiencing that transition here in the community. I was influenced by the book Boxcar Bertha (a chronicle of homeless women, known as "sisters

**Genny:** The stories I hear from people and the sense that all of this is bigger than me has fueled me. I mean, I believe this was a calling. Who finds their soul work at 20 years old? But I've always emphasized that it had nothing to do with me. I never could have stayed intact if I thought this was about me. Those community organizers I learned from gave me a gift and that was to look at the issues of social justice and human rights through the eyes of a community organizer. That meant I was not going to try to help people. Did they need an ally? You bet, but I wasn't going to pretend that I knew what the issues were. They would have to tell me what the issues were.

**Upside:** It sounds like you're not really done working.

**Genny:** I never will be. If anything is clear in this process of letting go it's that I am just as passionate and committed to human rights as I was back in the day. I don't think it will go away because the work of social justice won't go away. We need to make better choices as a society. And that's the work, but when you hold the big vision you have to be patient and you need to have a sense of humor. I talk to people and I build relationship with them. People are not their addiction or their homelessness or their poverty. They are people. Statistics won't tell you a damn thing. It's the relationships that will always tell you the truth. Sisters was never social work and I still say that someday it's just going to be the best damn coffee shop in town, but it will take all of us working together to change that. And you make change by building relationship with people. And when you build relationship you fall in love, and people do not become statistics when you fall in love with them.

*To find out more about Sisters of the Road, visit them online at <http://sistersoftheroad.org> or their coffee house at 133 NW Sixth Avenue, Portland, Oregon, or contact them at 503-222-5694.*

*Nikki Jardin has written for The Oregonian, Street Roots and the recently launched id Magazine. She lives in Southeast Portland and is continually impressed and inspired by the creativity and gumption of her neighbors and friends.*

**Genny Nelson (left) co-founder of Sisters of the Road, and Sisters' Executive Director Monica Beemer celebrate Genny's 30 years of service to Portland's poor and homeless.**



*Photo courtesy of Sisters of the Road*

of the road," during the depression) because I was seeing it on the streets here in my time. I knew the woman with the patch on the eye. I knew the women who lost their livelihoods when the men came home from the war. I knew all of these women who society spits out. They were all there on Skid Road right in front of me. So it was a convergence of phenomena that started Sisters of the Road, that assimilation of all those influences.

**Upside:** What inspired you to stay in the work for all of this time?

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**Mary Downer**  
Continued from page 1

When Downer called the hospital the next day to check on the woman; her family was with her and passed the phone around so they could all thank the Good Samaritan.

After the woman recovered, she took Downer out to lunch and gave her a \$500 Fred Meyer gift certificate.

Instead of thinking how she could spend it on herself, Downer immediately thought of how many people she could help with that money.

"I was excited," she said. "I knew I could buy things I needed to help the homeless. I went to the store and bought two carafes, packages of hot chocolate and Cup Noodles, Styrofoam cups, socks, hats and gloves."

Downer said that she did it because she feels an affinity with the homeless.

"They're someone's child," she said. "They're not all there because they did something wrong."

Packing a rolling suitcase with the carafes filled with hot water and packets of chocolate and soup, Downer hit the streets to hand out hot drinks and offer some cheer to the homeless people she encountered.

"I've never had a problem relating to the homeless," she said. "I counsel with them. They just need someone to listen. No matter why they're down there, they're all human beings. I walk around Pioneer Square and under the Hawthorne Bridge—that's a pretty good hot spot—and the Burnside Bridge."

Downer said that she doesn't get into dangerous situations.

"I'm smart and safe about it," she said. "I don't go down dark alleys. I text a friend where I'm going. I don't bring a wallet—just ID. I never go after dark. Just because I'm doing something good doesn't mean I'm invincible."

Downer heads downtown one or both days of the weekends, noting Nov. 12, "Last Saturday was very wet and cold, but I had a home to go back to and they didn't. That's why I'm starting to collect socks. Even the people who get into shelters at night need warm, dry socks."

"How do you get a job when you're wearing dirty clothes? A friend gave me some men's sweaters, and I passed them out. I remember seeing one man wearing socks and sandals, and they were soaking wet."

Downer went through her \$500 windfall a long time ago, and now she spends part of her salary on food and clothing for the homeless. A friend with a Costco card takes her shopping there, where she recently spent \$40 stocking up on items.

On Thanksgiving a year ago, Downer gave away blankets along with 100 muffins that she made.

"So many of these people have lost hope," she said. "If you've had hot chocolate in your past, you were probably a kid and cozy after playing in the snow. Sipping hot chocolate was a happy moment in your life."

"During the 10 minutes that they're sipping hot chocolate, they're drinking it in a happy place."

Downer said that when people ask her why she does this, she tells them the story of the woman she helped.

"I say, 'Because I care about you. You're human. You're important.' Some people are at first hesitant to take hot



Photo courtesy of Mary Downer

**Mary Downer believes that she can make the world a better place by lending those living on the street a helping hand or a pair of dry socks.**

chocolate or soup from me, so I look them in the eye and say, 'What's your name?' They answer and stand up taller. I feel respect from them."

"Sometimes I have 10 or 15 people waiting for me to hand them a cup. I will give them jobs, like stirring the powder in the water. One time on Christmas morning, I asked, 'Who has a good joke?'"

Downer not only keeps herself safe, but she doesn't take any guff from people.

"I don't put up with anything," she said. "I've had to tell people I won't come back. It's funny—a young girl standing up to these old men. Most are kind and courteous and grateful. Life has handed them a bucket of lemons."

People help Downer's mission by dropping off small items like socks, hats and gloves at Dr. Sepp's office, and she distributes them to needy people.

"I put the socks in zip-lock bags," she said. "I tell the people when they get to the shelter to hang the wet socks they wore during the day on something to dry overnight and put the dry ones on to sleep in. I know it makes a difference."

Downer sees people with mental illness and other serious issues that she can't resolve for them and admits, "Some of it is very heartbreaking, but the outcome is worth it. Even if you can't help someone, you can offer a helping hand. We can encourage each other, and it will make the world turn better."

## Submission of the month

Send us your photo, doodle, cartoon, poem, haiku, drawing, artwork, essay, quote, etc.; something that you find positive. Email it to editors@portlandupsde.com or mail it to us by February 20. One or more submissions will be chosen to appear in the March issue of The Portland Upside. Please include your name, email address and phone number in case we need to contact you.



Self-portrait photo by Sitta Cole, age 19

## Sitta's Story

I was born in Liberia, Africa. My life with my family was good until the war. When I was seven years old the rebels waked my family up in the middle of the night. We walked for four days to Sierra Leone so that we would not be killed. For three years we lived in the refugee camp until we were allowed to come to the United States.

In 2005 I came to The Portland International Community School. The teachers treated me with love and respect and taught me things I did not know before.

I came to Focus On Youth in 2008 and started learning photography. The beauty I see and am able to photograph makes me forget the painful things that happened in Liberia.

*Focus On Youth was started six years ago as a way to keep at-risk youth on the path to graduation using photography and mentoring. <http://focusonyouth.org>*

## All Kinds Of Books And Everything Collectible!



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Mary Downer can be reached at [blissfull23@hotmail.com](mailto:blissfull23@hotmail.com) or at Appletree Dentistry, 16035 SW Pacific Hwy, Tigard, OR, 503-620-2185.

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# The Portland Upside

positive people, positive stories

January 2010 / Complimentary

<http://PortlandUpside.com>

## Stick to your dreams

*Chris Bucci believed in his heart and now it's seen from border to border*

By Nicole Morales  
*The Portland Upside*



After years of moving, Chris Bucci finds his home and heart in Oregon and creates the green Heart In Oregon design that's now seen everywhere.

**W**hat's black and white and seen all over? No, it's not the latest issue of The Portland Upside. Here's a hint: there's a green heart in the middle. You're right! It's The Heart In Oregon sticker-turned-emblem that has popped up everywhere on auto bumpers, community news boards and skin. Yes, skin. Seeing the emblem as a freshly inked tattoo one wonders what it means for the bearer: homegrown pride, Oregon's natural beauty, love for community and place, or perhaps a dreamer's dream?

How did a simple image come to carry such emotion for so many people? Heart In Oregon designer and dreamer Chris Bucci shared with me how a dream and an idea are now his reality.

Chris moved around a lot during childhood. As he puts it, he was a corporate brat. With every new job his father took, there was a mandatory family move. All over the country. Seventeen times. The one tangible thing that followed Chris was his desk, covered with stickers.

Years later as a business-savvy computer tech, Chris sought job prospects in Seattle. It was the summer of '92. Chris packed up his car, wished his parents well,



Photos courtesy of Chris Bucci

and pioneered his way from Chicago to the Northwest. The desk stayed behind.

"When I first crossed the Oregon-Idaho border I felt something. It went away when I crossed into Washington. I felt a feeling of home."

This was new to Chris.

"I'd never had a home before because I always moved."

Chris made his way back to Portland a few years later, but things on the employment front had turned sour and he got laid off. With few job prospects, Chris knew the inevitable was creeping up on him.

*Continued on page 4*

## Israel Bayer grows roots in Portland

*Street Roots' executive director talks about his non-traditional path to journalism*

By Nikki Jardin  
*The Portland Upside*

**T**he Street Roots office on Northwest 2nd and Couch is surprisingly quiet. Outside, the skies are clear but the wind is bitter cold. Israel Bayer pokes his head up and waves from behind his desk where he is finishing a phone call. After a moment he comes out and offers a chair at the large table laden with snacks for the 70 ven-

dors who make up the distribution team for the paper. Street Roots is celebrating its tenth year as a nonprofit newspaper, no small feat for any organization that relies on donations and hard-working volunteers.

Israel, imposing in stature, offers me coffee and a smile. He has a kind and welcoming face. He has been with the organization for the majority of its ten years, leaving only briefly a few years ago to head up the Seattle street paper, Real Change. Starting as the poetry editor back when Street Roots was a small collective, he is now the executive director and the bi-monthly has a circulation of nearly 25,000.

Israel didn't take the traditional track into journalism. Raised in a working class family in an industrial river town "where factories meet the farmland," he saw economic devastation firsthand. In the nineties, all along the Mississippi River, job loss escalated as work moved overseas. His hometown, a vibrant city built on munitions factories, glass works and a shipping lane for corn and soybeans, withered.

"Unions were being busted, jobs were leaving, and it was becoming an economically depressed area. There was a lot of hopelessness."

Quitting high school, Israel took up life on the road, traveling the country, living in a biker compound, following the Grateful Dead and experiencing "different unique situations. Some good, some not so good. I was wandering aimlessly, working here and there, mostly as a convenience store clerk."

During many mini-mart graveyard shifts Israel got a different kind of education.

"I was witnessing urban poverty during those shifts and felt that was my first taste of social work. You see a lot of despair during those hours."

His travels brought him to Denver, Colorado, where he began to write poetry, inspired by what he was seeing at work. He began reading works from other poets, as well.



Photo by Nikki Jardin

Israel Bayer "wandered aimlessly" as a young adult, eventually finding his passion and calling in poetry and journalism.



Photo by Robert Holcomb

## Libraries, kids, books ... and dogs?

*Dogs lend nonjudgmental ears to developing readers*

By Deb Stone  
*The Portland Upside*

If a dog went to the library for story time, what kind of book would he likely hear? We asked to tag along as Alan Mitchell, a volunteer with the DoveLewis Animal Assisted Therapy and Education Program and his dog Wally partnered up for a day at Belmont Library. Alan is an attorney specializing in construction law. Wally is a 7-year-old Golden Retriever. Every three to four weeks the dog-and-handler team listens to children read aloud.

Although Wally was one of 14 pups in his litter bred and trained for Guide Dogs for the Blind, the standards demand a rigorous combination of health, skill, and behavioral qualities. After two years of training, only three dogs in Wally's litter qualified. The

*Continued on page 2*

*Continued on page 6*

# Helping people help themselves

*Program provides opportunities for the low-income to climb the economic ladder*

By Aaron Lundstrom  
*The Portland Upside*

Just as one may feel the gnaw of a cold rain lasting for days and the need to vent about it, it's just as easy to feel the weight of taxes and bewail them.

Taxes are potent enough to start wars and to inspire political bumper stickers with multiple exclamation points. So if you're not fully assuaged by tax money going towards road maintenance, police protection and other public services, or if you're concerned about taxes being taken from your hard-earned wages only to be recklessly spent, there is good news.

By paying your taxes you could be making a charitable contribution—one that empowers individuals to better themselves and their families in a challenging economy.

The Economic Opportunity Initiative (EOI), spawned in 2004 in part from taxpayer funding, focuses on helping the economically disadvantaged while adapting to the diverse needs of the individual.

Lynn Knox, program manager for the EOI, mentions seven microenterprise projects and 25 workforce projects now running, with more to come once the funding is available.

Weaving through every project is the goal to keep low-income individuals in the program for three years, with an end to increase their income and assets by at least 25 percent. The EOI is openly accountable, so anyone can look at the statistics to see whether the efforts are paying off.

As results for the August 2009 graduating class show, enrolled microenterprise start-up businesses—after three years and starting with nothing—averaged \$65,515 in sales. Existing businesses in the program more than tripled their sales.

For the workforce program graduates, most participants entered the program unemployed. EOI prepared them for work, helped them find a job and provided advancement assistance until their three-year graduation. From EOI job placement until graduation, adults increased their wages by an average of 33%, and youth saw a post placement increase of 23%.

This kind of success comes from the EOI's philosophy of "people not places," which aims to build up the individuals before building up the glitter-glassed structures and streetlights they walk past in their neighborhoods.

EOI "helps people to walk so that they can run," Knox asserts.

Karina Potestio, a clothes-crafting wife and mother of three girls, has experienced the success of this dynamic. She graduated from Trillium Artisans, one of the EOI's microenterprise projects that is committed to ecological and individual respect in economic development. In a world economy where jobs and wages often keep families apart, Karina's experience is all the more remarkable because it enables her family to spend more time together. You can see Karina's husband and children accompanying her to craft shows, helping her to set up, sell and then pack up her work once the day is finished.

Karina's girls have even begun their own microenterprise project. In the spirit of Luna, their mother's craft business, they offer handmade, cloth birds from a miniature wooden tree.

With 40 low-income artisans now work-



**Over 1500 people in various professions and small businesses have benefited from the EOI program, raising their incomes an average of 25%.**

Photos courtesy of Aaron Lundstrom and EOI

ium helps keep me connected to the rest of the world."

While not offering a complete solution to the cause of poverty, the EOI program and Trillium offer impoverished individuals a means to climb the economic ladder. But viewing the person and their family as a dynamic structure deserving

integrity and opportunity takes more than a program. It also requires an understanding that we are all only as respected as the opportunities we are given.

*For more information about the Economic Opportunity Initiative see <http://pdc.us/eoi> or call 503-823-3200. Visit Trillium Artisans at <http://trilliumartisans.org> or call 503-775-7993.*

*Aaron Lundstrom is a freelance writer and craft maker with a focus on truth, concept and bicycles. You can contact him at [poveranews@grovestream.com](mailto:poveranews@grovestream.com) or see his cooperative chess work and jewelry made from bicycle parts at <http://poveranews.com>*

## Israel Bayer

*Continued from page 1*

"I was into Hunter S. Thompson, Bukowski, basically all the beat poets. I was also reading travel literature and it occurred to me somewhere along the line that I was living a unique life and that I could actually write this stuff down."

Israel began attending poetry readings and working more diligently on his craft.

Traveling with a group of "artists and freaks," he set out west, arriving in Portland in 1996. He went back to work in the convenience store trade but eventually got a job at the William Temple House Thrift store, where he was promoted and began learning the administration skills that would become valuable in his current position.

In 1998 while walking downtown Israel passed by the Street Roots office, then located on Southwest 12th and Morrison. He walked in and immediately felt at home.

"I felt like these people were cut from my cloth."

He entered a poem for publication and soon began volunteering and working with other street poets. They began what Israel calls, "a collective atmosphere," and he began to feel a sense of community.

"I wasn't hearing anything until I started going out with these drunks and these homeless guys. I hadn't heard anything with that kind of grit before. This was different."

"And then the WTO [World Trade Organization protest in Seattle] happened and I went through my own personal revolution. I hadn't been a part of political activism, nothing to speak of. I had never connected the poverty I had seen throughout my life with politics. I mean, I knew about class dynamics, I lived it, but I didn't understand the interconnectedness of it all. And then I was accidentally arrested and spent about a week in jail with these union guys and hardcore activists and my eyes just popped wide open. Then I got pissed."

Israel became active in the anarchist scene and found his way to journalism when he realized that writing poetry wasn't doing enough to describe what he was witnessing and learning.

"I just started putting two and two together and I wanted it to be my job to write these people's stories. And so I started learning. I read everything I could get my hands on, just to

learn how writers were putting things together. I mean, I dropped out of high school. I had ninth grade English skills. I didn't know how to write. I started learning from everyone around me at Street Roots and through other organizations. I just started soaking them up like a sponge."

While Israel grew as a journalist, Street Roots grew as well. The circulation increased and the stories became more political and hard-hitting. The grass-roots publication began reporting the stories, both local and national, that were af-

**Israel Bayer has been with Street Roots for most of its ten years of existence, starting out as a volunteer, and now working as executive director.**



Photo by Nikki Jardin

feeling people experiencing poverty, homelessness and drug addiction.

For Israel, talking about Street Roots and the stories it covers is a point of pride and passion. The organization, started as a collective, has had to adjust and learn to straddle the fine line between being a direct service nonprofit and a

news source that sometimes bites the hands that feeds it.

"The better our journalism gets, the more serious our topics get and sometimes we get a little pushback from it. That just shows me we're doing our jobs," Israel says with a wry smile. "We don't run in the usual journalism cliques and sometimes that gets tricky. We're a nonprofit, and sometimes we pay for that."

"But it's important that we cover issues that are affecting people's lives. We're going to take difficult topics around homelessness and poverty and politics and we're going to go deeper. We want to allow people to tell their stories, in laymen's terms, so that everyone can understand them. We take our job seriously. I think sometimes people expect less from a street paper. We expect more. There's this stereotype, even in the messaging around homelessness that people are used to hearing and we try to shatter that with the type of news we're publishing."

Talking about the circuitous route his life has taken, Israel shakes his head and smiles, his voice softening.

"There are a lot of peaks and valleys in the day in and day out. I'm learning how to pace myself and sometimes I feel jaded. I've watched waves of people come and go. And it gets harder for me to buy into the bullshit around the effects of the streets and homelessness and then bounce back into an administrative role of running a nonprofit and then do my investigative journalism. But I knew, back after the WTO that I wanted to tell these stories. It was a calling. You know, back then, I had been whiskey-bent and hell-bound for so long that when I started this type of work, I finally felt like I had some meaning in my life. To tell these stories and to help other people find their voice. I love it, even when it's hard."

*Visit Street Roots online at <http://streetroots.org> or call 503-228-5657*

*Nikki Jardin has written for The Oregonian, Street Roots and the recently launched id Magazine. She lives in Southeast Portland and is continually impressed and inspired by the creativity and gumption of her neighbors and friends.*



## From the editors

By Rob & Sara Bednark  
*The Portland Upside*

**W**hile moving from the Midwest to Portland in 1996, we crossed over the Marquam Bridge with all of our belongings packed into the back of a rental truck. With the Willamette River below us and the Portland skyline nearby, we exclaimed, "Isn't it beautiful!" Today we still feel that same sense of appreciation and belonging.

In her article "Stick to your dreams," Nicole Morale quotes Chris Bucci, "My heart is here, my heart is in Oregon." That

exactly describes our feelings every time we cross those beloved bridges. Chris took his feelings and found a way to make them tangible, and thanks to him we can now proudly display our love of Oregon with the Heart in Oregon emblem.

We met Israel Bayer last June. He was telling his story to the youth in The Pangaea Project and we were moved by his journey, his honesty, and his heart. In "Israel Bayer grows roots in Portland," Nikki Jardin tells the story of the circuitous route Israel took to reach Portland, and how he is using his rich life experiences to connect with the homeless whose lives he champions.

We feel a commonality with Chris and Israel. They each searched to find their place, and then found ways to connect others to that shared sense of home.

After 13 years living in Portland, we are honored to be able to give something back to the place that we call home.

Sara & Rob

*All issues can be viewed on our website, <http://PortlandUpside.com>. Contact us by email, [editors@PortlandUpside.com](mailto:editors@PortlandUpside.com), or by phone, 503-663-1526.*

## Out of the textbooks and into the community

### PSU department puts anthropology to use to benefit Portland

By Faye Powell  
*The Portland Upside*

**F**rom the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas to Brazilian rain forests, from the humid villages of Southeast Asia to our very own streets here in Portland, Oregon—these places, as well as every other corner of the earth—are the domain of anthropologists at work. Anthropologists study culture in its myriad forms, and all members of the human species and their predecessors fall within the scope of the discipline.

As applied anthropologist Jeremy Spoon states, "Our world is now more aware of cultural diversity than ever. There's a unique role for anthropologists to be involved to better understand the human element from all facets, both past and present, and into the future."

While most of us know Margaret Mead's work on the South Pacific and Southeast Asian cultures, Jane Goodall's studies of chimpanzees, and the Leakey's work in Africa on the origin of our species, we are less familiar with anthropologists' contributions to the issues and problems right here at home.

I recently interviewed five faculty members of Portland State University's (PSU) Department of Anthropology to learn how the discipline serves the communities of the Portland metro area.

According to Professor Kenneth Ames, archaeologist and chair of PSU's anthropology department, one goal is to "conduct engaged and community-based research across local, regional and global scales. By this we mean, research that feeds back into the communities within which it is conducted and which, in some instances, instigated the research."

When Professor Ames came to PSU, he was asked to develop a locally-based archaeology field school so students would be able to work closer to the university. The field school evolved into a community-based research program that has trained students to work with agencies such as the Corps of Engineers, Forest Service, and National Park Service.

PSU students, in collaboration with Native Americans and other community residents, helped excavate an important 15th-century Chinook site 40 miles from Portland near Ridgefield, Washington. In 1991, based on the excavation, the community erected a Chinook-style plank house that is now used for ceremonial and ritual purposes.

Indeed, the entire anthropology faculty is engaged in projects of one type or another that benefit our local community. And as students learn to use the tools of anthropology, they work on projects to solve problems that local organizations have identified.

One such project helped the Dougie Center for Grieving Children and Families identify barriers the Hispanic popula-

tion faces in utilizing the center's services. In another, a student worked with former Portland Mayor Potter's office to do outreach in the Hispanic community.

Cultural anthropologist Sharon Carstens currently teaches an Asian-American class in which half of her students are Asian-American. Through class readings the students learn for the first time about the hardships their parents and earlier generations have endured. Films about the old country open the eyes of this young generation to their own history, allowing them to renew their empathy with older generations. This new window into their own history was so emotionally moving to some of the students that they borrowed the films to show within their home communities.

Michele Gamburd, also a cultural anthropologist, takes her research to Sri Lanka where she studies the effects of labor migration, globalization, and disasters on people and their culture. Bringing the knowledge and insights from her work in Sri Lanka home, she supervises students who study the impacts of immigration in the United States.

One student, for instance, researched the problem of limited health care among migrant laborers with asthma caused by their exposure to toxic chemicals. Another researched the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border and its residual effect on undocumented Oregon Hispanics.

A third student studied the use of health care among workers at Portland's day labor center. He found that they often go untreated for illnesses either because they cannot afford to take time off work or because they do not want to be perceived as weak, and thus less masculine. The City of Portland found the research valuable for providing a better understanding of the culture of these workers.

In another example of PSU's impact on the community, archaeologist Virginia Butler's current research work with archaeological records of ancient animal bones has significant implications for fish conservation and dam removal. She works in the Klamath Basin where water issues are a huge concern to ranchers, fishermen and environmentalists.

Excavation of these ancient bones has shown that salmon, previously thought to have been absent from the Klamath River, did once exist. In October, four major dams on the upper Klamath were ordered to be removed over the next ten years in order to reestablish salmon there. The Department of Interior is also interested in the research for its potential implications elsewhere.

**Our world is now  
more aware of  
cultural diversity  
than ever. There's a  
unique role for  
anthropologists to  
be involved to better  
understand the  
human element  
from all facets, both  
past and present,  
and into the future.**

*Continued on page 8*

# The Portland Upside

positive people, positive stories

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**Heart In Oregon**  
*Continued from page 1*

"I was at a low point and a revelation point when the idea for a sticker came to mind."

Chris recalled the day he sat outside of a Portland café pondering his predicament.

"But my heart is here, my heart is in Oregon."

That was in 2003.

Many months later Chris was still without a job. He spent much of his time thinking of where he would go. Having had no real sense of home anywhere else made it all the more difficult. That's when his idea materialized and his dream stuck. Chris put all his energy into the Heart In Oregon sticker.

Today his dream is well over 250,000 stickers strong through retail purchases, freebies, and gifts in kind. Last year Chris mailed 300 Heart In Oregon stickers to the Oregon National Guard to be given to its troops serving all over the world.

"It's the least I can do."

Chris explained that the Heart In Oregon image is formally called the Dreamer's Emblem. And it means, "I'm living a dream, I'm seeking a dream, or I'm supporting someone in their dream."

That's not to say that Chris' dream was an instant success. The original sticker featured a red heart that people just didn't respond to. It was also rectangular in shape.

Chris didn't give up on his idea. Rather he welcomed feedback on it.

"Friends suggested I make the heart green because it's Oregon and that I cut it out in the shape of the state."

Out of necessity, Chris heeded their advice.

"I created the sticker to help make ends meet."

Forging ahead with the Heart In Oregon emblem was not an easy feat. Other people were starting to emulate Chris' design.

"I was afraid to move forward." He knew that if he wasn't going to continue with the Dreamer's Emblem others undoubtedly would.

"I have to do this and why not bring more business to my



Photo courtesy of Jeremy Running Photography

**Unemployment was the mother of invention for Chris Bucci. (pictured with his son) He created the Heart In Oregon emblem in 2003 to make ends meet.**

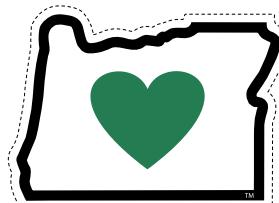
home, because my mission is to help make the best Oregon I can."

2009 was a great year for Chris. Other local businesses and communities have also benefited from Heart In Oregon success. And this success stems from the dream Chris shared with others. He made it a point to share his idea and he persisted.

"An idea is just an idea." And it will stay an idea until one "gets it outside of their head." Simply put, "I'm a guy who supports his family off of a sticker."

*Chris Bucci's Heart In Oregon stickers have evolved into T-shirts, pins, hoodies, and the window cling for people with "sticker commitment issues." Visit <http://heartsticker.com> to check out the online store and to see Chris' emblem designs for other states.*

*Nicole strives to connect people via multicultural education and writing. She teaches ESL at a private university outside of Portland and welcomes your inquiries at [nmorales.writes@gmail.com](mailto:nmorales.writes@gmail.com)*



us keep The Upside going by contributing your ideas and material assistance.

Call or email us with your help. We're relying on you in 2010!

Sara and Rob  
 Publishers, The Portland Upside

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The Portland Upside has come a long way in 2009. What started as a dream has become a living breathing reality, thanks to the help of volunteers who write, edit, photograph, and distribute the paper every month. From the enthusiastic feedback we've received, we know that The Portland Upside has established a reputation for quality content, providing a valuable service to the Portland metro area. With such strong community backing from day one, we're confident that with your help, we can continue to publish The Portland Upside.

This past year has been a learning process for us. With nine issues under our belts, the monthly creation process has become straightforward. It's now time to learn new strategies for generating revenue so that The Upside can stay in circulation. Thus far we've focused on advertising revenue to underwrite production and distribution costs. While

we've gotten lots of help, we have a long way to go to meet expenses.

We learn as we go, letting The Upside have a life and community of its own, following that life, one step at a time, trying, making mistakes, letting it evolve. We are now ready to learn new ways to make The Portland Upside a continued financial, as well as literary, success. It's now time to learn how to make this dream-come-true financially viable.

We need ideas on how to finance our answer to Portland's growing appetite for positive news. Do you have a penchant for positive news and making a difference in your community, along with skills or ideas to create more revenue for The Portland Upside? We'd like to hear from you!

We invite you to join us in making The Upside a staple in our beloved, quirky, positive and caring city. Together we will make The Upside a sustainable venture that continues to uplift the people of Portland.

Thank you to all who have generously supported us in 2009 with contributions, ideas and advertising. Please help

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## Submission of the month

Send us your photo, doodle, cartoon, poem, haiku, drawing, artwork, essay, quote, etc.; something that you find positive. Email it to [editors@PortlandUpside.com](mailto:editors@PortlandUpside.com) or mail it to us by January 20. One or more submissions will be chosen to appear in the February issue of The Portland Upside. Please include your name, email address and phone number in case we need to contact you.



**Misty firs**

In winter, fir trees sing dappled droplets  
 their pointed needles combed them from fog.  
 You must only listen as a hundred notes  
 drop and echo, hitting the paper leaves.  
 Songs of forgotten words,  
 you know that they are prayers  
 that only trees remember  
 and they tell it to you again.

**By Mike Aspros**

*Mike Aspros is a native of Portland. In addition to writing poetry, he enjoys co-facilitating events within Linnton's environmental group, and preserving Forest Park while building a community of forest stewardship.*

*Sandra Milner is a novelist, poet, aspiring photographer, and also a freelance journalist and food advocate.*

*Photo by Sandra Milner*

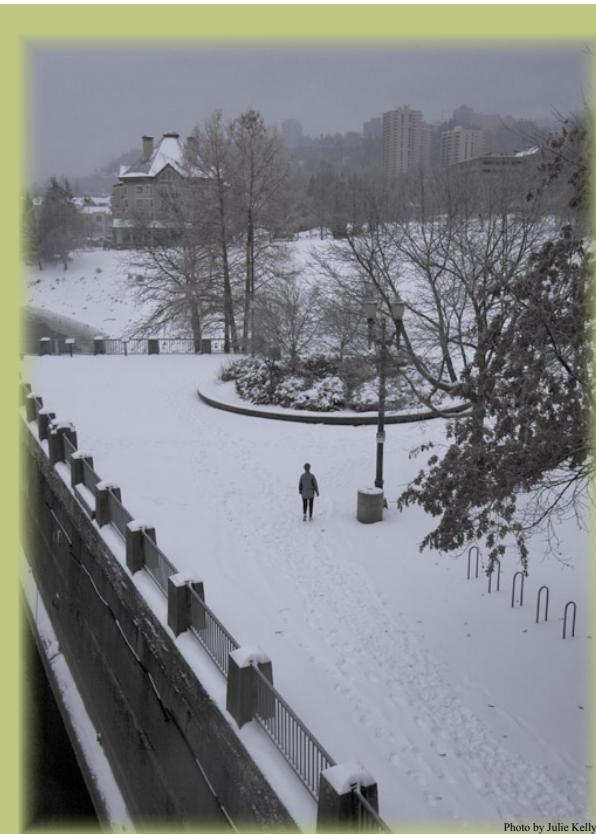


Photo by Julie Kelly

**Wintertime in Oregon**

I like the Wintertime in Oregon

her gopher holes  
and short, green wheat,  
and seagulls in the breeze;  
  
her frosty grass  
her frosted glass  
  
and chipping ice from windo' panes  
and haze.  
  
and skiers tracks  
thru' mountain trails  
and rabbit tracks  
on downy dales  
and hail  
  
and rain  
  
and  
  
crashing tides that  
suck the sand  
and  
wear the cliffs  
and  
rocks that stand  
and  
waves that  
break the jetties down  
  
and  
spray that streaks  
the crests that foam,  
driving wetness  
through my bones.  
  
and quiet nights  
of crystal calm  
that guard the gates  
of Winter's Home.

**By Bruce Mock**

Bruce Mock is a lifetime Oregonian and lives in Southeast Portland. He is the founder of Seven Years of Plenty, a charity dedicated to feeding the hungry and rooting out the causes of poverty. He writes poetry about what he loves.



Photo by Mike Aspros

**frozen pond, december eleventh**

we slid out onto the ice and stomped our feet,  
watching our reflections clear as glass  
grin back at us.  
we could fall through at any moment, we both knew,  
that was the hazardous joy of walking on water,  
and i remembered the simple strokes  
i practiced over the summer,  
but there was no need—

we danced. marvelous, to imagine yourself  
suspended over a habitat  
of fish and worms and quiet creeping things  
all sleeping at the bottom of the water;  
to remember this lake wobbly and dilute,  
to realize: i have conquered nature  
or perhaps she has let me into her arms...

we lay on our backs staring up at the sky,  
nothing but ice below us,  
nothing but the molecules of the world around us,  
and watched the clouds race the birds.

**By Larissa Pham**

Larissa Pham is young and foolish and very excited about a great number of things. She is a senior in high school at Oregon Episcopal School and writes poetry, makes artwork, and frolics round the Portland metro area upon many an occasion.



Photo by Andrew Bishop

**In The Garden**

Winter calls even the angels,  
first to the dark  
then the light,  
gently,  
preparing the soil,  
inciting buried  
seed, bulb and root  
to head up.

Let's head up.  
Let's wriggle and push our newness  
through the dark pages of  
December,  
of January, then  
into the transparent light of February,  
March.

Let's reach, pale green,  
out of all that is moist and  
necessary  
for that sweet smell of a  
lilac spring day,  
and meet the angels there.  
in the garden.  
laughing.

**By J. Waters**

Julianna Waters is a therapist and writer who lives in Portland with her husband, terrier and two cats. She's an award winning songwriter, co-founder of Heart and Hammer Music, and lives for long, slow walks in wild places. She can be reached through: <http://heartandhammer.com>



Photo by Julianna Waters

## Voices around town

*What positive changes have happened in your life this past year?*

Every day I try to emulate my Mom, who died two years ago at age 86. She always had a smile on her face, people liked her, she was a painter, she made dolls, always had something going on.

—Michael Cosentino  
Downtown Portland  
Portland, OR

I am proud of my efforts to bring attention to the importance of healthcare for everyone. Also, my only child Martha just turned 18, moved out on her own, and recently celebrated her year anniversary on-the-job. I am so proud of her!

—Martha Perez  
Pearl District  
Portland, Oregon

Through the very helpful advice of friends, my husband and I have been discovering how meditation can not only bring more peace to our life, but that it's also vital for our health. We are definitely planning to continue our meditation practice through 2010 and beyond.

—Angela Valdes  
Nob Hill neighborhood  
Portland, Oregon

By being creative and flexible and by expanding my business to include landscape maintenance as well as design work, it has grown substantially this past year!

—Karla Kramer  
Cedar Hills neighborhood  
Beaverton, Oregon

My wife and I have gotten to spend more time together this past year.

—Robert  
Pearl District  
Portland, Oregon

I learned to listen to my gut and keep believing in people's goodness. I now listen past the words and keep watching for the good to come out of people instead of being turned off by difficult events.

—Rebecca Whetstone  
West Portland Park neighborhood  
Portland, Oregon

A really great positive change for me this year was learning and working with a holistic process for support of well-being on all levels.

—Barbara Gerke  
Sellwood neighborhood  
Portland, OR

I completed the habitat restoration grant and project that I started a couple of years ago and am enjoying watching the 1100 plants and trees growing all over our little woodland and oak savannah area.

—Cindy  
Sauvie Island  
Portland, Oregon

### Read to the Dogs

*Continued from page 1*

other 11, including Wally, entered the guide dog Career Change Program. When Alan and his wife Lynn Davis adopted Wally at age two, they made a commitment to keep him involved in some type of community service. Alan thought he would like to volunteer at the children's hospital, but the requirements for the program were incompatible with his and Lynn's work schedules. Then he heard about DoveLewis' Read to the Dogs Program. He loved the idea.

"I'm a library geek," says Alan. "I love to read, and the Belmont Library is close enough for Wally and I to walk."

The pair attended training at DoveLewis to certify Wally as a therapy dog. He was tested on his ability to sit quietly, engage gently with a variety of ages and personalities of people, and tolerate occasional rough handling in a chaotic environment. Wally passed with flying colors.



Photo by Robert Holcomb

**Eight-year-old Lupita Englander practices her reading skills by reading out loud to Wally, a trained therapy dog, and his handler Alan Mitchell at the Belmont Public Library.**

The award-winning Read to the Dogs Program provides a relaxed environment and nonjudgmental listeners for children learning to read aloud. Research shows that being in the presence of a dog decreases physiological stress. The mere presence of a dog can moderate cardiovascular responses such as blood pressure and rate of respiration. The ability of dogs to use facial cues in human attention creates a sense of social support. Sociological studies in the late seventies showed that therapy dogs acted as catalysts to smooth social encounters by providing support and nurturance with eye contact, friendly licks, and a willingness to be held and petted.

Other studies have shown that reading aloud to peers increases stress in early readers because children fear being judged by their peers and evaluated aloud by adults. In such cases, children may become avoidant readers. But unlike peers, dogs never tease or belittle readers. The child always knows more than the dog about the book being read. This provides an opportunity for the child to be the one who knows most. It is an opportunity, says program director Heather Toland, for children to "be a star."

According to Heather, DoveLewis has about 40 active Read to the Dog teams in the Portland area, serving 12 library branches and a handful of elementary schools. The teams operate through the generosity of donations to provide training, printed materials, screening and certification testing of dogs. Multnomah County Library covers the cost of T-shirts, bandanas, bookmarks, appointment cards, and reading certificates. The program started in June 2001, based on a model from the Salt Lake City area.

In 2009, Literary Arts awarded DoveLewis' Read to the Dogs Program the Walt Morey Young Readers Literary Legacy Award for their encouragement to emerging readers.

For reluctant readers, the experience can provide the confidence they need to overcome their fear of reading aloud. Alan enjoys seeing readers return with their improving skills. They will often be shy during a first reading, but by the second or third, Alan says, they are showing Wally pictures or whispering in his ear.

The Belmont Public Library provides a comfortable corner in the children's room with two beanbag chairs—one for Alan and

one for the child—and a space for Wally to curl up and listen. Students sign up beforehand for a 25 minute reading session. They receive appointment cards with a photo of Wally to help them remember their special time.

Lili Morrisey is an 11-year-old student at Childpeace Montessori in Portland. She has read to Wally several times. For this Saturday, she chose three favorite books from home.

"Lili is such an expressive reader," according to Alan. Wally seemed most attentive when Lili read *Martha and Skits* by Susan Meddaugh, a story about a talking dog whose baby brother yearns to emulate her older sister's talent for human speech. The best thing about reading to Wally, says Lili, is that "he always listens."

Eight-year-old Lupita Englander selected books in the library for her Wally time. One of the books she chose to read was a Lemony Snickett tale: *The Larke Who Couldn't Stop Screaming: A Christmas Story*. Alan was impressed at Lupita's ability to read this complex story about a potato pancake that takes its fate into its own hands.

"This was a challenging book," says Alan, who intermittently stopped to help Lupita sound out a difficult word.

Asked how it feels to read to Wally, Lupita responds, "It feels nice and calm."

When Alan is not listening with Wally at the Belmont Library, he volunteers as a hearings officer for the Multnomah County Animal Services agency. His favorite books to read are science fiction. Wally doesn't have a favorite genre. He spends his non-library days at Alan's office and occasionally at doggy day care where he romps with friends. One afternoon on a walk, Wally met Lupita's dog Rosie. The dogs sniffed a bit, but did not talk books. It was Wally's day off.

*Children can read to a dog at Multnomah County Libraries by registering for an appointment in advance. Dates, times, and locations are available at <http://multcolib.org/events/readdogs.html> or call your local branch.*

*For info about participating in the Read to the Dogs Program, contact Heather Toland at 971-255-5910 or visit them online at [http://dovelewis.org/programs/Read\\_To\\_Dogs.aspx](http://dovelewis.org/programs/Read_To_Dogs.aspx).*

*To find out more about adopting a career change guide dog, go to [http://guidedogs.com/site/PageServer?pagename=program\\_dog\\_adoption](http://guidedogs.com/site/PageServer?pagename=program_dog_adoption) or call 800-295-4050.*

*Deb Stone is a freelance writer from Beavercreek, Oregon, whose work has appeared in *The Oregonian*, *The Portland Tribune*, *Asylum*, *Oregon Gourmet Foods*, *Poetic Voices*, *Kid-Bits* and *Willamette Writers*.*

**The Read to the Dogs Program provides a relaxed atmosphere where students like 11-year-old Lili Morrisey can develop their reading skills.**



Photo by Robert Holcomb

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# Encouraging mistakes to find the creativity within

## *Art teacher creates a safe place for budding artists to develop their talents*

By Nancy Turner  
*The Portland Upside*

**M**ost of us go through life wanting to do things right. Right? Practice makes perfect? Fake it 'til you make it? If at first you don't succeed, try, try again?

Imagine a teacher who says, "Do it wrong! Make the ugliest picture you can possibly make. No, make something uglier, more ugly!"

For over thirty years, Deanne Belinoff has taught art in many settings, including Pratt Art Center, Dale Chihuly's Seniors Making Art Program, and her own Creative Process Workshops. For the past two years she has been teaching groups of five or six students in her studio on an unassuming residential corner in Northeast Portland where she transformed a garage into a sky-lit art studio for herself, and space for others to express their inherent creativity. The sign on the studio wall says, "Be open to accidents!"

I recently attended an art show of Deanne's students' work. She is a wizard at moving people through their fears of creating, and I wanted to learn how she does it.

Long, waist-high tables are lined with white paper. Shelves crammed with tubes of paints, brushes, glue, scissors, and scraps, fill the spaces below. Beginning students as well as those with years of experience in visual art get involved in projects that honor their individual propensities and pace. Lessons include everything from acrylic portrait painting to a bit of art history. Everyone gets the chance to observe his or her own art process.

Deanne believes the best art, like the best science, leaves room for accidents. Even discovering the polio vaccine was not a planned project. The trick is to delight in surprises and know how to use the unexpected. One student, a 45-year-old

mother with a baby at home went from tedious work on her PhD in Medieval Literature to drawing huge scribbles, reminiscent of Jackson Pollack's paintings, on two-by-six-foot paper. Eleanor Gallay, a social worker, focused on printmaking. Andrea Vargo, a petite psychotherapist, created sensitive, detailed drawings of flowers and gourds. A professional gardener, Stephanie Turner, explored new territory through acrylic painting of landscapes. One of her paintings sold at the student exhibition.

Some art is created to make social and political statements. Stacked on a side table I spy a pile of white "bones." Deanne's students constructed larger-than-life papier-mâché replicas of human skeletal pieces to send, each with a five dollar donation, to the One Million Bones fundraiser in Albuquerque, New Mexico. One Million Bones is an art installation designed to raise awareness and funds for the millions of victims killed or displaced by ongoing genocide around the world.

In the safe environment of a class where there is no reprimand for making a mistake, success comes early and easily. Students become more aware of their opportunities for exploration. Ragan Lusk, a CPA-turned-carpenter, became a quick learner in drawing figures. Rex Brasard, an engineer accustomed to detailed, precise work, jumped into a series of abstract paintings.

When a person goes beyond their fear of making mistakes they have the freedom to take a blank piece of paper and transform it into art. When this happens, who knows what else in their life might change? Deanne and her intrepid students stay open to any possibility.

### Do it wrong!

**M**ake the ugliest picture you can possibly make. No, make something uglier, more ugly!



Deanne Belinoff may be reached at [Deanne@xprt.net](mailto:Deanne@xprt.net) or by calling her at 503-281-9521. Visit her website at <http://DeanneBelinoff.com>

Nancy Turner lives in Happy Valley but her heart dwells in Portland. She writes non-fiction and teaches story telling and dream interpretation. She can be contacted at [nturner@easystreet.net](mailto:nturner@easystreet.net)



Photos courtesy of Deanne Belinoff

**S**tudents in Deanne Belinoff's art classes move through their fears of creating by leaving room for accidents, delighting in surprises and learning how to use the unexpected.



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## Small group, small seeds, large impact

By CJ Mead  
*The Portland Upside*

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."*

—Margaret Mead

Last month a U.S. Department of Agriculture study reported Oregon second on the list of hungriest states in the nation, claiming that 13 per cent of its families struggle to put food on the table. Certainly there is work to be done to help feed the state's hungry, and we are in need of more than a band-aid on this problem.

The American Center for Sustainability (ACS), led by Ken Burrow and Frankie Leigh, has an answer.

ACS believes in developing a more sustainable local food web across Oregon by mobilizing communities to produce local and healthy food. In 2007 ACS began its Plant Project, a garden plant distribution program that donates edible plant starts to help battle hunger in communities from Portland to Pendleton.

Katherine Loeck of Utopia Community Garden says about ACS, "because the majority of our gardeners are low-income community members, this project allowed them to access plant starts that they would not have been able to afford otherwise."

ACS distributes traditional edible starts such as lettuce, tomatoes, onions, melons, and peppers; fruits like watermelon and strawberry; as well as herbs such as oregano, basil, and sage. ACS also donates starts that serve as beneficial insect attractants to promote successful fruition.

Sheryl Casteen from Planting Seeds of Change in Lebanon, Oregon, celebrates the locally-based humanitarian mission.

"[ACS] gave us the opportunity to offer plants to people that would not have otherwise been able to afford them, feed their families, and teach the children in several schools about vegetables," she says.

Since its inception ACS has distributed over 115,000

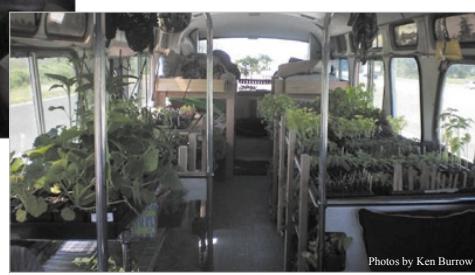
plant starts, helping community gardens, food pantries, and demonstration gardens overcome obstacles and dwindling resources to start thriving garden spaces. By collaborating with local nonprofit educational garden projects, ACS is able to spur local food webs rooted in volunteerism.

ACS meets its altruistic goals entirely by volunteer hands. In the spring of 2009, 12 volunteers sowed over 75,000 seeds and produced an estimated 60,000 plants to be donated to feed local communities. Those 12 individuals benefited more than 35 different plant recipients all over Oregon, including the Oregon Food Bank Learning Gardens in

**Frank Rodzwic (left) and Frankie Leigh in the ACS bus used for the "Garden Stimulus Tour" in 2009 to distribute over 60,000 plant starts to community gardens around Oregon.**



Portland, Dalles Imagination Garden and Utopia Community Garden in The Dalles, Bunker Hill School in Coos Bay, Plant a Row for the Hungry in Benton County, and Planting Seeds of Change in Lebanon.



Photos by Ken Burrow

By engaging in annual planting projects or helping distribute plants, this people-powered agency gives local citizens a chance to become involved in moving Oregon from the top of the list of hungriest states.

Recently members of the Portland community came out to support ACS at the Abundant Harvest Celebration held at the EastBurn restaurant, where members of the community learned about ACS plant projects and sustainable practices, and enjoyed music from the local bands Tapwater and Cow Paddy Stompers. The fundraiser enabled ACS to begin propagating thousands more plants for this coming spring in order to continue providing Oregonians access to their own local food web.

While ACS is indubitably a small group of thoughtful committed citizens, its work is changing the lives of hungry Oregonians.

Charlotte Link of Dalles Imagination Garden sums it up, "because of ACS, more Oregonians had food on the table for themselves and their family."

*For more info, visit <http://sustainableshift.org>, call 503-460-7136 or email [plants@sustainableshift.org](mailto:plants@sustainableshift.org)*

*CJ Mead believes when surrounded by positive people amazing things happen, seeing this firsthand in his youth-development work for Portland nonprofits. He is currently working on a Masters in Education at Lewis and Clark College.*

### Anthropology

*Continued from page 3*

While we usually assume that anthropologists only teach in colleges and universities, most actually work outside academia. In the medical field, one PSU graduate is employed by Oregon Health Sciences University (OHSU) to study the effects of race on doctor-patient relationships. Another works at Intel to help the company understand the use of technology in second homes in Russia, Australia, France and the United States.

A windmill company has also hired an anthropologist to

study the environmental and cultural impacts of wind farms on Native American archaeological and religious sites. In such situations, anthropologists help to mitigate environmental and cultural impacts before wind farms are built.

Here in Portland, as in many places around the globe, PSU anthropologists apply their insights and tools to a wide variety of problems in medicine, business, technology, and the environment, as well as in social and public services. Clearly, Portland State University's community-based research provides tangible results to many diverse local populations and proves just how practical anthropology can be.

*For more information about anthropology at PSU, go to <http://anthropology.pdx.edu>, call 503-725-3081 or contact Kenneth Ames at [amesk@pdx.edu](mailto:amesk@pdx.edu)*

*Faye Powell is a retired university librarian with an M.A. in anthropology. Contact her at [phaysee1@gmail.com](mailto:phaysee1@gmail.com)*

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# The Portland Upside

positive people, positive stories

December 2009 / Complimentary

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## Freedom for dogs, one fence at a time

*New Portland organization builds fences to increase happiness for owners and their dogs*



Noah, a beagle mix, proudly surveys his newly fenced-in backyard domain.

By Nikki Jardin  
*The Portland Upside*

The beagle mix is all tongue, tail and paws as he pivots and jumps, greeting the volunteers who arrive at the sedate Gladstone neighborhood on a Saturday morning. The dog stands on two back legs and happily licks the face of anyone who gets within range. Today Noah's reach is hampered by a tether attached to a clothesline, his restriction highlighted by the well worn path beneath him.

People arrive to participate in a recently formed volunteer group called Fences For Fido (FFF), a nonprofit dedicated to relieving chained dogs of an isolating and unhappy existence. The group provides the materials and labor to erect perimeter fences around an owner's property so that a dog may run freely.

This morning Noah is getting a fence, a doghouse and plenty of tender loving care from volunteers willing to sit nearby while activity buzzes around him.

One group pounds slender metal bars while others unroll and cut fencing wire. Three of the organizers discuss whether Noah is a "digger" and whether ground fencing might prevent him from escaping. Since many of the volunteers have been to a number of "builds" already, the operation moves smoothly, and the workers easily make themselves useful. First-timers are greeted warmly and immediately put to work.



After a day of building a fence, Fences For Fido volunteers bask in the happiness of a newly unchained dog.

Michelle Rouse, who drove from Beaverton this morning, heard about the organization from a local news broadcast. She called the group to report a dog she had seen chained in an unsuitable environment.

"This dog had no shade, no shelter, nothing. I called FFF and they went over that night to talk to the owner. I was floored that they would care that much. I helped build that fence and was hooked. It's fabulous, some of these dogs have never been off chains and you can see their pure joy when they are let go. I feel like we are the voice for those who can't speak."

FFF began last May when a friend spoke to Andrea Kozil about a chained dog she passed daily. She felt the dog's suffering but didn't know what she could do. Kozil, who works for the Humane Society of the United States, approached the

*Continued on page 7*

## From caring hands to children's shelves

*Volunteers at the Children's Book Bank distribute books to kids in need*

By Rebecca Ok  
*The Portland Upside*

A bell rings to announce the beginning of the lunch break. The once-quiet school halls erupt with the excited sounds of young children. In the gym, staff and volunteers from the Children's Book Bank wait for the afternoon Head Start preschool classes to emerge from the blissful chaos in the halls. A few teachers arrive, their students following them in lines, for the special assembly. The students sit down in front of an impressive row of tote bags full of new and gently-used children's books.

After a brief talk, the adults divide 60 bright-eyed students into four groups for story time with volunteer readers. Two of the volunteers, Tony Manus and George Josten of the Portland Timbers soccer team, read such children's classics as *If You Give a Moose a Muffin* and *If You Give a Pig a Pancake* to the rapt preschoolers.

When story time is over, each student receives a tote bag filled with 15 community-donated books to take home. The children are given time to explore the contents of their tote bags. They pull out alphabet books and counting books. They flip through animal books and look in awe at complexly constructed pop-up books.

They show their books to their friends, pointing out gorillas and princesses. They laugh at dogs wearing hats and cows in pajamas. Occasionally, a triumphant squeal can be heard, announcing the discovery of a hoped-for book.

The book delivery at the Clark Head Start site at the Creative Science School on Southeast 92nd Avenue was one of several the Children's Book Bank made on October 20. On that day, this new and growing organization distributed 780 tote bags filled with 11,700 community-donated books to all eight Portland Public Schools Head Start preschools. More than just children's books, the bags

*Continued on page 3*

**Portland Head Start students take delight in exploring their bags full of community-donated books which they now proudly own.**



Photo by Rebecca Ok

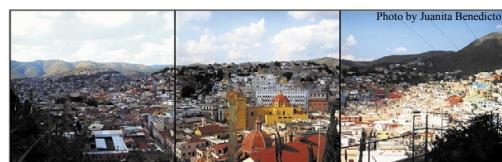


Photo by Juanita Benedicto

## Winter sunshine

*Portlander finds warmth by following the story of a former Oregonian now living in Mexico*

By Karen Munro  
*The Portland Upside*

Every weekday, like many other Portlanders, I sheath myself in layers of Gore-tex and nylon and ride my bike to work. In winter my ride is cold and wet, grey and windy. I thread my way around puddles and try not to mind the icy rivulets running down my collar and into my shoes. Oregon in winter is a soggy place, and here in Portland we can go days or weeks without seeing the sun.

But there's a little bit of sunshine waiting in my office. When I get in I towel off, fire up my computer, and point it to my blog reader, where *El Sur Experiment* tops my most-read list. There I might see a whimsical picture of a row of ceramic alligators in cowboy hats, a panoramic shot of the rooftops of a sun-drenched colonial city, or a portrait of a young girl walking alone through a courtyard, solemnly reading a picture book. Either way, I feel like my office just got a new window and a little more daylight.

*El Sur Experiment* is the photожournal of Juanita Benedicto, a former Oregonian who started remaking her life in 2004. While working full-time as an academic librarian and raising two daughters solo, Juanita began training for a new career as a massage therapist. During her summer breaks she traveled to Guanajuato, Mexico, to volunteer at Buen Pastor, a convent that assists poor, exploited, and marginalized women and children. Juanita started offering compassion, encouragement, education, and massage therapy to Buen

*Continued on page 8*

## Mother, comedian Jacki Kane gives parents TIME OUT

**By Jillian Starr**  
*The Portland Upside*

If Ellen DeGeneres' and Steven Wright's comedy had a baby, and the baby grew up to be a mother of two, it would be Jacki Kane. With self-deprecating humor and a big heart, she manages, produces and emcees "TIME OUT: The Mother of All Comedies," a local show that invites others to take the stage and share in the grand comedy that is parenthood.

Last month at Northeast Portland's Curious Comedy Theatre, Jacki joked about being a mom, a cougar, and growing up Catholic. Her comedy presence creates a comfortable, familiar atmosphere, like proudly watching your best friend perform. Welcoming six other mothers to the stage, it's obvious she loves to share the spotlight with parents who see the laughter in their own lives.

Women like Nicole McKinney clearly agree that parenting requires humor. She joked about insurance policies for kids' cell phones, asking the hilariously simple question "Did our moms ever call up State Farm to insure bikes and roller skates?"

Wendy Bax spoke of turning the food pyramid into a ranch-style house and Betsy Kauffman explained why Jewish people never see Bigfoot—"they would if he went to the half-yearly sale at Nordstrom's!"

Looking at the theatre's full house, it's hard to believe TIME OUT started as scribbles on scraps of paper tucked absentmindedly throughout Jacki's home. When the jokes outnumbered toddler crumbs, she debuted her new material during open mic at the family-friendly Airplay Cafe. A group of moms fell off the couch laughing, and at that moment she knew her honest comedy about child rearing resonated strongly with other parents. She immediately set up a meeting with the owner of the cafe and created her first TIME OUT show.

In January 2009, a crowd of about 80 parents buzzed with anticipation, wanting to laugh about the horrors of the holidays. The energized atmosphere—support group meets mom's night out—allowed for regular moms to take the stage and speak comically about Thanksgiving Day childbirth, projectile turkey vomit and other holiday plans gone awry.

Since that first show, Jacki has performed monthly in Portland, Beaverton and Vancouver.

Shows feature monthly themes such as "Extreme Makeover Mom Edition" and "Honey I Shrunk My Libido." Parent-comics joke freely about everything from diet plans to vasectomies. Local parenting businesses have lent support and performances have drawn standing-room-only audiences.

TIME OUT has attracted a diversity of performers including single moms, lesbian moms, moms with eight children, stay-at-home moms, entrepreneurs, dads and grandparents. Many performers are brand new to the stage while others have been professionally trained in acting, writing or stand-up. They go on stage because it's a supportive way to joke about parenthood, because they're trying to step back into a world of creativity and humor after having children, or be-



**At the recent TIME OUT comedy show "Guess Who's Messing Up Dinner," Jacki Kane (top) worries her kids won't know the meaning of a wildly dysfunctional holiday; Betsy Kauffman (right) talks about werewolves in Wisconsin; Wendy Bax (bottom) discusses her Thanksgiving involves a Snickers salad...with apples; and Jillian Starr (left) gives "Turducken" an all new meaning.**

cause they welcome any excuse to get out of the house.

Kristina Martin, mother of three and former high school teacher, does the show to keep her sanity. She loves finding humor in all the nutty things that go hand-in-hand with parenting and she reports that surrounding herself with laughter makes her kids laugh, too.

Beren deMotier, mother of three and author of *The Brides of March*, finds the applause from the audience highly rewarding because her work as a writer is spent isolated, "hiding out in the basement trying to be funny."

Debby Dodds, a professionally trained actress and improv artist, found TIME OUT to be the perfect way to step back into performing after her daughter was born.

Jacki herself logged three years of stand up comedy in Atlanta as well as writing comedy for television, advertising and radio before moving to Portland and slowing it all down to become a mother.

"After spending way too many hours wiping things, it's really all about claiming something for yourself," she says.

And what better way to self-nurture than to find the humor in life and make others happy?

Audience members find relief in laughing about the reality of parenthood. There are no airbrushed Hollywood parenting stories here, no nerve-wracking news reports, but rather a comical back-fence atmosphere of neighbor relating to neighbor, mama to mama.

One woman touched Jacki's arm after the show and said, "Thank you for showing me there's something more."

In the isolation of homes, parents may not realize the bond they share with others, how common their own stories are. Fatigue, toddler tantrums, and the challenge of balancing roles within work, family and the home can throw anyone off kilter. No wonder straightforward parenting sitcoms like *Roseanne*, *Everybody Loves Raymond* and *Modern Family* are so popular. Many relate to the humor in everyday family situations and laughing is a great stress release.

Jacki might be a bit sadistic tackling two of the hardest jobs: mother and female stand-up comic. Yet she good-naturedly acknowledges the challenges. She laughs about the time she was introduced at a comedy club as "that middle-aged lady" by a man who was older and in desperate need of a man bra. And she readily admits that if there were a job application for parents, she definitely wouldn't get hired.

Still, her two professions complement each other well. Her life is fodder for her comedy and her comedy is the creative outlet essential to her success as a mom. Hell-bent on turning TIME OUT into a show that continually fosters camaraderie among parents while not relying on thoughtless "blue" comedy, she's determined to guide the show toward continued success.

Long term, Jacki wants to use the shows to assist moms in need as well as to establish a foundation for mothers who are struggling writers. Given all that Jacki can accomplish in a year, it will be exciting to watch TIME OUT prosper.

For event schedules and more info about TIME OUT, see <http://jackikane.wordpress.com> or contact Jacki at 503-704-5737 or [kane.jacki@gmail.com](mailto:kane.jacki@gmail.com)

Jillian Starr writes screenplays, poems and personal essays and is a proud member of TIME OUT's board of directors. You can learn more about her at <http://jillianstarr.com>

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## From the editors

By Sara & Rob Bednark  
*The Portland Upside*

**T**hey say "a picture's worth a thousand words," and while that's true, one can never replace the other. Photos complement stories as much as stories complement photos.

Rebecca Ok's article about Children's Book Bank, (*From Caring Hands to Children's Shelves*, p. 1) and their Oct.

20 distribution of 780 book bags takes us to the school gym where eager pre-schoolers explore the wonders of books they now own. Rebecca's accompanying photos let us see some of the curious faces that will benefit from the organization's caring volunteers.

Nicole Morales (*Coming Soon: Kids, Coffee & Community at Café au Play*, p. 4) follows the years of planning and hard work put in by Kristin Heying and other community volunteers to bring life to Café au Play. The before and after photos help us appreciate how much change has taken place on the Tabor Commons site.

Building a fence never sounded so fun and rewarding until we read Nikki Jardin's article (*Freedom for Dogs, One Fence at a Time*, p. 1). The photos by

David Childs of Noah running along the fence, reveling in his new untethered freedom, captures the spirit of why the Fences For Fido volunteers do what they do.

Perhaps when looking at the photos from past issues (*A Look Back at Our First Seven Issues*, p. 5) you'll be inspired to go to our website and read some of the articles that you've missed. If you've already read them all, we hope the photos will remind you that Portland is full of people doing wonderful things to help others in the community.

Happy holidays!

Sara & Rob

### Children's Book Bank

*Continued from page 1*

contained promises of a better future.

The October distribution culminates two years of work by the Children's Book Bank. Founder Danielle Swope first became interested in improving literacy among low-income children while serving with Teach for America as a high school math teacher in the early '90s.

Danielle says she "was surprised to find that the most significant obstacle to teaching math was that my students' reading skills were so limited."

This experience, in addition to startling statistics regarding the barriers to education faced by low-income children, motivated Danielle to create the Children's Book Bank in Portland.

Book distributions are the final step in the process of closing the book gap. The term "book gap" refers to the astonishing fact that in middle and upper-income neighborhoods, the ratio of books to children is 13 books for every child. In low-income neighborhoods, on the other hand, the ratio is one book for every 300 children.

Kindergarten teacher Melanie Reaves affirms, "the most important thing to do to ensure a child will be a life-long reader is to read aloud to them."

The lack of age-appropriate reading material robs low-income children of the opportunity to develop pre-reading skills before entering kindergarten. The result, Danielle says, is that low-income children "arrive in kindergarten lacking the foundational literacy skills on which to build their future educations" and have to play catch-up with their middle- and upper-income peers.

In order to eliminate the book gap and its adverse effects, the Children's Book Bank facilitates the collection of books that children have outgrown and the subsequent distribution to children in need.

In addition to containing promises of a better future, each tote bag of books represents the dedication of many community members. Book distributions are only one part of the process of getting books into the hands of low-income children. As a nonprofit organization, the Children's Book Bank relies on the participation of a large network of volunteers to achieve its goal.

Volunteers are essential to every part of the process. They organize book drives in their schools, congregations, businesses, and other organizations. Individuals from the community donate the books their own children have outgrown. Groups of volunteers come to the book bank several times a week to clean, sort and bundle the donated books. By the time of distribution, each book has been touched by many caring hands from the Portland community.

According to Danielle, the Children's Book Bank began with a small mission and a big dream.

"I only thought we'd be able to help a few children," she says.

The October 20 distribution shows, however, how dramatically this young organization has exceeded even its own expectations. Community response has been so overwhelming that the Children's Book Bank was able to help a few children and then some.

Allison Yoshiwara, Portland Public School Head Start Educational Supervisor, reports, "the children are absolutely thrilled to have books they can keep."

Such response has enabled the Children's Book Bank to dream bigger. The organization hopes to expand distribution to other sites in the near future. Each book donated, each volunteer, and each child who goes home with a bag of books under

his arm, realizes a part of the dream of greater educational success for low-income children in the Portland community.

*The Children's Book Bank is located at 1728 NE Glisan Street, Portland, and online at <http://childrensbookbank.org>. Contact them by email at [info@childrensbookbank.org](mailto:info@childrensbookbank.org) or by phone at 503-753-4809.*

*Rebecca Ok is a recent Reed College graduate seeking to make sense of post-college life through children's literature. She can be contacted via email at [rebecca@childrensbookbank.org](mailto:rebecca@childrensbookbank.org).*

**On Oct. 20, the Children's Book Bank distributed 11,700 community-donated books to eager readers in all eight Portland Public School's Head Start preschools.**



# The Portland Upside

positive people, positive stories

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## Coming soon: kids, coffee & community at Café au Play

**By Nicole Morales**  
*The Portland Upside*

The vision: a nonprofit coffeehouse with plenty of play space for the kids as well as a place where parents can socialize or join community-run sessions about easy, tasty treats for the whole family. Students, honored citizens, and parents alike would be encouraged to interact via gardening activities, story time, budgeting classes, and yoga. Is this all possible under the same roof?

Kristin Heying definitely thinks so. She and two other mothers imagined a family-oriented coffeehouse when her daughter, Sophie, was only three. At that time, she and the other moms attempted to hang out at their local coffee spots. At every meeting, they got the feeling they just weren't jiving with the coffeehouse atmosphere: solos on laptops, couples in conversation, people-watchers, and baristas behind the counters trying to ignore their children.

Seven years in the planning, Café au Play will open this spring. In keeping with the family theme, her own father, Charles Heying, fully supports the idea and continues to help plan, organize, and renovate. He initially suggested it be a nonprofit enterprise.

Come early next year, families will have their own place to mingle among Portland's rich coffee house scene. Café au Play will offer ample opportunities to build community within a safe and diverse multigenerational setting.

In the three years leading up to the café's opening, Kristin and team have been busy with renovations at the former ill-reputed Drive Thru Wake Up Deli building at 5633 SE Division St. in Portland's Mount Tabor neighborhood. Today, the site is known as Tabor Commons, a project of the Southeast Uplift Neighborhood Coalition (SEUL).

Altogether, over 75 board members, volunteers, and others have been involved in the Tabor Commons site renovation. There are countless community supporters who have followed the Café au Play story since its beginning, 700 readers alone, via the café's listserv. Moreover, an estimated 25 local business owners, professionals, community groups, and artists have donated materials, reduced fees, or lent expertise.

Café au Play's business plan is unique in three ways: it formed a partnership with the organizers of Tabor Com-

mons, a community-owned building; it combines the coffeehouse air with the helping hands of a community resource center; its programs and services are patron-directed.

A true hybrid, the café will sustain itself through coffee bar sales while simultaneously offering a welcoming space for people with children and others looking to get involved in their community.

**An old drive-thru (right) is being transformed into Café au Play at Tabor Commons (below), an inviting community space and nonprofit coffeehouse on SE Division and 56th Ave., scheduled to open Spring 2010.**



Photos courtesy of Kristin Heying

*Looking to get involved and show your support? Start off by visiting the Tabor Commons Café au Play site on the northeast corner of Southeast 57th and Division during the Jingle Mingle Holiday Sale open weekends from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. until Dec. 20.*

*Also visit <http://cafeauplay.org> for more information about the café including volunteering opportunities, a photo gallery, and a calendar.*

Nicole strives to connect people via multicultural education and writing. She teaches ESL at a private university outside of Portland and welcomes your inquiries at [nmorales.writes@gmail.com](mailto:nmorales.writes@gmail.com)

**Kristin Heying, co-founder of Café au Play, believes the kid-friendly coffeehouse and resource center will provide a support system that many families need.**



Photo by Nicole Morales

In Stephen Frey's article *Portlander Sparks Hope in African Village* from the November issue, the term "villager" was added during our editing process. We were unaware that this term is sometimes used disparagingly and certainly did not intend it this way. We apologize to Stephen and our readers for any misunderstanding.

—Sara & Rob Bedmark



Portland area resident Stephen Frey (center, standing) with Masai friends and team members in Kenya, Africa, launch the Village Possibilities Centre, an informational resource library.

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quadrangle neighborhood on a Saturday morning. The dog spurned off by the cheering group. He makes three lightning strikes on the grass. I am sure he is a good boy.

# The Portland Upside

positive people, positive stories

May-November 2009



Oct. '09: A passion for action at Springboard

## A look back at our first seven issues

<http://PortlandUpside.com>



Photo by Julie Kelly



Photo courtesy of Joan Dalton

June '09: Solutions at Project POOCH



Nov. '09: Crystal spreads music

May '09: Portland - My Home



Photo courtesy of The Pangaea Project



June '09: Mother adopts orphans



Photo by Daniel Dancer

May '09: Warriors for peace



July '09: Musical medicine from Children's Cancer Association



Aug. '09: Zadok's therapeutic fur



Photo by Michael Cook

Nov. '09: City Repair inspiring neighborhoods

either. As the smiling volunteers line the perimeter of the yard, they are eager for the best part of the day—

stated, people have begun to clean up the yard and organize the tools. Noah kindly organizes the volunteers who have

Sept. '09: Saturday Academy feeds minds



Photo courtesy of SA

# Green, healthy and friendly

*Owner's values show through at the Ladybug Organic Cafe and Bakery*

By Kathleen Gabriel  
*The Portland Upside*

**S**t. Johns, annexed to Portland in 1915, feels like a small town. Because of its geography, on the peninsula formed by the confluence of the Columbia and Willamette rivers, it feels more like a destination than a neighborhood.

Angel O'Brien had classmates who lived in St. Johns when she attended St. Mary's Academy as a girl. Four years ago when she decided to start the restaurant she'd wanted to own all her life, she remembered St. Johns. The just-right space with all windows on two walls happened to be for lease. Even gutted it had a good feeling to it. Since then Ladybug Organic Cafe has become a cornerstone in the revitalization of St. Johns.

Angel didn't set out to have an all-organic restaurant with environmentally-sound practices. She simply brought her personal philosophy to her business. She eats organic food at home, and she hasn't had garbage service in years. She couldn't see giving customers food that isn't raised organically, or generating garbage in her restaurant.

In April, Ladybug won the Business-

es for an Environmentally Sustainable

Tomorrow award.

While the average American produces over four pounds of garbage a day, Ladybug Cafe, full of happy eaters eleven hours a day, generates only about eight pounds per week. You won't find a trash receptacle in the dining room, because they reuse, recycle and compost everything possible. Menus are made of organic paper and left at the counter. They offer nice, soft handmade cotton napkins. All of their to-go cups and straws are made of compostable plastic.

Ladybug Organic Cafe and Bakery is on Lombard Street at the intersection with Leavitt, just a few blocks from the famous St. Johns Bridge. The sign reads Ladybug Organic Coffee Company. Angel plans to change it, however, so that people know

to expect more than coffee. Ladybug bakes all of their breads and pastries, using recipes from many sources. Some are Angel's family recipes, some are from cookbooks, and every employee has contributed something. Every recipe

has been tweaked in one way or another to make it unique. Each day they offer at least two kinds of handmade pie (Angel's take on a turnover), one filled with a savory vegetable and cheese combination, one filled with fruit. There are little peanut butter cookies for a quarter, and fruit-filled bar cookies.

Ladybug is a community gath-



Photos by Gregg Morris



**Angel O'Brien, owner of Ladybug Organic Cafe and Bakery in St. Johns, takes pride in serving an all-organic menu and producing the least amount of waste possible.**

ering place. Knitters meet in front of the big fireplace. Writers and students sit with their computers and free wi-fi, laughing, typing, and frowning at the screen. Young families play and talk. Roosevelt Campus had a Writers in the Schools reading at Ladybug two years in a row.

Local art adorns the walls and windows, with Angel, an accomplished photographer herself, contributing. A special art event in September and October showcased local artists in other St. Johns businesses, but Ladybug has art all year long.

Exhibits have included colorful art by the children of Serendipity School, Blue Moon Camera and Machine's annual customers' show, and Chris Clem's photography.

Sure Ladybug is about food, coffee and tea. It's also about people in their community.

Ladybug's people are hardworking, friendly and articulate. Would-be employees must complete

a job application five pages long, with ten essay questions written by Angel, such as "what is something you do on a regular basis to make the world a better place?" and "what is the most important thing you have ever learned, and how has it changed your life?" The New York Times ran an article last December about this unusually long application for a barista position.

It's easy to qualify as a customer, however. All you have to do is show up and let this fine little corner establishment take care of you.

*Ladybug Organic Cafe and Bakery is at 8438 N Lombard St., Portland. Find them online at <http://ladybugcoffee.com> or call 503-715-1006.*

*Kathleen Gabriel, a library clerk and novelist, is married to Gregg Morris, the photographer. They live with their two ferrets, their dog and granddog. They visit Ladybug frequently. Contact her at [KathyGab@gmail.com](mailto:KathyGab@gmail.com).*

## Voices around town

*What do you do for fun in the winter?*

I like to go for a walk in my neighborhood, cozy up by the fire, read a good book, drink some tea, and relax with my wife.

—Craig V.  
Woodstock neighborhood  
Portland, Oregon

I like to knit and watch movies.  
—Anonymous  
West Linn, Oregon

Anything that doesn't involve work, that gets my mind off of work and the economy and all that. Anything and everything that will keep me relaxed. I hang out with my friends, exercise, go fishing. I'm a big fan of the outdoors.

—Joe Edwards  
Beaverton, Oregon

I enjoy going outside. I used to jog, now I just like being in the outdoors. I collect wines and do a lot of wine hunting, so I go out to the wine countries. Oregon has wonderful Pinot Noirs.

—S. J. U.  
visiting Portland from the  
San Fernando Valley, Los Angeles,  
California

I like to build snowmen.  
—Heidi G., age 9  
Centennial neighborhood  
Portland, Oregon

I enjoy going cross-country skiing at Teacup Lake up by Mt. Hood.

—Suzi G.  
Centennial neighborhood  
Portland, Oregon

As a family we play board games and do video game marathons. We recently went and saw the new movie *A Christmas Carol* in 3-D which was fun.

—Morgan and Cori O.  
Forest Grove, Oregon

We like to take walks in the snow and pull our two little kids on sleds.

—Hillary Klump  
visiting Portland from  
Bellingham, Washington

I enjoy playing World of Warcraft, a multi-player online game. I also read books, and like to sit at home and listen to music.

—Anonymous  
Northwest neighborhood  
Portland, Oregon

For fun, I like to tap dance.  
—Kim  
Gearhart, Oregon

I like to team dance.  
—Alex, age 16  
Gearhart, Oregon

I enjoy playing basketball.  
—Mariah, age 14  
Gearhart, Oregon

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**Fences For Fido**  
*Continued from page 1*

owner of the house and asked if he would allow her to build a fence so that his dog could be let off the chain. Fences For Fido was born.

Andrea, along with colleague Kelly Peterson, began recruiting friends and asking for donations from local companies. They estimated building about one fence a month. Twelve fences later they have a waiting list and weekly projects stretching from St. Helens to Salem.

The original inspiration came from a group in North Carolina, The Coalition to Unchain Dogs, which builds several fences a week for dogs in that state. A group from the coalition came to help FFF on their first build and to offer tips on how to get the job done most efficiently.

As more regular volunteers show up for the weekly fence builds, the work has become faster and more manageable. Andrea's friend, Vince Baker, became hooked after building the first fence and hasn't missed one since. Vince has become the de facto crew leader, a claim he shirks off with a humble smile. But he becomes animated and sincere when talking about his first experience.

"That first build was the ideal situation. Here's this dog, six years on a chain and we go in and build this fence. After that, the owner cleaned up the backyard, set up his barbecue and starting spending time back there with his dog. And that's what we hope for: that the fence improves the lives of the entire family. That was a perfect example of how people can see that there is a different way of interacting with their pets."

Dogs are pack animals by nature and are normally friendly and gregarious. Years on a chain can wear a dog down psychologically, making them unhappy, anxious or aggressive. FFF gently educates owners on the importance of interacting

It takes him just a moment to feel his freedom and he bursts into a run, spurred on by the cheering group. He makes three lightning speed laps around the yard and then stands, tongue lolling, to admire his new domain.

with their animal by visiting with them, walking them and taking care of basic health needs.

Michelle Blake, FFF coordinator in Salem, says, "We really try to educate people about their dog's need for companionship. When chained, they are so desperate for attention that they are obnoxious and it becomes hard to spend time with them. The fences do seem to make a difference in people's relationship with their dogs."

The fence is nearly complete, just a gate left to be installed. People have begun to clean up the yard and organize the tools. Noah happily engages the volunteers, who hang out with him in tether-range while he checks out his new doghouse, a custom-made insulated model with straw bedding and a covered deck.

Noah's owners come into the yard and quietly observe the hustle and bustle with a mixture of awe and satisfaction. In many cases, dog owners want to do right by their pets but can't afford to offer a better solution than a chain. Indeed, this couple is grateful for the assistance.

"I think it's absolutely wonderful," says Angela, Noah's owner. "We've been wanting to do this but couldn't pull it off financially. It pulled at our heartstrings this past year, having him like this. We actually thought about giving him up to a better home."

The moment has arrived for Noah to be released from his tether. As the smiling volunteers line the perimeter of the yard, they are eager for the best part of the day.

Andrea bends down and calls Noah to her. He trots over and she deftly releases the tether from his collar. It takes him just a moment to feel his freedom and he bursts into a run, spurred on by the cheering group. He makes three lightning speed laps around the yard and then stands, tongue lolling, to admire his new domain. In a moment that seems scripted, he leaps onto the top of his doghouse and stands proud and happy, even posing for a few pictures.

While the crew clears out, the family's children come into the yard. Along with their parents, they begin running and playing with Noah. An-



Photo by David Childs

**Since forming in May of this year, volunteer organization Fences For Fido has built fences for 12 dogs that are now untethered.**

drea looks on, pleased by the success of this build.

"It's great when you see the family really get inspired about their dog. They see a side of Noah now that they've never seen before. This is a way to bridge a gap and help nourish the relationship between dog and family. That's why we're here."

*For more info about Fences For Fido, visit their website, <http://fencesforfido.org>. Contact them at [info@FencesForFido.org](mailto:info@FencesForFido.org)*

*Nikki Jardin has written for The Oregonian, Street Roots and the recently launched id Magazine. She lives in Southeast Portland and is continually impressed and inspired by the creativity and gumption of her neighbors and friends.*

**Noah exuberantly explores the freedom offered by his newly fenced in backyard.**



Photo by David Childs

**Have an idea for an article you'd like to write for The Portland Upside?**

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*Hope and healing beyond traditional therapy*

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## Submission of the month

Send us your photo, doodle, cartoon, poem, haiku, drawing, artwork, essay, quote, etc.; something that you find positive. Email it to [editors@portlandupside.com](mailto:editors@portlandupside.com) or mail it to us by December 20.

One or more submissions will be chosen to appear in the January issue of The Portland Upside. Please include your name, email address and phone number in case we need to contact you.

## Winter Smile



Photo by Aike Burger

*Aike is a sophomore at Lake Oswego High School. She started with photography when she was 11 years old. Aike uses humor and an unusual angle to get her message across. This photo was taken when she got bored being inside during the big snowstorm in December 2008.*

**Juanita Benedicto**  
*Continued from page 1*

Pastor's clients. In 2008 she moved from Oregon to Mexico to volunteer at the convent full-time. She started *El Sur Experiment* to record the results of the experiment she was making of her life. In her own words, she wanted to find out what happens when "you follow your inner compass, enjoy where you're at, don't fret about the future, and remember that every day is another opportunity to practice grace."

Buen Pastor offers a wide range of social services, including a shelter for victims of abuse, foster care for girls, and a middle school. Some girls come to Buen Pastor because of an abusive relative. Others come because their families can't afford to feed or educate them. Many of the women at Buen Pastor have been beaten or sexually assaulted. Even the *madres* (nuns) themselves are growing old and feeling the pains of arthritis, rheumatism, and a lifetime of hard work. Juanita works with all of them, building trust and helping to release trauma through physical touch and attention.

For all that Juanita and the *madres* do, they're ambitious to do more. They want to make the convent more sustainable, and are seeking grants to build an organic community garden and install solar panels. They've started a Spanish-language library and reading programs to encourage the girls' literacy. (*Olivia the Pig* books are very popular.)

Juanita has set up a Buen Pastor website, where she invites readers to sponsor a girl's education—so far every girl who finds a sponsor has improved her grades, without fail. There are dreams of a bigger, better computer lab and maybe, someday, a paid position for Juanita.

Juanita's photo-journal reflects all

of this hard work and goal-setting. She documents the silly, joyful, and somber moments of life at Buen Pastor. In one post, Juanita writes about teaching Madre Patricia to pronounce "kiss my ass" in English. In another she quotes World Bank president Robert Zoellick:

"Investing in adolescent girls is precisely the catalyst poor countries need to break intergenerational poverty and to create a better distribution of income. Investing in them is not only fair, it is a smart economic move."

And then there's the rest of life in Guanajuato, filtered through Juanita's camera lens: shots of incredible, vibrant street art, drawings, painted murals, a classic car show packed with gleaming, iridescent Volkswagens. There are photos of the bluffs and buttes above the city, massive red rocks floating against a blue sky.

Guanajuato is an old, European-style city replete with architectural flourishes, and Juanita's camera finds every molded lion and scalloped ledge. She captures the brilliant colors of the houses—hot pink, teal, saffron, olive—as well as the crumbling edges of urban decay.

Juanita's posts sometimes wax sublime, sometimes ridiculous. She has a sly sense of humor and a talent for skewering the absurd. "Tell her how you feel in paint," she subtitles a photograph of street graffiti that reads, "Hey Alma Te Amo" ("Hey Alma I love you.") Sometimes the full meaning of a photo only emerges from its accompanying text. A picture of a snowy egret in an alley mystifies until you mouse over it, and read the pop-up explanation.



Photo courtesy of Juanita Benedicto

**Juanita Benedicto (center)** with two of the *madres* from the Buen Pastor mission, where she volunteers offering massage therapy, education and encouragement.

Increasingly egrets sojourn in urban areas like the nearby city of San Miguel de Allende, displaced from their native habitats.

From the posts that make up *El Sur Experiment*, a world emerges. Vibrant, complex, and fragile, Juanita's world includes birthday parties, ancient ruins, fiestas and fireworks, sewing machines and saints. It's a world where a garbage collector can win a muscle man competition, bulking up by eating out of the bins he empties; where a stub-eared guard dog peers down from a rooftop, surrounded by clouds; where rich and poor live next door to each other. In some ways, Juanita's world is not unlike Portland.

Most amazingly the brightness and power fill me with optimism, even in the face of poverty and injustice. Juanita's pictures of life in Guanajuato record her worthy work and refract light and energy all the way from Mexico to Portland. After a rainy morning commute to my office, the posts stream sunshine from her southern clime, reminding me that good works tend to send out ripples in all directions, like raindrops falling into a Portland puddle.



Photo courtesy of Juanita Benedicto

**Juanita (second from right)**, a former Oregonian, spends time reading with the girls at the Buen Pastor mission in Guanajuato, Mexico.

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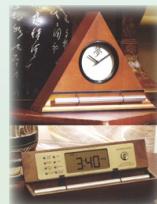
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# The Portland Upside

positive people, positive stories

November 2009 / Free

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## Bringing music to the community



Crystal Meneses' childhood love of singing has transformed into a passion for using music to bridge generational gaps.

*Choir director encourages self-esteem, healing and support through singing*

By Nick O'Connor  
*The Portland Upside*

In the small auditorium at Ethos Music Center in North Portland, I'm listening to a choir of about 25 boys and girls sing "To Zion," Lauryn Hill's powerful love anthem to her unborn son. This recital is the culmination of a weeklong summer camp which my 8-year-old daughter attended, and I've heard her practicing the song around the house. But as 11-year-old Ella's lead vocals soar, backed by the full choir's angelic chanting of the phrase "marching, marching to Zion," I'm struck more deeply than I know. Good gravy, I'm actually crying.

I return to interview the dynamic 27-year-old Ethos choir director, Crystal Meneses. At Ethos, Crystal leads both a kids' choir and The Portland Women's Intergenerational Choir. In its third year, the Intergenerational Choir has grown from about 15 singers last year, to more than 40 now.

How does Crystal feel about the large turnout? "I was overwhelmed... My vision is being realized."

I visit practice sessions of both choirs. Voice warm-ups are brief and the material challenging and diverse,

*Continued on page 2*

## City Repair's efforts inspire neighborhoods

By Edie Sidle  
*The Portland Upside*

In the 1952 short story, "The Sound of Thunder," Ray Bradbury proposed that one butterfly could eventually have a far-reaching ripple effect on subsequent events. Indeed, a simple beginning will sometimes have a surprising impact.

When City Repair's Mark Lakeman and others focused their efforts on making a Sellwood intersection a reflection of their neighborhood, little did they know the international influence the project would have ten years later.

After launching Share-It-Square in 1996 (see "Do-it-yourself neighborhood building" in the October issue of *The Portland Upside*), Mark and the other Sellwood residents wondered how to take the concept of public squares to other neighborhoods and thus mobilize their placemaking efforts.

They finally settled on a unique solution. Using an old truck, they created a "nomadic structure" with a traveling kitchen and its own shelter. They wanted to make it appealing and welcoming, something that would inspire and interest people. That was the birth of the T-Horse, still associated with City Repair today.

Then, and now, with the T-Horse as the focal point, City Repair invites a neighborhood to have a tea party. Neighbors bring homemade desserts, music and ideas to share so they can make connections in an informal atmosphere. The meet-and-greet plants the seed for neighbors to build community and increase participation in their neighborhood.

In the beginning, the T-Horse went from one neighborhood to another, setting the wheels in motion for possible

projects. Eventually, placemaking in other neighborhoods began taking shape, with seven projects the first year, then eight the next, and twelve projects the year after that. Today, City Repair facilitates from 20 to 24 placemaking projects each year.

Most of the placemaking efforts culminate in the annual Village Building Convergence (VBC), a ten-day event that brings neighbors together to help design and build their own



The "T-horse" vehicle is one of City Repair's tools for helping citizens increase participation and build community in their neighborhoods.

community amenities, including public squares, meeting houses, community kiosks, benches, and solar-powered and artistic innovations.

The VBC coordinators help participants through public outreach to involve neighbors and community decision-makers in planning and design meetings. They also help with the permitting process required by the city.

*Continued on page 3*



Stephen Frey's visit to a village in Kenya, Africa, helps residents discover their untapped potential.

## Portlander sparks hope in African village

By Stephen Frey  
*The Portland Upside*

Last year, 18-year-old Portland native Stephen Frey traveled around Africa doing community development work. He wound up living alone in a Masai village where he and a group of local teenagers started a community development organization from the ground up. Here, in his own words, is how it happened.

It was with utmost confusion that I traveled to Kenya in February 2009 for what seemed to be a misguided, spontaneous 10-week detour.

My exhilaration to be on the journey was overshadowed by an uneasy feeling in my gut: I didn't know what I was getting myself into. Sure, I wanted to do something useful to help. But what does that mean for an inexperienced 18-year-old kid?

Strangely enough, the feeling of uncertainty became my most powerful tool in connecting with the local people.

In the beginning I came to Africa to do a study/volunteer program in South Africa. It lasted five months, but I felt I was not meant to go home immediately afterward. For some unknown reason I felt I should go to Kenya instead.

One of the volunteer team members, Lantoo 'Israel' Sanchi from Kenya, invited me to live in his family's Masai village for a while. Together we began tossing around ideas to help their community. Whether it came from intuition or plain insanity, the whole trip was a last-minute decision and we didn't really know what would come out of it.

Once in Kenya, I immediately began questioning my reason to be there.

"What can I do to really help here?" I thought. "There are one billion people in Africa, 30 million in Kenya alone. What can one person do? I am an outsider. I don't know the language, I don't understand the culture... how do I even strike up a conversation?"

I felt powerless.

But coming from that outsider's perspective helped me to see an untapped potential in the local people, a potential that is often overlooked.

While their fertile soil and immense quantities of land give them the opportunity to grow enough food to feed millions of people, the livelihood of many Kenyans has been squelched by continuous drought and economic decay.

Kenyans are smart. With enough economic training they could create business opportunities and lift their economy. Foreigners already come in to Kenya to harvest the natural resources. Why can't the local people benefit from the land, too?

These thoughts sparked an idea. We needed something sustainable, which did not entail giving handouts as I had previously been trained to do. I realized I was not there to teach community members, but to create a platform for them to continue teaching themselves after I left.

So after arriving in the village, I befriended some of the other teenagers and began asking them zillions of ques-

*Continued on page 7*

## From “just looking” to “just found”

**By Holly Shumway**  
*The Portland Upside*

It is not often that you find a panda in Portland, but on a cold day three years ago, my family did just that.

Snow falls as we huddle in front of the computer screen to “just take a peek” at the dogs and puppies available for adoption. My three children and I navigate the Oregon Humane Society’s website, as the mantra “just looking” plays in my head.

Scrolling through the pictures, my sons laugh at the names that seem so fitting, their furry faces staring back at us: Marshmallow, a fluffy Pomeranian mix; Charlie, a curly cocker spaniel; and Dusty, a dirty brown Labrador mix.

The boys click on every dog, trying to fit the two-dimensional images into our three dimensional lives. Each boy locks onto a different dog and begins his own personal mission to convince my husband and me that it’s perfect for us.

Their chosen dogs become real as each boy races around the house outlining where his dog would sleep, where it would eat, and how wonderful it would be for us to watch him walk his new friend everyday. The boys even remind us of the importance of exercise.

Listening to my sons’ antics, I scroll to the very last page of the dog listings and see a single older dog. The boys stop their pleading and sidle up beside me.

On the screen, an 8-year-old Australian Shepherd mix captures our undivided attention. “Panda,” black and white and resembling a very canine panda bear, stares back as

if waiting patiently for us to find her. Her message states, “Sweet older gal looking for a family.”

My oldest son exclaims, “We’re a family!”

In that moment, I know that our “just looking” has transitioned to “just found!”

Panda has been an amazing addition to our family and to our neighborhood. Little did we know that she would become a hearing aid to our deaf Jack Russell terrier, model behavior to sounds that he is unable to perceive..

The kids in the neighborhood soften at the presence of Panda. She is, as one little boy describes, “a reverse panda bear in dog clothing.”

Whatever Panda is, we know one thing for sure, we feel fortunate to be just the family the Oregon Humane Society was searching for.



Photo by Holly Shumway



**Panda, an 8-year-old Australian Shepherd mix, found a new home with the Shumway family.**

To learn more about the Oregon Humane Society and browse adoptable pets, visit their website: [www.oregonhumane.org](http://www.oregonhumane.org)

Or expand your search to other shelters in the Portland area by using [www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com)

Holly is balancing motherhood with graduate school. She spends most of her time writing papers for school, but makes time to capture the eventful and treasured lives of her family.

### **Crystal Meneses**

*Continued from page 1*

ranging from an Italian aria to a medley from “Phantom of the Opera.” Crystal encourages boldness by telling her singers to “make mistakes loudly.”

For the interview Crystal is cheerful, happy to discuss her life in music. She speaks quickly, imparting a lot of information. Occasionally, she lets loose a big laugh.

“I’ve always been in a choir,” Crystal says. “I started in third grade.”

She began with the Greater Gresham Kids Kwire (later called the Mt. Hood Youth Choir), directed by Dr. Gayleen Martin. Continuing throughout her school days, Crystal sang with the Portland Symphonic Girlchoir, Sam Barlow High School’s Barlow Sound, and both the Portland State and Marylhurst University choirs.

At age 17 Crystal’s musical path took a mystical turn.

“We went to Doernbecher Children’s Hospital, to the ICU. I had always been shy about singing solos. But that day, something inside me said, ‘You can sing by yourself.’ It had never occurred to me to do that. And then a mom pulled me into a room and asked me to sing for her daughter, Karly, which I did. I thought she was sleeping peacefully.”

Crystal sang “Silent Night” and “Some Children See Him,” which she was getting ready to perform at The Grotto. Karly sat up and smiled at her.

“Later I found out she was in a coma and woke up.”

The Oregonian’s Margie Boué wrote a story about the experience and asked if Crystal had ever heard of music therapy.

“That was the beginning,” Crystal says.

Crystal went on to study music therapy at Marylhurst University. Although she expects to receive her degree along with a teaching certificate by the end of this year, it will not be in music therapy, but a major she made up herself.

“I decided to switch my degree to ‘Music In The Community,’” she says. “I had a great mentor at Marylhurst named Christine Korb. She inspired me to research intergenerational community projects.”

Crystal further explains, “In my school practicum, I was leading sing-a-longs with young choir students and in wise-elder communities.”

I stop her to clarify the term “wise-elder community.” She and some fellow Marylhurst students didn’t like the terms “nursing

homes” or “assisted-living communities,” so they chose something better.

She adds, “I’m Filipino and we don’t have old folks homes there. My dad freaked out when he saw the wise-elder homes.”

Crystal was directing the choir at Grout Elementary and at the same time, visiting the Odd Fellows’ wise-elder home directly across the street.

“I had been doing research on intergenerational studies, the attitudes of generations towards each other. I realized the dissonance. So I brought the kids over to the wise-elder home. The kids and adults wouldn’t look at each other, or talk. The kids were afraid to sit next to the elders or shake hands.”

For the first time she pauses. Her tone turns serious.

“Susan (the principal) and I got a grant together to fund my intergenerational project.

musical pals passed away. Kids talked about their parents not being together. I was delivering mail and putting together a sing-along program that would engage both groups. I used songs from the wise-elders’ childhoods like ‘Daisy Daisy,’ and patriotic songs. The kids loved these songs. At the second sing-along, they were holding each other’s hands and laughing. I couldn’t get them to stop talking.”

Looking for a space for an intergenerational choir, Crystal came to Ethos in 2001.

“They said ‘Yeah, here’s a space, we’ll work with you, go ahead.’ Three people showed up to the first practice. Then one of them passed away and another one left, I think because a family member was sick.”

She had to put the intergenerational choir on the back burner.

“Then,” she shrugs, acknowledging fate,



Photo by Shannon Batts

**The Portland Women’s Intergenerational Choir, under the direction of Crystal Meneses, is a safe place where girls and women of all ages can sing without competition or the need for perfection.**

I researched what to ask to get them talking and writing. What I did was create an intervention called ‘scripted musical dialogue,’ in which they made postcards to talk about music, art and everything. For example, I had students draw pictures of what they would look like when they got older.”

Both groups wrote musical postcards for five months, and Crystal hand delivered them to their “musical pals,” walking back and forth across the street like a letter carrier.

“Things happened,” she says. “Some

“I really started teaching.”

Without a credential, and while a part-time student at Marylhurst, Crystal has been teaching—often one-on-one—for almost a decade at elder homes, hospitals and treatment centers, and in the public schools.

“I do four to five schools a year. Sometimes they can only offer you an hour a week. Or I’m artist in residence for one or two full days, rotating all the kids through, maybe 25 minutes or a half hour per kid.”

For many children, she notes, this is the

extent of their music education.

“As I did more music in the community, I realized it’s what I want to do. That’s where my heart and core are. My teaching style is influenced by my music therapy education. The skill crossover has been easy for me, and has given me a useful edge.”

And Crystal has benefited from the support of her family. Crystal’s mother and grandmother were teachers. And the musical steps of her brother Vincent have closely matched her own. Vincent is a performer, songwriting teacher and social entrepreneur. He opened a nonprofit called Organized Sound on the coast this year.

Yet Crystal’s natural talent for spreading self-esteem and support through singing is all her own.

“When you sing, your insecurities are right in front of you. You can look around and get instant support. I’ve always just wanted a safe place where women can sing, which this is about, not competition or being perfect.”

With fond memories of traveling internationally with her choir as a girl, Crystal wants the intergenerational choir to tour. And she would like to hold an intergenerational choir camp.

“I have a vision of 100 women of all ages singing together. I want to do outreach with the choir, want it to be a mentoring program, a group to be with and be part of.”

And she will do it. When I ask about obstacles, Crystal says simply, “I don’t let anything get in my way. Sometimes it just takes more time.”

**Ethos Music Center is a nonprofit organization that brings music and music education to underserved youth. Visit them online at [www.ethos.org](http://www.ethos.org)**

*Nick O’Connor contributes to Free Fun Guides at [www.freenguide.com](http://www.freenguide.com). He has rejected the motto “Keeping Weird and Just Doing It In The Rose City That Works.”*



## From the editors

By Sara & Rob Bednark  
*The Portland Upside*

**W**hen someone wants to volunteer to write an article for *The Portland Upside* and asks us what subject we want them to write about, we invariably tell them, "Write about something that interests you or that you are passionate about." When things become personal, words become alive.

It is exciting when the articles come in to see what our writers have come up with. This may seem unorthodox and the mix of articles is certainly unpredictable, but each issue has been a fascinating selection of stories and profiles of people, businesses and organizations.

Everyone has a passion, be it writing, going to garage sales, making coffee mugs or singing. By following those passions even when the path is not clear, great things can happen.

Crystal created her own "Music In The Community" college major so she could follow her urge to use music to bring people together ("Bringing music to the community", p. 1).

By volunteering at Community Warehouse, Lin, Evy and April use their orga-

nizational and garage sale talents to help those who need to furnish their homes ("Secret to a happy life", p. 6).

Stephen traveled to Kenya, Africa, on something of a whim and ended up helping a village connect with information that will continue to help them in years to come ("Portland sparks hope in African village", p. 1).

9-year-old Isaiah Walker's curiosity about cultural backgrounds led to an International Day celebration at his church ("Cultural diversity celebrated", p. 8)

And our passion to hear about positive stories around Portland led us to start *The Portland Upside*. We didn't know how we would get here, but with the generous help of many volunteers, we have produced seven issues and over 65 articles to date.

Passion, indeed, brings words to life.

*All issues can be viewed on our website, www.PortlandUpside.com Contact us by email, editors@PortlandUpside.com, or by phone, 503-663-1526.*

# The Portland Upside

positive people, positive stories

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## Depave playground, reclaim nature

By Edie Sidle  
*The Portland Upside*

**D**eave/City Repair (see "City Repair's efforts inspire neighborhoods", p. 1) recently helped reclaim a significant portion of the playground at Vestal School on Northeast 82nd Avenue.

Early Saturday morning, August 8, after a series of speeches by dignitaries including Mayor Sam Adams, City Repair coordinators explained the depaving process and safety considerations. Approximately 70 volunteers had gathered for the series of warm up exercises designed to get them ready for the physical work of tearing up 15,000 square feet of asphalt and concrete comprising the Vestal School playground. The number of volunteers for the project was truly impressive considering the hard work ahead.

While paved surfaces are useful for some objectives, depaving can improve the beauty and usefulness of cityscapes through habitat restoration, urban farming, and the planting of trees and native vegetation.

Today the depaved area of Vestal's playground is filled with topsoil and compost and will eventually become an outdoor learning garden for the community and school. The City of Portland has already installed a water meter and spigots. Women in Trades has also built a shed to service the garden project. Later, Portland Youth Builders will add a second shed. Fencing added in the coming months will make the garden almost ready to use.

AmeriCorps volunteer Laura Benjamin will manage the garden, involving parents, students, and teachers in its use.

The school has formed a Vestal Garden Committee comprised of 20 students who will meet once a week to discuss plans for the garden.

Already the students at the school have been involved with measuring and doing basic math to figure out how to add raised planter beds. A fourth grade class is learning about vermiculture so that in the spring worms can be added to the compost. Other students are busy considering winter cover crops for the garden. Clearly, to participate in the miracle of growing plants in their backyard will be a much richer experience for Vestal School students than to stare at black asphalt.

True to the goals of depaving, the entire community has already greatly benefited from the garden. Pooled resources from the City of Portland Parks and Recreation, Friends of Portland Community Gardens, and East Community Gardens, will continue to bring citywide resources to bear fruit on a once barren patch of pavement.

*For years, Edie has been involved in "business writing" but more recently has been exploring creative writing, even trying her hand at poetry. She may be reached at [edeegee@yahoo.com](mailto:edeegee@yahoo.com)*



Hind Iserhott volunteers with City Repair's Depave project to remove asphalt from the playground at Vestal Elementary School to make room for gardens.

**City Repair**  
*Continued from page 1*

In addition to the T-Horse activities and Village Building Convergence, City Repair also sponsors community events that promote such aspirations as a city-wide Earth Day Celebration and City ReWare Upcycle Markets, where treasures can be discovered at amazingly reasonable prices.

It's not surprising that City Repair regularly receives invitations from municipalities as far away as Toronto, Canada. After all, underlying its practical goals are some pretty potent premises: to bring

humanity back to our neighborhoods through the power of people and creativity, friendship and respect, organized group action, ecologically-sustainable choices and the localization of culture, economy and decision-making.

Above all, City Repair seeks to inspire, educate and activate people to become part of their community rather than aloof non-participants. It strives to improve communication in neighborhoods and to get people involved in decision-making that shapes their present and future communities.

That's undeniably compelling and a good idea whose ripple continues to

be felt to the edge of Portland's urban growth boundary and beyond.

*See "Depave playground, reclaim nature" (above) for an example of one of City Repair's projects.*

*For more info, visit City Repair's website at [www.cityrepair.org](http://www.cityrepair.org) or call them at 503-235-8946.*

*For years, Edie has been involved in "business writing" but more recently has been exploring creative writing, even trying her hand at poetry. She may be reached at [edeegee@yahoo.com](mailto:edeegee@yahoo.com)*

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## Friendly faces at the Ugly Mug

**By Briena Sash**  
*The Portland Upside*

The old wooden door creaks as I pull it open to enter the Ugly Mug Coffeehouse. Coming off the busy street is like stepping into another realm.

The dimly lit shop is painted in warm yellows and oranges, cement floors stained and cracked. Heavy wooden countertops help create the cozy rustic atmosphere. Louis Armstrong serenades patrons sitting on the church pew and at scattered tables, reading books and papers and staring meditatively at laptop screens. Others chat and sip their lattes, chai teas and coffees from ceramic mugs.

A shelf lining the ceiling displays all sorts of mugs donated by Ugly Mug fans. Some have faces, others are molded into funny shapes, and many have been made by the customers themselves.

Freshly-ground beans and French-pressed coffee fills the air with a delicious aroma as the barista greets regulars by name. She knows most of the people approaching the counter, as well as their favorite drinks. Pam likes a mocha with whip in her own cup, Jay an Americano, Lloyd and Pauline favor medium skinny lattes.

The Ugly Mug Coffeehouse certainly holds its own in Portland's epic coffee scene with its rich espresso and quirky atmosphere. But if you know a bit more about this locally owned neighborhood shop, you discover it is anything but typical.

Seven years ago when a young couple, Kim and Nigel, moved to Sellwood, they noticed a problem that needed fixing: there was no neighborhood coffee shop.

"I walked up and down the street," Kim tells me, "stopping people and asking if they'd like to have a neighborhood coffeehouse."

She received such an overwhelmingly positive response that they opened the Ugly Mug.

This is a true mom and pop shop. Nigel did most of the remodeling and woodwork, while Kim made everything from the curtains to the ceramic mugs from which customers enjoy their drinks.

"That's why it's called the Ugly Mug," explains Kim with a laugh as she holds up one of her hand-crafted mugs. It's big and white with a green swirl and a few chips. It is certainly well loved.

"At the time there were no coffee shops around at all, not even Starbucks," Kim says. "The first day we opened, there was a line out the door. We've never had a slow period here."

Now Sellwood is full of coffee shops, but The Mug continues to have a big following of loyal patrons, many of

whom have been coming since the doors first opened. Why are people so loyal to the Ugly Mug?

When I started working at the Mug as a barista in June, I realized there is so much more to this coffeehouse than just, well... coffee.

Not only is it a cozy, comfortable place with delicious



Photo by Briena Sash

**Since the Ugly Mug opened in Sellwood seven years ago, co-owner Kim Newdel's coffeehouse has become a community of loyal employees and customers.**

drinks, free Wi-Fi, famed Stumptown Coffee and scrumptious pastries. Nor is it simply the well-trained baristas impressing customers with their perfectly-pulled shots and whimsical latte art.

The Ugly Mug's success has to do with Kim and her consciousness as a business owner. She cares about her customers, about quality and most importantly, about the community.

Kim supports her community by investing in the best local products she can find, including hormone-free Sunshine Dairy products, Kettleman's Bagels, and delicious Voodoo Donuts. Where she can, she buys from businesses local to the Sellwood neighborhood.

"Most of our pastries come from Lilli, which is on 17th. Our chocolate, Holy Kacow, is even made in Sellwood," she notes.

Kim is concerned not only about quality and local products, but also their environmental impact as well. She

recently tested new biodegradable straws and she currently offers a ten-cent discount when you bring your own cup.

"Now I'm trying to figure out a way to encourage people to bring their own-to-go mugs," she explains.

Perhaps the best reflection of Kim's approach to business is how she treats her employees.

"Most of our baristas stay with us for a long time. We all love each other. Until recently, our newest employee has been with us for over a year," says Kim.

Indeed, their longest-term barista, Jen, has been at the Ugly Mug since the doors opened seven years ago! She is young and charismatic, with an infectious smile and a healthy dose of spice. Not only is it apparent that Jen loves her job, it's very clear that people love Jen as their barista.

"She works magic," a fellow barista told me. "She's an awesome barista and has so much love for everyone. Not to mention everyone loves her!"

Loyal patrons and employees had a chance to express their affection when about two months ago a terrible accident landed Jen in the hospital and out of work.

"I was washing the sun tea pitcher when it shattered, cutting open my wrist. Luckily Maggie [an Ugly Mug regular and RN] was there. The paramedic told me that with this kind of cut it would have taken about two minutes to bleed to death. Maggie saved my life," Jen professes.

"It was amazing to see the Ugly Mug community respond to Jen's absence and misfortune. Not only were people asking about her, deeply concerned every day," an Ugly Mug barista explains, "people were bringing in dozens of get-well cards."

In response to Jen's lack of income, Kim also printed out a meal plan where people could sign up for a day to bring Jen dinner. It filled up almost instantly as customers brought in wholesome home-cooked meals to offer her.

Kirsten, a fellow barista, came up with yet another plan to help out. She decorated a jar and called it "Jen's heart fund", where people could donate money and kind words to help Jen recover.

"I came in to pick it up and found a piece of paper folded like an envelope," Jen tells me, tears welling in her eyes. When she opened it up she found five hundred dollars cash, donated anonymously.

"I can feel so much love from everyone," Jen says. "I know it's helping me to heal faster".

The Ugly Mug shines above the average coffee shop in most ways according to employee Kirsten Brady. Kirsten is not only an Ugly Mug barista, but also a talented artist.

This year, she and the Ugly Mug are hosting the second annual art-for-charity project, actively involving community volunteers who use their creativity to raise money for a designated local nonprofit. Last year's art-for-charity project raised over two thousand dollars.

This year's project, called 'Think Inside the Box', has over 70 participants signed-up to make dioramas out of cigar boxes. Participants are encouraged to be as creative and unique as they want. The diorama artwork will be on display and up for auction at the Ugly Mug through December. This year's beneficiary will be Sanctity of Hope, a Portland nonprofit supporting the city's homeless community through alternative means.

The difference, I discovered, while working at this Portland coffeehouse, is that it's not just about coffee. It's about community.

*The Ugly Mug Coffeehouse is located at 8017 SE 13th Avenue. Visit their website at [www.uglymugpdx.com](http://www.uglymugpdx.com) or call them at 503.230.2010.*

*Briena Sash is an Ugly Mug barista, travel photographer, photojournalist, and longtime community volunteer. Read her blog at [www.streetquotes.wordpress.com](http://www.streetquotes.wordpress.com)*

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Photo by Mike Aspros



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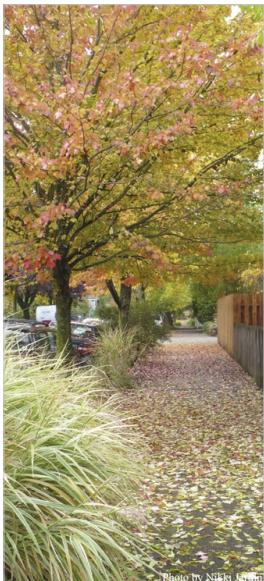


Photo by Nikki Laramie

**The Man Who Loves Trees**

loves through the seasons:  
bare trunk, fat buds, full green, wet red  
and their names; sweet gum  
cypress oak spruce willow maple  
red bud forest pansy  
and their parts; leaf cone flower  
bark root branch boll twig needle  
lacy fans of rough crochet, pods  
like cigars, like rattling gourds.

He loves their cast-offs crisp on the ground  
their sound under his boots on the trail  
rustling, breaking down into dust.  
He loves, later, their sawn boards;  
wood, its grain a watery maze  
polished, rubbed into light, glowing  
still with heat from the heart of the tree  
like his own heart, pumping dark liquid  
out to the limbs, out to his own warm hands.

by Judith Arcana

*Judith Arcana writes poems, stories, essays and books. This poem, written for her partner Jonathan, first appeared in the Canadian journal STUDIO, online. Visit Judith's website at juditharcana.com*



Photo by Briena Sash



Photo by Julie Kelly

**Leaf**

A wind gust lifts  
a maple leaf from its tree,  
it hovers with clouds above the schoolyard,  
falls like a heron to a pond—  
skillfully without rippling the water.  
The leaf lies face down  
for many days,  
far from the shadow of the tree.

The tree will always bloom new leaves,  
but surely less yellow than these.

by Mike Aspros

*Mike Aspros is always wandering, looking, skirting the boundary line passing a "No Trespassing" sign following deer and owls through Oregon ash and white oaks. He may be reached at mike\_aspros@yahoo.com*



Photo by Mike Aspros

**Turning Leaves, Turning Inward**

And so the leaves turn yellow—Fall is here.  
The crisp night air refreshes and renews.  
It is time for quiet introspection, listening to the quiet within.  
The warmth of wool and fleece pulled from the back of the closet comforts us.  
Putting away the picnic basket and the beach hat, we embrace the new season.  
Fall is here... we are finished with our play... we are finished with our raucous laughter, we are finished with the carefree days.  
It is time for wisdom, it is time for stories, hot cider and warm friendship. It is time for Fall.



Photo by Julie Kelly

by Edie Sidle

*For years, Edie has been involved in "business writing" but more recently has been exploring creative writing, even trying her hand at poetry. She may be reached at edegee@yahoo.com*



Photo by Briena Sash



Photo by Deanna Cintas



Photo by Briena Sash

## Secret to a happy life

*Local volunteers at Community Warehouse find a sense of purpose by helping others*

**By Gayle Amorose**  
*The Portland Upside*

**T**he happiest people in the world are givers."

Taken from an interview of a disaster relief volunteer over 15 years ago, that quote has always stuck with me. It's a wonderful summation of the reasons people devote time and energy to a cause, often for no money, little recognition, and the painful firsthand exposure to a myriad of societal ills. But despite the pitfalls, in a city like Portland, it's easy to feel good by helping others.

For the past three years, I've been a volunteer with Community Warehouse, a local nonprofit that offers essential furniture and household goods to low income individuals and families.

As program manager Tom Elston puts it, "We take in free stuff, and then we give it away. How cool is that?"

Every Monday I make the trek across the Fremont Bridge to the warehouse, now located at the corner of NE Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Shaver Street. I sort through donations that arrive daily, and then repack them for clients. The warehouse serves about 70 households per week, supplying them with basic goods they don't have the means to purchase, such as beds, kitchen tables, and pots and pans. Operating with a skeletal staff, Community Warehouse relies heavily on a dedicated roster of volunteers to carry out its mission.

In between taping together sets of dishes, and checking the shelves for a usable fry pan, I chat with another Monday volunteer, Lin Silver. She's been with Community Warehouse for over six years and has become the unofficial "chaos organizer," bringing order to the rows of industrial shelving that hold all the donated kitchen basics.

"Why do I volunteer here? Because I love the mission of the organization, and I love the fact that the work is hands-on. When I'm here packing orders and watching the clients coming in, I really feel like I'm doing something one-on-one to help them," Lin says.

Donations deemed inappropriate for clients—a large armoire that doesn't fit in a one-bedroom apartment, or a set of bone china sought after by collectors—are sold through the Community Warehouse Estate Store, adjacent to the warehouse. Run by volunteers, the store is open to the public five days a week. Proceeds from the Estate Store cover almost one third of the organization's operating expenses.

Evy Bishop has been an Estate Store

volunteer for two years. She heard about the organization through a co-worker who's aunt, Roz Babener, is the founder of Community Warehouse.

"I was born with the garage sale junkie gene," says Evy, "so it's fun working in the store and seeing all the donated treasures that arrive."

It appears that the majority of Estate

**Volunteer Lin Silver organizes donated goods at Community Warehouse that will be given to families in need.**



Store volunteers not only donate their time to help run the store, but they also support it by shopping there, too.

"I also enjoy the interaction with staff and other volunteers, because everyone is so friendly and accepting. And talking with customers is interesting, because we get such a broad spectrum of shoppers," she continues.

While Evy enjoys her role working with the public, other volunteers have found their niche behind the scenes.

April Doll made her initial contact with Community Warehouse as a donor. A professional organizer at the time, part of her job was to help clients find places to donate excess goods. One day while searching websites for volunteer opportunities, Community Warehouse came up and she started her stint packing orders in the warehouse two days a week.

"From the beginning, I've been totally inspired by what this organization brings to the community," says April. "And the people here are so nice, so patient, and so

appreciative."

Eventually, Community Warehouse invited April to help with the Estate Store's online sales. Since she had no experience posting items on eBay, she faced a steep learning curve in the beginning, but now she's hooked. April admits to sneaking frequent peaks at what the eBay auctions are doing while she's at home on non-volunteer days.

"It's such a great place to hang out," April affirms.

Like April, the longer I volunteer the further I'm pulled in. After working on the warehouse side, I've recently switched my focus to the Estate Store. I'm also on the planning committee for the organization's main fundraising event, The Chair Affair. In my experience, Community Warehouse offers the right combination for attracting and keeping volunteers: friendship, opportunity, and hands-on work that makes a difference in people's lives.



**Evy Bishop and April Doll in the Estate Store showroom, where donated goods are sold to benefit Community Warehouse.**

Photos by Gayle Amorose

*Find out more about Community Warehouse and the Estate Store at their website: [www.communitywarehouse.org](http://www.communitywarehouse.org) Or contact them at 503-235-8786.*

*When not volunteering, Gayle Amorose runs her own redesign and staging business, Piece by Piece, and offers private dog training through Romp & Rattle. She enjoys writing whenever she can.*

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## Voices around town

**What's made you happy lately?**

"My fantastic relationship, and the fact that we almost have our music studio done."

—Michelle M.  
Portland, Oregon

"I started running this past summer, and surprisingly enough, that makes me pretty happy."

—Doug Rosser  
Irvington neighborhood  
Portland, Oregon

"Being with my 2-year-old has made me the happiest. I also really enjoy being home, in our 'hood', hanging out with our neighbors."

—Rick C.  
Beaverton, Oregon

"The relationship I have with my family. It's been really special and very supportive lately."

—Kathy Lee  
West Linn, Oregon

"My fireplace. My sober community. My 3 dogs and 2 cats all with names that end in 'ee' so I can make up funny songs for them. My spiritual community. Dark roast coffee. My hot tub with rotating LEDs with my sweet baby on misty cool, wet evenings. The Spa Channel on satellite TV."

—Darren Littlejohn  
SE Portland, Oregon

"My oldest daughter called me the other day and needed a ride. It's nice to still be needed."

—Ellen McCarty  
Lake Oswego, Oregon

"Spending quality time with my family! We spent the last few nights doing holiday stuff together. Eating regular meals, carving pumpkins together, cooking together. I love taking time out for stuff like that."

—LaVica Parsons  
Damascus, Oregon

"My neighbor just took in a rescue kitty that was abused. He's often sitting by my door, and when I open my door and see him, it makes me smile. Knowing where he came from, and yet he's still out there trusting and opening his heart to everybody, that makes me happy."

—Althea Vandries  
Woodstock neighborhood  
Portland, Oregon

"Friends and family. Spending time with friends and getting to know people."

—Lea Andrews  
Irvington Neighborhood  
Portland, Oregon

"Going to the beach and spending all day in the sun. It was very restorative."

—Katherine Ball  
Old Town Chinatown  
Portland, Oregon

## Sing a chorus for peace

By Olivia Johnson  
*The Portland Upside*

**T**he Portland Peace Choir is shaping a unique group of vocalists who promote equality, justice and peace through song.

The choir got off to its official start on September 9, and has been rehearsing two hours per week at Bothmer Hall in Southeast Portland. The choir meets in the donated space every Wednesday evening from 7 to 9 p.m. No auditions are required, just a passion for singing.

Janet Allison, one of the founders of the choir, was a member of the Rogue Valley Peace Choir in Ashland, Oregon. She has sung in Hiroshima, Japan at the anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bomb, and she has also performed for Martin Luther King III. Being a member of Ashland's peace choir inspired her to help co-found a similar group here in Portland.

The Portland Peace Choir hopes to eventually share its music in similar settings. For now, the group is starting out by performing in as many different venues as possible, wherever people can be inspired by the music.

But making a positive impact on those who are listening is not the peace choir's only mission. They are also concerned with the well-being of each of their singers. When Janet was in the third grade, she auditioned for orchestra and was told that she had no music ability. She can relate to the many people she refers to as the "walking

wounded," who want to sing but are held back by either their own insecurities or the opinions of others.

"It's a healthy experience for people who've been told they can't sing to join this choir," she says. "Everybody can sing, especially if they sing with lots of people!"

The choir welcomes all voices, although Janet stresses that most choirs suffer from a lack of male singers. The Portland Peace Choir is no exception. Perhaps if men were aware of how many single women there are in the choir, the statistics of an overruling soprano and alto count would change drastically, she adds humorously.

Currently the choir has about 40 members. Ages range from high-school students and young adults to middle-age adults and seniors. Janet says they hope to grow and especially to welcome young people and much-needed tenors and basses.

Marion Van Namen, a music therapist running a private practice in Southeast Portland, is the choir's director and co-founder. Growing up in her native country of the Netherlands, Marion learned piano at a young age. She also plays the cello and the African drums. She trained in anthroposophy and music therapy for four years and has taught at various Waldorf schools in the United States. She also directs the community choir at the Portland Waldorf School in Milwaukie.

For their opening concert, Marion has selected a variety of songs ranging from The Freedom Song of South Africa to "Imag-

ine" by John Lennon. Some of the songs are in Dutch, French, German, African and Native American languages. Sometimes a piano accompanies their voices but most of the time The Portland Peace Choir sings a cappella.

"Music is universal," Janet says. "You don't have to know the language to understand the gesture."

Chrystal Godleske, who was a member of the community choir at the Portland Waldorf School, heard about the peace choir from Marion and joined as soon as it started in September.

She says that the Portland Peace Choir has "more complex music than the community choir." She especially likes being a member because practices are "participatory entertainment, fun, and Marion makes everyone feel comfortable."

The Portland Peace Choir will hold its first concert on November 22 at 4 p.m. at St. David's Episcopal Church in Portland. The concert is free and open to the public.

"We want to connect with people on a heart level," Janet says, "by bringing this music into the world."



Members of the newly-formed Portland Peace Choir are dedicated to singing songs of peace.  
Photo courtesy of Janet Allison

For more information about the Portland Peace Choir visit [www.portlandpeacechoir.org](http://www.portlandpeacechoir.org)

Olivia lives in SE Portland and is working on her bachelor's degree in Journalism and Theology at Multnomah University. She loves reading restaurant reviews, traveling, Frank Sinatra, and Stumptown coffee.

### Africa

*Continued from page 1*

tions. We brought the community together, looked at the available resources, and asked, "How can we make the most of what we have?" Through many discussions, they began to see their potential.

The final idea for the project came seemingly out of nowhere, about three weeks after my arrival in Kenya. The Masais crafted a vision for their community project and to express this vision, they called the group "Dupoto Naidimayu," meaning "Prosperity Is Possible."

And after many weeks of enthusiastic effort from the "Dupoto Naidimayu" team, the vision became a reality. We launched the Village Possibilities Centre to serve as a communal gathering point where people can find information they need to help themselves. Informational resources include home health care, sanitation and water purification, HIV/AIDS prevention, agriculture, irrigation, environmental preservation, economics, micro-enterprise, political awareness, modern technology, and college education options.

We found a way to get an Internet connection in the village and started collecting books for a library. We were also certified by the Kenyan government as a Community-Based Organization. The Centre now operates as a library, community forum, Internet cafe, computer school, and headquarters for the other community groups in the area. Soon they will start hosting workshops, classes and village gatherings on the topics above.

The project seemed to create a new posture and attitude in the community members. The whole atmosphere was pretty exciting. As people heard about our center, they said things like, "I've always wanted to do something like that," and "this is what our community has been waiting for!"

We later found that large non-governmental organizations (NGO's) were implementing the same model elsewhere in Kenya. That really blew us away because we were simply making things up as we went. Before our attempt, some community groups had started but faded out. Many of the local people already wanted to help their community but



Portland area resident Stephen Frey (center, standing) with Masai friends and team members in Kenya, Africa, launch the Village Possibilities Centre, an informational resource library.  
Photo courtesy of Stephen Frey

didn't know where to start.

One of them, Nicholas Kisoso, expressed it well.

"Before this, we all used to sit around by ourselves, wanting to do something for our people, wondering if we were the only ones who wanted it."

Nicholas now serves as the head of the local leadership team.

While the project snowballed and local involvement grew, I relocated back to the United States after only 10 weeks. Although I have handed over the reins to the local leadership team, I continue to stay involved long-distance. We plan for the project to continue growing for years to come.

As for my friend Israel Sanchi, his sights are set on becoming President of Kenya. He's already started to run for election in 2012 as the local county commissioner, something never done by someone so young, in his culture.

I remember looking out the window over the vast drought-stricken Kenyan landscape as the plane landed at Nairobi International Airport last February. I wondered then if I had a place there.

Looking back, I realize that my feeling of powerlessness helped me identify with the Masai tribe's situation. As they learned to believe in their own ideas, they taught me to believe in mine. We unwittingly helped each other to go through the same process.

After all, the community project had been stirring in them for years. In my opinion, I didn't do much. They were already capable. It just helped to have someone tell them they could do it.

The real project wasn't books or computers. The Centre was only a manifestation of the real gift to the Masai: hope, a belief, a vision that seemed to have been lost in previous attempts at community improvement. The real work was accomplished in their minds. The building could burn down tomorrow and I wouldn't be too upset. They'd rebuild, because the vision is in them now.

The Masai now possess the idea that they have power, they can do it, that they aren't crazy to dream of a better life for themselves. Prosperity is possible—even in Africa—when one makes the most of what one has.

Learn more about the Kenya project at [www.RiseUpVillage.org](http://www.RiseUpVillage.org)

Stephen Frey is now back with his family in Clackamas, Oregon. He is searching for like-minded people, ideas and opportunities. Please connect at [stephenfrey5@gmail.com](mailto:stephenfrey5@gmail.com)

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## Cultural diversity celebrated

*9-year-old's curiosity inspires International Day*

By Faye Powell  
*The Portland Upside*

Sometimes it is the simplest idea that reaps the greatest rewards.

One afternoon last summer, parishioner Michael Montgomery wore a zigzag-patterned dashiki decorated with stylized Nigerian dancers to St. Philip The Deacon Episcopal Church's annual picnic.

Nine-year-old Isaiah Walker, curious about Montgomery's garment and taking note of the diverse crowd at the picnic, said, "Wouldn't it be fun to have a day when everyone wore clothes of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds?"

Michael agreed and thus was born the idea of an International Day to recognize and celebrate the diversity within this Northeast Portland parish.

With Isaiah and Michael as co-chairs, the committee selected October 11, with its proximity to United Nations Day on October 24, as the day for the celebration.

Church organizers encouraged parishioners to wear clothing representative of their native backgrounds, as well as to bring a potluck dish of that culture. The 60 attendees represented heritages from Iran, India, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Great Britain, Morocco, Japan, Native America, and sev-

eral countries of Africa. In turn, each person took a few moments to describe something about his or her background.

Reverend Alceena Boozer, rector of St. Philip's, described the day as a joyous occasion highlighting the variety of folk that came from the continents of Africa, Europe and Asia.

"St. Philip's is probably the most diverse parish in Portland, and we really celebrate that," Rev. Boozer said. "Rarely have I seen the people of this parish so joyful about learning something new. I was surprised at how many people eagerly participated."

Chehreh Shirizi wore the most elaborate costume. Her multi-layered skirt with its beaded head-dress is a typical tribal costume of her native Iran.

Vivian Childs, raised in India, wore a sari and described the intricate manner in which many yards of silk are pleated, folded and tucked to create an elegant garment.

Betty Smith, former co-owner of the first African-American clothing store in Portland, wore one of her own creations, a boldly-patterned turquoise dress and headpiece. Many others wore dresses and shirts that demonstrated the



Photo by Faye Powell

**Young Isaiah Walker (center) inspires and co-chairs the first International Day at his church, in which members wear clothing representative of their native backgrounds.**

variety of styles, colors and patterns of Africa.

For Karol Kennedy, whose own heritage includes ancestors from Africa, Ireland, Scotland, and Asia, the day brought people closer together while showing the children the diversity of their church community.

"When they then see people walking down the street in different garments, they can relate to them...and not be fearful," she said.

Long-time parishioner Millie Jackson also appreciated the op-

portunity to teach children a little about different cultures.

Co-chairman Isaiah was happy to see everyone enjoying the day.

"I'm wearing my granddad's top from Japan. I like seeing everyone talking to one another," he added.

Michael Montgomery noted, "I think it is such a wonderful opportunity to show and share our cultural diversity."

According to the United States Census, Portland's population is 77.9% white, 6.6% African-American, 6.8% Hispanic/Latino, 6.3% Asian, plus smaller numbers of American Indian/Alaska Native and others. Additionally, 4.1% identify themselves as belonging to two or more races.

Founded in 1911 as an African-American parish, St. Philip The Deacon was officially recognized by the Oregon Diocese as an Episcopal parish in 1919. It has been in its current location on NE Knott since 1923. Over the years as populations have shifted, St. Philip's has become more diversified.

According to Rev. Boozer, a lifelong member of the congregation and its pastor for 16 years, "International Day signified to me that, although we come from all over the globe, we are all children of one God, and the variety of gifts that come to people were represented in the food we brought."

She added that she wasn't sur-

prised at the diversity of the congregation but was surprised by how many people eagerly participated and how much sheer fun everyone had. In addition to learning about one another's heritages, people were able to experience the joy of feeling a part of such a diverse community.

Colorful clothing, a multicultural banquet and sharing of ancestral stories promoted greater awareness and appreciation of all of the traditions within the parish and a stronger sense of unity among its members. What community, whether spiritual or secular, wouldn't be enriched by the opportunity to connect with those whose ethnic and cultural heritages differ from one's own!

*St. Philip The Deacon Episcopal Church is located at 120 NE Knott St., Portland. For more information, go to [www.sphildcn.org](http://www.sphildcn.org) or contact Rev. Boozer at 503-281-5802.*

*Faye Powell is a retired librarian and freelance writer. She can be reached at phaysee1@gmail.com*

### Submission of the Month

Send us your photo, doodle, cartoon, poem, haiku, drawing, artwork, essay, quote, etc. Something that you find positive, and that we can fit into a 4"x 6" space. Email it to [editors@portlandupsde.com](mailto:editors@portlandupsde.com) or mail it to us by November 20.

One or more submissions will be chosen to appear in the December issue of *The Portland Upside*. Please include your name, email address and phone number in case we need to contact you.



**Alpaca Pair**

Watercolor and line drawing by Joyce Lovro Gabriel

*Art director at Pacific University by day, on her own time Joyce is absorbed with the art of craft and the craft of art. She enjoys mediums from pen and ink to oil, but her favorite is watercolor...with pears and birds often front and center.*

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# The Portland Upside

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## Food appreciation from farmer to table

*Interfaith organization creates innovative partnerships to educate communities about food and health*

By Jenny Holmes and Alison Warren  
*The Portland Upside*

**E**cumenical Ministries of Oregon's Interfaith Food and Farms Partnership (IFFP) has been empowering faith communities, farmers and neighborhoods to create innovative partnerships for just and sustainable food systems since 2005. Through its cooking classes, farm to congregation projects, food assessments and The Congregational Wellness Project, IFFP educates people about food and health.

This year IFFP worked with Hacienda Community Development Corporation (CDC) to provide cooking classes to families and middle school kids. The kids are part of Expresiones, a Hacienda CDC after-school and summer enrichment program designed

to increase family participation and school attendance and reduce youth risk factors such as gang involvement, dropping out of school and alcohol abuse.

The cooking classes are taught by chefs from Bon Appetit Management Company which is committed to creating and supporting sustainable food systems. Bon Appetit donated chef time, supplies and food for the classes as a way to give back to the community and contribute to a better food system.

Chef Micah Cavolo, a parent himself, recognizes that many kids don't understand how the food system works. The Expresiones kids have been fortunate to be involved in growing a community garden and using some of their



**During a summer program, children learn cooking skills from professional chefs, in one of several programs focused on food and health provided by Ecumenical Ministries' Interfaith Food and Farms Partnership.**

community-grown vegetables in the cooking classes. Chef Cavolo sees this as a great way for kids to start making the connection between the garden and their plate.

"I feel that to have a successful

sustainable future, you need to engage and nurture the future and in my world I do that through food. The only thing more rewarding than being a chef is being a teacher also. Lucky for me they are rolled

up into one job," says Cavolo.

Pairing small scale and immigrant farmers to congregations is another way IFFP provides producers and consumers an opportunity

*Continued on page 7*

## Do-it-yourself neighborhood building

*City Repair brings neighbors together, beautifies the city and inspires others*

By Edie Sidle  
*The Portland Upside*

**P**lacemaking, food forests, free boxes, de-paving, permaculture, deep dialogue, bioswales, and cob—you might take some wild guesses about what these terms mean, but Hindi Isenhott with City Repair uses them everyday while working with Portland communities.

**Share-It Square**, a neighborhood gathering place which includes a bulletin board and chalkboard at SE 9th Av and Sherrett St in Sellwood, spurred the formation of City Repair.



*Continued on page 3*

## Kids Club pulse of community

By Nicole Morales  
*The Portland Upside*

**C**herry Blossom Estates, home to 85 families, is doing something different—progressively different—from other apartment complexes that are home to low-income families. While most housing complexes are content to simply rent out and maintain their units, Cherry Blossom provides for a full-time Activities Director. The director's responsibilities range from ensuring the children are fed and have a place to go after school to teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to the adult residents.

At the same time, City Repair founder Mark Lakeman had been coordinating "Moon-Day T-Hows," in the same neighborhood. These wildly-popular Monday evening dessert potlucks convinced many of the residents of the importance of having a gathering place for the community.

The synergy of the two events brought the neighbors together to address their concerns. One Sunday afternoon, the residents took action by painting a design on the intersection of Southeast Ninth Avenue and Sherrett Street. They were so excited about their results that they sent a letter with a picture of their accomplishment to the Portland Department of Transportation (PDOT).

PDOT responded by demanding they remove the painting from the intersection. While stalling for time, neighborhood activists managed to gain the support of then-Portland-Mayor, Vera Katz. Eventually they also won over council members who birthed a new ordinance to legalize the efforts of the forward-thinking community group.

Tia's involvement doesn't stop there. She regularly updates a resource book for residents and recently helped to establish the complex's Neighborhood Watch program. She is currently working on implementing med van visits for the senior residents.

Here's what I learned when I sat down to talk about Kids Club with Tia and long-time resident Jackie Johnson.

**Upside:** You were specifically hired on as the Activities Director?

**Tia:** Yes, and I try to make something available for everybody.

*Continued on page 7*

## Old computers diverted from dumpsters to desks

**By Faye Powell**  
*The Portland Upside*

We Oregonians are so green we practically exude chlorophyll. In fact, I have a friend who is so conscientious that she accumulates only one small bag of landfill-bound trash a month. Indeed, recycling is such a well-established way of life in Portland that "Renew, Reuse, Recycle" could be our regional motto.

Convincing Oregonians to recycle may be a no-brainer, but locating the right collection site for the right items can be daunting. And once we drop off our discards, how many of us know what happens to them afterwards?

Electronic products—computers and cell phones, as well as peripherals like keyboards, mice, modems, printers, cartridges, and cables—pose a particular environmental problem because of the toxic materials they contain and the frequency with which we replace them. This year's conversion from analog to digital signal also added thousands of out-dated televisions to the electronic waste stream.

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that the United States produces 300 million tons of electronic waste annually. About 80% ends up in domestic landfills or is shipped overseas to developing countries where children and adults often pick barehanded through smoldering piles of e-waste with known toxic substances like lead, cadmium, mercury and flame-retardants. These carcinogens shorten lives as well as pollute the atmosphere and water supplies. Although the U.S. Congress has considered a number of bills to deal with responsible disposal of e-waste, none has passed.

Oregon, however, is again ahead of the curve. In 2007, the legislature passed a bill that established Oregon E-Cycles, a program financed by electronics manufacturers and jointly implemented with the Department of Environmental Quality.

Beginning January 1, 2009, the law permits consumers to recycle, free of charge, up to seven computers, monitors and televisions at a time, at various statewide collection sites. The sites meet rigorous guidelines for safe handling and environmentally sound practices. In addition, starting January 1, 2010, Oregon law will prohibit any electronics from being discarded as trash.

According to Penny Erickson of Metro, 320 tons of computers, monitors and televisions have already been recycled this year under the Oregon E-Cycles program. While the current law mandates that only computer, monitor and television manufacturers pay the cost of recycling, it is hoped that future modifications of the law will include other electronic products as well.

Free Geek, one of the most innovative of the Oregon E-Cycles collection sites, is a Portland

nonprofit and pioneer in the area of technology reuse and recycling. Established in 2000 by former architect Oso Martin, Free Geek began with a room full of cast-off computers and a group of volunteers who sorted, separated, tested and rebuilt them. This was the beginning of Free Geek's adoption program that remains a cornerstone of the organization today.

Through his work with various community organizations, Martin saw a need to get usable technology into the hands of those who otherwise could not afford it. Around the same time, e-waste came on the radar of municipalities, and soon the City of Portland was passing its old computers on to Free Geek. Since they began nine years ago, Free Geek has put over 15,000 computers back into the community. Last year Free Geek provided 1200 computers free of charge, and this year they have already given away over 2,000.

Located in southeast Portland, Free Geek is a freewheeling, high-energy whirl of activity in a large building divided into areas for donation collection, teaching, computer building, sales, and warehousing.

Dave Haskins, Free Geek's production coordinator, is a tall, lean, twenty-something who fits right in with his geeky generation. He starts

over 500 computers. According to Haskins, once people get past the fear factor, anyone can build and repair a computer. He says you can't pay for this kind of education and experience at any computer school. And volunteers are eligible for a free computer after 24 hours of working in the adoption program (no hands-on experience) or after building five computers for Free Geek.

Although only manufacturers of computers, monitors and televisions fund recycling through Oregon E-Cycles, Free Geek recycles all non-reusable electronics through responsible companies at its own expense. Printers, complex machines made to be disposable, are one of the largest areas of e-waste right now, and hopefully will be added to the E-Cycles program through future legislation.

Most of the computers Free Geek refurbish are around three years old. In the thrift store they sell from \$90 to \$250. All kinds of computer-related products are also available. In addition to getting a bargain, Haskins says you have the satisfaction of knowing that you've bought a product with a neutral carbon footprint.

"I feel we [Free Geek] are really a social change organization," Haskins adds. "We take what some view as a waste stream, take amazing volunteers, have a synergy with them, rebuild

and recycle this technology and recycle it right back out there into the community."

In addition to Free Geek, several other organizations participate in Oregon E-Cycles, including the 90 Goodwill donation sites (See sidebar), Far West Fibers, Total Reclaim, Inc., and Metro.

### Oso Martin and CREAM

Free Geek founder Oso Martin is now the executive director of Computer Re-Use and Marketing (CREAM) based in Vancouver, Wash.

The organization creates job training and employment opportunities to help people gain marketable technical skills. Although its primary mission is education, CREAM also accepts electronic donations for resale to the community at affordable prices.

Like Free Geek, CREAM diligently ensures that their recyclers use processes that do not harm people or the environment.

*Learn about CREAM at [www.upgradeyourcommunity.org](http://www.upgradeyourcommunity.org). Visit them at 5000 E. Fourth Plain Blvd. Vancouver, WA or call 360-735-0888.*

### Goodwill's e-waste practices

Goodwill Industries, primarily known for its job training and employment programs for persons with disabilities, is also a partner with Oregon E-Cycles.

"We take everything, working or not," says Dale Emanuel, Goodwill public relations manager.

Working and repairable electronics are sold in their retail stores. As a last resort, the remainders are placed in bins and sold by the pound. E-waste that cannot be recycled through Oregon E-Cycles is sent to recyclers who salvage usable products such as plastics and metals. Participation in Oregon E-Cycles has helped reduce Goodwill's trash by 12%, and according to executive transportation manager Bill Goman, none of their discards go into the landfill.

*Visit Goodwill at [www.goodwill.org](http://www.goodwill.org)*



**Free Geek, an innovative computer and electronics reuse/recycling nonprofit, is one of the best places to take unwanted electronics, says production manager Dave Haskins (pictured).**

ed as a volunteer in 2002 and joined the staff six months later. His enthusiasm for the Free Geek mission is contagious.

"I picked up computers like a bad habit over the years," Haskins says. "I strongly believe the best thing anyone can do with their unwanted computer is bring it to us. If it can't be reused, it will be recycled in the most environmentally sound manner ... through Oregon E-Cycles."

At present Free Geek engages about 1,000 active volunteers, including an 85-year-old former Royal Air Force World War II veteran with no previous computer experience. He has now built

*Free Geek is located at 1731 SE 10th Ave, Portland, OR and online at [www.freegeek.org](http://www.freegeek.org). They can be reached at 503-232-9350. For a complete list of organizations that participate in the Oregon E-Cycles program, go to [www.deq.state.or.us/ecearch](http://www.deq.state.or.us/ecearch)*

*Faye Powell is a retired librarian who now feels challenged to peek inside the mysterious CPU. She can be contacted via [phayee1@gmail.com](mailto:phayee1@gmail.com)*

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## From the Editors

By Sara & Rob Bednark  
The Portland Upside

**W**ow! It's been a year since we started work on creating *The Portland Upside*. We had no journalism or publishing experience of our own, only a dream to create what we couldn't find—a publication with all positive news from the Portland metro area. Now a year later, we've published over 50 articles spanning six issues starting with the first in May 2009.

It feels like *The Portland Upside* is really catching on and

gaining momentum. We're getting a great response, more copies are being picked up at our distribution sites, and we're seeing more hits on our website. It turns out that we're not the only ones who want to read positive news.

As always, we want to thank those who volunteer their time and talent to share the inspiring stories from around Portland. Without their help, this paper would not exist.

Because of them, we are able to spread the word about Cheryl Lohrmann's quest to reduce the use of single-use plastic ("Cheryl Lohrmann leaves no plastic behind"), City Repair's successful community-building ventures ("Do-it-yourself neighborhood building"), Jim Keefe's commitment to giving the kids at Cherry Blossom Estates more opportunities to thrive ("Kids Club pulse of community"), and Oso Martin's creation of Free Geek, an innovative organization for reusing and recycling discarded electronics ("Old computers diverted from dumpsters to desks").

We look forward to hearing your comments as we continue to unearth more of Portland's upside and share it with you.

### City Repair

*Continued from page 1*

Thus the colorful and out-of-the-ordinary Share-It Square was created.

Since then, Share-It Square has evolved to include a solar tea station, free box with "treasures" for the taking, kid's play corner, and an artsy sitting place aka bus-stop bench. Residents will soon add a food forest. As you approach Share-It Square, you just have to stop. It's not every day that you see such an interesting and lively intersection.

Geri Ota lived on the intersection of Southeast Ninth and Sherritt from 2000 until 2005. She fondly remembers how neighbors gathered to do something to make their community beautiful. She says she has never lived in a community like Share-It Square, which comes together to plan and then paint the intersection on an annual basis.

"I love that community... So many people came out to participate and it was such a satisfying experience to come together," she says, recalling the annual Square renewal event.

Through donated labor and supplies, the neighborhood residents still get together each year to renew the efforts that first began some dozen or so years ago. Neighbors have a potluck and the green thumbs in the group share food from their gardens. New neighbors are welcomed, resulting in a feeling of true connection in the neighborhood.

"There was so much enthusiasm and it was a lot of fun," Geri recalls. It was "good, hard work that was well worth it," she adds.

It didn't just end with one project in one neighborhood. Through the tenacious efforts of Mark and others, the Sellwood project morphed into a nonprofit, volunteer-based organization that annually spearheads 20 projects in Portland and works with other cities—Albuquerque, Asheville, St. Paul, Eugene, Oakland, and Tucson, to name a few. In six years City Repair has inspired 50 other communities nationwide to consider similar initiatives.

Mark, a trained architect, grew up in Portland in a household with two architect parents. His visionary mother focused on village design while his Yale-educated father, a City of Portland planner, played a prominent role in the development of Portland's Waterfront Park and Pioneer Square. While growing up, Mark and his brother were immersed in talk about inner-city culture, urban sprawl, community commons, and placemaking. He jokes that the rides in the family car amounted to a "rolling architecture school." It paid off.

Indeed, City Repair facilitates the process of helping individual communities accomplish their placemaking goals. By helping them to organize, develop consensus, address conflict, and engage in deep dialogue, people can speak sincerely and listen with open minds. Residents develop decision-making processes and other group skills that people can use effectively in their everyday lives.

City Repair seeks to focus on an organic approach. The organization centers its efforts on promoting sustainability and permanence, empowering people and community, and building friendships and partnerships instead of just doing projects.

City Repair allows each community to engage in creative problem-solving through an inclusive and participatory process. Yes, it takes longer, but the results are profound. With a flexible and adaptive facilitation process, City Repair helps each community define what works best for them and what they want to achieve rather than what is outlined in a preconceived, one-size-fits-all urban plan.

Having spent time with indigenous societies, Mark also believes in the importance other cultures hold for food, music and celebration. Before the work begins, City Repair incorporates into each project just such a life celebration in order to downplay the usual goal-driven way of doing business. City Repair also helps in the purchase of straw, sand, clay and other materials used in each placemaking project.

Most people are in favor of improving their community and the organic nature of the City Repair projects make it seem like fun. Yet these community projects have surprisingly significant effects.

A recent study by Dr. Jan Semenza and Tanya March of Portland State University demonstrates in a measurable way the value of City Repair's community work. The survey conducted of resident participants within a City Repair project site found 53 percent rated their neighborhood better than before, 30 percent mentioned increased social interactions, and 44 percent rated their present neighborhood as an excellent place to live.

For Mark, even with these impressive findings, it is not about trying to make Portland like another city or better than another city, it's more about working with whatever is at hand, whatever individuals bring to the table and their active creative participation. The important result is that when we give of ourselves, it means more to us. It's also about reflecting the true community, not someone else's definitions of what a community should be. Mark sincerely values human capital, people pushing the envelope to the edge in order to create a new paradigm where society shifts to a community focus.

Just as we are coming full circle to value locally-grown produce and local businesses in order to become more sustainable, it makes perfect sense to look into individual communities to improve our quality of life. And when all is said and done, it's people that make our communities better, shape our ideas and our work at the local level. People are the vitality of our neighborhoods and the true foundation of City Repair.



Photo by Edie Sidle

**The creativity of Share-it Square's beehive newspaper box exemplifies the spirit of City Repair.**

# The Portland Upside

positive people, positive stories

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*For years, Edie has been involved in "business writing" but more recently has been exploring creative writing, even trying her hand at poetry. She may be reached at [edeegee@yahoo.com](mailto:edeegee@yahoo.com)*

# Find your passion, take action

*Springboard Innovation supports Portland's budding social entrepreneurs*

By **Rebecca Robinson**  
*The Portland Upside*

**A**lthough the world's problems can feel overwhelming at times, more and more ordinary people are stepping forward with creative ideas and a passion to make a positive impact in their local community. Rather than focusing on making money, they focus on making a difference. These innovative thinkers—who seek social rather than financial profit—have earned the label “social entrepreneurs.”

Yet even when the will is strong, the knowledge and skills are often missing. Many aspiring social entrepreneurs lack the business and marketing know-how necessary to bring their visionary ideas to fruition, let alone sustain them over time.

So how does Portland nurture these new social entrepreneurs?

One local organization, Springboard Innovation, has two signature programs to do just that. Local Agenda and changeXchange dovetail to benefit communities by nurturing sustainable, innovative ideas into reality.

Local Agenda is a 12-week course that anyone can take. For those with a passion for social change but no specific ideas, Local Agenda helps them find their niche. For those with a dream, like Cheryl Lohrmann, Local Agenda provides leadership skills and the support necessary to keep a great idea going.

Cheryl created Leave No Plastic Behind (LNPB), a community arts initiative that focuses on reducing the consumption of single-use plastics. LNPB was a successful start to Cheryl's work, but she knew she wanted to expand her vision. After taking Local Agenda, she fleshed-out her ideas and founded a broader-reaching organization called Create Plenty (See “Cheryl Lohrmann leaves no plastic behind,” right).

“I was looking at the Mercy Corps Northwest website for information on their business model,” says Cheryl, “because I had an idea but it came to the point where I realized I had to start some kind of work on developing it. I saw a description for Springboard’s Local Agenda program, and I clicked on it.”

Cheryl signed up for Local Agenda in the fall of 2008, where she learned how to put her ideas into action through the development of a sustainable business model complete with organizational name, purpose and budget.

“I am not a business person; I am an art major,” explains Cheryl. “But I don’t want to be a nonprofit dependent on grants from foundations which may fail. Which is why it was great to work with Springboard to develop a sustaining strategy... and get listed on changeXchange.”

changeXchange is a website designed to get good ideas launched by exposing projects to a community of potential investors. Seed funding is one of the biggest challenges social entrepreneurs face, and changeXchange helps bridge the gap by putting ideas together with start-up capital.

changeXchange allows anyone to review the projects listed and invest shares of \$5 each in any of them. Once investors purchase shares, they can connect with the project launchers through an online forum called the Roundtable. Here they interact with the launchers and fellow investors, strengthening community ties and creating dialogue between the social entrepreneurs and their financial backers. Being included on the website gives projects like Cheryl’s Create Plenty the visibility and funding opportunities needed to get off the ground.

Cheryl sums up her experience with Springboard Innovation:

“It’s great to have Springboard to help build energy for the projects and keep the momentum

going. They’re a great support network.”

Started in Portland, Springboard is a pioneer for educating and supporting social entrepreneurs, and its message is spreading. In March 2010, Springboard will hold a training to teach other cities around the country how to use Local Agenda to benefit their own communities.

For more information about Springboard Innovation and changeXchange visit [www.springboardinnovation.org](http://www.springboardinnovation.org) and [www.thechangexchange.org](http://www.thechangexchange.org) or call 503-452-6898.

*Rebecca Robinson is an award-winning freelance writer and editor based in Portland. Have a story that needs telling? Contact her at [rebecca.michelle.robinson@gmail.com](mailto:rebecca.michelle.robinson@gmail.com)*



**Springboard Innovations’ changeXchange website is designed to get good ideas launched by exposing social projects to a community of potential investors.**

## Cheryl Lohrmann leaves no plastic behind

By **Rebecca Robinson**  
*The Portland Upside*

“I foresaw a more traditional life for myself,” says Cheryl Lohrmann, describing her unforeseen transition from nonprofit staffer to social entrepreneur. She pauses, reconsidering. “Then again, I’ve always liked getting people to think differently.”

While working at the conservation nonprofit Oregon Wild, Cheryl founded a community organization called Create Plenty, a waste-prevention and food production initiative that arose from a Portland-based project, Leave No Plastic Behind (LNPB).

**Leave No Plastic Behind volunteer Adina Menashe (left) and founder Cheryl Lohrmann display a portion of the National Plastic Quilt Project, one of their programs to raise awareness to reduce plastic.**



Photo courtesy of Cheryl Lohrmann

From planting seeds at her church’s Soil and Conservation Days as a child in rural Michigan to taking photographs of garbage and junkyards in Chicago

after college, Cheryl has always cared about the environment. But she traces the inspiration to found Create Plenty to reading a single book.

“Elizabeth Royte’s ‘Garbage Land’ changed my life,” Cheryl says, her eyes lighting up as she describes the book’s in-depth exploration of landfills, shredders, and other final destinations for our mountains of trash.

“The section on plastic was so much worse than any of the others. There are so many chemicals that we’re introducing into our lives with plastic that we haven’t studied fully, and [reading about it] made me realize I had to spur more people into thinking we don’t have to

accept things the way they are now.”

Armed with the new information, Cheryl started brainstorming creative ways to engage and educate the public about waste reduction and alternatives to single-use plastics. She came up with Leave No Plastic Behind (LNPB), a project blending art, activism and community-building activities.

LNPB’s mission—to sharply decrease the demand for single-use plastic through the development of creative awareness campaigns—finds expression in the National Plastic Quilt Project. It’s a collection of foot-long squares made of single-use plastic joined together to create a collaborative work of art. The quilt illus-

trates the ubiquity of plastic and asks people to reduce their consumption.

Contributing artists are asked to walk their talk by adopting a “plastic-observer”

lifestyle” for three months. They agree to refrain from purchasing or using any items composed of or packaged in single-use plastic. The list is lengthy: prepackaged foods, to-go coffee lids, shampoo, bottled water, and many other staples of everyday life.

The Create Plenty venture hoping to get funding through the changeXchange social venture capital website (see “Find your passion, take action,” above) is the Action Center, a “community hub” with a store, container reuse station, garden and workshop where cooking, gardening, building and food storage skills are taught and exchanged in an environment which builds a cooperative, low-waste community.

“A place where you can have a café and a market and a deli and everything food-related without sending the consumer home with more trash,” is how Cheryl sees it.

Her long-term goal is to have Action Centers around the city “as prolific as 7-11 and Plaid Pantry,” to promote a sustainable, healthy lifestyle and create local jobs. The Action Center will show that Portland is moving beyond the plastic bag and tackling single-use packaging in creative ways.

“It won’t be easy,” Cheryl concedes. “We have to invent a new infrastructure. But not a high-tech one, just a practical one.”

Which, in her estimation, may mean looking to the past to guide the future.

“Maybe progress isn’t something no one’s seen before; maybe it’s something behind us that happened already,” says Cheryl. “It’s communication and sharing resources with each other.”

To learn more about Create Plenty and Leave No Plastic Behind, visit [www.createplenty.org](http://www.createplenty.org)

*Rebecca Robinson is an award-winning freelance writer and editor based in Portland. Have a story that needs telling? Contact her at [rebecca.michelle.robinson@gmail.com](mailto:rebecca.michelle.robinson@gmail.com)*

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## The Chapman School Vaux's Swifts

The Swifts spiral downwards, then swing up, up.  
 Their wings fluttering, a syncopated rhythm,  
 avoiding a million crashes, with something magical.  
 They play, they eat, they soar.  
 It is time to perch on the long column of the school chimney,  
 the dusk deepens.  
 Hanging tenaciously in the narrow darkness, now silent,  
 a thousand wings, now still.  
 They rest, they wait, forty thousand strong.  
 Answering to an unknown code, a silent destiny.  
 Then, the dawn breaks and the Swifts again fly up, up,  
 with something magical.  
 Nature's song.

by Edie Sidle

*For years, Edie has been involved in "business writing" but more recently has been exploring creative writing, even trying her hand at poetry. She may be reached at edegee@yahoo.com*



Photo by Steve Warner

**Every September since the late 1980's, the chimney at Chapman Elementary School in North-West Portland is home to thousands of migrating Vaux Swifts, small birds who circle the skies before sunset as hundreds of people come to watch them file into the chimney for the night.**

In the fall of 2007, I asked Greg Mistell, baker and owner of the Fleur de Lis Bakery & Café in the Hollywood District, to donate a cake for an event. Because it was a literary event, our conversation led to writing. Greg mentioned he'd been an English major, a happy coincidence and perfect fit for a bakery located in Hollywood's old library.

Perhaps because I'm a writer who eats a certain number of cookies each week, and perhaps because I live in an apartment above the new library, we wound up collaborating on a poetry-as-performance event, The Bakery Show, featuring local poets plus delicious dinners, drinks and treats from Fleur de Lis.

What with all that melding of words and bread, poetry and cake, I wrote this poem.



There's a bakery where the library used to be,

so the baker is an English major, and his gingerbread's shining lemon glaze rhymes with apricot scones, cinnamon rolls, thick brownies demanding haiku-size bites. And those fat doughnuts are classics, their holes suggesting absent clues in mystery novels whose pages flutter like flaky pastry around sticky elements of the plot. Each berry tart tells a story, each cookie's a simple sentence its crunchy sugar sparkles scattered like commas through paragraphs, like dashes for emphasis – and the very last crumb on the plate is a period or exclamation point or formally postmodern question mark.

When the baker is an English major, then stonground grain can be a metaphor, and characters can be yeasty, strong salty citizens who grow thoughtfully into goodness, work to make it come out right, study recipes, learn to combine necessary flavors and textures. One character gets punched down but rises shapes up, reveals a heart as rich as dark rye. The narrator is sharp as a well-kept knife every chapter seems a slice of real life, all its ingredients mixed well. All the words are folded carefully into fiction, memoir, sonnets cooling on stacked metal trays, shelved there like the books were, always bound to feed us.

by Judith Arcana



Photos by Jonathan Arlook

*Judith Arcana writes poems, stories, essays and books. Sometimes she stops writing and walks over to Fleur de Lis Bakery for cookies or bread. Visit her website at juditharcana.com*

## Out of the shadows and onto the big screen

*Locals create the documentary "Papers" highlighting problem of undocumented youth*

By El Grupo Juvenil,  
The "Papers" Youth Crew  
*The Portland Upside*

On Sept. 26, the documentary "Papers" launched its national tour at the Hollywood Theatre in Portland, Oregon. That's because the filmmakers, both youth and adults, wanted to showcase their extraordinary adventure in their hometown.

"Papers" is a film about undocumented youth and the challenges they face as they turn 18 without legal status. The film highlights the approximately two million undocumented children who were raised and live in the U.S., but were born in other countries. They were educated in American schools, know only the U.S. as home, and upon high school graduation, find the door to their future closed because it is against the law for them to work or drive. It is difficult, if not impossible in some states, for them to attend college.

Currently, there is no path to citizenship for most of these young people. They must begin adulthood living in the shadows, when they desire deeply, like most young people, to pursue their dreams and contribute their skills and abilities to our communities.

Portland-based Graham Street Productions made "Papers" in partnership with Film Action Oregon. The filmmakers worked with undocumented youth who wanted to tell their stories, as well as with national and local community organizations working to change immigration policy on behalf of them.

The "Papers" crew includes adult and youth, gay and straight, Latino, Jewish, Japanese-American, African-American and Anglo, ages 17 to 72. Director Anne Galisky is of Polish descent and has a rich immigration story of her own that stretches from the Ukraine to Mexico to Los Angeles. The producer, Rebecca Shine, of Jewish descent, was also inspired by the struggles and successes of her own people.

The five main characters in the film represent the diversity of young immigrants in the U.S. today: a Guatemalan-American girl who risks deportation before her eighteenth birthday; a Mexican-American student who lives on two borders as both a gay Latino and as an undocumented student; a Korean-American student who dreams of college but encounters only stone walls; a Jamaican-American young woman who wants desperately to use her college degree but finds herself exploited in dead-end jobs;



Photo courtesy of El Grupo Juvenil

**Director Anne Galisky, (first row, second from left) and members of El Grupo Juvenil worked together to document the struggles undocumented youth must deal with after they turn 18.**

and a Mexican-American teenager who wants to leave life in the streets for something more positive, but lacks the papers to take the next steps.

By choosing to tell their stories of being undocumented in America, the youth depicted in the film risk arrest, detention and deportation to countries they do not even remember. Aware that they no longer tell their stories for their own relief or even for the benefit of people they know, they have nevertheless taken responsibility for representing all the undocumented children who go to American schools only to live in the shadows of society after graduation. The characters in the film talk about possible solutions to this dilemma.

The project is not only about creating a compelling film, however. It is also about training young leaders in social justice.

One unique aspect of the film's production is the three youth producers, founders of El Grupo Juvenil, who were involved in every aspect of the project, including planning, fundraising, public speaking, filming, interviewing and outreach. Ages 18 through 20, the three grew El Grupo Juvenil to include young people from seven different school districts in the Portland metro area as well as dozens of youth from around the country who participated in the film.

Although the three founders of El Grupo Juvenil are Mexican-American, they work with youth from many cultures and ethnicities. They have spent the last couple of years working hard to do something positive with their lives. Not only have they produced this film, a companion book and a discussion guide, they have also designed and facilitated workshops about immigration, discrimination and storytelling at local schools, including

George Middle School, Madison High School, Beaverton International School, Southridge High School, and Portland Community College. They have mentored at-risk youth, including homeless youth, young adults with developmental disabilities, and high school students in danger of dropping out.

In the process of making the film, El Grupo Juvenil has found allies in U.S. Senators and Representatives, national immigrant rights leaders and other powerful individuals around the country. They have received over 1400 donations from 24 states, as well as requests for screenings from colleges, community groups and independent theaters across the country. The filmmakers have also submitted their work to film festivals and television broadcasters.

The "Papers" crew believes that as a society we risk losing the immense passion and talent of these immigrant American youth and that a change can be made, a hopeful and uplifting message in a country with a long tradition of immigration.

*Tour dates can be found online at [www.papersthemovie.com](http://www.papersthemovie.com) For more information, call 503-282-8683 or email [el.grupo.juvenil@grahamstreetproductions.com](mailto:el.grupo.juvenil@grahamstreetproductions.com)*

*El Grupo Juvenil was started by three young people who wanted to represent the 2 million undocumented youth in the country. They have grown to include over 150 youth from around the country who are participating in this project.*

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## Voices around town

**What do you like to do for fun?**

"Downhill skiing in the morning, sunbathing on the beach in the afternoon. Only in Portland can we do that on the same day!"

—Berry Kruijning  
*Lake Oswego, OR*

"Disc golf at Pier Park! Hiking the Gorge, and eating anywhere."

—Randolph King  
*Cedar Mills neighborhood  
Portland, OR*

"I like hanging out at Edgefield for an afternoon. Watch the glass blowing, eat outdoors, and enjoy a microbrew while listening to a local band—good times!"

—T. Burgin  
*Gresham, OR*

"I love to blow glass at Elements Glass in NW Portland. I also like to play frisbee with my dog, Happy, in local area parks."

—Marvin K. Dean  
*Portland, OR*

"Hunting for fall mushrooms on the forest floor is adventurous and fun!"

—Alan Benson  
*Southeast Portland, OR*

"I like to go to concerts and festivals around town to listen to and dance to good music."

—R.M. Lloyd  
*TROUTDALE, OR*

"Going to downtown Portland and experiencing everything that downtown has to offer. I love what they've done with the Pearl district, and there's something going on every weekend."

—Rho Weyhrauch  
*Pleasant Valley neighborhood  
Portland, OR*

"Since the season has changed, with all the fall colors, my husband and I take our convertible for drives up the Gorge and to the coast, sipping on some good cups of coffee along the way."

—Kay Crane  
*TROUTDALE, OR*

"I like soaking in a big soapy bathtub, with a great bottle of wine, and a whackin' good book."

—Donnie Endicott  
*Springdale, OR*

"I enjoy traveling to the National Parks to camp, and hiking the waterfall trails along the Gorge."

—C. Strobel  
*Damascus, OR*

"I love spending a little time at the library, then a coffee shop, then out for a hike in the woods or to the zoo."

—Howard Abrams  
*Beaverton, OR*

**Kids Club***Continued from page 1*

**Upside:** Do you see yourself as a teacher, as a parent, or as a mentor?

**Tia:** I would say all of the above. I do the teaching, the ESL instruction, the tutoring, the activity planning, and the resident help. I really do feel like a mentor to the children and adults here.

**Upside:** The adults, too?

**Tia:** I do ESL tutoring for the adults. Our community is very diverse because of the many nationalities here. They all just come together and that's my favorite part of it.

**Upside:** What was it like at Cherry Blossom when you first arrived?

**Tia:** When I came in, the clubhouse was pretty much empty and it was a really dark brown. It didn't really have much going for it. They told me, "Do what you want with it—we want it to be kid friendly." They gave me a budget and I made it a classroom setting.

**Upside:** Not all classrooms are as warm and inviting as this. (Sunshine yellow and cherry red walls complement the kids' colored name-bug projects that drape one corner of the room. Popsicle puppets that resemble their creators line the doorway.) What happened when you began five years ago?

**Tia:** The first year it sat empty. I had to go door to door and tell people, "Come into the clubhouse, learn ESL, send your children, it's free." Once the children started coming, it was very segregated. They didn't talk or play together. They came to the clubhouse and all sat at their different tables by nationality. And a few times, they would say, "Well you can't sit here, you're not [my nationality]." This just broke my heart.

**Upside:** And now?

**Tia:** Now, they're just best friends. And I really think the kids have brought the adults together. Every year we have these events. For instance, we started out with five people for the first Thanksgiving Harvest party and then the next year we had 25 people. And just this last barbecue we had over a 100

people! It's just amazing how you see all the cultures come together.

**Jackie:** The clannishness has dissipated. The example that Tia refers to of the kids coming together translates to the adults and that's why I'm personally so excited about what goes on here. I grew up with "old world thinking," and that would probably describe a lot of the parents' thinking that reside here. So I have a real keen appreciation of what Tia does with the kids.

**Jackie Johnson (left) and Tia Bennett. Tia, the Activities Director at Cherry Blossom Estates, developed an after-school club for kids in the housing complex that has united its diversity.**



Photo by Nicole Morales

**Upside:** How do you define yourself within the program, Jackie?

**Jackie:** Very much an advocate for what happens here and very much an advocate for the whole goal that Jim, the owner, has.

**Tia:** Jackie gives me suggestions. She'll see things outside that I don't see and give me ideas, like the need for a safety class.

**Upside:** Jackie, you were here before Jim purchased the property?

**Jackie:** Yes, I've been here since 2000. At that time it had two owners and the managers changed every six months. So there was no time for continuity, there was no time to build anything. This clubhouse sat empty most of the time.

When I first met Jim (the owner of Cherry Blossom Estates), he told me about his childhood. He said that he grew up in income-restricted housing and he made a commitment to himself that if he ever was able to give back, he would.

**Upside:** (I emailed Jim Keefe, who lives in California, and asked him some questions about his role in Cherry Blossom Estates.) How has your childhood inspired you to want to help youngsters and their families have a positive living and learning environment?

**Jim:** I grew up in a government-assisted housing project in Massachusetts. [My brother, three sisters, and I] needed to be outside... since there was not a lot of room inside. I feel that I greatly benefited from after school and summer youth programs in our local community. These programs always had a strong educational component and access to education changed my life. Now that I am able to do so, I believe that I have a duty to sponsor programs like ours at Cherry Blossom and to staff them with enthusiastic and caring people like Tia.

**Upside:** What do you hope to achieve with the club?

**Jim:** Our educational programs have four main goals: to supplement resident access to educational resources, to insure that our children are fed and have a place to go after school, to link our resident families with other resources in the area and to foster goodwill at our community.

**Upside:** Was Cherry Blossom Estates' Kids Club your first attempt at implementing an educational program for youth?

**Jim:** No. Our programs...are modeled after those being done on a larger scale by Project Access, Inc., a nonprofit [that strives to increase communal resources and improve the livelihood for low income families]. It was founded by my partners ten years ago.

**Upside:** How do you define your role with the club?

**Jim:** Cherry Blossom Estates is owned by a partnership with two general partners: my company and Affordable Housing Access, a Southern California nonprofit. Our role is to provide funding and overall management for the program.

I believe that our programs at Cherry Blossom should stand on their own. I would rather see you focus on and celebrate the daily achievements and successes of our children. Lots of people I never knew (let alone never thanked) put the programs that helped me in place. I am content to simply return the favor for the children we can help.

**Upside:** A prime example of Cherry Blossom's communal cohesiveness was when one of Jackie's neighbors couldn't find her child anywhere on the complex. Along with the three police officers called to the scene, all of the residents got involved in the search.

**Jackie:** It was very touching to see the diverse community rally around a common need.

**Upside:** Turns out the young girl had hid under some blankets in the bedroom.

**Tia:** It was like our very own Amber Alert. (Laughter).

We live in a big city and I'd always wanted to know what it felt like to be in a smaller community... just by living here I get that feeling like the TV show *Cheers*, "where everybody knows your name."

**Jackie:** My hope is that someone will read about this and realize they can do what Tia has done with the club. There are so many diverse income-restricted communities. The seeds that Tia plants on a regular basis at Cherry Blossom can be planted anywhere.

*Nicole Morales strives to connect people via multicultural education and writing. She teaches ESL at a private university outside of Portland and welcomes your inquiries at nmorales.writes@gmail.com*

**Interfaith food***Continued from page 1*

nity to understand one another. The project includes farmer tables as well as community-supported agriculture (CSA) for congregations.

Yua Lo is a small farmer who has benefited from the Interfaith Food and Farms Partnership. A refugee from Laos, Yua arrived in the United States as a 7th grader in 1978. She adjusted to a new culture, learned English and attended middle-school, all while caring for her younger siblings. Later Yua's family moved to Stockton, California to pursue farming. When she and her husband moved to Oregon 11 years ago, they planned to give up farming, but in 2001, Yua felt called back to the fields.

Today she is a savvy grower and smart businessperson. Not only is Yua steadily growing her family farming business through her relationships with local churches, where she provides flowers and vegetables. She has also provided important congregational connections to the Hmong community including new Hmong farmer table partners.

Small immigrant farmers who face language and cultural barriers find the supportive atmosphere of the congregations very encouraging. In addition, congregation members learn about different cultures. Farm families producing on a scale too small for other marketing opportunities get a new opportunity through the partnerships.

Alex Velikoretskikh (pronounced "vel-i-kor-et-ski") is one of these farmers. Alex was born in Russia and has always been a gardener and farmer, even as a young boy in the Ukraine. He immigrated to the U.S. with his wife and children in 2007. Ten in all, the Velikoretskikh family lives in the southeast Foster Powell neighborhood of Portland. Using hand tools and simple irrigation techniques, they grow potatoes, squash, tomatoes, peppers, beans and green onions on two plots, one on Sauvie Island and the other on Southeast 39th near Holgate.

Besides supporting immigrant farmers, congregations are encouraged to increase low-income access to healthy farm grown food through donations for an extra CSA share, and by buying leftovers at farmer tables for donations to

food banks or a community meal. These partnerships raise awareness in the faith community about the importance of supporting local farmers and building justice and equity in the food system. Small farmers also benefit from the new economic opportunities.

Another unique partnership exists between First Presbyterian Church, Alder House, Julia West and a local farmer. For the past four years First Presbyterian Church has had a farmer sell produce after their Sunday service. To reach out



Photo by Alison Warren

**Farmer tables support small-scale and immigrant farmers, and give congregation members convenient access to far m-fresh produce.**

into the community and increase access to the fresh food for all, the church also uses its kitchen to teach microwave cooking classes to residents of Alder House, a low-income single-room housing complex, and to clients of Julia West, a drop-in center for homeless individuals in downtown Portland.

The classes have been well received by participants such

as Janice Potter. Janice "really loved the recipes the class provided and found them to be very helpful."

One of her favorites was the rhubarb crisp, a recipe given out as part of the IFFP program. Janice used the coupons provided by the class to connect with the farm table at the church and buy the rhubarb she needed for the recipe. The coupons have also given Janice the chance to eat fresh lemons on cucumbers, tomatoes and beets.

She's a shining example of how this class helps people to think differently about food and eat well, even without having a regular kitchen. The classes also provide a unique way to build community through sharing skills and eating together. As one participant stated, it was the people who made it worthwhile for him.

The Congregation Wellness Project, another IFFP program, is equipping congregations to do assessments of their facilities and practices to determine how they can create environments where healthy choices for food and physical activity become easy. Some congregations that have done an adaptation of the School Wellness Index have realized that their land can be used for community gardens.

The belief that everyone one should have access to healthy foods and an environment that supports health forms the foundation of all IFFP programs. IFFP is doing its small part to partner congregations with communities to support health and a sustainable food system for all.

*For more information visit [www.emoregon.org/food\\_farms.php](http://www.emoregon.org/food_farms.php)*

*Jenny Holmes is the Environmental Ministries Director at EMO and Alison Warren is a Program Associate. If you are interested in participating in their programs, contact them at jholmes@emoregon.org and awarren@emoregon.org or by calling 503-221-1054.*

## The journey from inspiration to entrepreneur

**By Sally Murdoch**  
*The Portland Upside*

We have all heard stories about a layoff spurring a new business or a mortgage payment becoming the mother of invention. For some, not finding a job can jumpstart a latent entrepreneurial urge, while others work decades in a career before the enterprising spirit takes hold.

No matter how one gets there, the change in thinking from worker to entrepreneur can be fascinating and inspiring. Here are some snapshots of local people breaking out on their own amidst turbulent economic times.

### Bringing electric cars to the Northwest

Martin Magnia's reputation as the go-to guy on vintage Volkswagens was well established by 2002 when he started The DDB, his VW restoration business. Visiting his shop is like entering a VW Type 3 museum: fastbacks, squarebacks and Karmann Ghias span 50 years of car technology. Business has been steady for Magnia in his shop on 78th and Northeast Halsey. Nonetheless, he recently came upon a new opportunity that fast-forwarded his skills into the future: turning vintage VWs and other European makes into electric vehicles.

Magnia had long dreamed of making the cars he loved into efficient, carbon-neutral vehicles. He outfitted Beetles as electric cars until two years ago, when he and his friend Matt, owner of Ecos Motors, brainstormed on how to widen the technology. The two put their ideas to the test by placing an electric Beetle on eBay, and watching as it sold for \$26,500 within an hour. They formed a partnership that will bring three Ecos electric car models to market in 2010, with Magnia as the western distributor for all three: an electric VW beetle, the Ecos FUN which looks like a jeep, and a luxury sports car called the Ecos Harbinger.

While Magnia can build and sell new

Ecos cars, he can also convert cars to electric. There are a number of charging stations in town, and with Magnia's onboard self-charging apparatus, he says you can charge your vehicle at home for less wattage than a hairdryer. The tax credits, he points out, save money as well. Ideally, he says, it's the European lightweight metal models from the 50's, 60's and 70's that make great conversions to electric engines.

With his thorough knowledge of vintage European car models and electric conversion technology, Magnia's business is steady.

"No more oil changes, no more tune ups," Magnia says.

All parts and manufacturing are done in the U.S., except the batteries, which are made of 50% recycled parts in China.

### From craft brewing to screen printing

Tim McFall was the vice president of marketing for Widmer Brothers brewery for 15 years and an active part of helping the iconic brothers grow a small batch brewing operation into one of the country's largest craft brewers. With Widmer looking for ways to scale back in December of 2008, McFall decided to resign his position. After a decade and a half in the beer business, McFall and his wife Robin thought about the next chapter in their lives and were now looking for an opportunity to do something different.

In January 2009, he considered running an e-commerce beer merchandise site, but didn't see a good fit for Oregon's smaller beer company needs. His next choice was to look for a business to buy.

McFall found a screen printing shop for sale and the more he researched it, the more he knew he could use his marketing experience at a large company to help others. At Widmer, he had observed that many screen printers began as artists and graphic designers before falling into business ownership. Some were great screen printers and artists

but didn't necessarily understand the business side of things. Widmer sought out the artists that were also good business people and kept them as vendors. Having been on the client side for 15 years, McFall knew what makes a good vendor.

"High quality product

and fair pricing, but to be in business you have to know customer service and get it done right, and those were the vendors I used on a regular basis. Whether it's a coach from a local school or parent volunteer or a marketing manager at a brewery wanting to order a product or service," he said, "this is the job they have to do, and as a vendor it's your number one role to help them."

McFall's aha moment came while the screen-printing offer was wavering. The

and home for 4 weeks. When the pressure of maintaining a career overseas and a home and family in Portland became too great, he decided to look for a job here this past June.

A chef manager for 22 years in Scotland, he figured he'd be a natural in Portland's rich restaurant scene. But proving his experience on paper, conducting interviews with a thick Scottish brogue, and competing against hundreds of other applicants, proved difficult. By mid August, he was ready to explore other options.

Encouraged by frequent Portland food cart dining as well as a New York Times article proclaiming that food carts are changing Portland's culinary landscape, King's entrepreneurial wheels started spinning. A visit to the British Fish and Chip Shop had him missing tastes of home, and the two ideas melded. Why not, he thought?

He'd always wanted his own chippy some day. A converted trailer showed up on craigslist one Saturday and by Tuesday the trailer was his.

Named The Frying Scotsman, the trailer opened on Sept. 14 in Portland's eastside industrial district at 22nd and Raleigh. By 12:30 p.m. on day two, King had to post the closed sign in order to catch up with demand. By the end of the first week, he had sold 75 servings of fresh fish sourced locally from Pacific Seafood. What makes his business unique, he says, is the authentic British fish and chips made by a true Brit.

### The Frying Scotsman

James King was born and raised in a small town west of Glasgow, Scotland, his home for 40 years until a chance meeting with a Portland girl (that's me) led him to Oregon. Two years ago they married and had a baby while King kept his UK-based job on an offshore oil rig.

King's job kept him away for 4 weeks

*Fourth-generation Portlander Sally Murdoch has a two-year-old daughter and two stepsons. She has owned a marketing consultation firm for over 4 years, specializing in beer, action sports and art. Contact Sally at sally@sallymurdoch.com*

### Submission of the Month

Send us your photo, doodle, cartoon, poem, haiku, drawing, artwork, essay, quote, etc. Something that you find positive, and that we can fit into a 4"x 6" space. Email it to editors@portlandupsde.com or mail it to us by October 20.

One or more submissions will be chosen to appear in the November issue of *The Portland Upside*. Please include your name, email address and phone number in case we need to contact you.

**Bus Love**  
by Kara Maslen



Photo by Lillian Read

One of 400 entries in Forest Grove's Sidewalk Chalk Art Festival.

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The Sidewalk Chalk Art Festival in Forest Grove has occurred on the third Saturday of September for the past 19 years. It began when the Board of the Valley Art Association was inspired to emulate Santa Barbara's street painting festival as a way to encourage creativity and community. Unlike other Chalk Art Festivals, the artwork is not judged, so all drawing is done purely for the sake of creating art.

Lillian Read has volunteered at all but two of the festivals, and will co-chair next year's event with her mom.

For more information, visit [www.valleyart.org](http://www.valleyart.org) or contact Lillian at [Lillian.Read@gmail.com](mailto:Lillian.Read@gmail.com)

The

# Portland Upside

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## Listening to America

*Woman takes journey to capture 100 voices in 100 days*

By Rob Bedmark  
*The Portland Upside*

After the 2008 presidential election last November, change seemed to be on the minds of many Americans. Mary Clare, graduate psychology professor at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, found herself thinking about change as a central theme of the campaign, regardless of party affiliation. She wondered what people meant by the word "change." The view presented by the media was one thing, but what would a cross section of Americans say when asked about the meaning of change?

In August, several months before the election, she had made a decision to work only half time during the 2008-2009 school term. She couldn't articulate why she was cutting back, or why she needed the time, only that she needed to do it. Then after analyzing the campaign and economic downturn with her students in a diversity class, an idea for a project began percolating.

Mary remembers being profoundly moved some 30 years ago when she first encountered a book by Studs Terkel. He had a way of capturing the voices of ordinary Americans, real people, and presenting them to readers

in a captivating and unadorned way. He focused on what people said, rather than on opinions and interpretations of what they expressed.

Inspired by Terkel, Mary decided

to friends and relatives announcing her plans. She asked for referrals to any acquaintances, interview subjects whom she shouldn't miss. She also asked if they knew of anyone who



**Inspired by Studs Terkel, Mary Clare traveled the country and recorded American's views on the topic of change.**

to take her own journey to capture the voices of Americans. For her project she chose the first 100 days of the Obama administration and she set a goal of interviewing 100 people.

On December 31, Mary sent an email

would be willing to let her roll out her sleeping bag for a night. Within two weeks she had offers for places to stay all over the country and a list of people

*Continued on page 2*



Photo by Carrie Ure

## A wealth of flowers

By Carrie Ure  
*The Portland Upside*

"It starts out as a hobby but it becomes a way of life." According to gardener Jan Behrs of Portland, Oregon.

For 25 years, she has tended two-thirds of an acre near the historic southwest neighborhood of Multnomah Village. Once home to Agnes and Florien Cadoneau of the Alpenrose Dairy clan, her shy white clapboard farmhouse hides its perky front porch behind a pair of PeeGee tree hydrangeas loaded with masses of creamy blooms.

A transplant from the weather extremes of the Midwest, Jan moved to Portland in 1980, shortly after the Mount St. Helens eruption.

"We traded tornadoes for volcanoes," she quips.

Raised on 15 acres north of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, by an organic farmer who aspired to grow French wine grapes, Jan searched for her own impossible dream. When she first saw the suburban Portland property, replete with tangled blackberry thickets, tall grass and run-down farmhouse, it was love at first sight.

"I don't know about the house, but I want that land," she told her husband.

They moved in and began work in the yard immediately, putting off the house remodel until they had constructed raised beds for vegetables and ornamentals, two children's gardens for their son and daughter, and a field of heirloom daffodils divided from those originally planted by a Cadoneau daughter.

Although I've lived in the neighborhood off and on for 16 years, I met Jan for the first time last week. I'd left my computer to get some fresh air and a change of scenery.

Driving through the neighborhood I register a deep sense of sadness and frustration about my futile job search, dwindling bank account and the current state of world affairs. I'm having a bad day.

As I round the corner onto my street I see the cheerful white shed and hand-painted sign next to Jan's house. She's converted a garage into a farm stand and today it's brimming with bright yellow sunflowers. I find myself pulling over despite my self-absorbed state of anxiety and fear. It's just so wonderful to see so many flowers!

I choose a gorgeous bouquet of purple and yellow, drop a five dollar bill into the box and head back to my car. Just then I notice a figure stooped in the massive sunflower-filled garden. I venture into the yard and call out, "Yoo hoo!"

Jan hops up out of a flowerbed as I reach out my hand. "Hi. I'm Carrie, your neighbor..." I venture timidly.

"Oh, hello, I'm...dirty." Jan says with a smile, apologetically shaking a mud-caked gardening glove from her right hand. We laugh, the ice broken, and I know that, although I'm trespassing, I'll be forgiven.

"I've lived in the neighborhood for years," I start. "I don't know how many times I've stopped to buy a bouquet. Maybe dozens. But I want you to know that I've never needed one more than today. I just want to thank you..."

My voice cracks with emotion and I find myself beginning to cry in the company of the kindly stranger with a quick smile, easy laugh and dirty overalls.

A few days later I'm seated on an overstuffed sofa in her cozy living room, with its brick fireplace, old-fashioned built-ins, and art prints of calla lilies lining the walls. Her black cat Zimma settles on my lap, purring. I ask Jan what

## Homeless man uses creativity for cash

By Briena Sash  
*The Portland Upside*

Melvin has lived on the streets of Portland for ten years. For many, the mention of a homeless man might stir up images of a street-corner panhandler, perhaps an alcoholic, a can-collector, or maybe a person holding a cardboard sign, the message Hungry, Vietnam Vet, or God Bless, etched in black Sharpie ink. There are many stereotypes, but Melvin fits none of them.

Melvin does not panhandle, he doesn't drink, and he has never held a cardboard sign. Melvin makes origami.

I meet him recently at Coffee Time on Northwest 21st. He greets me outside, pulling up on a bike decorated with stickers, a flag and a toy truck zip-tied to the frame. He locks my bike to his and directs me inside to a dim private booth decorated with murals resembling stained glass windows.

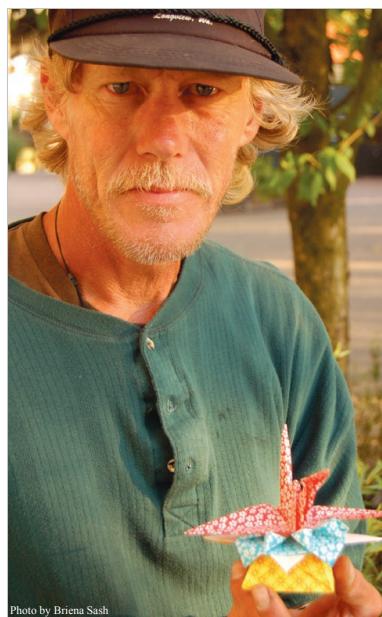
"This is my spot," Melvin tells me. "I call it my office."

Mel's origami workshop certainly looks like an office, with piles of bright paper scattered about, a laptop and an almost-full coffee cup sitting on the table.

Melvin is now fifty-three. Growing up in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California, he joined the Marines as a teenager. Shortly thereafter, he found himself in a hospital in Okinawa, Japan, with a broken leg hoisted in a sling.

"A little Okinawa woman came in to care for me," he explains. "She was so little, she couldn't have weighed more than ninety pounds. She was so sweet. She thought I was rather cute looking... about nineteen with my blond hair and my blue eyes," Melvin recalls fondly.

During his eight weeks in the hospital, the woman brought scratch paper pre-cut into squares with which to teach Melvin origami. He shipped his origami creations back home to his grandparents, kindling a life-long passion for folding paper.



**Melvin McAffe uses his origami skills to help support himself on the streets of Portland.**

*Continued on page 3*

*Continued on page 4*

## From the Editors

By Sara & Rob Bednark  
*The Portland Upside*



**“W**hat has inspired you lately?”

There were many answers to this question last night as we walked along Waterfront Park in downtown Portland (“Voices from the street”).

When we ask the question of ourselves, our thoughts turn to *The Portland Upside*. Over the last seven months we’ve been inspired in numerous ways while working on this paper.

First and foremost we have been amazed at the touching and heartfelt stories that have emerged from the streets of the Portland metro area.

In “Hearts, minds and bodies nurtured at p:ear,” Faye paints a picture of an organization that really cares

about giving dignity to homeless youth. Briena helps us see that the stereotype of the homeless doesn’t fit every person living on the street (“Homeless man uses creativity for cash”). Mary Clare (“Listening to America”) inspires us with her initiative for going out, listening to people, and finding the threads that unite us all.

We are continuously inspired by the many volunteer writers who donate their time and talent to reporting the positive news of Portland.

Nicole has written for all five of our issues on a variety of topics, and this month she writes about a personal experience in “Yard sale brings in more than just money.” Our copy editor and occasional contributor, Carrie, has been here from the beginning, encouraging us and volunteering many hours to make the paper shine. Her story of an encounter with the Daffodil Lady (“A wealth of flowers”) inspires us to plant more flowers next year.

All the feedback we’ve received on behalf of *The Portland Upside* inspires us to continue to search for articles that celebrate the positive side of the Portland metro area. You can now go to the new “Articles” section of our website and comment on any of the individual stories that have been published. Or feel free to add a comment about what has inspired you to this month’s “Voices around town” section.

Inspiration is contagious!

Contact us at editors@portlandupside.com or 503-663-1526 and visit us online at www.PortlandUpside.com

### Mary Clare

Continued from page 1

to interview.

Mary named her project “EX: Change09”, capturing the topic of “change” and the “exchange” of ideas. The two dots in the colon are red and blue, symbolizing Republicans and Democrats; the letters and numbers are purple, symbolizing the color-mixing of red and blue.

She chose three questions “general enough to allow for any given respondent to take the conversation whatever way seems right to them.”

What does change mean to you, right now?

In the midst of change, what is important to have remain the same?

What will change look like—what will you recognize as solid evidence that change has happened?

On February 2, Mary hit the road, alone in her Mini Cooper. Over the next 50 days she headed south into California, across the southern states to Georgia, up the eastern coast to Delaware, and across the upper half of the country back to Portland, traveling through 28 states, logging 10,000 miles.

Along the way she videotaped over 50 interviews, some of them prearranged, and others spontaneous, often in coffee shops. She deliberately talked with people from all walks of life: rich, poor, homeless, seven-year-olds, 80-somethings, and Americans of varying political affiliations, religious beliefs, and ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

In a coffee shop in California, Todd, a 25-year-old senior at San Diego State University, took a break from pouring over his finance text to talk about change.

“I don’t really know why I changed. I mean, all through foster care and even adoption the adults all said that I would never be anything but a loser. But here’s the thing: I’m not living that prediction. I have changed and I’m committed to building a real life for myself.”

In a Tucson, Arizona coffee shop a 65-year-old woman named Cheri agreed to an interview.

Cheri wants a government for the people, not for business or for bigger government. She wants freedom. A retired law enforcement officer who’s lived in Tucson for 55 years, she raised her children to be bilingual and learned Spanish herself because “it’s only right to have both languages if you want to do any job well in this city.”

Cheri is also a practicing Muslim, raised in the mosque by her Iranian father and Euro-American mother. After 9/11, she stopped wearing hijab—the traditional head covering worn by many Muslim women—because of fear for her own safety. Three years ago, Cheri still didn’t feel safe enough to wear hijab, but she was tired of hiding her identity, and wanted to do something to symbolize her devotion to God and her hope “for all people to be well and at peace.” She then showed Mary a tattoo that means “Islam.”

While getting her things together to leave a coffee shop on the banks of the Guadalupe River in Texas, Mary overheard David and Tommy talking about their Sunday school class. They were willing to stop their conversation for a minute to talk about change.

Both devout Christians, they spoke with pride of their church community in Kerrville, Texas. They spoke of the 200-300 in their youth ministry and the evidence in a recent personality inventory that these kids are ready to be active in making their community a more peaceful and kind place.

Both men emphasized the importance of family and the necessity of shifting values from greed and materialism to concern for one another and for the environment. Tommy, the older of the two, said it was time for Americans to get over being hung up on our differences and to start working together.

er on the urgent matters facing our country.

“We’ve been majoring in the minors and not in the majors,” Tommy said.

A white man in Jackson, Mississippi, spoke specifically of the noise of dueling ideologies. People on both sides are bound and determined not to give an inch, to the point of sacrificing the well-being of the people of the country, just to save their rigid positions and inflated pride. Other Americans down the west coast and across the southwest and Texas mentioned this frustration.

In Georgia, Mary interviewed a woman who was a McCain supporter. The main thing this woman wanted? To see Americans stop demonizing one another, to be in dialogue and to listen.

Four hours later, Mary was in another Georgia town, interviewing a 17-year-old Obama supporter and daughter of ex-hippies. This teenager echoed the same sentiment as the other Georgian, that Americans stop putting others down, listen more and find more understanding.

Two young women who worked at the Starbucks in York, Nebraska spoke with Mary. They spoke about the media’s habit of exaggerating the negative and how that relates to change.

“We get the wrong picture and start thinking no one can be trusted and that the country is doomed,” said the first woman, an immigrant

## Submission of the Month

Send us your photo, doodle, cartoon, poem, haiku, drawing, artwork, essay, quote, etc. Something that you find positive, and that we can fit into a 4”x 6” space. Email it to editors@portlandupside.com, fax it to 503-828-9889 or mail it to us by September 20.

One or more submissions will be chosen to appear in the October issue of *The Portland Upside*.

Please include your name, email address and phone number just in case we need to contact you.

### Yin & Yang



Woodblock print by Brian Lockyear  
 Willamette Heights neighborhood, Portland, Oregon

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For more info, visit: [www.PortlandVegFest.org](http://www.PortlandVegFest.org)

Find out more about Mary Clare’s EX:Change09 interview project on her website, [www.exchange09.com](http://www.exchange09.com). Portions of this article are excerpted from Mary’s blog, [www.exchange09.blogspot.com](http://www.exchange09.blogspot.com). She can be contacted by email at [info@exchange09.com](mailto:info@exchange09.com).

Rob Bednark spent over 60 hours last year interviewing 27 people around Portland, just for the fun of it, and was amazed at what he learned. [rbednark@gmail.com](mailto:rbednark@gmail.com)

**Melvin**  
Continued from page 1

After returning to the States and suffering a series of unfortunate consequences, including the loss of his job and the death of his wife, Melvin found himself in and out of homelessness. But throughout trying times he continued to focus his energy on his paper-folding hobby. While living in Berkeley, California, he even earned the nickname "Origami."

"I'd get paper out of a recycle bin at a paper store," he recalls, "I was calling it 'recycled origami.'"

Eventually, unsatisfied with his life in Berkeley, Melvin joined a friend on a bicycle trip up north. He rode a Gary Fisher mountain bike to Washington, turned around, and in Astoria decided to follow the US-30 sign to Portland.

"I liked it here. People are nice; a lot better than California," he explains. Melvin has lived in Portland ever since.

On a typical day, Melvin wakes up and brews himself a cup of coffee on his white gas camp stove, then meticulously packs his camping gear into his bike trailer.

"Everything goes a certain way," he explains.

He then sets out to find some breakfast.

"I usually go to Freddie's and get a pint of milk and something sweet," he says, "I don't go to places that serve breakfast [to the homeless]. I usually get sick because of my medicine." Melvin suffers from serious illnesses, including cancer.

After breakfast Melvin parks at Coffee Time to get to work folding origami. When he has enough pieces completed, he bikes a couple of blocks to Trader Joe's where he offers passers-by his original paper artwork neatly displayed on a Tupperware lid. He usually sells at least one a day, sometimes two or three.

Melvin's favorite design, which he calls an ornament, is a crane sitting atop a ball of blooming flowers, inside which another tiny crane dangles from a thread. It takes Melvin one hour to make and

sells for ten dollars.

"Sometimes people bring me a sandwich and juice and I give them a few dollars off," he says.

He also creates designs based on individual requests. A patron once commissioned him to make an origami cross. City Bikes also displays an origami bicycle made by Melvin.

"If you can make a drawing or describe a shape, we can figure out something to make for you," his web page suggests.

A friend, William Price, built a page for him and hosts Melvin on his site under his "friends" section. The page, simply entitled "Melvin McAffe," greets visitors with a picture of Melvin that winks.

"To make it through the winter," it reads, "I am saving up for a good 4 season tent... I try not to beg or ask for money because I repair bicycles and make cool origami."

Two years ago, a man from Holland ordered six pieces of origami from the web page. The man paid fifteen dollars each instead of the ten dollars Melvin was asking and in addition, sent him a one hundred dollar check after receiving the paper creations.

"They were ornaments," Melvin explains. "Each one was in a different Christmas color."

Although origami is Melvin's main source of income, it's not the only one. Having grown up in his grandpa's machine shop, he's also an incredible mechanic, often fixing a stalled car or broken bike to make a little extra cash. Recently a man with a stalled truck was referred to Melvin, who fixed the vehicle after discovering the spark plugs were replaced in improper sequence.

"I got ten bucks and a cup of coffee," Melvin tells me excitedly.

He admits it's not enough to sustain himself, but when asked why he doesn't panhandle, Melvin replies sternly, "I don't like it. I like to have something to give back."

Although Melvin won't ask for money, he receives plentiful good tidings from caring individuals. Not only does

he receive occasional meals and coffee, but also origami paper, an occasional gift card to an art store, and even a mini paper cutter.

"This thing comes in so handy," He holds up the orange hand tool, a big smile spread across his face.

According to Melvin, people even salvage old wrapping paper for him to use.

"It has to be a good gauge," he explains. "It tears too easily if it's too thin."

I watch Melvin work as we talk. With a bottle of Elmer's, a pair of scissors and a couple of worn and weathered hands, he carefully folds, bends and creases ordinary paper into beautiful works of art. Various people stop to comment and several friends greet him warmly. I offer him a coffee, but he refuses.

"Thanks," he tells me, "I already bought one. This is the hard part."

His hands are shaking as he prepares his needle and thread to attach a dangling crane to the center of his masterpiece.

Melvin completes a beautiful ornament with ornate flowers blooming in blues and greens with matching foil centers.

"People like the paper with patterns and bright colors," he tells me.

Holding up his finished piece for me to see, Melvin's face displays a look of true satisfaction, the look of a man proud of his work. This truly creative man has invented his own way of survival. He places the beautiful ornament in the Tupperware container with the others, mounts his bike, and heads for Trader Joe's.

Email Melvin at [melorigami@gmail.com](mailto:melorigami@gmail.com) or visit him online at <http://waptek.white.prohosting.com/melvin.htm>

Briana Sash is a longtime community volunteer, travel photographer and photojournalist intimately involved in photographing, chronicling, and befriending the Portland homeless community. Read her blog at [www.streetquotes.wordpress.com](http://www.streetquotes.wordpress.com)

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## Hearts, minds and bodies nurtured at p:ear

By Faye Powell  
*The Portland Upside*

If home is where the heart is, what happens to the heart when one is homeless?

Seven years ago, Joy Cartier, Beth Burns and Pippa Arend had a vision of a safe haven for homeless youth in Portland that would address the needs of the total person—heart, mind and body. The three committed teachers from the alternative Greenhouse School were unwilling to give up on their homeless students when the school lost its funding. They also realized that education was only part of the solution. So together they raised \$2,000—enough for one month's rent—and p:ear (project: education, art, recreation) was born.

Associate director Cartier succinctly sums up p:ear's innovative approach: "No one can do fractions all day."

Today the trio's vision is realized in an open, spacious and well-lit building in Portland's Old Town. Here homeless youth gather to create, study, and find emotional support, and encouragement from staff, adult mentors and one another. Daylight streams through the floor-to-ceiling windows of the art gallery. At the back of the gallery a darkroom and music room beckon. Adjacent to the gallery is a large space with tables and easels for art projects, a kitchen, library and comfortable reading chairs. A staircase leads up to an open office area where a staff of six takes care of administrative functions.

Formerly a doggy daycare, the p:ear facility was completely renovated by SERA Architects as their first 1% Solution project, a national initiative that challenges firms to donate one per cent of their staff to pro bono work. SERA gave time, energy, and resources to designing and furnishing the entire space. The firm donated much more than one per cent, according to Cartier.

Each day an average of 45 clients between the ages of 15 and 24 come to paint, draw, photograph,

play the piano, read, work on their GED (General Educational Development) certification, or just hang out. Approximately 350 young people participate in p:ear's programs throughout the year. Local artists, photographers, and teachers mentor the youth. Every two months the gallery mounts a new exhibit of youth art alongside a featured professional artist. p:ear participates in First Thursday, and the proud young artists receive 90 per cent of the proceeds of their sold art.

Nutrition is another important aspect of addressing the total needs of the young homeless. Some of Portland's best restaurants have committed to providing food, enabling p:ear to feed the kids at least two meals a day. Additionally, both the Oregon Culinary Institute and the Western Culinary Institute donate time to teach the young participants how to prepare nutritional meals. Once they get their food handler's license, the youth can work in the p:ear kitchen.

"Not having a home is not the major problem of homelessness," says Cartier. "The major problem of homelessness as we've seen in young people is how they feel about themselves."

*My concrete heart I have found  
 There it lay beneath your feet on  
 the ground*

This poem, penned by Letti, a 20-year-old Alaska native, accom-

panies one of her paintings on exhibit in the gallery. Raised by her artist father, she is part Yupik, part Scottish. Letti says she left Alaska a couple of years ago because neither she nor her family felt accepted by the community there,

her mother and attends school, getting by even though her mother is a heroin addict. Eventually, however, the mother stops going to work and falls behind with the rent. Finally one day, she comes home to find her mother and all of

says.

While p:ear cannot provide housing and other pressing needs of these young people, it can help them develop self-confidence as they participate in a community where they are supported and encouraged to grow creatively, intellectually and emotionally.

p:ear receives no public funding. Like other charitable organizations, it has seen monetary donations decline in the current economic downturn. There has been, however, a tremendous increase in material donations.

As Cartier says, "p:ear has become the queen of the in-kind donation."

Volunteerism has also increased during these difficult economic times. Indeed, volunteers are the backbone of the organization. In addition to artist and teacher mentors, other volunteers bring in their own hobbies and projects to share. Volunteers also pick up food and supplies and take kids on recreational outings.

Cartier would like to see p:ear—with its unique way of putting education, art and recreation all together under one roof—become a national model for programs that work with homeless youth.

By addressing the combined needs of their hearts, minds and bodies, p:ear truly helps homeless kids build self-esteem, learn skills, successfully transition into adulthood and make choices formerly beyond their reach.

*p:ear is located at 338 NW Sixth Avenue. The gallery is open Tuesday through Thursday 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. as well as 6-9 p.m. on First Thursdays. For more information, go to [www.pearmentor.org](http://www.pearmentor.org) or contact Joy Cartier at 503-228-6677.*

*Faye Powell has master's degrees in library science and anthropology and writes both fiction and non-fiction. She may be contacted via phaysee1@gmail.com*



**p:ear gives homeless youth like Letti a space to grow creatively, intellectually and emotionally.**

Photo by Faye Powell

She moved to Seattle first, then to Portland last year because she felt she would have more opportunities to pursue her art here. Since coming to p:ear, Letti says she has received much emotional support as well as opportunities to develop herself as an artist and work toward her high school diploma. Someday she hopes to become a social worker.

"It's kind of like a family here," Letti says. "The staff and volunteers accept you for who you are. I lost my ability to create art for a while. They [p:ear] are like the family I never had. My dad raised my sister and me singly so there wasn't much maternal support ... it's like having so many moms here. They are awesome!"

The backgrounds of homeless youth and the circumstances that lead to their homelessness are diverse.

A girl lives in an apartment with

team until he comes out to his parents as gay, a young man lands on the streets when they kick him out of the house and refuse to allow him to return.

Some kids end up in foster care where their experiences range from very good to worse than where they started. Even still, the foster system provides for them only until their 18th birthday. Because most at-risk 18-year-olds are not mature or skilled enough to function as adults, p:ear includes youth up to the age of 24.

The actual number of homeless kids in the Portland area is unknown. There are only 80 shelter beds for them in the city. Most sleep under bridges, in doorways or abandoned cars, two or three together for safety. Others occasionally stay with a friend or relative for a day or two.

"Imagine a war zone where just surviving is your concern," Cartier

bringing her a bouquet.

"Spring in Portland is gloomy. These flowers are a ray of sunshine. I know how they pick me up. They're no problem to raise. It's an easy thing."

A true-blue farmer, Jan reminisces about her years as the Daffodil Lady. She even speaks easily of the time, several years back, when money disappeared from her cash box one day and then overnight somebody stole all the flowers! She tossed it off as an "opportunistic crime," installed a locking box the next season and has never had a recurrence of the problem. Often finding IOU's in the box and notes with dollar bills on her front porch, Jan takes it all in stride.

"What a testament to the fact that local community is thriving in the big city," I offer. "Imagine! An old-fashioned honor system farm stand still works, right here in suburban Portland."

To that, Jan just smiles, clearly comfortable making a difference, one armload of flowers at a time.

*Carrie Ure is a freelance writer and Copy Editor for The Portland Upside. She blogs about everyday spirituality at [www.carrieure.wordpress.com](http://www.carrieure.wordpress.com)*

### Flower Lady

*Continued from page 1*

motivates her to spend all her free time in her garden, rain or shine, only to sell her beautiful bouquets on the honor system for two dollars per two-dozen-bunch.

Jan's answer is so straightforward it surprises me.

**Jan Behrs stands in her garden of sunflowers, one of the many kinds of flowers she sells at her old-fashioned, honor-system farm stand.**



"Here's the deal: it's flowers. It's hard to have enough to pick for the house without denuding the garden. My goal was to be able to pick an armload of daffodils to have indoors. That's why I started dividing them.

"There needs to be abundance. There are so many things that we don't have enough of. I can't eat my fill of chocolate. We can never have enough money. To create abundance

I could do it with flowers and when I had enough for armloads for myself, I thought, 'I bet there are others who don't have a big yard.'"

It turns out Jan perpetuates a long-standing Multnomah Village tradition. Carl Lehrer, her first neighbor and lord of a flourishing field of spring yellows, had an honor system farm stand for as long as anyone could remember. For years he bought her daffodils, two dollars per two dozen. He liked to mix them in for the color variation they provided in his bouquets. The enterprise augmented his income as a deliveryman, and he eventually saved enough to take his wife on a cruise. After Carl died, Jan picked up the slack, retaining his pricing from over two decades ago.

"They have always been two dollars per two dozen. I can't charge more because I'm so math challenged. They'll always be two dollars. If I sell them for two dollars, then anybody can have a huge bouquet of sun-

shine.

"I don't have wealth in any other way but I do have flowers."

Flowers, even though a small thing, make a real difference according to Jan. She remembers telling her husband that it didn't matter that she could grow a whole field of them, she still appreciated him

**By Sara Bednark and Amee Pacheco**  
*The Portland Upside*

The catalogue comes in the mail and immediately my 9-year-old son grabs it from my hands. He devours it while eating his morning breakfast Legos! He wants *Lego Physics II: Motors and Movement*. No, it's not a Christmas catalogue come early. It's the Fall course listing for Saturday Academy.

For my math and science lover, third grade got a little, shall we say, boring. He'd come home from school and when asked what he did that day, "Not much," was his usual reply. Adding and subtracting was his thing in first grade but he wants more of a challenge than the math curriculum can provide. When our school counselor sends home Saturday Academy's course listings, we check it out.

Saturday Academy (SA), the brainchild of Portland teachers Gail Whitney and Jackie Jackson, began in the early 1980s. Their talented and gifted students, hungry for hands-on projects and eager to learn, weren't being engaged at the appropriate level by the public school curriculum. They watched one gifted boy become bored, decide school wasn't for him and drop out. Gail and Jackie feared losing their brightest kids and they vowed to do something about it.

The creative duo also noticed much cutting-edge technology—computers at that time—sitting around unused during the weekends. By recruiting community experts as instructors, they were able to use the computers to provide young people with hands-on, in-depth classes in an environment that was relaxed, stress-free and anything but boring. The program has grown from those early ideas.

Today Saturday Academy provides three distinct programs to assist eager students who need more than the regular school day

to quench their thirst for learning: classes and workshops, SA in the schools, and Apprenticeships in Science and Engineering (ASE).

twenty choices from the school counselor's catalogue, including Acting for Young People: Fractured Fairy Tales; Computer Art & Animation; and Rocket Science: Blast Off. He decides on Math Gems and it's just what

3/14, they celebrate pi. These Saturday Academy people are his kind of people, and for my 3rd grade math wizard, learning has become fun again. This story repeats itself year-in and year-out in SA classrooms all over town, with curious students pursuing their quests for hands-on learning.

## Saturday Academy in the schools

*Saturday Academy satisfies the hunger of students eager to learn*

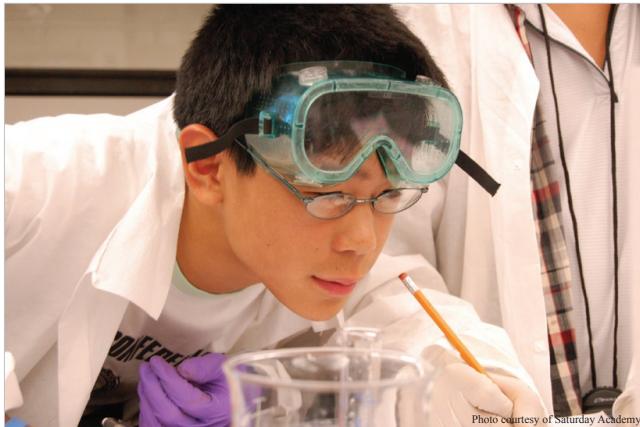


Photo courtesy of Saturday Academy

**For kids that need more challenging education than traditional schools can provide, Saturday Academy offers programs and classes to stretch their minds.**

### Classes and workshops

Saturday Academy offers hundreds of classes and workshops at various locations throughout the Portland metro area and welcomes all students from grades 2 through 12. Although math and science remain a focus, SA subjects also explore the humanities, arts and writing.

My 3rd-grader ruminates over more than

he needs.

In the first hour and a half session, students create and solve codes, and we can't get him to leave the Portland State University (PSU) classroom. The day they study Fibonacci numbers, he rushes home to catch rabbits and count flower petals. In one class they fashion abacuses out of paper, metal nuts and string, and he learns to use his for addition and subtraction. On the final day,

"I try to engage the students to work as if in a professional environment," says Anthony.

His teaching style is decidedly different from the middle school instructors many of us remember. The children are encouraged to speak up and interact with one another, giving the classroom a laid-back feeling despite all the concentrated mental activity. He spends a good deal of the class time observing rather than teaching. First providing basic instructions, Anthony then

*Continued on page 7*



### The Numerous You

You are a Ginkgo leaf that knows its way; letting go, you trust the ground to catch and hold.

A Swainson's Thrush stomps dirt for a kernel, with your weathered endurance of Bristlecone bark.

Like an elder Oak, in its stillness with winter limbs, and bent elbows, you embrace the helpless.

As the sun rouses geese from the reeds, rejoicing, I love, I love, I love,

glowing on your face. People crowd around and like a Marsh Wren's outcry they admire you.

By Mike Aspros



Photos by Mike Aspros

*Mike Aspros is a native of Portland. In addition to writing poetry, he enjoys co-facilitating events within Linnion's environmental group, and preserving Forest Park while building a community of forest stewardship.*

## Yard sale brings in more than just money

**By Nicole Morales**  
*The Portland Upside*

What's more popular than barbecues, inflatable kiddie pools, and picnics in the park?

Yard sales!

Also known as garage sales. Or moving sales when one wants to lighten the load before a move.

When you're the buyer, any of the three does just fine. It's the deal you're after. You gather some spare cash, set aside some time, and call up your buddy who can spot a bargain from the passenger's side window. Off you go!

On the vendor's side, though, things get a bit more complicated. You ask yourself, should it be on Friday, Saturday or Sunday or some combination? Are mornings better than afternoons, a whole day or just half? Maybe my neighbors would like to join in for a multifamily sale?

Then there's the gathering and organizing of stuff—furniture, books, linens; pricing everything and moving it all onto the driveway or yard; and positioning the booty for best marketing success.

And don't forget about the signage. They've got to be visible, eye-catching, and able to withstand the elements, whether morning drizzle or afternoon breezes.

These are the steps I took with my moving sale a few weeks ago in the hopes of unloading accumulated stuff and procuring some cash. But I underestimated one essential element—getting to know people.

Amid the maze of gently used furniture and shoebox transactions, I encounter many faces in search of a deal. Some are more than happy to chit-chat about the weather or their day, and even tell me a little something about themselves.

There's the early bird fellow. He pulls up before eight o'clock, noticeably happy to be our first potential customer.

"Good Morning!"

He's wide-eyed and groggy-free, unlike me.

"Morning," I say as I sip my coffee.

There's a spring to his step even though a propane barbecue and rusty metal parts weigh down his pickup.

"I see you got an early start," I say pointing to his truck.

"Nah! I haul scrap metal," he replies, eying my kaput lawn mower at the curb. "What's wrong with your mower?" he asks.

"It's seen better days," I say. "Not sure if it'll start up again, so it's free for the taking."

"I'll haul it off for you," he says.

"Deal."

Now I don't have to persuade my friend with the hatchback to add it to his growing pile of junk.

Then there's the woman brave enough to dig through my big brown box of clothing. She has plenty of questions. How much for this, that, these, and those? Intent on capturing a bargain, she resurfaces with a coat in one hand and scarf in the other. Quite a steal for five dollars.

Her next stop is the jewelry display on the card-table-turned-checkout-counter. Her free hand holds up a pair of dangly



Photo by Nicole Morales

"Nice bike," I say.

"Thank you. I got it for free at the thrift store," he tells me.

Our conversation evolves from there, a near two-hour exchange during which Angel recounts childhood stories and experiences living here in his adopted country.

"I left Havana, Cuba, on a raft with ten people on August 22, 1994. The mother ship picked us up four days later," he explains.

"Mother ship? You were rescued?" I ask.

"The United States Coast Guard rescued us," he replies.

"Wow! What a story, Angel."

The US Coast Guard returned Angel and his sea mates to Cuba. But they didn't return to the capital. They were taken to the other side of the island, Guantánamo Bay. He worked in a warehouse for four hundred and ten days before arriving in the United States the following year.

"So you weren't a prisoner... a detainee?" I try to clarify.

"No, a refugee."

Unreal. Here's a man in slacks and a button-up shirt who rides up on a retro single-speed cruiser complete with white seat, looks over the three dollar ironing board and considers the ten dollar Dirt Devil vacuum cleaner. He walks up to the checkout table and easily engages me in dialogue about his bicycle, his family, and how he landed—literally—in this country.

"You want to see a picture of my daughter?" he asks.

"You two have the same smile," I say.

Angel looks proud. He pauses, "I used to play marbles when I was a child, and I always beat the other kids."

Turns out he's a good chess player, a contendor at dominoes, and can swing a baseball bat like a pro. All things he excelled at in Cuba. He studied as an industrial mechanic back home, and has held a handful of jobs in this country, though none in his field of expertise. Through his stories I glean that Angel has had a difficult life and many misfortunes, yet he is content, happy to share what most people consider too much information for a first encounter.

I finally ask, "What keeps you happy?

He mentions his late mother and says, "My mother told me to stay away from funerals and not to visit cemeteries."

I laugh. "She couldn't be any more right than that, Angel."

I start to pack up my unsold goods while Angel goes on talking. I haven't made a fortune, but I am richer for the stories. Not a bad way to leave a neighborhood I used to call home.

Nicole Morales strives to connect people via multicultural education and writing. She teaches ESL at a private university outside of Portland and welcomes your inquiries at nmorales.writes@gmail.com



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## Voices around town

### What has inspired you lately?

"I'm inspired by random displays of kindness. I work in a Starbucks drive-thru, and at least once a week, someone will come through and pay for the order behind them. The initial reaction from the next car is always shock, and then the level of gratitude that comes after is uncanny."

—Jenni  
*Woodlawn neighborhood*  
*Portland, OR*

"I've been inspired watching the *Wordplay* documentary. It's cool to see things that bring people together instead of drawing them apart, because you can get so much more accomplished that way."

—Matt Brockman  
*Forest Grove, OR*

"I'm inspired by my friends who came down from Seattle to see me while I'm in Portland. It's a good feeling to know that you have people who care about you like that."

—Matt K.  
*Houston, TX*

"I'm inspired by just getting out and seeing people. Seeing everybody doing their thing, and yet, somehow coming together without being told to or required to and having a good time."

—Tim S.  
*Vermont Hills neighborhood*  
*Portland, OR*

"I've been inspired by Barack Obama getting elected. I'm Canadian, and I didn't think I would see a black man elected to the White House in my lifetime."

—Penny  
*Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada*

"I'm inspired by the willingness of newfound friends to explore Portland with me as if it was all new to them."

—Drewcifer  
*Kansas City, MO*

"I'm inspired by watching my kids grow and change before my very eyes. Also, reading a really well-written book inspires me."

—Tonda Burgin  
*Gresham, OR*

"The nature outside my door teaches me and inspires me. When things are simply being themselves, following their own nature, they are so beautiful and healthy."

—Cindy  
*Sauvie Island*  
*Portland, OR*

"I'm inspired to build mopeds, because mopeds are a reliable and economical mode of transportation. I like to take junk and put it back into use."

—Philip Patrie  
*Seattle, WA*

# Portland nonprofit tackles the hard costs of cancer

**By Erin Codazzi**  
*The Portland Upside*

**P**aul Grock wasn't worried about the bump on his cheek. Someone must have clocked him on the basketball court. Or maybe it was a bug bite that would soon shrink, he thought. At the age of 26, he'd been healthy all his life and couldn't be bothered to visit the doctor.

But the bump didn't subside. Paul was diagnosed with Ewing's sarcoma in his jaw. That was October 2007, a month that marked not only the beginning of his cancer treatment but also his introduction to Komak, the Portland-based nonprofit.

A team of doctors acted quickly, starting with three months of intensive chemotherapy to shrink the tumor, followed by fifteen hours of surgery to remove the tumor and reconstruct his jaw. Paul spent the next eight months undergoing radiation treatments, more cycles of chemotherapy and physical therapy. He lost thirty pounds and all his hair, but his spirits were bright.

During the long year of treatment Paul's employer reassured him that they would do what they could to support him. They let him work when he was up to it, yet he was barely able to work part-time and his bills were compounding. That's when Komak stepped in to help.

## Bridging the gap

Komak is a Persian word, which means help, aid or assistance to one in need, sickness, pain or distress. The definition lays the foundation for Komak's mission: to help low-to-middle-income working people who need financial assistance, primarily because cancer has disrupted their lives. Whether someone has had to stop working because of chemotherapy treatments or to take care of an immediate family member with cancer, Komak focuses on seeing them through until they can get back on their feet.

Co-founder Dr. Katrelnka Rember ex-

plains, "Low-to-middle-income working people and their families are truly an underserved population when it comes to prolonged illnesses like cancer. Those who are very poor or disabled often have medical coverage. Those who are wealthy can manage."

Komak helps those caught in the middle.

"Our hope is that they not only survive their cancer, but that they can keep their home, family and financial status intact," continues Katrelnka.

She has first-hand experience with the financial toll cancer can take. At the age of thirty-nine, her fiancé was diagnosed with metastatic colon cancer and given months to live. Less than a year later, Katrelnka was also diagnosed with colon cancer. While they both had good jobs, good employers, and health and disability insurance, they could not have managed without an extensive support network.

Honoring her fiancé's final wishes, after her recovery Katrelnka co-founded the organization along with Merle and Nasi Greenstein. As a volunteer organization with little overhead, all donations are channeled directly to Komak's clients, a statistic supporters like Sam Naito appreciate.

"Knowing that every dollar I give to Komak goes directly to someone in need, in Portland, makes a big difference," Sam says.

To date, Komak has helped twenty individuals and families by assisting with medical bills and basic living expenses.

According to Merle, "We cap our assistance at \$5,000. That may not sound like a lot, but in most cases it's more than enough to help people make it through some tough times."

Most applicants are referred to Komak through a network of social workers in area hospitals. After an initial screening, board members visit applicants to assess the amount of the financial gap between their incomes and expenses.

"We look at the bigger picture, seeing if

there are other ways they can reduce expenses before we determine what financial assistance they really need," explains Merle. "These are hard-working people who were living within their means before cancer struck. If we can help them maintain their quality of life and dignity while they heal, we're fulfilling our mission."

## Making a difference

"I wish we could say there wasn't a need for this type of assistance," says Katrelnka. "But there is. Too many hardworking Americans are forced to choose between paying for rent and paying for cancer treatments. When we can help someone like Paul, we know we're doing the right thing."

During his illness Paul's income was cut in half, and there were months when he had no income at all. As his bills mounted, he also had to make Cobra payments to continue his health insurance. Komak covered two month's of Paul's living expenses and worked with some of his medical providers to reduce their bills.

"Komak did more for me than I ever could have hoped for or expected," comments Paul. "If it weren't for them, I would be in a lot more debt."

Today, Paul says his life is back to normal. He feels great, is playing basketball three times a week and working full-time again.

"Besides getting cancer, everything went as well as it could," chimes Paul. "I got super lucky finding such a great team of doctors. And I got really lucky finding Komak."

He was especially pleased that his doctors



Photo by Amanda Peterson

**Paul Grock celebrates his recovery and thanks Komak for their assistance in easing his financial burden after a year of cancer treatments.**

let him have the 3-D model they built of his skull.

"It's bright pink and an exact replica of my skull, down to the millimeter," he says. "I put lights in it and used it for a Halloween prop last year. It's a pretty cool perk, even if it did cost \$81,000."

**Komak is an Oregon-licensed, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. To learn more, make a donation or get involved, visit their website at [www.KomakCares.org](http://www.KomakCares.org).**

*Erin Codazzi is a freelance writer with a penchant for positive news and black licorice. She lives in Portland and can be reached at erin@erincodazzi.com*

## Saturday Academy

*Continued from page 5*

allows the students to lead their own projects, intervening only to answer questions and offer encouragement.

"There are a lot of happy accidents in here," he says.

The curriculum is based on Anthony's personal experiences as both a student and an instructor.

"My initial approach is to incorporate past college experiences, projects, lessons, and concepts into their lessons," he says. "[This] makes the students strive a bit above and beyond what they might get from their respective age-level education."

Anthony's lesson plans are heavily influenced by his students' level of interest and productivity. His willingness to adapt his methods fosters an all-inclusive environment where everyone feels successful. Students explore and build at their own pace, creating a learning environment with plenty of "aha" moments.

As one student puts it, "I finally got my ceiling up. I'm so proud!"

## Apprenticeships in science and engineering

Once the ceiling is up where does one go from there?

Saturday Academy addresses the age-old question of how to bridge the gap between education and the real world with their Apprenticeships in Science and Engineering (ASE) program.

To quote the SA website, "The ASE program matches high school freshman, sophomores, and juniors with scientists and engineers in an 8-week summer internship in a professional, scientific or engineering environment."

Dr. David Jay, PSU professor and ASE instructor, exemplifies the professionalism of the program. His experience points to the important contributions one mentored young person can make through participation in ASE.

In 2003 David was training SA intern Andrew Krause to run a tidal analysis program. When Andrew's results found that the tidal amplitude (the differential between high tide and low tide) near Astoria was increasing, David asked him to check his work again, and to analyze data from a San Francisco site. Andrew found tides increasing there, too.

Thus began David's five-year project culminating in the discovery that tidal amplitude has been rising from Alaska to Mexico, all along the west coast. Until his work, the scientific community considered tidal amplitude to be stable. While reasons for the change are still unknown, global warming is a prime suspect.

Clearly science has benefited from Saturday Academy's ASE program and Andrew's hard work. How do the interns benefit?

SA mentor and board member Meenakshi Rao explains that doing real work—to which researchers in the field refer and on which they base future research—"is very empowering

to a student. These high school students have amazing talent and potential. And mostly, we as a society ignore it. ASE empowers the students while enriching society with their new ideas and hard work!"

Andrew Krause went on to Cal Tech and received his engineering degree this past spring. When he heard about his part in David Jay's research he responded:

"Wow, that's great that the research paid off! I definitely remember the excitement of finding out that the long hours in front of the computer seemed to be leading to discovering something no one had noticed before."

Early this summer my son takes his second Saturday Academy class, Lego Physics Level 1: Gears and Cams. He builds a bridge that spans the classroom and constructs a tower taller than his reach. Luckily SA instructor Scott Isler is there with support to lift my son higher as his construction project soars. Likewise, after twenty-five years, Saturday Academy has built a strong organization, educating thousands of Portland metro area students and lifting them higher toward their dreams.



Photo courtesy of Saturday Academy

**Saturday Academy gives inquisitive students opportunities to delve further into science, technology and the arts.**

*To view Saturday Academy's fall catalogue, register for classes or find out more about their in-school and apprenticeship programs go to [www.saturdayacademy.org](http://www.saturdayacademy.org)*

*Sara Bednark has written two children's books, publishes The Portland Upside and believes that everyone has a story to tell.*

*Anee Pacheco has a bachelor's in journalism and a graduate certificate in nonprofit management from the University of Oregon. She happily spends her time writing grants for Saturday Academy and knitting.*

## From old and unwanted to fun and stylish

By Erika Weisensee  
*The Portland Upside*

**E**ugene native Suzanne Keolker began sewing when she was a kid. She's still sewing as an adult, yet in a new way—a green way, in fact.

About 10 years ago Suzanne pulled out her sewing machine and made her first tote bag out of an old vinyl banner. Today, she rescues items from landfills and transforms them into unique, useful and chic accessories.

Suzanne, now a Portland resident, turned her hobby into a business which she named Mugwump, after her childhood nickname. She makes tote bags, purses, pouches and other items from an array of would-be landfillers like old shower curtains, lawn chair webbing, kitchen contact paper and classroom wall maps.

As a former elementary school teacher, Suzanne loved going to SCRAP, a local nonprofit dedicated to promoting

reuse through its programming and community store. That's where she found the old orange banner. After making the first tote bag, she kept going and before long used up the whole thing.

"It's tricky to sew with vinyl," she says, "but I fell in love with it."

From that point on, she began looking at things with a new eye, wondering what she could make out of the many items that people just toss out. As her creative passion grew into a new business, she eventually left her teaching job, though she still substitute teaches.

At Splurge, an artist's co-op on NE Fremont Street, Suzanne's creativity is on full display. Her creations include retro-chic handbags made out of discarded placemats and vintage board games, old book pages turned into pouches, and out-dated maps transformed into wallets and business card holders.

"Finding the materials is half the fun," Suzanne says. As her business has grown, so have the number of people who find things for her. Recently, for instance, a friend tipped her off. His school was cleaning out a storage closet and had a bunch of old classroom maps.

Suzanne's customers enjoy buying accessories that are not only attractive but environmentally friendly. When she began selling her items a decade ago, she had to educate people about what she was doing. People didn't always get the value of taking trash and making it into something useful. But the idea of reuse has definitely caught on.

"I don't have to explain it anymore," Suzanne says with a smile.



What happened to those old paint-by-numbers? Suzanne transformed them into useful handbags.

Suzanne sells her items at the Portland Saturday Market and at retail boutiques in Portland. For more information visit [www.imugwump.com](http://www.imugwump.com)

Erika is a writing mom. She lives in Milwaukie and teaches writing at the University of Portland.

Suzanne Keolker puts reuse into action by turning unwanted items into unique accessories.



Photo courtesy of Suzanne Keolker

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# The Portland Upside

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## Therapy dog provides healing power of fur

By Sara Bednarik  
*The Portland Upside*

**I**t's a quiet Tuesday and I'm scheduled to meet Zadok, a beautiful eight-year-old Akita, in the front lobby of the Kaiser Sunnyside Medical Center in Clackamas. When I arrive he's already surrounded by admirers, so I wait my turn. Zadok's owner, Julie Burk from Damascus, has graciously allowed me to follow along as she and Zadok do what he loves best, visit with people.

I first met Zadok the night of the 2009 Rose Festival Starlight Parade. He was sitting with Julie on a float with a dozen other therapy dogs and their handlers. As he patiently waited for his turn to ride the two-mile parade route, my husband, son and I were drawn to him. After only a short petting session our long walk to the car seemed a little lighter. I resolved to call Julie to see if I could find out first-hand what Zadok does for others. Little did I know I had encountered a true celebrity.

In 2008, Zadok was awarded the American Kennel Club's Ace Award in the Therapy Dog division. In January of this year, Animal Planet sent a crew to Kaiser to film him in action.

According to Zadok's business card, he's a registered therapy dog affiliated with the Delta Society, Dove Lewis, and People and Animals Who Serve. Also certified with National Animal Assisted Crisis Response, he visits local hospitals, a children's facility and prisons. He's even travelled to Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University to provide emotional support to the students and faculty affected by the campus tragedies.

In layman's terms, Zadok's there when people need him. As I stand and wait, I soon realize I haven't been in a hospital for years. Needles, blood and general body failures have always given me the creeps, and I now find my mouth dry and my knees weak. I begin to question if this interview is a good idea.

Before I can think to leave, the admirers are done and it's my turn to introduce myself to Julie and Zadok. The 81-pound



Photo by Julie Burk

**After receiving national recognition for his work as a therapy and crisis response dog, Portland area resident Zadok pauses for a photo while doing crowd training at Disneyland.**

Akita walks over, pushes himself against me and lets me pet his soft newly-bathed fur. Then I squat down to get his signature treatment, a lick down one side of my face and up the other. On this day, I guess one of the first people who needs Zadok's three years of therapy experience is me. Suddenly I no longer care about my hospital anxiety. I would follow my new best friend anywhere.

According to Julie, Akitas aren't generally thought of as therapy dogs. While one usually thinks of Labs, golden retrievers, and Shelties, she had therapy-dog plans for the eight-week old ball of fur she brought home in 2001. She began to socialize and train him right away by introducing

*Continued on page 8*

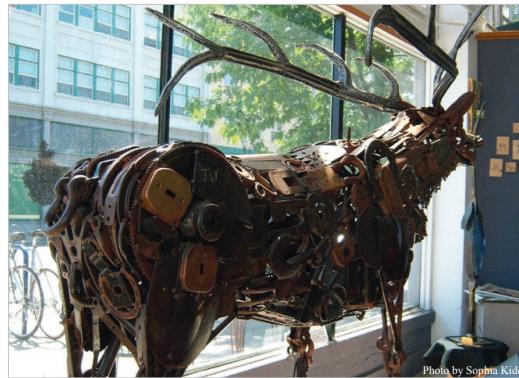
## Artist welds new life into old metal

By Sophia Kidd  
*The Portland Upside*

**L**et's just suppose an elk is not an elk, nor an owl an owl. See instead a can opener expired before its time. See a fleet of door hinges rather than a giraffe's neck, chains as tails, plates as pelvic girdles, and bolts as knee caps. Each of Joe Warren's found-metal-object animal sculptures represents an historical slice of Portland's material culture.

Joe's life-sized elk is breathtaking. Its haunches are made of trowel heads, light sockets, horseshoes, and fleur-de-lis ornaments rounded by a saw blade. The elk's tail is a noble and heavy door knocker; its thigh signified by a double headed wrench and crowbars. Hammer heads make for ligaments while multiple bicycle chains, cut in cascading lengths, perfectly simulate the elk's beard. Where, on rare occasion, metal parts do not naturally fit the form, Joe manipulates them with barely perceptible bends. The parts are as significant as the larger composite figure.

The body of his giraffe elicits poetry, with a star shape mid-neck, as if to celebrate the ecstasy of recycling wasted matter into art. To capture the giraffe's exact curves, Joe chose door hinges, and many of them. The hinges contiguously crawl up the neck with



**Joe Warren's life-sized elk sculpture is being displayed at Shop People, 421 SE Grand Ave.**

slight lifts left and right. Around the eyes are perky eyelashes made of nails. The giraffe's tail is a stroke of genius, it's long, heavy, link chain hanging down between the animal's rear legs with a tuft of bicycle-chain strands anchored to a large metal hook. Such biomorphic nuances impart the breath of life into the sculpture.

And the artist has a sense of humor. His owl is made, according to its placard, "from cast off plow parts, pry bars, bearings, clippers, rakes, etc. She even swivels her head—Hoo!"

Two owls from the series, displayed recently at Coffee People, were sold in June for \$225 a piece, a small price for a whole new way of viewing our material culture vis-à-vis the animal kingdom. And the sleek recycled creatures are really cute.

Joe started as a writer. While getting his master's degree in creative non-fiction, the urge arose to get his hands on something more concrete. He started taking a class in welding at Portland

*Continued on page 2*

## Community Organizing 101 with MACG

By Nick O'Connor  
*The Portland Upside*

**O**n a warm Wednesday evening I'm listening to Christi, a young mother of two boys, whom I've just met. She tells me about the icy Portland winter her family moved into a camper parked on the street while their house was being remodeled. When a promised bank loan failed to materialize, the contractor wouldn't agree to new payment terms and walked off the job, leaving the house without plumbing or heat. The camper became the family's bedroom.

In turn, I tell Christi about my struggle with unemployment and the looming foreclosure on my family's home mortgage.

We're sharing these stories as part of an intensive 12-hour, four-week training, called Leadership Institute for Public Life, sponsored by The Metropolitan Alliance for the Common Good (MACG).

MACG describes itself as "broad-based," and indeed, draws members from a wide range of backgrounds. We've gathered in Gladstone at the Operating Engineers 701 Union Hall with 25 others from churches, synagogues, labor unions and community service organizations. We're here to learn the elementary skills of community organizing.

According to John Schwiebert, pastor at Metanoia Peace Church, "A primary task of broad-based organizing is to dis-organize the cultural isolation that has turned us into little more than consumers. We get people to talk to each other at some meaningful depth, about their pain, pressures, and unrealized dreams."

*Continued on page 7*

# Elders take action to help others

**By Nancy Hill**  
*The Portland Upside*

Maura (not her real name), returned to Portland in dire straits. An 83-year-old American citizen, she had been living in Mexico until a couple convinced her to sell everything and travel throughout the world. The con team promised Maura they would take care of her for the rest of her life. Instead, they deserted her as soon as they'd run through most of her money. She managed to find the American Embassy in Mexico, which helped her get back to Portland, the last place she had called home.

She arrived with only a birth certificate, a canceled passport, and a change of clothes. Although she had a small bank account, without Oregon ID or a Social Security card, she could not access her funds.

Adult Protective Services referred her to Elders in Action, a nonprofit that helps adults over age 60. Elders in Action assigned the case to Jon Springer, a volunteer in the organization's Personal Advocate Services program, and he sprung into action.

"Maura was not a typical case," Jon says. "Not only did she have a very complex situation, but she also had a number of issues she needed help with."

Elders in Action has been helping seniors since 1968, when it was established as the Portland/Multnomah Commission on Aging. In 1997, the Commission, a panel that advises local officials on programs and policies for older adults, established Elders in Action, a private non-profit agency. The Commission, still active, is housed at the Elders in Action office.

In addition to its Personal Advocate Services, Elders in Action has a Speakers Bureau that provides informational workshops to seniors, and an Elder Friendly Business Certification program that helps establishments promote their products and services to people over age 60.

The agency has more than 150 volunteers working in its programs. Many are retired themselves.

Says Jon, "I retired in 2004 and by the time I began volunteering with Elders in Action, I had done a lot of things I wanted to do in retirement. I felt the time had come to volunteer." After reading about Elders in Action in the Oregonian, he called to find out more.

"There was a training coming up. I signed up and became a personal advocate." Volunteers in this program help older adults with housing, Social Security and Medicare benefits, neighbor and creditor disputes, consumer issues, and legal solutions such as restraining orders.

Jon has personally worked with more than a dozen clients to date. Some have had easy problems to resolve, like a woman with a neighbor whose hedge was growing up the side of her garage. She was afraid it would block her gutters, so Jon asked the neighbor to lower the hedges, which the neighbor gladly did.

Other clients face serious financial difficulties, like the cancer patient who had law-suits filed against him and his wife for his huge medical debts. Jon helped the couple qualify for financial aid and showed them how to apply.

"It took about six months, but we contacted all providers and as a result, 100 percent of their bills are now paid."

Satisfaction is Jon's reward.

"I try to help them solve their problems and give them some skills so they can cope and manage similar problems on their own. For example, the cancer patient now knows how to deal with medical bills. For me, there's an intrinsic satisfaction in solving problems, whether they are my problems or someone else's."

Jon is quick to point out that many other people also volunteer and help clients as much as he does.

"You can read a lot of great success stories by going to the Elders in Action website," he says.

Between July 1, 2007 and June 30, 2008, Elders in Action helped more than 2,045 individuals experiencing problems with health care, housing, crime or abuse. During the same time period, Personal Advocate volunteers recouped \$484,672 for seniors for problems ranging from fraud to wrongful billing.

Elders in Action has a staff of nine, led by Executive Director Vicki Hersen. The agency relies on grants and donations from both corporations and individuals. It also has contracts with Multnomah County and the city of Portland for specific services for the elderly.

Jon credits Elders in Action's staff with providing the resources volunteers need to help their clients.

"When you get a case, the staff has done a lot of screening, but once you get into a case, you always find another twist or level. They keep you focused on the issue the client called about. The staff is incredibly supportive and helps you through every step of the way."

Thanks to Jon's efforts, Maura is situated in housing that suits her and she's rebuilding her life.

"She's going to group counseling and joined a knitting class. She's establishing her social circle and hopes to eventually move into her own apartment."

Happily, such positive results typify the



Photo by Nancy Hill

**Elders in Action volunteer Jon Springer uses his problem-solving skills to help elders help themselves.**

work Elders in Action does every day of the week for Portland's honored citizens.

*Elders in Action, 1411 SW Morrison St., suite 290, Portland, OR 97205, 503-235-5474, info@eldersinaction.org. To get involved, fill out an online interest form at www.eldersinaction.org*

*Nancy Hill is a writer and photographer who believes that when people work together anything is possible.*

## Do you love to write?



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## Joe Warren

*Continued from page 1*

Community College (PCC) and when he finished, he decided to audit the class over and over again. He created his own welding community: regular contact with other metal workers, advice from knowledgeable instructors, and access to good equipment.

As for his wonderful sense of anatomical form? According to the artist, he was self-taught, getting heavily into the Internet, downloading every online animal he could find. Joe has even researched footage of animals in movement. With this knowledge and his own experience of moving parts and

**Metal light plates and hinges support the long neck of Joe Warren's giraffe.**

wholes, he began the creative birthing process.

With a real passion for metal talk, the artist marvels over old tools made with stoic standards. To find them, Joe scour old mining grounds, scrap yards, pawnshops, and estate sales. The old tools he finds at estate sales are often left behind by people who knew the value of craftsmanship, he says. And to bring the whole process up to date he also relies on Craigslist to solicit parts.

Joe also marvels at the tools made cheaply by foreign labor for thirst markets, objects that have, according to him, "used up their primary purposes, breaking way ahead of their time." An example is the shiny can opener forming part of the giraffe's torso. Almost everything else on the animal is rusted. Joe prefers rusted parts because they aren't galvanized or coated with toxins. Rust-free parts, when welded, released their sealants as toxic gas. The process not only sickens him, but also indicates what galvanizing toxins do as they oxidize in the environment.

While he kept on at PCC for awhile, his commute to school got old. Wanting to make less of a carbon footprint, he started looking for a creative space closer to home. His research turned up Shop People. Founded and operated by Richard Ellison and Rebekah Dresky, Shop People is a thriving network of artists and craftspeople who share space, tools, and ideas.

As an environmentalist as well

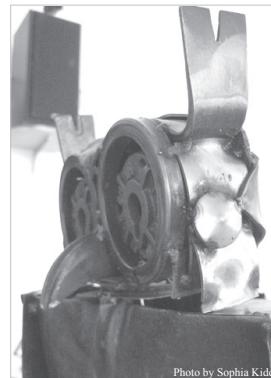


Photo by Sophia Kidd

**Old metal objects become a wide-eyed owl.**

as an artist and community activist, Joe Warren fits right in and today he is one of Shop People's brightest rising stars.

*Stop by to see Joe Warren's giraffe, elk, and owl, all on display along with the work of other community-minded industrial artists. Shop People, www.theshoppeople.com, is located at 421 SE Grand Ave, Portland. There are tours Mondays at 11:00 a.m. and First Fridays from 6-10 p.m.*

*Sophia Kidd is a free-lance writer for various local, national, and international publications. Recently based in Portland, she begins reading this fall for her M.A. in Classical Chinese Literature at Sichuan University. She wishes for positive civic journalism to thrive in The Portland Upside.*

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Photo by Sophia Kidd

# From the editors

By Sara & Rob Bednark  
The Portland Upside



This past month we've been talking a lot about what we want for content in *The Portland Upside*. One of the most important criteria is that stories focus on positive things happening in the Portland metro area. Something that makes you say, "Wow! That person, organization,

business, or in the case of Zadok, that dog is doing something great for the community."

Because Portland is...well, Portland, *The Portland Upside* will always include articles on the great local nonprofits. Travis, the unlikely founder of Sanctity of Hope, drew us in with his humble and practical approach to the question of giving money to the homeless ("Can you spare a token?").

Of course we don't expect every article to click with every

reader. Some of us may not want to go running at five in the morning as Nicole describes in "Waking up before the sun," while others are already tying their shoes.

So our second standard for *The Portland Upside* is variety. We want variety

of topics, voices and genres. We'd love to expand our content to include cartoons, artwork, more poetry and more profiles of everyday Portlanders, like the one Sophia did on Joe Warren and his amazing life-size artwork ("Artist welds new life into old metal") or Kay's article profiling some of the people in her neighborhood ("Planned neighborhood becoming a robust community").

"Voices around town" is an exciting new addition for *The Portland Upside* because it allows us to showcase more of Portland's voices. A hot Sunday afternoon on Mt. Tabor was the perfect place to ask the question, "What do you like about Portland?" We couldn't get people to stop talking!

We hope you all enjoy this issue of *The Portland Upside* and we always invite you to send us your feedback, article suggestions and content submissions of any kind.

*Contact us at editors@portlandupside.com or 503-663-1526 and visit us online at www.PortlandUpside.com*

**M**eet Jennifer, artist, long-time Portland resident, global positive-thinker and *The Portland Upside's* new Advertising Sales Representative.

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*"Selling advertising for The Portland Upside is easy because I believe thoughts create. Don't underestimate the power that a small newspaper has to inspire and create community."*

-Jennifer Doheny



## Submission of the Month

Send us your photo, doodle, cartoon, poem, haiku, drawing, artwork, essay, quote, etc. Something that you find positive, and that we can fit into a 4" x 6" space like the one below. Email it to editors@portlandupside.com, fax it to 503-828-9889 or mail it to us by August 20.

One or more submissions will be chosen to appear in the September issue of *The Portland Upside*.

Please include your name, email address and phone number just in case we need to contact you.

Issues of *The Portland Upside* can be read online at: [www.PortlandUpside.com](http://www.PortlandUpside.com)

*The Portland Upside* is an independent, volunteer-driven publication that is dedicated to finding and printing the positive stories of the Portland metro area.

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# Planned neighborhood becoming a robust community

## *A glimpse into the lives of some New Columbia residents*

**Story and photos by Kay Reid**  
*The Portland Upside*

New Columbia, the small community where I live, is a beautiful 82-acre site in the Portsmouth neighborhood of Portland. It's home to the largest community revitalization project ever undertaken in Oregon's history. In 2001 the Housing Authority of Portland received a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant to demolish and redevelop the World War II-era Columbia Villa housing project which stood there.

Today New Columbia houses 850 households, a combination of 232 homeowners and 618 rental units. Twenty-five hundred people live here; 1,300 children, 1,200 adults. On any given day when I walk my dog around the streets and parks of this neighborhood, I might encounter individuals representing 22 countries. Eleven languages are spoken here and I frequently hear some of them as I walk.

I bought a home in New Columbia a year ago and I'm happy with my decision.

I'd long known about Columbia Villa's history. When I looked into New Columbia, the idea of living in this community and experiment was very attractive. The day-to-day reality has surpassed my expectations. The racial and ethnic diversity, the sights and sounds, including the nearby train whistle, all appeal to me. Plus I am near a dear friend on Sauvie Island, a place where I have old ties and where I love to walk.

Yes, I am pleased to be at New Columbia and would like to introduce some of my neighbors here.

### Carlos and Nancy Chavez

Nancy and Carlos work full time. She's an RN with the Red Cross and he's a respiratory therapist with Providence Home Services. They bought their home in New Columbia four years ago, when many of the homes right beside them were still under construction. They were attracted to its handsome structure, affordability, and the hope of cultural diversity.

Nancy and Carlos are on a mission. Most missionaries would not be found at the St. Johns Fred Meyer parking lot at 1 a.m. But this couple goes there to capture feral cats congregating in a corner of the store property. Nancy and Carlos go through a process of baiting and setting the traps and then standing vigil. The cats fortunate enough to be caught will be taken to a Feral Cat Coalition veterinarian for spaying or neutering. Most will be returned to the grocery store lot, their original home.

In their sojourn at New Columbia the couple has trapped approximately 50 cats and fostered 27 of them. Nancy keeps a list of their names in the garage. This work is in Nancy's blood—when she was a little girl she asked her mother if she could open an animal shelter in their basement. Carlos, clearly pleased, tags along as Nancy's assistant. He calls his wife "the cat whisperer." They have also influenced several



**Carlos and Nancy Chavez**

neighbors to foster or adopt cats.

The joy of their mission, along with its significant time and expense, eclipses any imagined night life or long vacation. They did take pleasure, however, in one expensive social event, the Fur Ball. At the fundraiser they saw a clip of themselves in a film, in the wee hours of the morning, barely out of pajamas, unloading traps and taking cats into the clinic.

"We looked terrible," Carlos said.

### The Fraction family

About to celebrate their 10th anniversary, Megan and Micheal live two doors down with their three children, Janaeaya, Keisha and Mike, and their Akita-chow mix, Boojum. Micheal is employed by Bank of America and Megan is a property manager for Steadfast Companies.

Although they both work, it's an understatement to say that Micheal and Megan are devoted, loving parents. I often see members of this family on their front porch talking with animation and affection. The Fractions go fishing with their kids and have dinners with Megan's family in Beaverton.

They warmly greeted me when I first moved to New Columbia. I'd lived here only a few weeks when my own new extended family from Syria arrived for a visit. As the foreigners exited the car, including my son's veiled mother-in-law, Micheal and neighbors were playing catch on the sidewalk. They immediately invited eight-year-old Hakam to join them, a friendly gesture that Hakam still remembers.

Megan and Micheal bought their home in 2005. They were compelled by the convenient location, the numerous parks in and around New Columbia, and the proximity to Sauvie Island, where Micheal fishes for sturgeon, crappies, and catfish. In her scant spare time, Megan likes to sip wine and read. She says she "kind of enjoys gardening but mostly likes to watch Micheal garden."

### The McIntosh family

Ginean and Mark aspired to live in a walkable community in a healthy neighborhood; the multi-cultural, multi-racial mix of New Columbia also added to the appeal. They also chose New Columbia because it is close to Mt. Olivet Baptist Church on Chautauqua Avenue, where Ginean and Mark have been active since the mid-1990s. Their house is also 20 minutes from Mark's work.

Ginean first moved to Oregon to attend George Fox University, where she majored in communications and minored in Christian ministry. After years in the work force as an admissions counselor at George Fox and then as an insurance processor, she married Mark. Now Ginean is the stay-at-home mom of the couple's blended family of four children: Derek, Michael, Joseph and Jasmine.

Ginean's passion is staging "Take Time" retreats for women, couples and families. An inveterate event planner, she also organized a November bazaar in one of the New Columbia community rooms, complete with Kenyan food, a Kenyan author, jewelry, and displays from numerous local businesses.

The availability of community rooms at New Columbia adds value for Ginean. She threw her son's



**The Fraction family (left to right): Micheal, Megan, Janaeaya, Keisha and Mike**

last birthday party in the senior housing center's Trenton Terrace, where her mother now lives. Independently, Ginean's mom had been exploring a move to Trenton Terrace while Ginean and her husband were mulling the prospects of purchasing a home at New Columbia. The extended family is happy to be together and they enjoy acquainting lucky neighbors with Ginean's quiches and cobblers, which she regularly brings to New Columbia events.

### Carmina Casimoro

Carmina has been in Oregon for 22 years. She left the puebla of Uruetaro, Michoacan, Mexico, on her own, for the opportunity to work in an Oregon cannery.



**The McIntosh family: (left to right) Mark, Ginean, Jo-seph, Jasmine, Michael and Derek**

Going to considerable trouble and expense, Carmina eventually brought two of her children to Oregon. The mother of three—Faviola, Paola, and Rebecca—Carmina came to New Columbia from the Tamarack, a public housing complex in North Portland. Rebecca, her nine-year-old, goes to Portsmouth School.

Carmina has worked in childcare, elder care, and cooking. Recently she has been unemployed for several months. She

**New Columbia**  
Continued from page 4

has a passion for cooking and loves to work. Being unemployed has not deterred her. With a crew of Latina women, she goes to Rosa Parks School on the New Columbia campus and picks up litter. She also helps Community Coordinator Lucia Noriega-Pena do daycare at meetings.

Carmina epitomizes neighborliness. More than 90 families from Latin America live in New Columbia, mainly from Mexico, but also from Uruguay, Cuba, El Salvador and Guatemala. When Carmina learns about someone in the hospital and most of the adults in the household are working, she takes the bus to visit the stricken family member. She enjoys working with both seniors and youth and recently accompanied 40 children on a New Columbia-sponsored trip to the zoo.

**Carmina Casimoro**



**Marsha Roach**

**M**arsha is the proud mother of seven children: Terrence, Jahmal, Lashaun, Shalamar, Champagne, Ginelle, and Diamond, two of whom live at home. She has been around children all her life and likes to work with them, doing in-home childcare for several years.

On the waiting list for Section 8 housing for five years, Marsha said New Columbia was the last place she wanted to live. But she's been converted and now wouldn't live anywhere else. Marsha was a certified nursing assistant at Baptist Manor and later worked at the Forest Park Care Center.

Caregiving for family is a major theme of Marsha's life. She helped care for her mother, with whom she lived from 1999 until 2007. Marsha inherited some of her mother's zest for life. An amputee from diabetes, her mother didn't let a wheelchair stop her from having an active social life or going to church every time the door was open.

At New Columbia, Marsha has volunteered for National Night Out, the Community Speaks Initiative, and for the youth training program, Kids Creating Harmony in Neighborhood Growth (K-CHING). Marsha likes the summer mini-concerts, and the knowledge that she has neighbors from around the globe, including Russia and Ethiopia.

New Columbia has had growing pains and an occasional eruption here and there. However at any given time, my neighborhood is the home of hundreds of wonderful people leading good lives.

Filmmakers Sue Aburthnot and Richard



**Marsha Roach**

*Wilhelm candidly chronicle Columbia Villa's disruptive demolition and transformation to New Columbia in their stunning documentary, "Imagining Home." Visit [www.hareinthegeate.com](http://www.hareinthegeate.com) or call 503-287-3731 for information on screenings in Portland.*

For more information on New Columbia visit [www.newcolumbia.org](http://www.newcolumbia.org)

Kay Reid is an oral historian who helps individuals, families, and businesses tell their stories. [www.kayreidstories.com](http://www.kayreidstories.com)

## Waking up before the sun

By Nicole Morales  
*The Portland Upside*

**W**hat's your morning like? Alarm, shower, wake up the little ones, search for something wrinkle-free in an endless closet, toast with jam for you, toast with strawberry jam for the kids, comb hair, and then out the door? You rev up the engine while in the garage since it'll be idle while eastbound on Hwy 26. Or better yet, you scurry along the sidewalk to your local Max station—another five minutes away. You've missed the early train by about three minutes. There's still another chance to catch the Blue Line so you can clock in at 8:00 a.m. Time isn't on your side most mornings.

How many of you extend your nights, whether on the phone keeping up with friends or finishing that borrowed mystery novel before its pending due date? Regardless of how long you put them off, mornings come too soon and they're just never long enough.

Well, I've got a remedy, a quick fix. But, you've got to get up before the crack of dawn. Ugh! I know, you already feel the pain before any mention of the word exercise. Continue reading. I promise you won't break out in a sweat.

I get up at 4:30 a.m. four days out of my work week. Sometimes I hit the five-minute snooze once or twice. That's okay as long as I'm out of the house by 5:00 a.m.

I groggily walk around the house: a morning pee, quick face wash, a dig in the dresser drawer for a clean sports bra and ankle socks. My mind is blank, full of sleep. I bend and twist and reach over to grab my toes. A ten-minute stretch should do it. Ugh! It's morning. It's early. But I'll feel so much better after an hour-long power walk and jog around the schoolyard. That's seven times around the same two and a half blocks. Boring? Not quite. My morning begins after my second lap.

I know who to expect coming up the block out for his morning walk. Some days he has a black pullover with yellow reflec-



Photo by Matthew Koski

tors. Other days it's powder blue with silver reflectors. He expects me too. We wave and nod. A shared moment of morning workout camaraderie.

Thirty minutes into my walk, that familiar late model Ford Mustang rings around the corner. Its smooth body reflects the glare of the lone streetlight above. The Mustang seamlessly glides by regardless of who's keeping my beat, U2, Gypsy Kings, or James Brown.

A few minutes later I encounter the mini Nissan pickup, its driver competitively leaning over the wheel. His workday must start at the school at precisely at 5:45. It's a race to see which of us can make it around the block first. On occasion he has to wait for me to cross the schoolyard's entryway. That's when I win. Then again, he's a courteous driver, unconscious of his right blinker rapidly signaling to no one.

Farther down, a seven-foot high National Rent-A-Fence keeps trespassers out and a gutted school gymnasium in. Rumors say it could have been renovated into a cultural arts building. I suspect that the overnight security guard and three member construction crew that changes guard by 6:45 a.m. all consider the chain-link an effective way to keep politics out and their job security in.

Sometimes I get distracted from the action. A sign says the elementary school offers free weekday summer lunch to children until August 14th. Neon markings leave quite an impression, an active gas line here, a major water line there. I ponder hungry neighborhood kids and gas and water field crews taking their jobs seriously.

Then my eyes dart upward. There's the woman whose three dogs take her for a walk. It must be ten 'til seven. Two of her friends are wolf hybrids—I asked one morning—and the

other is a black Lab. She winds leashes on both wrists, tightening them as canine ears perk with the jingling of the keys in my pocket. She pauses, but the dogs don't.

I swish by them with my usual, "Morning! Got your hands full?"

"Always!" she replies.

It's my final lap. I walk this one. My fingers crawl up on the outer side of my neck. 30-second pulse check. A cyclist zips past since there's no confusion at the four-way stop. I cross the street and lunge up the driveway, my cool down stretch to the door. Made good time, it's 6:57. I've got an hour before the early bus hits the stop, and if I make it, a breakfast bun from Maggie's before I clock in. Delish!

I prefer to battle my mornings before the sun wakes up. It makes my day that much easier and, if time is on my side, tastier too.

Nicole Morales strives to connect people via multicultural education and writing. She teaches ESL at a private university outside of Portland and welcomes your inquiries at [nmorales.writes@gmail.com](mailto:nmorales.writes@gmail.com)

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## Sanctity of Hope offers new way for you to help the homeless

By Briena Sash  
*The Portland Upside*

**P**ortland-based, nonprofit Sanctity of Hope is unique. It isn't just about helping the homeless; it's about "helping you help the homeless."

Oregon native Travis Van Staaveren created Sanctity of Hope as a solution to a problem. He knew that people want to help those less fortunate; he also knew, however, that many people are hesitant to hand out cash and, therefore, may not give at all. How could he help people, who don't want to give cash, give to the homeless? How about a token system?

"I wanted to get the community more involved helping each other. I wanted to remove fear of 'ultimate use' and make it easier to give," says Travis.

In order to facilitate giving, Travis has devised a plan: he has minted silver dollar-sized brass tokens which can be bought by the public and given to the homeless instead of cash. The homeless redeem the tokens at participating establishments to purchase necessary items such as food and emergency goods. Sanctity of Hope then purchases the tokens back from the partners and sells them back to the public.

What inspired Travis to become so heavily involved with such an issue?

"I'm a problem solver," Travis admits, "I saw a problem and there didn't seem to be a good enough solution—so I came up with one."

Many may assume Travis to be much more than a problem solver... humanitarian, perhaps? Travis has strong objections to these accusations. Truth be told, Travis is a surprising and seemingly unlikely candidate to start such an organization in response to this sort of social problem. Web Master by trade, Travis has no background with nonprofit work. When speaking of the events and circumstances leading up to the organization's birth, Travis does not mention things like Social Justice, Liberation Theology, duty or rights. Nor does he speak of any sort of calling or mission. He simply describes himself as someone doing what he thought needed to be done.

"It's a travesty: people who want to help, but can't, and people who need their help but don't receive it. I wanted to get rid of the barriers to giving and show everyone just how generous we are," Travis continues, "That is what Sanctity of Hope is all about, giving people the opportunity to give."

Pizza Schmizza is among the local establishments accepting tokens, where 2-3 tokens can buy a hot slice of pizza and soda at two of the popular pizza chain's

downtown locations.

"Since Sanctity of Hope buys the tokens back from businesses, no business needs to take a loss by accepting tokens," says Travis.

In fact, businesses determine each token's value in their own stores. They can decide whether to participate for charity or profit. It's a win-win.

"So far the tokens have had a great response," according to Travis, "People feel comfortable handing them out, and the homeless love them."

However, it is not always easy getting establishments to accept tokens. Travis realizes that while some businesses are happy accepting them, many still view

outsiders. With gift cards in hand, the homeless are no different than any other customer."

So far, Travis has collected gift cards and gift certificates from barber shops, restaurants, outdoor/survival stores, pet shops, dollar stores, bicycle shops, coffee shops, and many more. In the near future he hopes to include a laundromat and a place for bathing.

When asked about the response of the homeless community to Sanctity of Hope, Travis explained, "In the beginning our only concern was that the homeless community would not be receptive to the token system—preferring to receive cash. This has certainly not been

the case. We've heard so many of the homeless say, 'thank you, the last thing I need in my pocket is money.'"

With a fist-full of tokens the homeless can get a meal at a number of restaurants, a haircut, some food for their dog, a bicycle tire, a blanket, some socks, or just a cup of coffee.

Local businesses, foundations and individuals alike have shown Sanctity of Hope astounding support.

"We've had youth groups, men's groups, churches, and a number of volunteers take on Sanctity of Hope as a project. They're purchasing and distributing tokens, raising money at work, handing out care packages at our weekly barbecue, and even baking cookies and knitting scarves and hats to hand out to people to raise awareness," says Travis.

Token minting and vending machine purchases are supported 100 percent by sponsors and token sales. Tokens are minted in batches of 1,000 and most tokens include the sponsor's name imprinted on the back side of the token. Vending Machines can be similarly sponsored. Sanctity of Hope plans to install 10 more vending machines in Multnomah County in the next 24 months, and eventually expand nationwide.

"What we need now is to familiarize the public with Sanctity of Hope," says Travis. "To let them know they can give freely, without hesitation, and truly feel good."

For more information about Sanctity of Hope, to purchase tokens, or to sponsor a set of tokens or a vending machine, visit [www.SanctityOfHope.org](http://www.SanctityOfHope.org) or email Travis at [info@santityofhope.org](mailto:info@santityofhope.org).

**Sanctity of Hope raises awareness of its token program with their weekly barbecue for the homeless.**



Photo by Travis Van Staaveren

them as a hassle. Because of this, Travis is taking Sanctity of Hope, and giving to the homeless, in a new direction: token-only vending machines.

Travis's newest project is to set up vending machines that solely accept Sanctity of Hope tokens. Sanctity of Hope's first vending machine, installed in January of this year, is located in the Job Resource Center at the Goodwill on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard in SE Portland. The location has already seen such great response that Goodwill has encouraged placing several more at their other Job Resource locations.

Socks, sewing kits, granola bars, personal hygiene products, flashlights, and emergency items were among the items recommended by the homeless themselves and initially available in Sanctity of Hope's vending machine. That is, until Travis recognized an imbalance in item purchases. Surprisingly, the vast majority of tokens were being exchanged for Subway gift cards. Stocking Sanctity of Hope vending machines with gift cards offers a broader selection and lets the homeless decide what they want or need.

"I was purchasing many of the items in the vending machine at the same stores now represented by gift cards, so the selection has actually grown," says Travis.

He also believes it will better promote feelings of dignity.

"I want to integrate the homeless back into society, to make them feel like they are part of the community instead of

Briena Sash is a longtime community volunteer, travel photographer and photojournalist intimately involved photographing, chronicling, and befriending the Portland homeless community. [www.streetquotes.wordpress.com](http://www.streetquotes.wordpress.com)

## Voices around town

### What do you like about Portland?

"I like the thriving art scene. It's impressive the amount of galleries that are in Portland."

—Jason Kappus  
Lents Park neighborhood  
Portland, OR

"The city planning is phenomenal. I like the 'neighborhoodiness' of it. It's an extremely friendly place, and you know it the minute you get here, just talking to strangers."

—Philip Golden  
Los Angeles, CA

"I like all the natural places like the Rhododendron Garden, Sauvie Island, Mt. Tabor. I think Portland's done a really good job of preserving the natural areas."

—Sandra Longmore  
Washougal, WA

"It is so livable. It's really easy to live here."

—Jeff  
Portland, OR

"I lived here about 10 years ago for a couple years, and I miss it. This has always been the best place I've ever lived."

—Ken  
Boston, MA

"There's always a lot of motivation to bring communities together, whether it be gardening, or just as neighborhood associations."

—Shannah  
Woodlawn neighborhood  
Portland, OR

"I like the size of the city. It's a small city but with a lot to offer."

—Sarah  
Boston, MA

"I love the beautiful green trees, the successful light rail system, and the temperate climate."

—Perry  
Arbor Lodge neighborhood  
Portland, OR

"I travel a lot. Every time I come back to Portland, I feel remarkably happy, because I feel like I'm in a place with people that understand a certain lifestyle that I want to live, one that my kids are happy in."

—Chris Dominic  
Laurelhurst neighborhood  
Portland, OR

"I love the trees and the clean air."

—Tim  
Portland, OR

"Portland has the best summer. People always ask where we are going for summer vacation, and we say, 'Right here. We're not leaving!'"

—Laura Dominic  
Laurelhurst neighborhood  
Portland, OR



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# High school sports team gives back to the community

By Allie Connick  
*The Portland Upside*

**W**ith eight combined boys and girls district titles and 15 state champions in the last six years, the Gresham High School (GHS) Track and Field team has certainly established itself as one of the state's most successful programs. But with the development of a new community service campaign called "Gresham Track Gives Back," the team is also finding as much success out in the community as they do on the track and in the field.

Created and implemented by head coach Chris Koenig, Gresham Track Gives Back provides athletes the opportunity to perform community service hours within the city of Gresham. Established for the 2008-09 season, the team has already logged more than 80 hours.

"These student-athletes represent the city of Gresham each and every time they put on their track uniform," said Koenig. "We wanted a way for them to give back to the same community they live, learn and compete in."

Projects during this inaugural year include preparing Meals on Wheels dishes, serving food at Loaves and Fishes and planting fruit trees at Snow-Cap. They also adopted a one-mile stretch of Main Street and performed multiple

clean-ups of the road that runs directly in front of their school.

According to Koenig, "cleaning up Main Street was actually a lot of fun and very rewarding. We literally had business owners and residents coming out to meet us and ask 'who are you?' They were so surprised to see these young men and women picking up trash, and when we explained that we were the GHS Track and Field team, they were extremely appreciative."

Stacy Skerjanec, the Adopt-A-Road Coordinator for the city of Gresham's Transportation Division collaborated with Koenig to organize the clean-ups, and the permanent signs that were erected to acknowledge the efforts of the team.

He said, "all too often we underestimate what positive contributions and challenges the young people of our community are willing to take on to make a real difference. The Gresham High School track team, a group of fine citizen athletes, has recognized a way that they can give back to the commu-

nity and do it with a real sense of pride and accomplishment."

"ed" portion into seven additional residential streets surrounding the school.

"The community has embraced the Gresham High School track team's contributions with open arms," continued Skerjanec. "We are proud of the effort put forward and civic pride apparent in these future leaders of the community. We hope this example from these future leaders at Gresham High School will encourage more such involvement in this program."

Even Gresham's Mayor, Shane Bemis, has taken notice. "The Gresham High School athletes involved in the Gresham Track Gives Back program demonstrate that being great athletes also means being great citizens," Mayor Bemis said. He continued, "We deeply appreciate their many hours of volunteer service, especially in the tough times we are currently experiencing."

Organizing all the details for the various projects and signing up volunteers was coordinated by Tim Mowery as part of his senior project. "What I liked most

about Gresham Track Gives Back was having the chance to give back to the track program, the school and the community for everything they've given me," said Mowery. "It was also a fun time bonding with my teammates and to see how teamwork has an impact off the track too."

Mowery graduated from GHS last spring and will now head to Western Oregon University to run track, as well as study Education so he can become a teacher and coach.

Another athlete who volunteered for multiple clean-ups was incoming senior, Sam Crouser. Currently, Crouser holds the American Junior Record for the javelin with a throw of 239' and spent part of his summer competing against the best in the world at the Pan American Games.

"Picking up trash wouldn't ordinarily be much fun, but doing it with all your teammates made it a good experience," Crouser said. "Plus, we could see what a big impact we were making in the community."

So while the GHS Track and Field team certainly deserves the accolades for their many athletic accomplishments, it is their work in the community that has earned them a standing ovation from the city of Gresham.

## Keeping Main Street in Gresham clean is one of several community service activities undertaken by the Gresham Track and Field team.



Photo provided by Kim Koenig

## MACG

*Continued from page 1*

Good idea. But how? MACG's basic tool is the "relational meeting" or "one-to-one," the kind of thing Christi and I are practicing. It's a heart-to-heart telling of personal stories, exactly the kind of honest talk that happens in well-functioning families and between trusted friends. In this setting we're doing it as concerned citizens. We want to unearth common pressures and problems so we can face them together, publicly, politically, and most important, powerfully.

One of MACG's member organizations is Phoenix Rising Transitions, a successful prison-to-community program. Phoenix has developed a "relational culture" that forges bonds between prisoners and community leaders.

Harry Olsen, a leader in MACG and founder of Phoenix, says, "When I got out in 1991, there was nothing like a prison-to-community transition program in Portland. I'd attended the Native American Sweat Lodge, led by a volunteer, at Oregon State Prison. I called him the day I got out and that saved my life. Still, I longed for social connection. I searched for that link for others, too. In the Lodge I envisioned Phoenix, an organization of and for people that were in and had been to prison. In 1999, I found MACG. Its freethinking leaders answered my prayer. No longer need parolees starve for normal human and social connections. No longer need they exist as outcasts, pariahs without an avenue to approach, to participate in community."

Another Phoenix member, Willy Smith, tells his story.

"Volunteers from Phoenix and

MACG came to the prison to attend and facilitate classes. These classes gave me a new beginning and taught me leadership skills that I immediately began to use upon my release. The support and mentorship gained through these gave me strength to believe in myself enough that at the age of 54 I returned to college. I'm now in my second year at PCC with a 4.0 GPA, a member of Phi Theta Kappa honor society, and just received Student of the Year in the Alcohol & Drug Counselor program."

One MACG credo, embodied

## We get people to talk to each other at some meaningful depth.

by Phoenix, is that leadership is not a single inborn trait, like eye color, bred only in peppy college kids running Student Council or shrewd and driven entrepreneurs. It turns out there are practices and strategies, like the relational meeting, available to the average person. Such strategies create a context for leaders to emerge.

Practices developed in the 1930's based on the research of University of Chicago sociologist Saul Alinsky, brought together groups as diverse as labor unions, the Catholic Church, ethnic minorities, business owners and government. Eventually the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) arose, an international umbrella entity that now has 59 affiliates. As a bud-

ding community organizer, I learn I've joined a lineage of thousands of IAF trainees who have included such luminaries as United Farmworkers founders Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, as well as Barack Obama.

At the Gladstone Union Hall we get plenty of theory and history under our belts, yet for three weeks there's scant mention of MACG's current role in the political arena. More than one participant asks what MACG is doing in the real world right now.

Mike, a labor organizer, likes the training but I can tell it all seems a little soft to him. He's used to hardball negotiations over contract terms and wages and it's not clear how relational meetings will translate to the union setting. During the workshop's last night, we hear more details about MACG's political actions.

One story catches my attention. Lois Jordahl, MACG leader with Redeemer Lutheran Church, tells how a recent MACG action cleaned up a meth lab in her neighborhood. Police had busted the meth house in the glare of TV cameras, yet the boarded-up house languished, a contaminated eyesore. Lois notified her Redeemer "core team," a small group of leaders acting as a liaison with MACG.

"[My team] met with neighbors, city officials, bureaucrats, housing inspectors who told us they couldn't do anything under the current laws and ordinances. We invited recovering addicts from Recovery Association Project to join with us, and several did, including a former meth cook. Folks from labor got involved. We met individually with City Council members. We were instrumental in writing a resolution that allows the city to force cleanup even when

the owners are uncooperative, and provides funding methods for cooperative owners who can't pay the cost of decontamination."

Bottom line, the house was cleaned up.

Toward the end of our last meeting, we try an exercise at odds with the familiar talking heads format. We're asked to figure out how to rearrange a stack of chairs to represent "power over" and another to represent "power among."

Our group of a dozen sits around a table, uncertain how to do this. There's disagreement as people talk out their own concepts. Discussion stalls and we're struggling for a handle, when Christi stands up.

"Let's do the best we can. We

want a tall pile over here, right?

And a circle for the 'power among'?"

Christi's decisive move breaks the deadlock and provides a powerful demonstration of true leadership. In no time we've got a

teetering hierarchy of metal and plastic—"power over," and next to it we're sitting in a circle—"power among."

Our final activity is to declare our next steps. Some of us aim to establish or strengthen core teams at our institutions. Others, like me, promise more one-to-one meetings. Everyone pledges something. As we leave, the night air is refreshingly cool. Organizing for power? We can do it!

*For more information about community organizing, visit the following websites: www.macg.org, www.rap-nw.org & www.phoenix-rising-transitions.org*

*Nick O'Connor contributes to Free Fun Guides at www.freefunguides.com. He has rejected the motto "Keeping Weird and Just Doing It In the Rose City That Works."*



**MACG participants, left to right, Nick O'Connor, Muriel Wenzien and Rev. Bill Gates put their leadership training to work when they lobbied at the Oregon state capitol in April.**

## Cash poor, talent rich

*Single mother uses bartering to gain more financial freedom*

By Leah Mayes  
*The Portland Upside*

I'm a single mother who sometimes finds it difficult to make ends meet. It's hard for me to find the time to work, care for my 5-year-old, and still be able to get a massage, acupuncture, and save time to play. To be able to afford to go places and do things outside of our home is a challenge. In short, money can create a lot of stress for me. At times, I find myself getting overwhelmed and turning into a person I prefer to avoid.

On those days I've thought I would love to do without money, or be able to do with less, not by sacrificing the things that are important to me, but by using a different way to fund the things I need and want.

Thankfully, I've found an answer: bartering.

There once was a time when money was not traded in exchange for goods. Animals, handmade furniture, skills and crops were the

currency. When you went to market or to seek out assistance from someone with skills you had not mastered, you traded with what you did have, what you could make, or with the knowledge that you possessed.

Midwives would trade their services for herbs, food, farm animals. A carpenter would trade his handcrafted furnishings for tools, horses, and seed. Wagons were brought to market filled with handmade rugs, clothes, and pots and would return full again with items needed to live.

When did we lose our trade line? The traditional system of bartering seems like a long way off in this society of hourly wages, 401K plans and retirement packages. Yet it has been my experience that bartering, like many things, has



Photo by Shane Reeves

**Leah uses her kitchen skills to barter for goods and services such as food, health care and tattoo work.**

not disappeared completely. It has merely hidden in the background waiting for the right time.

I've been fortunate to tap into a good barter system in my life, bringing food, alternative health care, massage, child care, gardening skills and much more to my family. Money is great for some things, even needed for others, but not for everything. And in a society where the mighty dollar rules, it liberates me to be able to fall back on such a tried and true con-

cept of exchange.

I have thousands of dollars worth of tattoo work on my body, for example, and I've actually paid very little cold hard cash for any of it. I have been able to trade with skills of my own such as cooking, house-cleaning, weeding, harvesting, child care, and also with my own art work.

Often I run into people who want to try bartering but don't know what skills they have to trade. That's when I ask, can you

### Zadok

*Continued from page 1*

him to as many people, animals and situations as possible.

"That way nothing is scary for them as they get older," Julie explains.

By asking everyone she met to pet, feed and talk to the puppy, Julie taught Zadok that meeting new people is a great thing and that is precisely what works for therapy. Agility and obedience training, along with the intensive socialization, helped Zadok become the outgoing, well-mannered hospital dog he is today. And good genes helped.

Julie sensed Zadok's natural gifts the first time she took him to a hospital. Understandably a bit nervous, when she and Zadok were motioned into a patient's room and he promptly crawled under the privacy curtain and onto the bed, Julie was downright worried.

"It's a dog! It's a dog! It's a dog!" she remembers hearing a surprised voice repeat.

Her heart pounded until the curtain opened

and she saw the broad smile of the man behind it. Julie and Zadok have volunteered ever since.

They visit Kaiser about once a week. The day I follow along we stop on the oncology floor and at the ICU. About half the time, we ask patients if they'd like to pet Zadok and then we get out of the way to let the Akita do the rest. He nuzzles, licks, or just sits, concentrating on the person at hand.

While Zadok lies next to oncology patient Carol Gordon, she absent-mindedly pets him while speaking of her own dog and its recent trip to the Rose Garden without her. Similar scenarios play out, room after room. We hear about border collies, pit bulls, Jack Russells, even a tabby or two, all residing in the real world outside of the hospital. Zadok is the bridge to normalcy for patients confined to a bed.

One woman waiting outside the ICU sums up Zadok's talents as a therapy dog nicely:

"Crappy day. You see a dog and you smile. He does his job well."

Between patient visits we make frequent



Photo by Sara Bednark

**Therapy dog Zadok stops to spend time on the bed with patient Carol Gordon as he makes his weekly rounds at Kaiser Sunnyside medical center.**

unexpected stops at nurses' stations and the halls outside patient rooms, visiting with the hospital staff. Nurses, doctors, technicians, all get their chance to "ooh and aah" in high pitched voices and to take in Zadok's goofy side.

"Everyone needs a little puppy love," admits one nurse after Zadok nuzzles her cheek and presses into her legs.

"He's good for my heart," responds another.

I wonder how Julie knows who needs Zadok's attention. She doesn't take any credit for those decisions. Zadok seems to know who needs what.

She does confide to me in a whisper that the staff needs Zadok as much as the patients. She describes their meetings with Zadok, "as a chance to reset in a stressful job environment."

Indeed, during the holiday season, he focuses his attention more on the staff, presumably to ease their anxiety of being away from family. At other times, patients are the focus, and Julie just follows Zadok's lead.

After about two hours in the hospital, Julie and I give Zadok a well-deserved bathroom break as we chat a little more about what he does for people. It's one of those conversations containing no hard facts, just genuine words of relief, peace, and thanks and the shared memories of the relaxed faces of those he's touched.



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Sara Bednark has written two children's books, publishes The Portland Upside and has been certified by Northwest School of Animal Massage to perform small animal massage.

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## Youth seize opportunity of a lifetime

*The Pangaea Project connects low-income youth with changemakers around the world*

By Rebecca Robinson  
*The Portland Upside*

**T**hink globally, act locally.

For many, this oft-used phrase is easier said than done. But for Deb Delman and Stephanie Tolk, founders of the Portland-based nonprofit The Pangaea Project, it is the basis of their day-to-day work and the realization of Pangaea's motto: "bringing the world back together."

The duo met in the fall of 2002 at the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO), where Deb worked. Stephanie interned with IRCO while working toward her masters in social work at Portland State University. It wasn't until April of the next year, however, that the two went from being casual acquaintances to collaborators.

"We were at the same nonprofit event," Deb recalls, "and we got to talking ... and realized we had a very similar vision."

Their vision, a unique international project that engages low-income youth in leadership development and service, centers around social justice issues. During an eight-month program the young people forge bonds across countries and cultures while becoming powerful agents of change in their own communities.

They chose the name Pangaea—the supercontinent theorized to have existed billions of years ago before our continents separated—to inspire an image of a reunited world.

Thrilled to have discovered their shared purpose, Deb and Stephanie quickly began researching other programs with similar goals and approaches. As it turned out, their vision was unique.



Photo provided by The Pangaea Project

**The Pangaea Project's participants are riding high after learning about grassroots change in Chang Mai, Thailand.**

"We realized, we're not reinventing the wheel ... we're creating a new model," said Deb.

Months of intensive networking ensued, leading to a meeting in Spring 2003 of nearly 40 interested people, including some future Pangaea board members. "It was the first time we got out of our heads and had to explain [our idea] to people," says Stephanie. "It was legitimizing. We've told all these people about it; now we have to do it."

The immense outpouring of support and guidance led Deb and Stephanie to see that, in Deb's words, "we weren't alone in this vision."

They fully committed themselves to their shared goal and worked for the next year without funding to make The Pangaea Project a reality. They launched the organization in

*Continued on page 8*

## Portland's cultural diversity finds home at 90.7 FM

By Paula Small  
*The Portland Upside*

**N**estled in the intersection of SE 8th and Burnside, KBOO, Portland's only community radio station, is one of the oldest in the nation.

In 1949, community radio began in Berkeley, California, on the dual platform of non-commercialism and listener-support. It took another fifteen years for a group in Portland to plant the seeds that in 1968 would officially become KBOO.

KBOO provides a home to those in the community who want programming outside the mainstream. A walk through KBOO's front door leads to a diverse staff and volunteer base, people who belong to the misrepresented and underserved populations of our community. Some of KBOO's listeners are also members, people who support the station by donating as well as listening.

*Continued on page 6*

## Musical medicine for kids with cancer

By Bre Gregg  
*The Portland Upside*

**I**t's got four wheels, 100 musical instruments, song-writing software, a custom-built iPod docking station, a video screen and the power to help seriously ill children by bringing music directly to their hospital bedsides. The Children's Cancer Association's magical mobile music cart brings joy through a one-of-a-kind interactive music experience. With live hallway music, highly trained music therapists and a corps of volunteers, the CCA's Music Rx® program makes the rounds at six Portland area hospitals and care facilities, and is now expanding nationally.

After 14 years of experience, research, development, evaluation, awards and accolades, CCA is excited to expand the Music Rx program beyond Portland, Oregon, for the first time. Now, thousands more children will be comforted by the healing power of music at Mattel Children's Hospital UCLA in Los Angeles, California, and Miller Children's Hospital in Long Beach, California.

Music Rx is a three-pronged program, including volunteer musicians playing instruments in hospital corridors, the interactive music cart and on-call specialists who bring comforting music to terminally ill chil-



Photo provided by CCA

**Children's Cancer Association's interactive music cart brings entertainment to Darian and other kids with serious illnesses.**

dren and their families. This summer, CCA has launched a new songwriting project, pairing seriously ill kids and teens with Portland-based songwriters to co-write, record, mix and produce their own songs.

Providing inspiration to help formulate the child's raw ideas, the songwriter fosters the child's creative talents. The lyrics and melody are written by the kids, giving voice to some of the experiences they have had throughout their treatments and their life.

Thirteen year old Lauren likes to

write, act and sing. She especially loves musical theater and bubbles with excitement when she talks about the time she and her family went to see the musical *Wicked*. She is well-spoken, vivacious and full of life. She also happens to have leukemia.

Lauren wanted to be involved with the songwriting project because she feels she has an "ear for music," but most of all, she loves to sing. Paired with Lisa Forkish, recent winner of the Portland Songwriter's Associa-

*Continued on page 2*

## Mentorship program gives migrant students brighter future

**By Meryl Lipman**  
*The Portland Upside*

Teresa Alonso, director of the College Assistance for Migrants Program (CAMP) at Portland Community College, believes anything is possible.

She also believes in hard work and follow-through.

So when she met Cynthia Escamilla, chair of Nike's Latino and Friends Network (LAFN) at El Poder de la Mujer (The Power of the Woman) conference in February 2008, Teresa wasted no time following up.

That spring, Teresa and her students, all from migrant worker backgrounds, took a tour of the Nike campus, courtesy of Nike recruiter and LAFN member Jenny Salgado. At the end of their meeting Teresa pitched the idea of a mentorship program. Jenny asked her to submit a formal proposal and again, Teresa followed up. She later received a call from Alma Garza in the company's retail marketing department. Alma liked the idea of the mentoring program and she sat down with Teresa and Jenny to develop a pilot project for the summer of 2009.

Teresa, no stranger to recognizing opportunity, began her life on an earthen floor in a house with no plumbing. She spent her first four years in San Jeronimo, a tiny Michoacán village in Mexico, before moving with her family to the U.S. In Oregon she and her parents shared a mobile home with another family and worked in the berry fields. By the age of 10, Teresa was juggling school, sports, field work, and the care of her younger siblings. As her parents' financial situation remained dependent on the capricious conditions of agriculture, Teresa says she "saw education as the antidote to poverty."

"Mentorship was key for me," says Teresa, who was offered a mentor through a program at Oregon State University. Indeed, her mentor helped her mother understand the benefit of Teresa finishing high school.

"My mother was always very supportive," she says, but she admits that her father was

somewhat bewildered by his daughter's ambitions. After completing the University of Oregon's High School Equivalency Program (HEP), "I basically told them I was going to college," Teresa chuckles. She transferred to Lane Community College and then Western Oregon University.

and nurture increased parental involvement. "Many of our students are the first in their families to finish high school, let alone go to college," Teresa explains. "Parent say is so strong in the Latin community. If we can get parents on board with regard to education and help them understand the [long term]

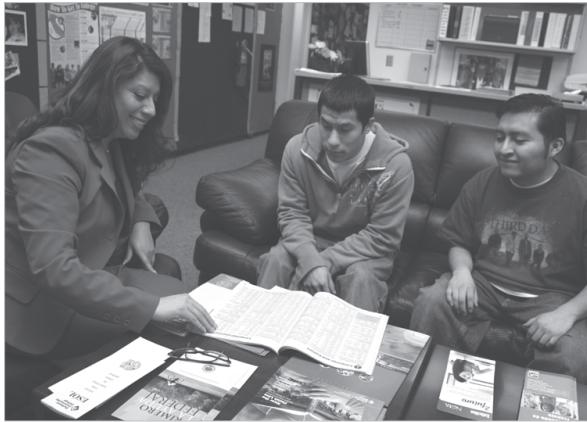


Photo provided by James Hill

**Director Teresa Alonso (left) explains new Nike mentorship opportunities with two students in the CAMP program at Portland Community College.**

Teresa began working for PCC in January 2007 and in the space of two years she and her team created one of the most innovative and successful of the 35 CAMP programs in the nation. CAMP—a federal grant program located at the Rock Creek Campus in West Portland—sets up mentorship, academic support and community for the children of migrant workers during their first year in college. The program has enjoyed full attendance and Teresa beams when she mentions that most of her original group is still in college. They are beginning to transfer to four year universities, mentor new participants

economic investment, will be so much easier for young people," she says.

Seven students were chosen to be mentored in the Nike summer program—Roy Gomez (Hermiston), Isidro Interian (Alloha), Sandra Soto (Cornelius), Maria Araceli Rebollo Salgado (Cornelius), Jose Lopez (Forest Grove), Juan Ramirez Alonso (Hillsboro), and Izequiel Lopez Jr. (Cornelius).

Alma and Teresa paired them with Nike mentors based on their goals, and their mentors' professional backgrounds, which included finance, retail, marketing and child-

care.

CAMP student Isidro Interian comes from Yucatan, Mexico and arrived in Oregon at age four. His parents were originally agricultural workers, though his mother now works in production and his father works as a janitor. Isidro made both Dean's List and Honor Roll. He wants to major in education and teach kindergarten someday.

"I'm interested in physical activity as part of education, particularly for young children," he says. "And Nike's creativity can help me later on in working with kids."

As a next step, he would like to volunteer for Nike's soccer camp. "This is networking for the future," he says. Through the Nike program, Isidro hopes to learn time management, communication and leadership skills.

The mentors met their students at a kick-off ceremony on June 18 at the Nike campus in Beaverton. The pairs will attend monthly group meetings all summer to complete three professional development projects. The program finale will be a Latino Heritage Celebration with LAFN in September.

Teresa, recently selected as one of Portland Business Journal's 40 Under 40 business leaders, is thrilled that the relationship between CAMP and Nike has come to fruition.

"I am beside myself with gratitude," she says.

Teresa hopes the program will expand next year and eventually involve student internships at Nike. Networking with companies like Nike plays a critical role in her investment strategy for her students and proves that with a little hard work and some mentoring, indeed, anything is possible for migrant students in Oregon.

*Meryl Lipman has a masters in writing from PSU and has worked for Portland Community College since 2003. In her spare time she loves to travel and jump out of airplanes.*



Comments?  
Feedback?  
Story ideas?  
An article to submit?

We want to hear from you!

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### Music

*Continued from page 1*

tion's Songwriter of the Year, they get to work.

Sitting across from Lisa, Lauren remembers a quote from the movie Kung Fu Panda—words that have had meaning for her throughout her battle with leukemia.

"The past is history, the future is a mystery, but now is a gift. That's why it's called the present."

From this idea, Lauren creates her lyrics and melody, which she sings as Lisa sits at the piano. Listening attentively, Lisa plays what she hears, adding some beautiful embellishments of her own. When they are done, they are both proud of the piece of music they have created together.

When asked about her Music Rx experience, Lauren says, "It was the best! I knew I could sing, but had no idea I could write a whole song!" She goes on to say that "even though there are many bad experiences that go with cancer, there are quite a few good ones, too."

For thousands of seriously ill children and their families the peels of playground laughter have been replaced by the beeps of hospital monitors. Music Rx combats pain, fear and loneliness with the healing power of music, transforming the hospital environment with every note.

When seriously ill kids and their families need more than

medicine, CCA is there with compassion and innovation, creating moments of respite and hope, both in the hospital and at home. Managed by a professional staff and powered by volunteers, CCA brings soothing music in a time of crisis, friendship in a time of loneliness, resources in a time of turmoil and vital support in the midst of life-threatening illness.

*If you know a child who would be helped by the Music Rx® program, or*

**Leukemia doesn't stop 13-year-old Lauren from joining CCA's Music Rx team in an impromptu jam session during her cancer treatments.**

*Photo by Jamie Knox*





**Rob and  
Sara  
Bednark,  
editors of  
The  
Portland  
Upside  
with  
10,000  
copies of  
their first  
issue.**

## From the editors

By Rob & Sara Bednark

The Portland Upside

Years ago, we stopped following the news in all its forms—TV, radio, newspaper, internet—finding that it left us feeling discouraged, scared, and hopeless. Yet, among the onslaught of negative stories, there were always a few positive stories that lifted our spirits and

gave us hope.

"Why can't there be a newspaper that prints only positive stories?" we'd think.

Through the years, we have dreamt of working together. We didn't know what shape or form it would take, but we knew we wanted to create a community that would bring people together and showcase their creative talents.

After a layoff, we took the opportunity

to create The Portland Upside. We started eight months ago with small steps, motivated by our passion to create a publication that we had always wanted to see.

With no journalism or publishing experience of our own, we knew we needed help. We put the word out, and in the span of a few months, we gathered over 30 volunteers who shared our vision of a positive newspaper. These volunteers joined us with their talents of writing, photography, artwork, distribution, ad sales, editing, public relations, and more.

This is the third issue of The Portland Upside, and we hope the articles leave you feeling good about what is happening in Portland. All the feedback we've received has encouraged us to keep going, and we know the stories we've published so far are only the tip of the iceberg.

*We can use more help with distribution, writing, photography, advertising sales, and story leads, so if you want to help spread the positive stories of Portland, contact us at [www.PortlandUpside.com](http://www.PortlandUpside.com), editors@portlandupside.com, or 503-663-1526.*

## A Window to Compassion

How one man's view of the homeless changed 34 years ago

By Doug Dixon

The Portland Upside

In 1975 I was a young salesman working for a factory on the northwest side of Portland, the gritty industrial district next to the rail yard and close to the docks. This was the part of town where the heavy lifting was done, a community made up of old warehouses containing a myriad of manufacturing and distribution companies. Trucks raced up and down the narrow streets, large machines banged away, and sparks flew in open buildings where burly men carved up steel. Each morning I got out of my car and walked to the entrance of our plant listening to a symphony of industrial racket that I always found exhilarating. It made me feel alive and part of something big.

My office faced north with an unglamorous view of the empty lot next door.

Most days I would sit behind my desk pitching agriculture bags over the phone to packing houses and feed mills around the country. I clinched many a deal with the muffled noise of a large printing press thumping away on the other side of the wall. And for lack of anything better to look at while I did my job, I stared out my window at the vacant lot.

Typically not much happened around the little piece of unattended ground. Periodically a cat or rodent would briefly make an appearance then quickly disappear into the blackberry patch. On windy days trash would blow into the prickly island with little hopes of getting picked up. There were also many freight trains that chugged by each day stopping often to load and unload cargo. My office may not have been uptown with a view but at least it was a start.

Then one dark winter morning it all changed. As I sat at my desk I noticed something sizable moving in the vines. At first it startled me because I couldn't fathom what weighty animal could be moving about in that dense briar patch. But as it grew lighter it became clear that the beast was actually a man. He appeared to be somewhat stocky and sporting a scraggly beard. I assumed he had attached himself to one of the freight trains that had arrived in the night.

Each day I sat captivated, watching the new tenant toil away at his subtle construction project. With his long dark coat and floppy hat, he blended in well with his surroundings. In time it became apparent he was using his knife to cut away the vines to make a sort of hidden nest to stay in. He eventually pieced together enough discarded plywood and scrap plastic to call it an actual shelter. It was obvious by his lack of wasted movements that he was a seasoned nomad, quite adept at setting up temporary housing.

Upon rising each morning he would slip out of his lair and cautiously urinate near the back of the property. Then with his possessions in hand he would head for downtown. I assumed his daily trek was to fill his belly with free food at the Rescue Mission, that he naturally lived off the scraps of others, the charity of many a "do-gooder", as my father would have called them.

Who knows where he may have come from. Perhaps it was Seattle or maybe

Each day I sat  
captivated,  
watching the new  
tenant toil away at  
his subtle  
construction  
project.

back east. But no matter where his origin, he still resembled most of the numerous unkempt derelicts hanging out on Burnside Avenue. At the time, Portland was a well-known haven for transients and this unseemly fellow looked like he fit right in.

Up to that time, I had never really paid much attention to the sketchy-looking figures shuffling around the Mission waiting for the soup to be served. If I did have to walk through the Burnside area I did so briskly without making eye contact with the lost souls slumped in the doorways. Truthfully I didn't really give them much thought. They just seemed like the normal décor of the bad side of a big city.

But due to my sudden voyeurism, I found myself pondering some deeper

questions about my new associate with the rumpled appearance. For starters, how did this guy ever begin living as he did? Had his love affair with the bottle finally taken its toll? Or perhaps an affair of the heart had knocked this troubadour down. Then again, the reason for his decline may not have been all that juicy of a story. It could simply be that Old Man Grief put his hooks into him and refused to let go. Whatever the case, I assumed it had to be something traumatic that caused his downfall.

In contrast, like most young men I was consumed with thoughts about myself. How was I going to become successful? When would I meet the girl of my dreams? Or if nothing else, which disco could my buddies and I go to on Saturday to strut our stuff? The days were mostly dedicated to the pursuit of advancing my career. I nourished my brain on a stew of business books, biographies and motivational materials. It's safe to say there was a fire growing in my belly and I was determined to fan it into a blaze. And under the direction of author Norman Vincent Peale, I wrote down my goals and always carried them with me. To me there was nothing finer than visualizing how great life was going to be when I had my own little empire some day.

One morning I pulled the goal sheet out of my briefcase and took measurement of my progress. As my gaze drifted out the office window I found myself being pulled back to earth after seeing Mr. Floppy Hat getting rained on. He was curled up under his plastic covered shanty trying his best to stay dry. I began wondering what his goals were. Did he have any? I'm sure there must have been some time in his life when he dreamed of accomplishing great things. After all, most young men do. When he was 25 did he, too, believe a man could accomplish almost anything if he put his mind to it? Or instead, did his stubborn nature and habit of not cooperating prove right the Japanese adage: the nail that sticks up gets hammered. Perhaps life had hammered this rebel into the ground.

If I had been a less self-absorbed person at the time, I would have taken my new imagined friend some food and found out for myself what his story was. After all it wouldn't have taken much effort to extend him a kindness. If I had, it probably would have done us both some good. But instead I did what most of us

# The Portland Upside

positive people, positive stories

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*Continued on page 7*

# Community gardens thriving throughout Portland

By Erika Weisensee  
*The Portland Upside*

In the heart of Southwest Portland is an urban oasis known as Gabriel Park. Sprawling for more than 90 acres, seeing it all requires a lot of time and a good pair of shoes. From walking trails to a skate park, from tennis courts to baseball and soccer fields, Gabriel Park has something for almost everyone.

Arguably the prettiest spot in the park is the Gabriel Park Community Garden, which stretches like a green patchwork quilt across a sunny slope at the park's south end.

Gabriel Park's garden is one of 32 organized by the City of Portland's Community Garden Program. Because Gabriel Park's garden was started in 1975, some of its gardeners have had their plots for 10, 15 and even 20 years. Interest in the program is at an all-time high, according to program manager Leslie Pohl-Kosbau. Twelve hundred people are currently on the waiting list for gardens located throughout the city. Because the community garden program is affordable (\$75

end up giving what they can't use to friends, family members and local food banks. Others do the same, Lee says.

As for the "community" part of the garden, Lee says it's real. The garden has social events and harvest parties. People become friends.

"We give each other pointers all of the time," he says.

Before I left the garden, Lee graciously answered a couple of my questions about growing tomatoes and strawberries. As I walked away, I knew I had visited a special place—a place that grows food, and a whole lot more.

*For more information on The City of Portland's Community Gardens program visit [www.tinyurl.com/pdx-com-gardens](http://www.tinyurl.com/pdx-com-gardens)*

*Erika is a writing mom. She lives in Milwaukie and teaches writing at the University of Portland.*



Photos by Rob & Sara Bedmark

per year for a 20' x 20' plot and \$38 for a 10' x 20' plot), the program is ideal for people of numerous income levels, for families living in apartments, and for seniors who have downsized to apartments or retirement homes. And when you visit Gabriel Park's garden, you realize it is truly a community of many types of people.

When I visited the garden in late May, I was greeted by two retired women sitting near a plot cultivated mostly with cutting flowers. I noticed a mother working in her plot with a small boy. And I saw many people gardening alone. Of course, they weren't really alone. Constant company is one of the many benefits of community gardening.

While looking over the garden's fence, I met Dave Lee. He invited me in for a personal tour. Lee shares a 20' x 20' plot with his wife, Linda, and another couple, Dave, a high-tech writer, and Linda, a massage therapist, live in a condo and don't have enough space or sunlight for a garden at home, he explained.

In their third year at the garden, the Lees have a neatly designed plot producing a healthy assortment of vegetables, herbs, and some fruit. Their plot is so bountiful that they



## Watching a garden grow

**Many arrived here as Mom did,  
 she from Fresno,  
 hands squeezing Oregon  
 rolled up in a magazine.**

**We relished firs and rivers,  
 watching moods of weather flexing colors.  
 Gaping at buildings spouting like dandelions,  
 pink and white basalt pillars,  
 edges of silvery gilt,  
 a few hovering domed cathedrals.**

**If I could,  
 would I flip a switch preventing newcomers?  
 I'd be the greeting party,  
 leading a ticker-tape parade raining rose petals.  
 The city's chosen you like a perfect strawberry.  
 Newcomers are needed to  
 cultivate the diversity of roses,  
 making room for new,  
 majestic things to grow  
 replenishing smiles.**

By Mike Aspros

*Mike Aspros is a native of Portland. He enjoys co-facilitating events within Linnton's environmental group, preserving Forest Park while building a community of forest stewardship, in addition to writing poetry.*

**By Faye Powell**  
*The Portland Upside*

**W**hat's the most fun at the ballpark? Eating stale popcorn and artery-busting hotdogs? Scrambling for a foul ball in the stands? Following the slo-mo action on the field?

No. It's watching the wildly entertaining antics of the mascot and, if you're a kid or a kid-at-heart grown-up like me, there's nothing like scoring a hug from the goofy creature with the big head and serious overbite.

For the Portland Beavers baseball team, this would be Lucky, a.k.a. Trampus Adams, 36. The Beavers, a Triple-A team now affiliated with the San Diego Padres, dates back to 1903 when they were known as the Portland Browns. For a period in the 1940s, as a result of a winning streak, they were dubbed the "Lucky Beavers," hence the mascot's name, Lucky.

Sitting for a chat with Trampus at the Starbucks near PGE Park, I asked him what makes a good mascot.

"You have to love what you're doing," he said, "and you have to think of yourself as an athlete. You must have a passion for it. Just like playing any sport, if you don't love it, you can't do it. If you'd do it whether you got paid for it or not, then you know it's good for you."

This is Trampus's first year with the Beavers. Previously he was the mascot for the Portland Lumberjacks lacrosse team. He obviously relishes it.

With a huge smile breaking across his face, he said, "I love my job. This is the most fun I've ever had. When you're this cuddly Beaver, you're like a rock star in the stadium. On school days, I can't even go into the stands without getting mauled. I actually have to have three body guards around me."

"When you're a kid, you want to be famous, and even though as a mascot, you're not really famous—unless you're the San Diego Chicken—you feel famous here. People will stop whatever they're doing to watch you. If

Lucky's sitting next to you, that's much more exciting than what's going on in the field."

It isn't as easy as it looks. For one thing, it is very demanding on one's body. You can't just jump in the suit and dance around. You

Trampus has developed a repertoire of gestures, much like those of a mime, to communicate with his audience. His job involves getting the crowd riled up, tossing tee shirts and goodies into the stands, and sometimes making fun of the

fourth and fifth fingers together. After he got the job, Trampus learned to write his signature "T" by taping his fingers together.

In addition to enlivening the crowd at games, Trampus visits kids in schools, hospitals and at

whole field full of mascots. Once a year, the Beavers host a Mascot Mania Day where mascots from regional teams, such as the Portland Lumberjacks, Portland Winterhawks, Washington State Cougars and Portland State Vikings, perform at PGE Park. This year's Mascot Mania will be on Saturday, August 15, Lucky's birthday.

Trampus is married and the father of a sixteen-year-old daughter. A native Washingtonian, he graduated from Federal Way High School, where he played football, soccer and hockey. After high school he played semi-professional hockey in the Portland area and dreamed of turning pro, but unfortunately that dream did not materialize. Interestingly, his high school counselor predicted he would either be a sports star or an entertainer.

As a mascot Trampus has found a career that combines both his talents and interests.

Besides being in good physical condition and loving the work, he has the outgoing personality for it.

"Believe it or not," he said, "I'm like that inside or outside the suit. Of course, I get away with messing with people a lot more in the suit; otherwise, I'd probably get arrested."

---

*So, you think being a sports mascot may be your calling? Wanna-be mascots should check out MascotNet at [www.mascot.net](http://www.mascot.net) to find everything you need to know about health and fitness, tryouts, costumes, and much more. There is also a Mascot Hall of Fame for die-hard mascot fans. Check it out at [www.mascothalloffame.com](http://www.mascothalloffame.com).*

*Faye Powell has master's degrees in library science and anthropology and writes both fiction and nonfiction. She may be reached via [phaysee1@gmail.com](mailto:phaysee1@gmail.com).*

## Lucky to be Lucky Life as the Portland Beavers' mascot



Lucky's photo provided by the Portland Beavers, inset photo by Faye Powell

**Portland Beavers' mascot Lucky and his alter ego Trampus Adams (inset) wow the crowds at PGE Park.**

must develop good routines and it takes a lot of stamina to handle the heat. Trampus makes sure to hydrate thoroughly before he puts on the costume and to re-hydrate often during the game. There are also breathing tricks he's learned to prevent passing out, such as taking short breaths and removing the head whenever possible.

Being a mascot is theatre. Since he can't talk with the costume on,

other team, all in the name of good sportsmanship, of course. He circulates throughout the stadium, signs autographs, poses for photographs and keeps spirits lively and joyous.

"It took a lot of practice to be able to sign autographs," he said. "The fingers of the costume are stuck together like this," he demonstrated by holding his index and middle fingers together and his

other public events. For a recent t-ball appearance, he rode from Portland to Beaverton on the back of a Harley.

"It kind of freaked people out, seeing a Beaver riding through the streets on a motorcycle, but hey, 'Keep Portland Weird,' as they say. It was a lot of fun. And I got a lot of air."

Trampus will also participate in an upcoming event involving a

## Local, seasonal delicious

**By Dani Dennenberg**  
*The Portland Upside*

**O**ne of the upsides of the recession is that people are finding a way back to their roots, slowing down, re-examining who and what matters to them, and immersing themselves in the things that bring them joy. In just the last few days, two examples surfaced for me: a newsletter about the burgeoning interest in libraries, and an NPR report about the upsurge in canning and consequent bridging of younger and older generations. Both remind me to keep it simple.

Another conversation—the one about getting back to the simplicity of buying food locally, seasonally, and organically—while it's been around for some time, is now getting the center stage it deserves. Not just a passing trend, sustainable eating is a tremendous opportunity to make a political statement, practice active citizenship and support and strengthen one's local economy. And there's no better time to do it than the summer.

Here in Portland, cooperatives, farmer's markets, and community-supported agriculture (CSA) are teeming with nectarines, blueberries, strawberries, and raspberries.

I spent last summer, my first in Oregon, plucking blackberries from the vine that borders Forest Park behind my house. I also made a memorable trip to Hubbard to pick organic blueberries against the backdrop of Mt. Hood at Schmid Family Farm. I froze the berries and used them in smoothies for weeks.

This year, my vision is to bike to Sweet Home Blues in

Sherwood for more luscious berries.

I'm also fortunate to live in Northwest Portland near Food Front, one of the best cooperatives in town. The co-op makes a point of seeking out high quality foods and merchandise from local, organic, and sustainable producers.

No matter where you live in the Portland metro area, the Pacific Northwest's abundant fertile soil brings life to countless sustainable food choices. The agricultural richness of the Willamette Valley, a result of the infamous Missoula Floods at the end of the last ice age, makes Portland a sustainable eater's mecca.

To find the locations of farmer's markets, CSA's, farm stands and U-pick farms in the Portland metro area visit [www.tinyurl.com/pdx-local-food](http://www.tinyurl.com/pdx-local-food).

If you're searching for a list of seasonal produce, visit [www.tinyurl.com/nwproduce](http://www.tinyurl.com/nwproduce).



**The author picking blueberries at one of the many U-pick farms near Portland**



Photo by Sara Bednark

And if you'd like a suggestion for using some of the lush local bounty try the following recipe:

**Summer Smoothie**  
*Blend the following ingredients and serve:*

- 2 Tbsp of ground flax seed
- 1 scoop of vanilla soy ice cream
- 2 Tbsp peanut or almond butter
- ½ frozen banana
- handful of fresh or frozen berries
- a squeeze of agave nectar

---

*Dani Dennenberg is director of Organizational and Higher Education Partnerships for SNWEL; founder of Seeds for Change, a global ethical issues program for youth; and the first student in the U.S. to graduate with an M.Ed. in Humane Education.*

# Excellent food and a good cause a perfect combination

By Edie Sidle  
The Portland Upside

**W**hat does a restaurant featuring modern Chinese cuisine have in common with a nonprofit organization? People with good intentions and caring hearts. That is exactly why Sungari Pearl partnered with Breast Friends for the month of May.

Sungari Pearl, a sustainable Chinese restaurant in the Pearl District, has a commitment to being a positive business in the community. While in today's business world it's easier just to focus on the bottom line, the people at Sungari Pearl also believe in creating a "harmonious environment for all" and their business practices definitely reflect this commitment.

First of all, Sungari Pearl uses locally-sourced, organic ingredients whenever possible in their food preparation. They feature fresh ingredients such as home-made sauces, wild-caught seafood, cage-free poultry, organic beef and even home-made oils. The idea is

to help customers make healthy and natural food choices.

They also live the commitment to promoting a sustainable lifestyle by recycling all of their oil for bio-diesel, using reusable materials whenever possible, giving out green bags to take-out customers and encouraging customers to use their own bags in exchange for a free soup or appetizer. Even the furniture in Sungari Pearl is made right here in Oregon. Such eco-friendly practices make this caring business green, indeed. Sungari Pearl even goes a step further by caring for their community as well as the environment. The restaurant partners with nonprofit agencies and generously supports local charities even during these economically-challenging times. Specifically, they feature a "Spotlight Charity of the Month" and prepare fresh meals every Monday morning for Loaves and Fishes.

For the month of May, Sungari

supported the nonprofit organization, Breast Friends, through their Thursday Jazz Nights. A modest cover charge from restaurant patrons and a cash donation from Sungari Pearl's staff went to Breast Friends to help fund their valuable programs and services. In addition to the customary pleasant surroundings and wonderful food, customers were entertained with music from two popular groups, Acoustic Minds and The Andre St. James Trio.

Based on the premise that no woman should go through breast cancer alone, Breast Friends was created to provide emotional, spiritual and physical support to breast cancer patients, their families and friends. The nonprofit organization has recently extended these vital services to support women with cervical, uterine, endometrial, and ovarian cancer as well.

Speaking in praise of Sungari Pearl's support, Becky Olson,



Photo by Edie Sidle

**Sungari Pearl gives back by supporting local businesses and charities.**

president and co-founder of Breast Friends, says, "It is not every day, and especially in this economic climate, that businesses are so willing to share their wealth. It does not go unnoticed in the community."

During the month of May Sungari Pearl's customers enjoyed tasty food (the duck salad rolls and tang tang noodles are de-lish!) and good music in a lovely atmosphere while they donated to a worthy cause at the same time. Everyone—the restaurant, the charity, and the customer—ends up win-

ning. What better way to spend an evening?

*Visit Sungari Pearl at 1105 NW Lovejoy Street, Portland, or online at [www.sungaripearl.com](http://www.sungaripearl.com)*

*Find out more about Breast Friends at [www.breastfriends.com](http://www.breastfriends.com)*

*After living in Utah, Alaska, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Colorado, Edie has finally settled down in Portland. As a newcomer to Portland, she is thoroughly enjoying discovering this vibrant city!*

## KBOO

*Continued from page 1*

tinent & the Caribbean. "Jazz in the Afternoon" and "Music from the True Vine" showcase all slices of Americana including jazz, country and folk music. "Mujeres Bravas," "Islamic Point of View" and "Portland Yiddish Hour" offer music and information from Portland's Latino, Islamic and Jewish communities. Other musical programs that challenge the mainstream include "Drinking from Puddles," "Cross-Fade" and "The Melting Pot," present world music from electronica to rock-and-roll and everything in between.

In addition to musical programming, there are daily news and public affairs shows dealing with local as well as international issues. Shows such as "Democracy Now!" and the "Evening News" offer timely news coverage, often address-

ing controversial situations.

One program, "Guess Who's Coming to Radio?" hosted by Jamilah Bourdon, combines relevant public affairs programming with music, all relevant to the Black community. Recently, she spotlighted various Black-owned barbershops in Portland. To complement the interviews, she offered a mix of soulful music.

I had an opportunity to catch up with Jamilah about her show.

Q: What brought you to KBOO and how long have you been here?

A: I moved from NY and wanted to still listen to community radio. I listed to college radio in Bellingham, but that still wasn't full-service community radio. I used to listen to

KBOO while working a graveyard shift. I called into the "Abe and Joe" show but didn't get through. Went to the station and they put me on the air [to make my comment]. I began volunteering and joined as a member during the membership drive in 2005.

Q: Why did you create your show "Guess Who's Coming to Radio?"

A: Everyone told me I should be on the radio. When the Wednesday, 7 to 9 [pm] slot opened up, I started thinking about it. I noticed there wasn't a show for people in their 30s, or anything to represent the "Hip-Hop Generation". There wasn't a show to bridge the generational gap between perspectives and programming, because until then, those perspectives were mostly by older people.

I wanted to create a show to talk about issues. The show that was on Wednesdays from 7 to 9 was all music. I brought in public affairs and [introduced] Tony Muhammad, [a frequent contributor to the show], who is in Florida and an educator of youth. Tony brings perspectives of music and society [from that point-of-view].

Q: What is the format of your show?

A: It's public affairs with music. I wanted to introduce a show "for us, by us"; unapologetic Black radio that was inspired by George Page's show that used to be a Saturday show with two hours of jazz music and an hour of public affairs. I always start my show with music from Stevie Wonder and then bring a variety of music, familiar and non-familiar, that is positive regardless of genre. It is important for people to have space for their voices. [My show's] not monolithic; it's about balance, about celebrating history, but [also] acknowledging our present.

From its youth, cultural and gender-related programming and public affairs to its broad base of volunteer opportunities and community events, KBOO is an Ellis Island for the diverse, voiceless and sometimes segregated communities here in Portland.

*You can find KBOO online at [www.kboofm.org](http://www.kboofm.org), or on the radio at 90.7 FM in Portland, 91.9 FM in Hood River and 100.7 FM in Corvallis.*

*Paula Small is a proud member/listener/volunteer of KBOO. She's also a lifelong learner with a passion for fiction and poetry.*

**Jamilah Bourdon uses her KBOO radio show "Guess Who's Coming to Radio?" to touch Portland's Black community with music and public affairs.**

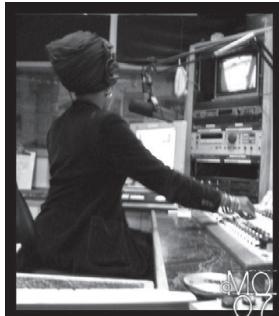


Photo provided by Jamilah Bourdon

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# New country, strange culture, helping hands

## Organization becomes extended family for immigrants

By Nicole Morales  
*The Portland Upside*

We are a world of an estimated 6.8 billion people. 16 million of us have fled our homelands because of civil and ethnic strife. As refugees, we seek to legally resettle our lives in a country that grants us permission. Since 1975, approximately 2.6 million of us have resettled in the United States. And about 1,000 of us arrive annually in Oregon. Fortunately there are organizations that assist in what is often a challenging life transition.

One such organization in Portland, the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO), lends its many hands to help refugees and legal immigrants begin a safe new life in the city. The organization officially formed in the mid 1980s when two local agencies, committed to the betterment of Asian refugees, decided to extend their services to refugees coming from the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Africa. However, its roots go back to 1976. As a nonprofit organization, IRCO has continued to empower their clients to become self-sufficient individuals who contribute to the community through social and professional interactions.

On June 19, IRCO invited the community to learn more about its refugee population in recognition of World Refugee Day 2009, which formally takes place on June 20 every year worldwide. At the event, IRCO shed some positive light on the world refugee dilemma and issues closer to home. Those in attendance learned how IRCO helps its clients transition into city life. Four speakers shared their personal histories and how they are learning to live life in the Portland metropolitan area.

One speaker, Djimet Dogo, is a longtime member of the IRCO community. Because of growing governmental repression in the central African country of Chad, Djimet left his home country and resettled in Portland in 1999. He recounted a humorous but sobering story.

"When I first got here, I tossed out every dime onto the street and kept the pennies whenever I had loose change," he said. "Back home the small [copper] coins are worth more than the silver ones." It was only when Djimet attended classes at IRCO

that he learned that the opposite is true. Djimet is able to smile about his experience, "but so many of us have to start everything from zero."

Today, Djimet works for IRCO's Africa House. He is often one of the first people that recent African refugees meet at the Portland International Airport.

"Large families arrive at the airport with nothing but a plastic bag hanging from their wrists," he remarked. "Stapled to the bag is a photo of their family [to identify them]."

IRCO understands their clients' delicate situations and basic needs. Rowanne Haley, IRCO Manager of Community and Donor Relations, shared that 175 staff members provide services to their clients in their first language—60 languages in all.

"IRCO partners with over 200 organizations to deliver its services, and has worked with over 4,000 employers in the metro area to provide employment to its clients," according to Rowanne.

Through its directory of nine major service areas, IRCO offers a multitude of programs to fit every client. There are services for all ages in areas such as health educa-

**"So many of us have to start everything from zero."**

—Djimet Dogo

tion, work preparation and training, youth mentoring, and English language learning. In addition, IRCO's Asian Family Center and Africa House host specific programs catering to the organization's Asian and African populations.

Africa House, in outer southeast Portland, opened in early 2007. Djimet, the program coordinator, explained that Africa House "is the linkage between the new arriving families and the [existing] community, so we link them with people from their culture, from their country, that speak the same language with them." The center's staff and

volunteers help new families transition from living life in a refugee camp to living life in an urban environment.

"We help them [into] their new country, culture, and way of life, so that families will stay together."

Africa House teaches their clients cultural and financial literacy skills, many of which native citizens take for granted. Practical how-to's—paying one's monthly utility bills or riding the bus—combine with cultural etiquette lessons—how and when to say "excuse me." All need to be taught to African refugees who settle here. These skills are essential if they are to become self-sufficient and contributing members of their community.

Some families need continued support, however. A family may go without electricity for three days because they are unaccustomed to monthly billing cycles or are unfamiliar with the different ways they can pay their bills. But when they seek assistance from Africa House, a call is made to PGE, misunderstandings are clarified, and the bill is paid.

The most rewarding job aspect for Djimet is "when we help a family that is falling apart and we help reconcile husband and wife."

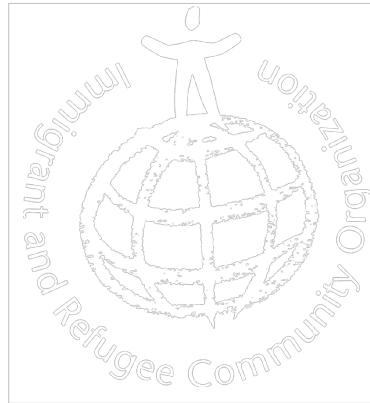
He described the importance of elders during family hardships.

"In Africa we have the whole village intervening to keep the family together—here it's just wife and husband and they don't know where to go for help. We play this role that elders play back home to keep harmony and peace in the household and the community," he emphasized.

The families are grateful and show their appreciation in a number of ways.

"At 8:30 in the morning [I'll] see flowers and cards left by clients at the door saying 'Thank you for helping our family,'" Djimet concluded, "It's a really tough job, but somebody has to do it and I'm so glad to do it to keep people together."

Reward and work satisfaction are also apparent within the organization.



"The thing I enjoy most about working here is the internationalism of the environment—I learn something new almost every day," said Rowanne. "For someone who loves to travel and learn about other cultures, that's a huge bonus for me."

There are a number of ways people can get involved with IRCO, including volunteering, serving on an advisory committee, making monetary and household good donations, and requesting interpretation or translation services for private or commercial purposes.

IRCO does good things for people coming from difficult life circumstances. Every client becomes a self-sufficient contributing member of the community and in return enriches the livelihood of our dynamic city.

*To find out more about IRCO, visit [www.irco.org](http://www.irco.org).*

*Nicole Morales strives to connect people via multicultural education and writing. She teaches ESL at a private university outside of Portland and welcomes your inquiries at [nmorales.writes@gmail.com](mailto:nmorales.writes@gmail.com)*

### The Window

*Continued from page 3*

do when coming across the homeless. I kept my distance, content with my own assumptions about what had caused his dilemma.

The next day I followed my normal routine. I poured myself a cup of brew, and before starting work I glanced out the window and gave my usual mental good morning to Mr. Hat. But as I sipped my coffee and scanned the shanty I saw no inhabitants. The meticulously built nest looked somehow different, like it had been abandoned. I could only surmise that in the night he had hopped a train out of town.

Although I never actually met him, Mr. Floppy Hat's brief stay in the City of Roses had a profound effect on me. His presence opened my mind to be more compassionate towards the homeless and also to take stock of my own life. After all, who was I to look down from my lofty position making judgments about someone who was struggling?

His situation also prompted me to question my own ability to handle real adversity. Up to that point in my life I had never experienced sorrow, nor had my metal been tested by overcoming ma-

jor challenges. If I lost a child someday, faced financial ruin or took a man's life as a soldier, would I be able to snap out of it? I, too, might find myself living a life unthinkable in my optimistic youth, huddling in some unsavory abode, viewing the world through the amber glass of a liquor bottle and just trying to hold on to my sanity.

I prayed that I would never have to find out.

*In 1980 Doug Dixon left what later would be referred to as the Pearl District and migrated to Boise, Idaho. In 1984, he and his wife Michelle started a container plant and ran it successfully until selling it in 2007. During their stewardship of Dixon Container they created a jobs program that gave graduates from the Boise Rescue Mission Rehabilitation Program and recent parolees a second chance. Doug remembers that experience as "one of the most gratifying things I've ever been involved in."*

*Doug Dixon retired after 33 years in the packaging business. He has since turned his hand to writing short stories and is ready to publish his first book, "Tip's From an Entrepreneur".*

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## Students respond to call to service

By CJ Mead  
The Portland Upside

**C**an middle school students really make a difference in their community?

Rowe Middle School's response to this question is most certainly, "Yes we did!"

Seventh and eighth graders from the North Clackamas School District middle school recently heard President Obama's call to service and took it personally. The entire student body participated in a project to serve the greater community and make a difference in the lives of its constituents.

Students chose how they would be involved by selecting an area of focus, either literacy, social justice, school beautification, or environmental stewardship. They served in these areas in several differ-

ent ways. Some assisted elementary school students in one-on-one reading. Others spent the day at Portland Rescue Mission helping the homeless. One group of middle schoolers created a large mosaic for their school entrance, and still others pulled invasive ivy at state parks and recreation areas in several locations in the Portland community.

For many students this was a day of education they will never forget, an opportunity to move outside of the classroom and receive a real life, hands on experience. One student commented, "I didn't know that school could be so fun."

To many people the life of middle school students is one of drama, self indulged adolescence and insecurity. However this day was quite the contrary.

One celebrated, "I have seen

[one particular student] many times at Rowe and have always known he could be great, but he has never acted great. Today when he was with a little kindergartner, he was great. I knew he had it in him."

Students rose to the occasion, taking on tasks and leadership roles that required stepping outside of their comfort zone to make a difference in the community. Helping homeless individuals in downtown Portland can be a daunting task for a student who has never experienced inner-city homelessness.

"Service Learning Day really opened my eyes and showed me how other people live" reported a student.

For others, working hard towards improving the natural and aesthetic environment around them builds a sense of community that will last a lifetime and create active citizens

for years to come.

In this current time of budget crisis, this day proved a reminder of the great achievements that are possible from our schools. Such a creative use of the students' time and school resources proved to be a true act of educational ingenuity, one that educators hope to repeat for years to come at Rowe Middle School.

**School's out, but the echoes of service day still ring in the halls of Rowe Middle School in Milwaukie.**



### Pangaea Project

*Continued from page 1*

October 2003 and obtained 501(c)(3) status in April 2004.

The greatest challenge faced by the two friends in the beginning, according to Deb, was "the fact that we had to take leaps of faith. We had to believe something into reality."

Fortunately, the duo found fellow believers who helped provide a foundation for Pangaea's success. From generous financial supporters to school teachers and administrators nominating their most promising students, there was enough participation to launch the organization's pilot program in 2006.

What started out as a six-student, two-staff journey has today grown to an endeavor involving 50 students over four years.

The curriculum has three phases and involves local as well as overseas programs.

The first phase, World CLASS (Connect, Learn, Act, Serve, Solve) is an introduction to the program's thematic focus, the destination country's language and culture, and team-building activities.

Emphasis is placed on introducing students to "changemakers," inspiring individuals who are making a difference on the grassroots level by working for positive social change in their communities and in the broader world.

World CLASS also gets students out of the classroom and onto the streets of Portland to gain a first-hand understanding of how the issues they're studying apply to communities in the city they call home.

For this year's focus on the global cost of production and consumption, students visited two local nonprofits, Tryon Life Community Farm and Foodworks. There they learned how sustainable solutions to feeding communities are being implemented right here in

the Rose City.

Three months and numerous eye-opening lessons later, the students embark on phase two, International Inspiration. In this phase they travel with their trip leaders to either Ecuador or Thailand to become fully immersed in the country's culture. They live with host families and participate in activities and service projects relating to the program theme.

These "learning journeys," as the Pangaea staff calls them, take students far off the beaten path and introduce them to grassroots leaders solving problems outside the traditional spheres of power and influence.

This summer, the Thailand group will travel to Chang Mai, a traditional indigenous

a model for self-sufficiency.

For Deb, it's most powerful to witness the students, many from difficult backgrounds, working alongside grassroots leaders they can relate to.

"These aren't rock stars they're meeting," says Deb. "They're people who are overcoming obstacles."

And overcoming obstacles is something many of this year's students know well. Some have recently exited gang life or the juvenile justice system; others grew up with drug-addicted parents or in poverty.

What they all have in common, Deb says, "is an incredible resilience, genuine curiosity, and a sense of drive to help people."



Photo provided by The Pangaea Project

**Some of The Pangaea Project's participants for 2009, high school students that have overcome obstacles, come together to take part in an eight-month leadership program.**

farming community which made the switch from conventional to organic agriculture after the pesticides they were using made some community members ill.

Those on the Ecuador trip will visit Yungilla, a 200-family cooperative led by a 21-year-old. The cooperative not only champions sustainable land use but is also recognized as

Indeed, the students' biographical statements reflect these qualities.

Saharla, a straight-A student at Rosemary Anderson High School, joined Pangaea to further explore herself while exploring the world around her. She hopes to pursue journalism in order to write about social justice issues and those around the world working

for social change.

Tony is a recent graduate of the alternative school, Portland Youth Builders. His Cambodian mother survived the Khmer Rouge genocide in which her entire family perished. He made a fresh start for himself after a difficult childhood during which he stole to help feed his family and did time in the juvenile justice system as a result. Tony is now enrolled at Portland Community College, and is "glad to leave the lifestyle I was living." He is discovering through Pangaea that his voice counts and that he can make it heard.

"I have something to say," says Tony with surprise. "People listen to me."

The students complete the program with the third phase, Local Leadership, in which they work with their trip leaders to create a presentation aimed at educating the Portland community and inspiring people to take action. For many of the students, it is the first time they have ever spoken in front of a large audience. Whether presenting to 20 or 200 people, it represents an empowering opportunity to take the lead and make a difference. The experience gained and lessons learned from Pangaea's intensive program stay with graduates long after they move on to other endeavors. Some graduates have gone on to serve on the Multnomah Youth Commission. Others have earned scholarships to continue their international travel and broaden their global awareness.

Chris Craig, a 2007 Pangaea graduate and junior at Portland State University, says of the program, "I have yet to encounter another program that instills so much in the minds and hearts of Portland's youth. It is an opportunity of a lifetime, and one I am thankful for every day."

*For more information about The Pangaea Project, or to get involved as a donor or volunteer, call 503-517-8999, email info@thepangaeaproject.org, or visit www.thepangaeaproject.org*

*Rebecca Robinson is an award-winning freelance writer and editor who lives, works and story-hunts in Portland. Have a story that needs telling? Contact her at rebecca.michelle.robinson@gmail.com*

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## Adoptive mother creates global family

*Adoptions lead to continued connection with Chinese orphanages*

By Nicole Morales  
*The Portland Upside*

**F**or Kathlene Postma, China is a place of beginnings, trust, and love.

In 2001, Kathlene and her husband adopted their first child from the Fuling orphanage, formally the Chongqing Fuling Social Welfare Institute, in southwestern China.

"[Because] we didn't get to go to the orphanage, I became obsessed. Which is probably the best thing that ever happened," Kathlene admits. With the help of a Chinese friend, Kathlene was able to establish a connection with the Fuling orphanage director.

"We got the phone number and called. They were delighted to hear from us." So she asked how she could help support the children who remained at the orphanage. The director was in dire need of incubators. Newborns and preemies were overexposed to cold weather. Hospital visits were becoming too costly. So Kathlene and Julianne Briggs, another mom who adopted a child from Fuling, started a quest to help.

The quest was no easy feat, though. It was hard to get people to donate money because of concern that the funds might not be used for the intended purposes. Communication was difficult. Maintaining a continual dialogue between two people who spoke different languages, lived by different time schedules, and had different expectations of one



Kathlene Postma, co-founder of two non-profits focused on helping Chinese orphanages, gives hugs to one of the babies.

Photo by Amelia Mowery

another challenged Kathlene and Julianne.

"We bumped heads with the orphanage director at first," explains Kathlene, "but she was patient with us, especially once she realized we were not going to stop trying to help."

Eventually Kathlene, along with a team of parents with children adopted from Fuling,

established trust with the orphanage.

"Every time we would do one project [the director] would say, 'You know, I kinda need this other thing,'" such as bedding and medical supplies.

"I remember getting no sleep because we would be up on the phone for hours."

Kathlene and the parent team called people

for donations, called to reassure donors that their donations were being used as promised, and listened to stories about the orphanage and its progress.

Her persistence led to the development of Fuling Kids International (FKI), a parent-run nonprofit association where parents ensure

*Continued on page 7*



Photo by Nancy Hill  
**Through dog training, Project POOCH visionary Joan Dalton (right) teaches youth at MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility skills for a successful future.**

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## Two problems, one solution

*Wildly successful program helps both incarcerated youth and dogs on death row*

By Nancy Hill  
*The Portland Upside*

**F**ifteen years ago visionary Joan Dalton had an idea. As vice principal of MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility, Joan was painfully aware that without a good education, MacLaren's incarcerated youth could not avoid the revolving door of corrections. She also knew that traditional teaching methods were unlikely to benefit the students, many of whom tested significantly beneath their grade level.

During her free time, Joan helped foster animals and began to research the human-animal bond. She began pondering whether there was a way this bond could benefit both the youth at MacLaren and neglected, discarded animals.

"There are definite similarities between these two groups," Joan says. "Our society loves children in theory, but when one has problems, many people think locking them up is the solution.

People abandon or euthanize difficult animals. With both groups, a lot of people seem to prefer abandoning someone exhibiting behavioral problems instead of figuring out how to change the root causes of the behavior."

In 1993, Joan took her first step to linking these two similar populations by approaching MacLaren Superintendent Robert Jester to ask if he'd try a program in which incarcerated youth could adopt dogs scheduled to be euthanized.

The youth would train the dogs, groom them, and find them new homes. She would run the program as a real kennel would be run, which would give the youth a chance to learn valuable job skills as well as math, writing, and other traditional subjects in a non-traditional setting. Additionally, the youth would have a chance to do something good.

*Continued on page 2*

## Tony Fuentes puts heart into business & community

By Nick O'Connor  
*The Portland Upside*

**I**n 2004 while scouring the city for ways to eke further value from our daughter's used clothes, my wife, Shannon, walked into Milagros, "a boutique for little miracles and their mamas." Besides new stuff, Milagros sells clothes on consignment. Shannon became a regular consigner.

The storefront is located on NE 30th Avenue just south of Killingsworth, a business corner known as Fox Chase. Though modest in size, Milagros feels spacious thanks to a high ceiling, good light and a peaceful, welcoming vibe. When I first met owner Tony Fuentes there, I must have been fooled by his flowing hippie locks and self-effacing demeanor. I assumed the store—which he operates with his wife, Jennifer—defines his life.

Soon though, I was seeing Fuentes' name and face all over town—creator of the Portland International Short Short Film Festival (now the 10 or Less Festival); Concordia Neighborhood Association board member; contributor to the blog BikePortland.org; leader of the Keep Colwood Green! Coalition—just for starters.

Fuentes, much like Milagros, radiates a friendly, warm presence. So I was happy when he agreed to an interview. Waiting for me at the Cup and Saucer Cafe across the

*Continued on page 5*

## Stories transform lives at Write Around Portland

*"Everyone has a story to tell. What's yours?"*

By Faye Powell  
The Portland Upside

Diane Tamassia, Matt Flores and Sofi LaReva sit across the conference table from me in the busy downtown office of Write Around Portland. The three are among hundreds of participants who have taken writing workshops with the nonprofit organization.

Diane is a slender woman with long straight brown hair and hands that fly excitedly in all directions as she speaks. In spite of her proclaimed shyness, words tumble rapidly from her when I ask about her experience in the workshops.

"They bring out the best in you," she says. Homeless when she was younger, Diana found her voice through the writing workshop and

now writes for the Sisters of the Road Café newsletter. She also reads her poems occasionally on KBOO Community Radio.

Like Diane, Write Around Portland is committed to the belief that everyone has a story to tell and that individuals and the community alike are enriched when people have the opportunity to write and share their stories.

Since 1999 the organization has facilitated writing workshops at no cost for those affected by HIV/AIDS, survivors of domestic violence, seniors in foster care, people in recovery from addictions and physical or mental disabilities, prisoners, homeless teens, veter-

ans living with PTSD, and many others who might be unable to participate due to lack of income, social isolation or other barriers.

The Write Around Portland model is based on the philosophy that everyone is a writer and that writing skills can grow exponentially when strengths are encouraged with positive feedback rather than criticism and competition. Participants meet for ten weekly two-hour sessions to "free write" in a safe, supportive environment. Various prompts are suggested to get the words flowing, such as a picture, a line of a poem or a sentence fragment.

The results are as varied and



Photo by Faye Powell

Left to Right: Diane Tamassia, Sofi LaReva and Matt Flores are part of the collage of voices at Write Around Portland.

unique as the participants. Matt, known as Haz Matt when he deejayed on the Spud Brothers radio show in Idaho, used a seashell as a metaphor for his journey of life that has involved "hitting the very bottom and, I imagine, some pretty high highs."

Matt is serious and reserved until he begins to talk about his writ-

ing. At age thirty, he had a heart attack that left him with a chronic heart condition and the possibility of Sudden Death Syndrome. For Matt, writing has been an important means of processing the fear and anxiety that he lives with daily.

*Continued on page 6*

### POOCH

*Continued from page 1*

"They'd also experience unconditional love," Joan says. "Many of the youth come from dysfunctional families and, like the dogs the young men would train, they themselves had suffered neglect and abuse. Many of the youth didn't want to get close to anyone, but bonding with a dog would be safe. Through that bond, they could learn to trust again, how to build a relationship."

The superintendent agreed to let Joan try her idea, which she named Project POOCH. She selected one youth and one dog to begin the program. Anthony was solely responsible for feeding, walking, grooming and training Grover.

But when voters passed Measure 11, Grover's solo kennel near the high school had to be moved to make room for tents to house additional juveniles being incarcerated. The superintendent then offered an unused storage space at the far end of MacLaren's campus. With more space in the new location, Joan began adding more youth to work in the program.

"The youth had to apply just like they would for a job," Joan says. She also did background checks to make sure the youth had never harmed an animal and were not likely to do so.

Sixteen years later, POOCH has been wildly successful. A study conducted several years ago found that not one youth in a randomly selected group of 100 POOCH participants has returned to corrections after serving out his sentence.

POOCH is strictly non-profit. While it is located at MacLaren, it receives no state funding and depends on grants and donations to keep going and growing. Fortunately, some major contributors have helped the program thrive. Joan insists that POOCH would not have succeeded without amazing support from the community.

"We have volunteers from all walks of life eager to come and work with both the youth and the dogs," she says. "It's incredible to see how many people want to help. I wish everyone could see how much difference it makes to the youth when they meet people who

treat them with respect, who want to help them succeed. I see young men grow and change every single day. It's an incredible example of how helping and caring for a dog can change lives."

One philanthropist donated \$10,000 to build a small kennel. Another donated enough to add an education center to the kennel. The center boasts six computers, desks, and a place for speakers and vets to come and teach specific aspects of dog training and care, such as massage and health issues affecting different breeds. The education center also gives the youth a chance to learn writing, graphics, layout, basic math and computer

skills, and communication and business skills used to promote POOCH.

Others have donated the time and money to allow the youth to learn building skills by building a four-dog kennel under the guidance of professional contractors. Still others have shown their support by helping with fundraisers like the recent auction at MacTarnahan's Brewing Company that raised over \$45,000.

In addition, numerous vets give discounts and in-kind services to keep POOCH alive. Skilled volunteers help the youth train dogs to pass Canine Good Citizen tests; to learn t-touch, a technique to ac-

tivate the function of the cells; to work with dogs on agility training; and to develop social skills. Even people without dog-related skills love to help; volunteers pick up and deliver dogs, take them on home visits to potential adopters, and tutor students in specific areas, like writing, math, job interviewing, and personal finance.

The program has been so successful that film crews from Japan have documented the program seven times. One Japanese author wrote a book about POOCH that was required reading for all middle school students. Joan has also traveled to Japan, Korea, Scotland, and throughout the United States to help others set up similar or modified programs. POOCH has been featured on *Animal Planet*, and last year Joan was a finalist for *Animal Planet's* hero of the year award.

The youth who have participated in POOCH have their own success stories. Some have gone to trade school or college. Many are holding down living-wage jobs. Some now work with dogs. Joan points out that the participants gain skills far beyond how to work with dogs.

"They learn specific skills for getting and keeping jobs. By interacting with so many people from the community they learn communication skills. They learn how to organize and plan, how to anticipate and problem solve. One of the most important things they learn, I think, is parenting skills. There are many parallels between caring for children and dogs, like patience and unconditional love and consistency. Some of these youth are already fathers, and I know what they learn in POOCH will help them with their children when they're released."

While Joan is quick to praise others for their contributions to POOCH's success, she is perhaps too modest about her own efforts. In the early days, Joan went without a salary and sold her house to keep the program going. She routinely works six days a week and is available to help the participants once they leave MacLaren.

One of her dreams is to build a kennel outside of MacLaren where participants can continue to learn skills as they adjust to life outside of a correctional facility.

"If a youth spends years locked up, they have lost touch with life on the outside. It's not as easy to adapt as people think, and so I'd love to build a program to help with the transition and for mentors to meet with the youth to help them over the rough spots."

Knowing Joan, she'll find a way to make that happen.

**Thanks to Project POOCH, these two groups are helping each other overcome the past as they all get a second chance in life. Here's a sampling from the hundreds of participants over the last 16 years:**

#### The dogs:

*Ginger knew nothing but abuse. Beaten and neglected, she cowered any time anyone came near her, for contact with humans meant nothing but pain.*

*Lougard was found abandoned in the woods, harnessed to a tree with a tow strap. One of his front legs was so severely broken when he came to POOCH he had to have it amputated.*

*Bailey spent most of his young life tied to a tree. As he grew, his collar became too small and grew into his neck. When he was rescued, the collar had to be surgically removed.*

#### The youth:

*Chris lived with an abusive stepfather. At age 9, Chris's mother took Chris and fled, but the damage had already been done. Angry and resentful, Chris acted out, and started getting in trouble with the law by the time he was 13.*

*Andrew (name withheld on request) was born into a family of drug dealers. He was taught the trade from a very young age and expected to participate in the family "business." He was arrested and sentenced as a young teen.*

*Mike (name withheld upon request) was deserted by his father the day he was born. After a childhood and adolescence of neglect, he acted out and ended up incarcerated.*



Photo by Nancy Hill

Nancy Hill is a writer and photographer who believes that when people work together anything is possible.

# A partnership for dignity

*ReFIT, PCC, and the Rebuilding Center help ALS man maintain independence*

By Meryl Lipman  
*The Portland Upside*

**A**LS, or Lou Gehrig's Disease, is a cruel robber. Attacking the nerve cells in its victim's brain stem and spinal cord, it takes one motor function at a time, sometimes over several years, until the person, though fully cognizant, cannot move, eat, speak or even breathe on his own.

As Milwaukie resident Wayne Lauman found out, however, ALS does not have to steal a person's independence of spirit.

As Wayne's illness progressed after his initial 2007 diagnosis, family and friends got together to build a disabled ramp to the entrance of his home. Later as he transitioned from a manual to a motorized wheelchair, he and his wife Kathy realized their home needed further accommodation. But an age-old question stumped them: where to find the money?

The same friends and family who had gathered to build the ramp discovered a Portland non-profit called ReFIT or Remodeling for Independence Together, a 12-year-old organization comprised of construction industry professionals and community members who have made it their mission to help lower-to-middle-income, aging, ill and disabled homeowners remake their homes to fit their changing needs.

A homeowner must apply to become a ReFIT client, a rigorous process that includes presenting income and financial statements. The home must be in Clackamas, Multnomah or Washington County, the homeowner or family member must have limited mobility, and the homeowner must have below 80 percent of the median income. Potential clients cannot be eligible for any other home repair programs, and the modification must produce an important outcome: the person can stay in his or her home.

ReFIT board member Bill Markt of Markt & Company Construction says the program is meant to target those who do not qualify for other social services. "Because they have a home, their net worth is too high, but in reality they would have to sell the home to raise money for the remodel."

Once an application meets ReFIT criteria, a site visit is scheduled, after which the appraiser makes a recommendation to the Board of Directors. When the Board of Directors approves a project, a second site visit is made to develop a construction plan. Finally, a team of project managers and volunteer labor is formed to proceed with the work.

This year ReFIT corralled a whole new cadre of volunteers. Portland Com-

munity College, Rock Creek, boasts one of the states most advanced building construction technology (BCT) programs. In March, PCC's BCT department chair Spencer Hinkle arranged for six students to help ReFIT build a disabled ramp for

valuable career practice, he also hopes to be selected as one of 10 students who will travel with PCC to New Orleans this summer and rebuild a condemned Hurricane Katrina home.

Bill Markt notes that the work experience the students are getting makes this a win-win situation. "It's a great networking environment," he says of the remodel, in which students are supervised by industry professionals. "After the project is done, a dozen people will give these students a reference."

Trudy Jacobs and Angela Christenson, two of the PCC student project managers, scurry around with notebooks, talking with vendors on cell phones, overseeing delivery of a roll-in shower. But they stop when Lauman's friend and neighbor, another man with ALS, stops by on a walk with his dog. The man has a jaunty gait and speaks with some difficulty, but he praises the work being done and his friend, who is too sick to be interviewed.

"Wayne is such a positive presence," says Lauman's neighbor, who chose to remain anonymous. "But his disease is far along." The neighbor is in his 40s, married with children. He describes his own experience with ALS. "I had always lived such an active life. First it was a foot, then a hand. And exercise doesn't help because the muscles aren't getting nourished." He has read about the final stages of the disease, which he describes as "locking in," and, while it terrifies him, he says that in these past couple years, "different things have become important."

"The key is to be independent for as long as possible and maintain your dignity," he says, "which is why this project is so important." As he walks away, slow but resolute, the PCC project managers watch him go. Then someone's phone rings and they're back to work building a bathroom that will help another man maintain his dignity for as long as humanly possible.

For more information visit the following web sites: [www.refitportland.org](http://www.refitportland.org), [www.rebuildingcenter.org](http://www.rebuildingcenter.org) and [www.pcc.edu](http://www.pcc.edu).

Meryl Lipman has a masters in writing from PSU and has worked for Portland Community College since 2003. In her spare time she loves to travel and jump out of airplanes.



**Left to right:** PCC student Kyle Knees, Rebuilding Center representative Gina Rodondi, and PCC student Raymond Chan assist with remodeling project.

Photo by Meryl Lipman

# The Portland Upside

positive people, positive stories

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Join our effort to spread the positive news of Portland.



## I am perched 30 stories above the Portland Chinese Garden looking down at the Willamette as it makes its way towards the Columbia River.

The beautiful arch of the Fremont Bridge and the rusty-orange of the Broadway Bridge spread out before me.

A buzz of conversation fills the air at the Portland City Grill, where a group of us celebrates a friend's birthday.

Suddenly a hush descends. All eyes focus outside on a bird, wings outspread, effortless and graceful, soaring, dipping, and riding the thermals high above the river and the city.

Questions arise that cannot be answered by the group. What kind of bird is it? Is it common or is it rare? Is it a year-round inhabitant of Portland or just visiting? Where does it nest? What does it eat?

We learn from a waiter that the bird is a red-tailed hawk that nests nearby. And yes, red-tailed hawks are very common in Portland. As we leave, I think to myself, "Wouldn't it be nice to be able to identify the birds of Portland just as I can readily identify its important landmarks?"

So when I get home I consult Metro's "Portland Metropolitan Area Bird Checklist," and make myself the following short list of about 25 common year-round birds from the full list of about 200 birds.

And now I'm on my way to appreciating another – smaller – dimension of Portland.



Photo by Seth Reams

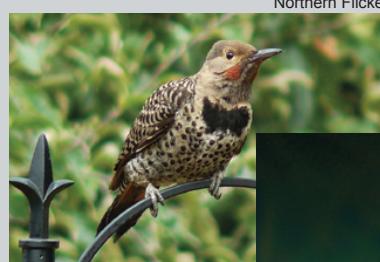
Red-tailed Hawk

By Meenakshi Rao

- American Crow
- American Kestrel
- American Robin
- Black-capped Chickadee
- Brewer's Blackbird
- Bushtit
- Canada Goose
- Chestnut-backed Chickadee
- Downy Woodpecker

- European Starling (introduced)
- Golden-crowned Kinglet
- Great Blue Heron
- House Finch
- House Sparrow (introduced)
- Killdeer
- Mallard
- Northern Flicker

- Red-breasted Nuthatch
- Red-tailed Hawk
- Red-winged Blackbird
- Rock pigeon (introduced)
- Song Sparrow
- Spotted Towhee
- Steller's Jay
- Western Scrub Jay
- White-crowned Sparrow



Photos by Seth Reams



House Finch



American Kestrel



Chestnut-backed Chickadee



Song Sparrow

# A sense of place: falling in love with our local bioregion

**By Dani Dennenberg**  
*The Portland Upside*

Oregon's year-round green, with its abundant coniferous trees, stole my heart a year ago when I contemplated a necessary uprooting from my comfortable life in Southern California. How could it be that the sense of place I discovered in the Pacific Northwest was so immediate? I felt so at home and so at ease.

Having spent 27 years in Palm Springs and San Diego, surrounded by palm trees, creosote, sage, and scrub, I had become accustomed to bone-dry weather and brown landscape, much of it hacked up by highways. I yearned for green. There was a longing; it felt like my very physiology needed the vibrancy that so much green offers. And that's probably why the rain makes me smile. It's a reminder to me of our temperate rainforest region.

In the nine summers that followed my college graduation, I found myself on the coast of Maine. It was there that the seeds for my craving were planted.

My friend Zoe took me out late one night. With flashlights, we knelt down by her family's spring-fed pond and searched for thumbnail sized chorus frogs, known as Spring Peepers. The Spring Peeper is a strong indicator of warmer days to come and we could hear their distinct peeps from the back porch.

Many nights I walked out my bedroom door to the wide expansiveness of her backyard and stood in awe of the pitch blackness of the night sky, the chilled air against my cheeks, the star patterns sprinkled across the open. My breaths were deep and full. I promised myself that I'd find that vivaciousness soon. Little did I know that I would find it on the opposite coast on nearly the same latitude. The

same smell of the crisp night air in Maine would hit me at the base of Forest Park's Lower Macleay Trail, my "backyard."

It was as though I was being reintroduced to myself as a child. My childhood was peppered with hikes and camping outings with my dad.

**"One way to open your eyes is to ask yourself, 'What if I had never seen this before? What if I knew I would never see it again?'"**

Rachel Carson

That sense of wonder I had as a kid had become buried and it wasn't until I spent all of those years in Maine that I realized how much of a city girl I had become.

During my studies in Maine, I remember agonizing over a bioregional quiz. I was embarrassed by how little I knew about the history of my region, the water, the soil, the flora and fauna. As a staunch activist at the time, I dismissed the idea that knowing one's bioregion is a passive form of conservatism. I wondered how knowing all of this information would benefit an ailing planet. Over time, I would come to realize just how precious that wisdom is and how much it would feed my spirit in coming years.

When we acknowledge the mystery of this complex planet we inhabit, that reverence opens the door to respecting our sense of place and taking responsibility for actions that collectively affect our environment.

As environmental pioneer Rachel Carson stated, "One way to open your eyes is to ask yourself, 'What if I had never seen this before? What if I knew I would never see it again?'"

If we could ask ourselves those questions every day, how would the quality of our lives and the well-being of our planet transform?

Here are a few notable organizations in the Portland area working tirelessly to protect our precious bioregion:

The **Northwest Earth Institute** (NWEI) has reached more than 100,000 participants with its unique discussion courses on simple living, food, sustainability, and climate change for small groups. Courses take place in homes, workplaces, centers of faith, universities or any place where people naturally gather. The courses provide an enjoyable, supportive setting in which to examine personal values and habits, engage in stimulating conversation, create meaningful community, and consider ways to take action towards creating a more sustainable future. Anyone can organize a group in their community, with the role of facilitator rotating among group members with each meeting.

One of their seven-session courses, *Discovering a Sense of Place*, focuses on the Pacific Northwest, and is dedicated to knowing and protecting our bioregion. Topics include sense of place, responsibility to place, knowing your bioregion (watershed, soils, climate, plants, animals and history), living in place, mapping your place, and building local community and empowerment (individual and group). Visit the web site at [www.nwei.org](http://www.nwei.org) or call 503-227-2807 for more information.

The **Forest Park Conservancy**'s mission is to enhance Forest Park's value as an irreplaceable asset for wildlife habitat and for the use and enjoyment of the public. Their primary areas of focus include land acquisition, habitat preservation, trail and trailhead projects, and public outreach. Each year, the Forest Park Conservancy hires and trains a full-time seasonal trail crew, the only staffed crew dedicated solely to Forest Park. The crew concentrates on maintaining and rebuilding the 70-plus miles of trails in the park. Contact them through the web site at [www.forestparkconservancy.org](http://www.forestparkconservancy.org) or by calling 503-223-5449.



Photo by Marlene Andreco

farms that cover the valley floor. The majority of Oregon's population—more than 70 percent—lives in the Willamette River watershed. Their strategy focuses on four primary areas: habitat restoration, education, water monitoring, and legislative advocacy. Visit [www.willamette-riverkeeper.org](http://www.willamette-riverkeeper.org) or call 503-223-6418.

**No Oregon Child Left Inside** (NOCLI) (HB#2544), a visionary piece of legislation supported by Freshwater Trust's Healthy Water Institute, addresses the large number of youth disconnected from the natural world. Today, children spend far less time outdoors than their parents did. The legislation will help youth develop the knowledge and skills they need to devise creative solutions to complex natural resource challenges. NOCLI aims to build a framework to support youth reconnecting with local forests, backyard streams, local landowners and nearby rivers, as well as a state environmental literacy plan that will ensure that every student will graduate as an environmentally literate citizen.

With a growing list of more than 80 organizations representing over 90,000 Oregonians, the NOCLI Coalition is comprised of a wide variety of groups—from those concerned about education and the environment to organizations with health and business interests. For more information go to [www.nocli.org](http://www.nocli.org) or call 503-234-3326.

*Dani Dennenberg is director of Organizational and Higher Education Partnerships for NWEI; founder of Seeds for Change, a global ethical issues program for youth; and the first student in the U.S. to graduate with an M.Ed. in Humane Education*

## Tony Fuentes

*Continued from page 1*

street from his shop, he sat ignoring a cup of herbal tea.

I asked how Milagros evolved.

"I was working freelance, doing both film-making and management consulting. Jennifer was being a parent. We had talked about establishing a family-friendly bookstore or coffee shop, but when we became parents our world changed. Our daughter Mila, and now our boy, Gael—they are our living, breathing investment in the future. Thanks to them, the desire to make things better has become genuine to us. Environmentalism, supporting community and building community: those three things define what we do at Milagros."

He connects the dots, pointing out that the shop is small but from the beginning has had a play area and a room adjacent to the sales area set aside for community events and classes where parents and neighbors can connect.

Supporting local artists and selling handmade crafts have been essential aspects of the business because, Fuentes says, "helping people help themselves by creating and selling things locally mattered to us."

In selecting products, Fuentes holds Milagros to high standards.

"Everything is sweatshop-free, environmentally and socially friendly. So people know the products they walk out with are beneficial not only to themselves but to the larger community."

"One of the hardest things on the business

side has been keeping faith that our values and decision-making are important to others. This commitment has meant finding and supporting local suppliers and foregoing hot products when the country of origin or overall environment did not feel comfortable."

Fuentes believes that people want to make right choices and do the right thing, but often are missing necessary information.

"When I explain, 'Here's why we're not carrying X,' I see the light bulb go on."

Fuentes explains how the store has been a springboard for his and Jennifer's political activism. He mentions their projects helping small businesses and families, protecting open space in the Cully neighborhood, and enhancing livability in Concordia.

"It's been exciting and sometimes daunting. People look to us as community leaders, the city asks us to join various initiatives. It's interesting because we didn't walk into this with the goal of being leaders or activists."

In passing, Fuentes references past occupations. He's made films, run a record label and distribution company, worked as a rock climber with Outward Bound as well as been a self-employed guide.

As he sits back sipping tea I wonder how such an apparently laid back person has done so many things and how, given the workload of a job, a business, and a family, he manages to flourish.

As if reading my mind, he says, "On some level, doing all these things has allowed me to build a sense of optimis-

mism and resiliency."

When I ask Fuentes for a take on the economic future, he immediately advocates for the virtues of entrepreneurship and small business.

"In the recent past . . . most jobs created to pull out of downturns were created by firms with five or fewer employees. In Portland, 75 percent of the jobs are in small businesses. Investing in that diversity, rather than investing in a few big winners, promotes

resilience. I want to see political leaders focused on the real value in growing entrepreneurship."

"When you work in a small business you know everyone you work with and what they do, have a broad view of business, and usually have more opportunity to expand your skills and for mentorship. Others have more opportunity to know what you can do. Any one who works at our shop could start their own shop, after working there for a year."

Fuentes is also concerned about education, Portland's high dropout rate and the poverty that adds to it. Not surprisingly he'd like to see a youth entrepreneurship training program that works with local businesses like Milagros, where youth could learn management training and what it takes to run a business.

Business as an arena that brings students into the real world is clearly one of Fuentes' passions, and he has more to say about it. But an hour has passed and he has to leave for his part-time job as a technical writer/consultant at Tri-Met—yet another item on the slate of things he does "on the side."



Photo provided by Tony Fuentes

**Tony Fuentes and son Gael, one of his main inspirations for community activism.**

*Nick O'Connor contributes to Free Fun Guides [[www.freefunguides.com](http://www.freefunguides.com)]. He has rejected the motto "Keeping Weird and Just Doing It In the Rose City That Works."*

## Student artists' dreams become reality

By Ellen Wyoming  
*The Portland Upside*

**J**osh Gonzalez and Josue Ramirez amble their way through the crowds at the Breeze Block Gallery on 19th and East Burnside like they've thrown fundraisers and talked with strangers about their art all their lives.

Josh and Josue are students at Alpha High School in Gresham, Oregon. Josh is mellow and even-keeled. At first glance you'd take him to be serious, almost shy, his voice always acceptable for the hushed tones of an office or a studious classroom.

Josue, on the other hand, is more animated, with an intense gaze, hands gesticulating to emphasize his speech, and words that carry you away on a wave of energy. The two became fast friends when they met. Their bond is art.

Personality contrasts aside, Josh and Josue have more in common than not. Both boys grew up in rougher neighborhoods but had the strong backbone of dedicated families who knew and understood that their sons had talent. Harnessing that talent and taking it to the next level, however, has been a process rife with growing pains.

Josh remembers his first art as scribbling in the church hymnal when he was 3. Small acts of vandalism followed as did writing on things that were not his. Josue found a thrill in manifesting his art on the blank canvas of concrete walls, which also landed him into trouble. Eventually, along separate

paths, they both found mentorship from older artists who recognized their talent and encouraged them to take it off the streets and onto canvas, wood and paper.

Earlier this spring, Josh and Josue heard about a pre-college summer studio art program at the Pa-



Photo by Stephanie Sasse  
**Josh Gonzalez**

cific Northwest College of Art in Portland. Both applied, knowing there was a possibility for scholarships. The program gives high school juniors the opportunity to create compelling portfolios for college applications and scholarships during their senior year as they prepare for post-secondary education.

Josh and Josue submitted portfolios of work they had done outside of school without aid of an art teacher, and both were accepted. They each ranked in the top 25 percent of all national applicants and each received a \$1000 scholarship. However the rest of the program costs were out of their reach.

Due to the economic downturn, additional formal funding sources were unavailable, so the staff at Alpha and PNCA sat down and brainstormed. Geof Garner, who works in the Alternative Pathways program for the Multnomah Education Service District, and is a frequent presence at Alpha High School, suggested they hold a benefit concert. Josh and Josue were eager to pitch in to do their part and immediately spread the word that they were looking for musicians and a venue.

Paige Prendergast is the owner of the Breeze Block Gallery. She has known Josh and Josue for a while. They enjoy hanging out in her gallery to "talk shop." Paige, a strong advocate for their continuing education in art and beyond, immediately agreed to open up her space to the boys when they presented their conundrum.

They came back the next day with a venue, not quite for a concert, but perfect for an art auction and fundraiser.

From there the giving and the momentum behind the cause spread like wildfire. Geof Garner sits on the board of directors for a 501(c)(3) called the Artist Mentorship Program (AMP) with Will Kendall, who started the program. AMP normally works with musicians and provides at-risk and homeless youth the opportunity to build musical skills to express

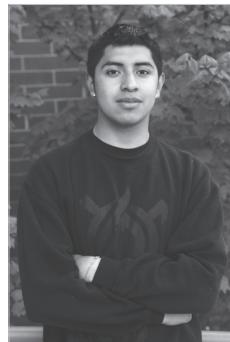


Photo by Stephanie Sasse

**Josue Ramirez**

themselves and gain their goals in the arts. When Geof talked with Will about Josh and Josue's situation, AMP immediately jumped in to help.

Staff at Alpha High School, AMP, and volunteers worked within a tight five-week deadline as they solicited and gathered artwork and donations from around the city. Artists with Portland connections caught wind of the cause and sent in work or donations from Austin, Texas; Jackson, Wyoming; and Washington, D.C. Food and drink donations were solicited from local businesses and given warmly.

At 6 p.m. on Friday, May 22, the doors opened for the art auction and fundraiser. Josh and Josue looked calm and collected. Volunteers were stationed at the entry and at the transaction table. Donated art filled the room and space was at a premium. The collection of work from those who care about the cause showed both the diversity of talent in Portland as well as

the strength of giving.

Over 150 people came and went from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Josh and Josue mingled with many new people as well as family members and friends who came to support them. Josue's parents proudly showed photos of a mural that he was recently commissioned to do for a local barber shop. Josh's mother beamed with pride and said that she always knew her son was talented and would shine.

At the end of the night a strong crowd still lingered, waiting for results of the silent auction to see if their bids would take home a prize. The energy was high and laughter bubbled as a line of smiling faces queued to pay for their items. The entire community had given and gained.

The extended community raised \$5,145. In a final meeting with PNCA on June 2, the momentum carried through and a way was found to alleviate the remaining cost of the program. Josh and Josue succeeded and they carry with them the well-wishes and support of the greater Portland community and givers nation-wide.

To learn more about AMP and PNCA visit [www.amprocks.org](http://www.amprocks.org) and [www.pnca.edu](http://www.pnca.edu)

*Ellen Wyoming is a Jane-of-all-trades and a master of none. She believes in teaching, learning, paying attention, and doing. She loves Portland and gets involved in any way she can.*

### Write Around Portland

*Continued from page 2*

"The workshops are also really good for socialization and increasing self-esteem," Matt says. "When people don't have a lot of resources, they tend to become isolated. Through the workshops you meet a lot of people." Like Diane and Sofi, he lives in subsidized housing where getting to know people isn't always easy.

Write Around Portland is the brainchild of two individuals, Ben Moorad and Liza Halley, who once worked with Outside In, a social service agency for homeless youth. Liza and Ben, a current Write Around Portland board member, believe in the power of writing to transform lives. They conceived of workshops that would reach those in the community who otherwise would not have access. The first volunteer facilitator training sessions were held in Ben's living room ten years ago. From that modest beginning, Write Around Portland now holds 50 workshops a year.

In addition to the ten-week workshops, mini-workshops are held on the third Thursday and one Sunday a month at Hot Lips Pizza in southeast Portland. The workshops are open to anyone who wants to experience writing in community. A \$20 tax-deductible donation is suggested. While reservations are encouraged, drop-ins are also welcome.

Workshop writers engage in the community in two major ways. First, every participant can have his or her work published in an anthology. Over the last ten years, 29 anthologies have been published.

The impact of seeing one's work in print is huge, says Sofi, a workshop participant.

"I always wanted to be published, but I

never thought it would actually happen. It was such a feeling of achievement, a real high. I can't say enough about the experience."

Sofi moved to Portland from Spokane, Washington, a little over a year ago to seek the culture and diversity of a large urban environment. She, too, claims to be shy and says through Write Around Portland she discovered a safe, non-judgmental community in which to write, to experience the creativity of others as well as to discover her own. Having her work published was an exciting validation of her creativity.

Public readings provide a second form of community involvement. Write Around Portland invites writers published in the anthology to read their work at events drawing diverse audiences of up to 300 people. Though it can be scary at first, participants find that reading their work publicly gives them an opportunity to feel seen and known in ways they may not have experienced before.

Executive Director Robyn Steely was a workshop facilitator before accepting her current position. She says the organization is inclusive and helps people deal with many issues, such as trauma, poverty and poor health. The workshops, published anthologies and public readings are all part of simultaneously promoting creative expression and social interaction.

Write Around Portland Development Director Beth White describes the experience of writing in community as life-changing. Various programs support "the potential in every person, and this is true not only for workshop participants. For the community at large, there are tremendous advantages to hearing the stories of those not always heard from. Their stories engender respect and dispel fear of others."

Beth is concerned, however, about the organization's health in an economy where foundations are cutting back subsidies by 20 to 30 percent. She explains that at the moment the program's resources are adequate to maintain its current level of service, but they may have to scale back the number of workshops. Already more people apply than Write Around Portland can accommodate.

Three levels of workshops are offered: entry-level traditional workshops facilitated by trained volunteers; "Write On" workshops in which veteran workshop participants begin self-facilitate; and "Seasoned Writers" groups that meet regularly without an outside facilitator to write in a safe space provided by Write Around Portland. Several "Prompt" workshops are also available on a fee basis for those who can afford to pay, including one this summer at Powell's Books.

Write Around Portland partners with a long list of social service agencies such as Cascade AIDS Project, Veterans Living with PTSD, Central City Concern, and the Youth Employment Institute. Much of Beth's work involves telling potential donors the amazing stories of participants.

"We never talk about our work as therapy, but it is hugely therapeutic," she says. "When you put people together in a room with paper and pen in front of them, magic happens."

*For a schedule of upcoming workshops and events, see [www.writearound.org/events](http://www.writearound.org/events), call 503-796-9224, or visit the office at 917 SW Oak Street, #406.*

*Faye Powell is a retired librarian who has a lifelong engagement with reading and writing.*



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## Filling minds, not landfills

By Erika Weisensee  
*The Portland Upside*

**W**hat do old bottle caps, used tissue paper and out-of-date calendars have in common? They all find new life at SCRAP (School & Community Reuse Action Project). SCRAP was started about a decade ago when two teachers began passing on unused materials to other teachers at A Teacher Space, a resource center for educators in the Portland area.

The idea caught on in a big way, and today SCRAP, located at 2915 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., is an innovative non-profit store offering workshops, summer camps and a brand-new art gallery.

Simply put, SCRAP inspires people to think of new ways to use old things.

The organization is also dedicated to educating people about "reduce, reuse and recycle," what Executive Director Kelley

Carmichael Casey calls the "triumvirate" of sustainability.

"Reuse hasn't gotten enough attention," says Kelley. At SCRAP reuse is front and center.

SCRAP staff and volunteers teach people how to make useful things, even beautiful things, out of items that might otherwise go to landfills. At a values level, SCRAP challenges people to think differently about waste and consumption. The goal is for people to ask themselves, "What do I already have at home that can serve another purpose?"

Stocked with arts and crafts supplies and thousands of reusable items, the store is an ideal, budget-friendly resource for artists, teachers, and families looking for craft projects.

"SCRAP is for everyone," Kelley says enthusiastically.

The store has traditional arts and crafts supplies like paper, paintbrushes, matting, frames, yarn and buttons. Yet it also sells unconventional items such as poker chips, old game pieces, metal doodads, computer parts, and old wire. When put to use creatively, these things find new life in fun projects and one-of-a-kind works of art. For example, SCRAP shoppers have transformed bottle caps into jewelry, robot eyes, and adornments for a menorah.

This sort of creativity combined with do-

nations from community members helped divert 65,000 pounds of materials from local landfills last year.

"We get new donations all the time," says Kelley. "So the store is new and fresh and interesting."

Here's a list of customer favorites sold at SCRAP: memory foam from the aviation industry, old logo travel coffee mugs, upholstery samples, duct tape, handmade Nepalese paper, cardboard tubes, X-rays, multi-colored drill-bit spacers, buttons, feathers, lenses of any kind, vintage ephemera, National Geographic magazines and slides. By making a tax-deductible, in-kind donation to SCRAP, people receive the satisfaction of keeping usable items out of landfills while providing creative materials to the community.

Right next to the store, a workspace encourages people to do projects on-site.

"You can pick out your materials, do your project, and then only pay for what you've used," explains Kelley. With scissors, adhesives and glue guns, glitter, plenty of room, and a sink for cleaning up, it may even be more convenient than doing the project at home.

SCRAP's new RE:Vision Gallery, located in space just off the store, is another source of inspiration for casual crafters, artists and art lovers, and anyone concerned about the environment. All art displayed at RE:Vision

must include at least 75% reused materials.

"SCRAP both provides the materials and shows the art," explains Volunteer Resources Manager and Arts Program Coordinator Bethany Moore. "The idea behind the gallery is to show people that SCRAP materials can be used for fine art."

The gallery opened May 9th with "New Beginnings," a collection of reuse art featuring creations by 11 local artists. The diverse show included a paper bird sculpture made out of old maps, reused photography framed in an antique window, and various pieces composed of things like broken doll parts, rulers, old books, reclaimed wood, metal and wire. Beginning June 5th, the United Plastic Quilt Project exhibition by the Leave No Plastic Behind organization will fill the space.

SCRAP is open Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., Thursday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. SCRAP is closed on Monday and Tuesday. This summer the organization is offering four separate weeks of summer day camps for children ages 6 to 12.

For more information, visit [www.srapaction.org](http://www.srapaction.org).

Erika Weisensee is a writing mom. She lives in Milwaukee and teaches writing at the University of Portland.

### Orphanages

*Continued from page 1*

children still at the orphanage receive proper health care and have their social needs met through a handful of programs.

One such program is called First Hugs. Trained caregivers, "aunties," hold, guide and nurture infants and toddlers as they learn to explore their surroundings.

"Babies need movement, light and touch," says Kathlene, and this program allows every single child, from birth to age 2, to receive basic but essential mental and physical stimulation.

Kathlene's commitment to the welfare of the children and the orphanage is about responsibility.

"These are the people who took care of my children and these are the children who [are still waiting to be adopted]."

She pauses, "You walk out with your child and think any one of those children could have been matched to me – I owe it to

any one of those children."

Three years later in 2004, Kathlene's family of three became four when they adopted their second daughter, this time, from the Zhanjiang Social Welfare Institute, in the GuangDong Province in southern China. Kathlene says that although the Zhanjiang orphanage was more established than Fuling, there were still children's needs that were not being met.

"There were a lot of families with children adopted from Zhanjiang who wanted to give in a meaningful way." Yet at that time, there was no way for families to help the orphanage and to remain connected with the children there.

So it took double the persistence, continual support from a handful of Chinese agencies and a bit of luck for the Zhanjiang orphanage to finally agree to accept help from Kathlene and the other parents.

"Once you get in and you build that trust, it can really move," Kathlene says. And in 2006, Zhanjiang Kids Organization (ZKO) was created.

"Our organizations focus on two things simultaneously: helping the children at the orphanage and helping the kids adopted from that orphanage feel a connection and be a part of giving back," explains Kathlene.

ZKO supports and fosters a connection between these children through its Caring Kids program. Children from Zhanjiang can choose to sponsor a child still in care at the orphanage. Youth sponsors help a child attend and excel in school

in Zhanjiang for as little as \$60.00 a semester or \$100.00 for a year. In return, the youth sponsors receive updates such as drawings and letters from their "sisters" and "brothers" at the orphanage.

Kathlene's involvement with the Fuling and Zhanjiang orphanages includes regular visits to China. She will soon return to the Fuling orphanage for the fourth time in two years. Kathlene has brought together a team of occupational and physical therapists from Pacific University Oregon.

During a week-long stay at the Fuling orphanage, the team will share the latest methods for helping children with special needs, as well as create individualized care plans for about fifteen children. The therapists hope their visit will be the first of many.

"I think they're going to get really hooked," Kathlene says optimistically.

Here at home, Kathlene is Associate Professor of English at Pacific University Oregon. Outside of her teaching and family responsibilities, she is Chair of FKI, and the webmaster for ZKO. Although membership is only permitted to families who have adopted from Fuling or Zhanjiang, visitors to either website can sign up to receive a newsletter with updates and project successes.

Kathlene smiles, "I would like people to know that I am just so elated to be able to do [this] and I am one very lucky person to have gotten the access I did to those kids." Her unsurpassed involvement and commitment to her daughters' orphanages expresses her optimism about humanity.

"You see such hopeful, amazing things that affirm your belief that people are basically good. I like to think that people can imagine

ine something really great that is of the heart and figure out how to make it happen for other people."

Kathlene made it happen for her family through adoption and she helps make it happen for children who have yet to be adopted in China.

For further information or to lend your support to Fuling Kids International and Zhanjiang Kids Organization, visit [www.fulingkids.org](http://www.fulingkids.org) and [www.zhanjiangkids.org](http://www.zhanjiangkids.org). Specific donations and aid inquiries may be addressed to Kathlene at [kathlene@fulingkids.org](mailto:kathlene@fulingkids.org)

Nicole Morales strives to connect people via multicultural education and writing. She teaches ESL at a private university outside of Portland and welcomes your inquiries at [nmorales.writes@gmail.com](mailto:nmorales.writes@gmail.com)



Babies at the Fuling orphanage in China benefit from the affection of an "auntie" in the First Hugs program.

Photo by Amelia Mowery

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## Local store helps environment and thrives economically

By Amanda Grier  
*The Portland Upside*

**N**othing says Portland better than "reduce, reuse and recycle." And nobody knows better than Chris Gauger, owner of "Here We Go Again," a women's consignment store she started 17 years ago. During a lunch meeting, Chris has much to share about the role of running a local business, the importance of good customer service and the fun of letting go of the day-to-day stuff in order to create new cross-promotional ideas.

Chris hails from Lincoln, Nebraska where her mother and sister run a consignment store called "One More Time." She came to Portland with her husband after earning a master's degree in dance. In 1992 she opened her first consignment store on Barbur Blvd. in Southwest Portland. Chris has since changed her southwest location to the popular and walkable John's Landing and she has opened a second store in the hip neighborhood of Northeast Broadway.

Chris can claim success at a time in which, as she puts it, "economizing is cool again." Other than being cool, it is also practical. She asserts that women go through their clothing more rapidly than men because we are expected to be fashionable and to wear new things more frequently. But men need not worry, they can shop in a neighboring men's consignment store across the street from her Broadway location. Her concept is great because it focuses solely on women and is tailored to fit their busy lifestyles. While shopping, the busy mom can recycle her old batteries during the Earth Day battery drive. The working woman can stop by for after-work shopping hours, usually offering further discounts and complimentary snacks. And the anytime shopper, hoping to find the perfect outfit, can get great fashion advice and kind customer service that will leave her exuding confidence.

Chris, raised to value volunteering, emphasizes friendly customer service. She believes in exceeding customers' expectations at her stores. At special events she is often likely to combine both this quality of charity and business. This winter she held the SOUP-ER Bowl, to support the Oregon Food Bank by collecting soup cans during the Super Bowl. Next she is looking to start a neighborhood drive for those hard-to-get-rid-of and where-do-you-take-them-anyway styrofoam blocks from appliance packaging. And finally, her standard practice with clothing that does not make it to resale is to take it to the emergency food/clothing pantry on Hawthorne

called Fish Emergency Service.

During our brief lunch date Chris continues to cycle through many more fresh ideas she has for making her business more green and more local. She wants to get locally recycled paper bags with handles not only to encourage reusing but in order to "complete the circle." We agree that this is the fun part; by letting her staff take more ownership of the day-to-day operations of the stores she frees up some time for creative thinking.

### "Reuse" is in style



Photo by Amanda Grier  
**Chris Gauger, owner of Here We Go Again women's consignment shop, dresses her store and her community.**

Chris regards networking in the community as important and doesn't think that women do this enough. She enjoys mentoring women, including her staff, who typically work for her for three to seven years. She also enjoys supporting locally owned establishments, and is active in her local business associations. Clearly she is tapping into the heart of what it means to be a Portlander.

As our conversation comes to an end, Chris lets me know of a few hundred new consignments she needs to get ready for the weekend. So if you want to pick up a green habit or two, stop into "Here We Go Again Consignment and Resale" to experience just what Chris has to offer. And if you want to simplify your life, bring in a bag of clothes in good condition for resale.

You never know what you might find.

*You can stop by the Here We Go Again Consignment and Resale stores at either 0511 SW Carolina Street Portland, OR 97239 or 2438 NE Broadway Avenue, Portland, OR 97232. Or visit the web site at [www.hwgga.com](http://www.hwgga.com).*

*Amanda Grier is a Footwear Distributor/Kid's Footwear Buyer for Adidas, and loves to write, read and learn about the community and Portland.*

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## Free: bike repair classes

By Edie Sidle  
*The Portland Upside*

**J**ason Bietz of River City Bicycles firmly believes that if you have a basic understanding of your bike and how to fix and maintain it, chances are you will venture out to more remote, beautiful surroundings. Not only will you feel more confident with your bike, you will enjoy your biking experience more. And that is exactly why he offers training on how to work on your bike.

Jason offers you freedom, independence and more options—things every one of us values immensely. After all, what are you going to do when you are out enjoying a beautiful sunny day on your bike (ah, the glorious Portland summers...) and you suddenly get a flat? Or you've talked yourself into doing a bike race and unexpectedly, miles into the race, something goes wrong with your bike—groan!

Once a week Jason teaches bicyclists the basics – how to repair flats, clean and lubricate a bike, do basic adjustments, and how to work on the brakes and derailleur. He even offers some riding tips and shifting techniques. The classes last from 45 minutes to an hour and the groups range in size from a few to 15 or so. The participants are a mix of people—young, old, male, female—but they all come with one goal: to become more comfortable and competent with their bikes. The best part is that River City Bicycles offers it free of charge, a wonderful service to the community.

Few class participants know that Jason not only knows his stuff, he is an expert on the subject. While he was working for Cyclesport in Ashland, Oregon, Jason had the opportunity to go to United Bicycle Institute (UBI). UBI is one of only two technical schools that offers professional-level training on bicycles. The institute offers information in lecture format, as well as hands-on expe-

rience. Advanced subjects, such as frame building, are also available for those who are seeking special skills and knowledge.

After training at UBI, Jason joined River City Bicycles. He took over and expanded the popular training classes.

River City Bicycles is well known for supporting the cycling community. In addition to the maintenance classes, they routinely offer free technical support at cycling events as a way of supporting customers and cyclists in general. This is a valuable service to the cyclists, particularly since cycling is rarely 100 percent problem-free. So if you ever talk yourself into that bike race only to find things going amuck, it might be the River City Bicycles folks who put you back on track, allowing you to finish the race.

Sponsoring many teams over the years, River City Bicycles and Jason Bietz have bought into the heart-and-soul of Portland's competitive cycling community in a big way! Their enthusiasm and generosity contribute to Portland's reputation as one of the most bicycle-friendly places in the United States. As they say on their website: "Cycle Nirvana Awaits."

*To find out more about the free bicycle classes at River City Bicycles, visit them online at [www.rivercitybicycles.com](http://www.rivercitybicycles.com)*

*After living in Utah, Alaska, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Colorado, Edie has finally settled down in Portland. As a newcomer to Portland, she is thoroughly enjoying discovering this vibrant city!*

Photo by Jason Bietz



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May 2009

Free

# Joblessness spurs quest to help others

*Portland pair forms an army of unemployed workers eager to help*

By Ashlee Sprugel  
*The Portland Upside*

We've Got Time to Help is a small but growing organization with the goal of helping people in Portland and the surrounding area. As their blog states, "We are a group of people that have found some extra time on our hands. Most of us have been laid off and are having a tough time finding a job in this awful economy. We are using a small portion of that time to make our entire community a better place."

Portland natives Seth Reams and Michelle King created We've Got Time to Help after Seth was laid off from his job in December. Seth found our firsthand about the struggling economy as his search for work lasted longer than he had initially anticipated.

Michelle became aware of Seth's demeanor changing and depression creeping in during that time. She could see that he was personalizing not being able to get a job, so she suggested to Seth that he get out of the house and volunteer for a few hours. And, getting out and volunteering actually helped Seth feel better. He posted a couple of listings on craigslist.org and realized that there were other people in the same situation—people who wanted to help but didn't know where to go.

From this experience, Seth and Michelle got the idea to create a blog as a way of connecting volunteers and those who needed



Photo by Peter Chee



Photo by Seth Reams



Photo by Seth Reams



Photo by Pete Chee

**Seth Reams (left), co-founder of We've Got Time to Help, and other volunteers work on several of the many projects completed since the organization formed three months ago.**

their help. With this goal in mind, all they had to do was find people who needed their help.

Once again Seth turned to craigslist, hoping to find projects for the newly-formed group. They started the blog the end of January and on February 1 posted their first We've Got Time to Help ad on craigslist.

The responses they got were overwhelm-

ing. People from all different walks of life responded by saying, "I want to help." Those who responded included unemployed people who were in the same boat as Seth, high school students, those who are lucky enough to have a job (like Michelle), and business owners who said, "I have materials and time—let me know how I can help."

As Seth expected, there were also plen-

ty of projects people needed help with or things to fix. For example, somebody with a leaky pipe might not have the money right now to hire a plumber or they may not have the knowledge, skill, or ability to fix it themselves. We've Got Time to Help would provide the help to resolve the leaky pipe before the problem becomes a crisis situa-

*Continued on page 6*

## Piano Santa Foundation gives the gift of music all year long

By Nancy Hill  
*The Portland Upside*

Ten-year-old Tram arrived in the United States from Vietnam with a Yamaha keyboard prize under her belt, but her family could not buy a piano to foster her talent. Patrick, at 16, had never seriously played the piano, but once he started, talent flowed through his fingers. Unfortunately his single-parent household could not bear the cost of a piano equal to his abilities. Steve had been playing the piano for six years and had won many competitions, but his piano was holding him back. It simply couldn't keep up with his ability.

With the help of the Piano Santa Foundation (PSF), a Portland non-profit organization whose mission is enriching life through music, all these promising musicians earned an opportunity to fully realize their potential.

PSF founder Mark Mention has nothing but admiration for the talented musicians to whom his organization has awarded pianos through its scholarship program. As a child and youth, he, too, played the piano. He even studied it in college until, he says, he realized he would never be good enough to play professionally. But that didn't keep him from his love of the instrument. He merely changed gears and went to The North Bennet School in Boston, Massachusetts, to learn to tune and restore pianos.

"It was a perfect fit for my interests. I love music and woodworking, and this gave me a chance to do



Photo by Nancy Hill

**Piano Santa founder Mark Mention tunes one of his fleet of loaner pianos.**

both."

Mark might have been satisfied there, but in 1992, when Portland schools were cutting music programs, he feared the community was losing its music. As he wondered how he could help keep music alive, a client called to say she wanted to donate her piano to a child who couldn't afford one but who wanted

## Warriors for peace

*Oregonians keep hope alive to create U.S. Department of Peace*

By Faye Powell  
*The Portland Upside*

If you could design a culture of peace, what would it look like? Imagine, if you can, a world in which principles of peacemaking are the norm for resolving disputes in the home, school and community; where domestic and child abuse rarely occur; where gang members and prison inmates resolve feuds with words instead of weapons; where tolerance and respect for differences replace religious and sectarian enmity; and where war is the last resort for settling international conflicts.

But in a world where violence in every sphere of life is endemic, is a culture of peace only a wildly utopian ideal? Is it only the audacious, naive fantasy of a few John Lennon-esque-dreamers? Or is it an idea whose time has come? Robert Kennedy once said, "There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why? I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?"

*Continued on page 2*

*Continued on page 5*

## Food, learning and cultural exchange bind families

*Helping immigrant family learn English leads to lasting friendship*

By Nicole Morales  
*The Portland Upside*

**C**hicken feet!" Sara Bedmark laughs as she recalls sharing a meal with the Oun family at a restaurant in Chinatown, Portland. "Of course I tried them, we hadn't known each other very long and I didn't want to be rude." Bophar Sie gestures with a down-faced palm scurrying through the air. Sara winces. We all laugh sitting around a small coffee table in the Oun's living room. It's been two years since the Ouns and Bedmarks last saw each other, though their smiles make it feel like it was just yesterday.

I met with the Oun and Bedmark families at a drippy Sunday afternoon in Cornelius to talk about how they met 12 years ago. At that time Rob and Sara Bedmark, founders of The Portland Upside, were looking for a way to get involved in their new local community after moving from Minnesota to Portland. Nearby, Phallon Oun was in search of an English conversation partner. He and his wife, Bophar Sie, had just emigrated from Phnom Penh, Cambodia, with their two children, Thyda, 9, and Seiha, 7.

"Everything was new," Phallon says. Although he was financially able to support his family in Cambodia's capital, the civil unrest and societal instability were too much to bear—it was safer in the United States. Phallon left behind a reputable job, a familiar lifestyle, loved ones, and a language when he and his wife made the decision to immigrate to the United States.

"I spoke no English," recalls



**Left to Right: Phallon Oun, Rob Bedmark, Sara Bedmark, Thyda Oun, Seiha Oun, and Bophar Sie reminisce in the Oun family's Cornelius home.**

Photo by Nicole Morales

Phallon. That was up until he met Rob through the Oregon Literacy Council, a program that then matched up volunteer native English speakers with individuals in need of English as a Second Language (ESL) services. Phallon wanted ESL lessons for himself and his family.

"He asked me right away if I could help his family, too," Rob says. "That's when I asked Sara to help." What was supposed to be a once a week volunteer opportunity for Rob quickly evolved into a full-fledged family affair.

Soon enough Rob and Sara offered to pick up Phallon, Bophar, Thyda, and Seiha for the ESL sessions. When the lessons were finished, Rob and Sara would take the Ouns back home. "We didn't have a car," Phallon says.

Yet it wasn't all work and no play. Thyda chimes in, "We went to the zoo! And the Rose Parade."

Sara adds, "We also took a day trip to Vancouver, B.C."

Bophar gives a thankful smile when Sara talks about the time they all went to a supermarket to learn the English names of different foods.

The Ouns relied on Rob and Sara a lot. In addition to ESL sessions and day trips, Rob and Sara were also available when one of the Ouns had an English question or needed help to fill out school, health, or employer related forms.

It wasn't all one-sided. "They fed us," Sara says, emphasizing, "All the time."

Rob and Sara had full stomachs and, undoubtedly, a complete

*Continued on page 6*

## Destiny made me do it

*Paratransit driver lovingly shuttles the developmentally disabled*

By Todd Telford  
*The Portland Upside*

**D**riving a paratransit van is rarely a job that one aspires to. For me, it's a job I fell into, then looked back at the hidden wisdom leading me there. Like many, I didn't see it coming.

My path started with doing outside sales in the insurance field,

reer, such as driving and working with seniors. I then subtracted the pressure of sales and came up with paratransit driving.

Scouring around the Portland metro area in a 13-passenger van designed to transport the physically and developmentally disabled turned out to be much more than I imagined. There are people who've spent much or all of their lives in wheelchairs and were near shut-ins because of that status. Now services like ours give them back their friends, the city, the thrill of shopping and being a part of everything. You can see it in their eyes when you secure their chairs. They are so thankful. I nat-

I told myself that I might want to do civil service and volunteering someday if I had the time. Well it is the time, and now that I'm in this deep, it's hard to fathom doing anything else. For me, working with the developmentally disabled is an unexpected treasure.

I start every work day in the early afternoon picking up a boisterous group from their work site and taking them to their individual group homes throughout western Washington County. Their functional ages are from three to about 12. Some have Down syndrome and many have speech impediments. Yet it's hard to fathom just how much fun we have every day.

**"Yet it's hard to fathom just how much fun we have every day."**

working a corridor encompassing the top 30 miles of the state from the Willamette River to The Dalles. I wasn't making enough money to survive, but there were parts of the job I enjoyed. I liked driving around, constantly reminded of the beauty of the land. And I got a kick from visiting little old ladies in rural lands, although it was my job to always leave their homes with a check in my hand.

I fell into sales, an offshoot of starting out in a family business, and I thought I was pretty good at it. But cold-calling and the inherent baiting average that would send anybody to the minors jarred my ego. With so little wind in my "sales," I found myself looking for my next vocation. I analyzed the parts I liked about my previous ca-

urally defer the credit to those who started programs like these over two decade ago, but I don't mind basking in their adoration anyway.

Coming in, I was a little afraid that I'd see equal amounts of despair and joy, with many people lamenting their lot in life and the futility of limbs that will never move again of their own accord.

But despair is almost completely absent from my job. Of course, not everyone is upbeat, and I do encounter behaviors that don't reflect the best intentions. But nearly everyone is happy to see me. These clients are thankful for the service, and they engage me as a worthy human rather than a laborer attending to them.

Like many folks stampeding through the core years of their life,

I liken it to being an activities director sitting around the campfire with his group on the fifth night of a three-week summer camp.

The jubilation, the anticipation, the comradeship, the teasing are all there. I participate with my riders in a complete willingness to be goofy.

We make funny noises. We sing to the radio. Occasionally we have burping wars. There's the young woman who puts her shoe on the bar adjacent to the lift so that before I deploy it I might spend a moment squeezing her big toe. There's the guy I always let steal my hat. He's also the one who sings Christmas carols any time of the year when he's happy. There's the one who lives to be teased so

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### Piano Santa

*Continued from page 1*

to play. He decided to help her out and thought Christmas would be the ideal time to give the piano away.

Mark called the Music Teachers Association and asked for names of likely candidates.

"I put all the names together and then pulled one out of the hat. The piano went to a little girl that first year, and I just knew this was something I had to continue."

Friends were interested in this endeavor as well, and with their encouragement and support, Mark created a board of directors. Three years later PSF received 501(c)(3) status.

"We realized pretty quickly that if we only gave away one piano a year, we wouldn't make huge headway. I'd also figured out by then that giving a piano away might not be ideal. Children change their mind about things, and a piano is a big commitment."

Mark and his board decided that rather than give pianos as gifts, they would give children scholarships to borrow a piano for up to three years. "This gives their parents time to save money if their child stays interested," Mark says.

In addition to providing the piano, PSF can also help scholarship recipients find resources for discounted piano lessons. Students may borrow music from PSF's music library rather than pay the high cost of sheet music, and the scholarship program connects students with a sponsor and arranges for them to work with a mentor involved in the music community.

The mentorship and sponsorship programs help the students, some of whom are as young as 10, keep their commitment to the scholarship.

The scholarship application is simple. Students and parents write letters saying why the student wants a piano. Students have to personally commit to a year's worth of practice and learning, and they have to fill out mentor reports. During the year, PSF requires each student to fill out monthly practice sheets as well. The students also perform at four annual piano recitals.

Students can apply for three different kinds of scholarships. The first, the Standard Scholarship, is non-competitive. Those awarded this scholarship receive a regular piano for a year and can reapply for up to three years. The students need to be from an economically challenged family.

The second type, the Stepping Stone Scholarship, is competitive, and the winner receives a grand piano for two years. Only PSF students can apply. Again, the students are from families whose economic background would not otherwise be able to support a grand piano and the level of study PSF provides.

The third scholarship, the annual Grand Scholarship, is open to the public. While income is a factor, there is no maximum income attached. PSF awards a grand piano for two years to whichever student will most benefit from it.

Mark believes that in addition to learning about music, PSF students also learn valuable life skills. For instance by applying for the program, students learn from a young age how scholarships work.

Says Mark, "The students see they are key to any scholarship they apply for. It's very empowering." One student, an Ethiopian girl, went on to earn a scholarship to a private high school and from there received a college scholarship.

Also, "The piano teachers all teach self-discipline," Mark points out. "The kids learn that nobody can buy good musical skills. Everyone has to earn them. They also learn that by applying themselves and practicing, they can do a lot more than they ever thought they could."

In general, the students are highly appreciative of the opportunity PSF provides. Says Steve Lam, a recent Grand Scholarship winner, "I had come to a point in my playing where my piano didn't have the dynamics I needed. It was a great beginner's piano, but some aspects of it limited my playing and creativity."

In addition to providing young students with an opportunity to realize their potential, PSF also grants piano placements to organizations that use music as a way to benefit the community through music therapy or vocational rehabilitation.

PSF was run entirely by volunteers up until a few years ago when it hired a half-time executive director. Mark says, "I thought if parents knew volunteers were willing to help their children learn music instead of going to the beach or going skiing, it said a lot about the value of their child."

Mark is always looking for ways to fulfill PSF's mission. "We currently have a fleet of 35 pianos," Mark says, "and we want to make sure they are all in circulation.

We also want to start doing more community outreach and expanding beyond classical music." With the recent addition of Executive Director Sandra Phadke, PSF has been able to expand its scholarship and grant programs as well as its new after-school teaching program.

Mark has a strong philosophical bent and yet he is humble about his dedication and PSF's success. "I think what people are looking for in life, whether they know it or not, is fulfillment. It comes down to asking, 'What is it that makes you feel good as a human?' I think the answer might be as simple as taking the gifts or skills you've been given and using them in a way that helps others. Music is what I can share. I'm not the Piano Santa," he says. "We're a foundation. There are many of us working together to make this happen."

*Students and families interested in scholarships should visit the Piano Santa website at [www.piносanta.org](http://www.piносanta.org). Applications for this year's Grand Scholarship are due May 15, 2009. Other scholarships are open year round. People interested in volunteering or making donations can reach the PSF office at 503-245-6269.*

*Nancy Hill is a writer and photographer who believes that when people work together anything is possible.*

## More using Meetup site to leave the Web behind

*Portlanders flock to social networking site to build real community*

By Monica Rodriguez  
*The Portland Upside*

**M**eeting friends in elementary school wasn't so hard, right? "Can I borrow your crayon?" "Wanna be best friends?" The two questions seemed to go hand in hand.

But as we get older, it often gets a little harder to make and keep friends. Blame it on best friends moving to Wichita or college buddies holding onto cool jobs teaching English in Japan. Sooner or later, most of us find ourselves a little hard pressed to find companions for knitting snazzy sweater sets or sharing a beer during happy hour.

Thanks to the Internet, it's not so hard to keep in touch with Midwestern friends and old classmates lost in translation. Unfortunately, though, your grandma is right: this text-messaging, online-chatting, voice-mailing culture of ours seems to leave many of us feeling disconnected and even a little lonely.

Luckily, the staff at Meetup ([www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com)) is doing their best to undo the wear and tear of modern living. Founded in 2002, the New York based company is a spin on other online approaches to meeting and greeting. Its objective is simple: "To revitalize local community and help people around the world self-organize." Meetup wants people to meet face to face, not just in a chat room, and it provides the tools to help us all do just that.

Jackie Swift, organizer for Young Portland Women Meeting for Friendship, attests that Meetup meets its mission. "My favorite thing about Meetup is how the Internet is able to connect people and help them form real-life and in-person friendships. People that would otherwise have never met meet over a shared passion or at least a good meal," Jackie says.

### How it works

Meetup works because it is so darn simple. At [meetup.com](http://meetup.com) you can look for groups based on location and interest. Are you into Dungeons and Dragons? Awesome! Do you have a bassinet and want to find a dog walking compadre? Cool! Just create a quick profile and join the group. Some groups charge small fees to cover the nominal subscription fees charged to Meetup organizers, but most are free.

After that, you can pretty much just sit and wait. Meetup is smart enough to email you when your groups organize new events. It's even nice enough to remind you a day or two before an event takes place, so you're sure not to miss one. And don't worry. Members self-select all preferences, so you won't get stuck receiving a hundred emails a day, if you don't want them.

Okay, so Meetup is smart, but it isn't psychic. When planning events, orga-

nizers must be savvy enough to request Meetup to send emails and reminders to group members. Mostly, organizers are really good about doing that. Otherwise, it helps to check your group's page regularly, especially while the organizers work the kinks out of running a new group.

### A group for every interest

There are over 600 Meetup groups in the Portland area, and more are likely to form.

The Portland Metro Urban Hikers

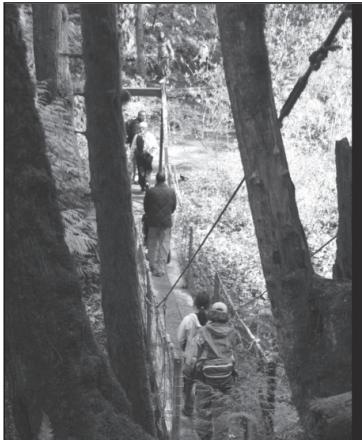


Photo by Melissa Bosserman

### A Meetup hiking group takes to the trails.

group is one of them. Scott Haas, a former Seattleite who's been here for over a decade, started the group last fall. He wanted to plan local low-cost hikes to explore the bountiful natural landscapes in and close to Portland.

"There are many other hiking groups," Scott says, "but the hikes are mostly out of town and require a full day's commitment. I like those kinds of hikes, too, but when fuel hit \$4 per gallon, it started to become cost prohibitive to go out of town every weekend. So I thought, 'Why not find local hikes that are eco and transit-friendly, that would only take a few hours out of the day, but still give an opportunity to explore?'"

His reasoning hit the mark. The group already boasts 700 members and usually meets once a week on the weekends. Some hikes have attracted as many as sixty members, while others - the ones on the colder, wetter days - only number in the single digits. But all have been fun.

Jack Huttig organizes The Flying Spaghetti Monster Lands for a Pint, a local community for atheists. He joined Meetup over a year ago after moving to Portland from the Midwest.

After a slow start, he began planning events for his Meetup. Now that the group's main organizer is taking a break to plan her wedding, he's stepping in full-time to help keep the group alive.

"I've been fortunate that Flying Spaghetti Monster has a core group of people with a list of definite things they like. That means they're quick to share ideas, recommend places, and even offer their homes for parties," Jack says. "I've met some very nice people," he adds. "To tell the truth, the Meetups are the highlight of my week when they're held. It's a group of people I feel I can trust, which is the first prerequisite to friendship."

Young Portland Women Meeting for Friendship has also had its fair share of success with 400+ members. The group targets women in their twenties and thirties and aims to have about one gathering per week to give its members a chance to attend regularly.

Jackie Swift, the group's current head organizer, found out about Meetup a little over a year ago and doesn't regret becoming involved.

"When I moved back to Portland after having been away for a while, I didn't have very many friends in town anymore. I researched social opportunities in Portland and found Meetup. I was looking for a new social network, and I certainly found it! It's been a very rewarding experience and a lot of fun. I've met hundreds of interesting women, many of whom are new to Portland. It's a wonderful opportunity to be able to help them settle into a new city."

Nina Knapp agrees that the chance for forming friendships is one of the main appeals and main successes of Meetup. A member of several groups, including Jackie's women's group, Scott's hiking group, a yoga group, and a vegans and vegetarians group, Nina feels that she's found a good outlet for making connections with others.

"I have met some great people I otherwise would not have met," Nina says.

Meetup is an invaluable resource for finding support, too. There are countless parenting, networking, exercise, and other support groups in the Portland metro area that succeed at helping people find others with whom to share difficult times.

And if nothing on Meetup strikes your fancy, you can always form a group of your own. While there are costs involved in being a group organizer, Meetup staff offer suggestions for how to help make them manageable.

To find out more about Meetup, visit their website at [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com).

*Monica Rodriguez is a full-time editor, part-time writer, and occasional square dancer. She loves all things Portland, including living in Sellwood, eating pastries at Grand Central Bakery, and buying used books at Powell's.*

Over 240 tons of reusable building materials found a home through **The Rebuilding Center** in Portland in April, which sustained over 40 full-time jobs with benefits. [www.rebuildingcenter.org](http://www.rebuildingcenter.org) 503-331-1877

In March, 20 volunteers gave 108 hours for **The Giving Tree**, a Portland non-profit that supports resident retention for the chronically homeless and constructs community environments for people living in affordable housing. [www.thegivingtree.org](http://www.thegivingtree.org) 503-280-9068

[www.streetroots.org](http://www.streetroots.org) 503-228-5657



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**Ethos Music Center**, a Portland non-profit dedicated to the promotion of music and music-based education for youth in underserved communities, provides affordable music lessons to over 2200 kids per year. [www.ethos.org](http://www.ethos.org) 503-283-8467

If you have any ideas for Upside News Bites, email them to [editors@portlandupside.com](mailto:editors@portlandupside.com)

### Upside News Bites

**My Father's House**, a family shelter in Gresham currently housing 10 families, has an 85% success rate (families leaving the shelter with income and affordable housing). [www.familyshelter.org](http://www.familyshelter.org) 503-492-3046

**Hands on Greater Portland** made 4,253 connections during the month of April between community-based organizations and volunteers looking to help. [www.handsonportland.org](http://www.handsonportland.org) 503-200-3355

**The Pixie Project**, an animal adoption center in Portland, adopted out 20 animals during the first two weeks of April, including Grandpa Sampson, a nine-year-old border collie. [www.pixieproject.org](http://www.pixieproject.org) 503-542-3433

In March, 20 volunteers gave 108 hours for **The Giving Tree**, a Portland non-profit that supports resident retention for the chronically homeless and constructs community environments for people living in affordable housing. [www.thegivingtree.org](http://www.thegivingtree.org) 503-280-9068

**Street Roots**, a local non-profit, grassroots newspaper that is a catalyst for individual and social change. [www.streetroots.org](http://www.streetroots.org) 503-228-5657

**Portland - My Home**

By April Curfman

©2002

Mountain - spectacular  
Webbed feet - vernacular  
I was born here

Rose Festival - a vision  
Hood to coast competition  
Heritage formed - year after year

Washington Park, the trees  
Ladd's Addition - rose - perfumed breeze  
Visitors from far and near

The Columbia, The Sandy, The Willamette  
Water overflowing or coming down wet  
Bridges from there to here

Jantzen, Intel, Meier & Frank, Boise Cascade  
Tom McCall, NW Natural, OHSU, Portland State  
I am proud of what's been achieved here

Lacey's Bomber, Roses, The Old Spaghetti Factory  
McMenamins, The Bite, Izzy's  
Good friends, good times, good cheer

From Union to MLK,  
Beaverly Cleary to OMSI  
From Horses to Max - does the driving for us  
From Logging to "The Silicon Forest"  
Portland's history brings us together - here

The churches, The Arlene Schnitzer, Oaks Park  
The Saturday Market, The Grotto, "Portland after dark"  
The sounds I love to hear

Neither Mount St. Helen's eruption,  
Nor the occasional congestion  
of a freeway connection  
(with the possible exclusion  
of a botched Trailblazer solution)  
could distract from the  
attraction  
of this treasure of seduction  
My Home  
Portland  
I was born here.

*April Curfman worked for NW Natural for 23 years, co-facilitates a support group for Parkinson's Disease and enjoys sharing her poems with a Poems & Coffee Meetup group.*



Photo by Julie Kelly



Photo by Julie Kelly



Photo by Hamid Shibata Bennett



Photo by Hamid Shibata Bennett

**Portland - Wow!**By Edie Sidle  
*The Portland Upside*

It's so easy to forget to value the uniqueness of a community once we've lived somewhere a few years. After ten years spent enjoying the magnificence of Alaska, I remember blandly greeting a friend's wonder with, "Oh, yeah, the eagles. You see them all the time."

Since relocating to Portland in October, I have been sending a "wow" list to my friends and family back in Utah. Here are some of the things that have made me truly happy to call myself a resident of Portland.

**Chicken or egg**

While researching housing options, I discovered that Portland allows its residents to keep up to three chickens without a permit. In fact Portland has the highest per capita urban chicken population in the country! One house I looked at didn't have a chicken coop, but the neighbor a house away did, and I thought it would be pretty cool to trot down to the neighbor's to get fresh eggs. Thankfully, roosters are not allowed. That wouldn't be as charming at five in the morning. Still, fresh eggs in your morning omelet? How could one complain about that?

**Bicycles everywhere**

Walking to my car recently after another interesting neighborhood exploration, I was caught by surprise as an onslaught of bicyclists - a good 15 or 20 of them - passed by. I stopped and wondered why there would be a bike race in the middle of the week when I realized the time: 5 p.m. The bike-to-work commuters were on their way home!

**Where there are bikes, there are beards**

I remember reading a local magazine that proclaimed Portland as the "beardiest" city in the United States. Some Portlanders claim that a beard works like a scarf while bike riding. Apparently all the biking to work explains all those beards!

**Good conversation**

My heart skipped a beat while enjoying home-cracked pumpkin ice cream at the Troutdale General Store one day. Three handsome and fit 50-something men dismounted their bikes, came in for some coffee, and chatted about sustainable

Photo by Hamid Shibata Bennett



Photo by Hamid Shibata Bennett

lifestyles at the table beside me. People here take their beards, their bikes, and their sustainability seriously. Woohoo!

**Liberal reading policies**

I am now officially a resident of Oregon. Well, at least the library says I am. When I recently got my library card I was amazed to discover that I can check out 100, yes, that's right, 100 books, CDs, or DVDs at a time. The Multnomah County Library system seems determined to help its residents have their own personal library, even if it's only for three weeks at a time.

**Not in a hurry**

While driving on the freeway, wondering why I was passing everyone, I noticed the speed limit just outside Portland is 60 miles



setting atmosphere. Clients come for a shampoo and blow dry, cut or color, and a free bottle of Miller High Life. They stay to hang out.

On their website, owner Leo Rivera says, "We care about being part of the community and making it better."

**Even the grocery stores are different**

At my local Fred Meyer the other day, I found hemp milk on the shelves as part of the regular inventory. It's touted as being cholesterol free, vegan, and full of essential amino acids and Omega 3 and 6 oils. Even better: it's legal! I had to try it. After drinking a gallon, I have to admit I don't feel healthier, but I do appreciate having the alternative right here in my neighborhood grocery store. During another grocery outing, I was offered a sample of beer. Having come from a state with less liberal liquor policies, once again I marveled at how good we have it here in Portland.

Each day continues to surprise and delight me as a newcomer to Portland. Even if you are a native or long-time resident, I hope you will make your own "wow" list and take great pleasure in the many wonderful things this great community has to offer.

# From the Top

*Five – six – seven – eight . . .*

By Sara Bednark  
*The Portland Upside*

*If they could see me now,  
That little gang of mine,  
I'm eating fancy chow,  
And drinking fancy wine.*  
—Dorothy Fields

**N**ow comes the hard part. Hand your top hat to the right and grab the one from the left, then turn, kick, and place the hat on your head. All the while singing, smiling, and hopefully not dropping the hat, that slippery hat.

The Northwest Senior Theatre group is rehearsing for their spring show, *Steppin' Out on Broadway*, and I feel slow and clumsy just watching. In preparation for each show, they rehearse two days a week, three hours a day for five months.

It's a big commitment, especially when they could be spending more time with their families and relaxing into their retirement. So why would this group of 62- to 85-year-olds want to spend that much time putting on a show?

"It's something to do" and "We'd be too sedentary if we didn't" are just two of the many answers I receive when I ask the cast.

Some mention that memorizing the lyrics and choreography keeps their minds active. Others point out the importance of the community they have created. And still others talk about the volunteer aspect; Northwest Senior Theatre puts on five to six performances of each show for retirement homes throughout Portland.

Fred Bauner, though, touched on something much different. "We're all hams anyway!" he says. "You know, it's the appeal of the crowd, the applause."

*I'd like those stumble bums to see for a fact  
The kind of top-drawer, first-rate  
chums I attract.*

And attract they do. Northwest Senior Theatre has volunteer members from all over the Portland metro area, Vancouver, and as far away as Hubbard. Their twice-yearly auditions are advertised in *The Oregonian's* Monday callboard and brings in people from all backgrounds: engineers, doctors, postal workers, teachers.

Sue Tenison, Northwest Senior Theatre's choreographer, gives me the lowdown on qualifications. You must be able to sing and move at the same time and, of course, you must be 55 or older. But you don't have to have prior theater experience, just a willingness to practice.

*If they could see me now,  
That little gang of mine,  
I'm eating fancy chow,  
And drinking fancy wine.*

Northwest Senior Theatre is a non-profit organization that has been around since 1991, supported by donations and membership dues. The group puts on two galas a year for the general public, one

**Northwest  
Theater  
Group  
rehearses  
for their  
upcoming  
prod-  
uction "Step-  
pin' Out on  
Broadway"  
which  
premiers  
May 27th at  
the Alpen-  
rose Dairy  
Opera  
House.**



Photo by Rosboroughphotography.com

in the spring and one during the winter holidays. Some of the performers have been in theater for most of their lives and are true professionals.

For Gerry Warner, Northwest Senior Theatre president, the theater had been only a dream. She describes it now as a second career.

"One I've always wanted and didn't think I'd ever have," she says. "It's just amazing!"

And it really is! Audiences just don't know what to expect, Sue proudly reports. "They think these little old people will come out [on stage] but, no, we have this big, huge production. We have scenery, costumes, an accompanist, a drummer, lighting, sound." And many dedicated members who put it all together.

*Look where I am.  
Tonight I landed, pow!*

*Right in a pot of jam.  
What a set up! Holy cow!*

Their friends can see them, and so can you. For a \$5 donation per person, you can see two hours of Broadway numbers at the Alpenrose Dairy Opera House. Every day at 2 p.m. from May 27 through May 30, the curtain will rise for the Northwest Senior Theatre's performance of *Steppin' Out on Broadway*.

To learn more about Northwest Senior Theatre visit their website at [nwseniorthetheatre.org](http://nwseniorthetheatre.org) or call 503-251-4332. The opera house is located at 6149 SW Shattuck Road in Portland.

Sara Bednark has published two children's books and believes that everyone has a story to tell.

## Warriors for peace

*Continued from page 1*

In July, 2001 — two months before 9/11 — U.S. Rep Dennis Kucinich of Ohio introduced legislation to establish a U.S. Department of Peace that would create a structure and programs to promote solutions that prevent and reduce violence, both domestically and abroad. As a Cabinet-level posi-

Bill 808. Currently, 66 members of the House of Representatives are co-sponsors, including Oregon Reps. David Wu and Peter DeFazio.

With the nation deep in an economic recession, passage of the U.S. Department of Peace legislation is unlikely to occur in the near future. But alongside this current crisis and daily media blitz of violent news, a grassroots movement that believes in the possibility of a culture of peace and the eventual establishment of a U.S. Department of Peace is quietly growing. This movement, organized along congressional district lines, is active in all 50 states, coordinated nationally by the non-profit Peace Alliance. In the Portland area he consults with students who have initiated their own projects. West Linn students, for example, developed and presented a resolution of support for a U.S. Department of

present to the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners.

Under Bryan's leadership and sponsored by Commissioner Dan Saltzman, the Portland City Council unanimously passed a resolution in support of a U.S. Department of Peace in August 2007. With the support of state Senate leaders, Bryan hopes to present a resolution to the Oregon Legislature later this year. Though a U.S. Department of Peace may not become law in the near future, Oregon is moving forward to build relationships for its eventual passage.

of unnecessary violence in this country. He views the creation of a U.S. Department of Peace as a good milestone for turning our culture around. Burnout and frustration are not issues for him. "I stay motivated because I believe the goal is solid. I believe we will eventually have a U.S. Department of Peace, and I can then look back with a sense of satisfaction of having been involved from the beginning," he says.

"Each of us does what he or she can," McAllister adds. "Every conversation people have about the U.S. Department of Peace is part of the campaign, of weaving a piece of the fabric of a culture of peace."

The Portland Area Department of Peace group meets the second Thursday of each month.

**"There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why? I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?"**

Robert F. Kennedy

tion, it would have equal standing with the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of Defense and others that advise and consult with the president. A U.S. Department of Peace would be pro-peace, not anti-military nor necessarily anti-war.

To date, the bill lacks enough support to receive serious debate in Congress; nevertheless, Rep. Kucinich has continued to introduce it in each session of Congress since 2001, most recently as HR

"I am not drawn to do this work," says Oregon State Coordinator of the Peace Alliance Campaign David Hazen, 65, of Salem. "I am compelled to do it from the deepest stirrings of my heart and soul. I have survived many forms of personal and systemic violence. Because my heart is broken open, I must bring the world with me." Through this work, Hazen foresees the healthy growth and development of children, prosperity and safety for adults, as well as cooperative learning and problem-solving.

Ken Bryan, 49, is the leader of

Peace to the West Linn City Council that passed in November 2008.

Lincoln High School students are working on a similar resolution to

Larry McAllister, 58, is another founding member of the Portland area campaign. For years he has been concerned about the amount



Local peace advocates demonstrate their support for a U.S. Department of Peace.

Peace to the West Linn City Council that passed in November 2008.

For information about upcoming events and opportunities to become involved, contact Ken Bryan at [kendbryan@yahoo.com](mailto:kendbryan@yahoo.com) or at 503-236-0499. Also see [www.ThePeaceAlliance.org](http://www.ThePeaceAlliance.org) for information about the national organization and [www.nwdepartmentofpeace.org](http://www.nwdepartmentofpeace.org) for information about the Northwest Regional Campaign.

Faye Powell is a retired librarian who wants to channel Lois Lane without the complications of Clark Kent.

## Making Room

**By Leah Mayes**  
*The Portland Upside*

One night last week I found myself in one of Portland's finest, a watering hole filled up and down with characters. After ordering a drink and settling into my seat, I nodded "hello" to my neighboring bar fly. Seeing no one with whom I might have common interests, I decided to sit a while, observing the evening's goings-on.

The man holding down the stool next to me appeared to be a good ol' boy, complete with button-down shirt, hat, boots, jeans and an affinity for Pabst Blue Ribbon. Lo and behold, our conversation turned first to what we do for a living.

"I am a chef," I said. "I love to cook. I have studied nutrition for the last seven years and I must admit to being a food snob at times. I specialize in organic cooking with an attention to vegan and vegetarian cuisine. How about you, cowboy?"

"Well," he said, "I sell hamburgers. Flip um, sell um, all my life."

I smiled. Turns out this good ol' boy owns and operates two local McDonald's eateries. I smiled again and I think I might have nodded, but rest assured, I wasn't quite sure what to say next. My mind teetered between an urge to launch into a spiel about childhood diabetes on the rise, heart disease, and bad cholesterol ("Oh, by the way, did you see "Super Size Me"?") and an equally strong desire to politely excuse myself to find other conversation. In the end, I decided to just stay and listen. After all, I'd never met an owner of a McDonald's. I figured this could be interesting and I might just get some dirt for my next nutrition speech.

Portly, bordering on the short side, good color in his cheeks, my side-kick appeared well-shaven and eager to make a friend. I found out that in addition to owning restaurants, this man loves to farm. He described plowing his fields on a tractor, on a sweet summer day in the sun, the wind blowing the tall grass around like waves. He smiled a lot. I felt that to him farming was a meditation.

I have no idea if this man was wealthy but in truth he seemed very humble. He spoke of working for McDonald's his entire life, how the company has helped him make a family and take care of them. He honestly proclaimed his support for the intelligence behind the corporation, its ever-changing ability to keep up with what the public demands, the many employees he has supported through regular employment.

When I asked about quality, he talked of changed ingredients, additional menu items and lowering the fat content to help support healthier choices. Then with a flurry of one-liners gained from numerous team-building seminars, memorized every morning in the mirror, my well-shaven friend announced his excitement for life, the need to keep busy, a passion to succeed with his goals. He talked about not watching TV or movies, not wasting his precious time, time better spent improving himself and his life. He was impressive with his drive and appreciation, his smile and honest-to-goodness simplicity; a genuine man, living his life as he sees fit, taking his own path to the American, rags-to-riches dream; all held in the hands of a clown and supported by the Golden Arches. Over four billion served.

Served willingly, many would argue, and they have a good point. People living off the street stumble in when they find a buck; people walk in way too many times because they can't stop themselves; people eat fast food just because it is easy.

This man and I had little in common. I could have argued left and right about the quality of meat he serves, the treatment of the cows his company slaughters, the robbery of American nutrition and much more. But I didn't. Instead I noticed that we represented two opposite ends of the spectrum, sitting together reminiscing about what a field of tall grass looks like in the wind.

Some things are beautiful even if we don't agree with them or understand them. Some things just are. Although I think we should fight for what we believe in, this time I didn't feel the need to fight. I felt recognition for this man just as he is: a man, living his life, making choices. And though I myself would not choose the same, here we were making room for each other over a tall glass of cold beer. And that is an upside.



Photo by Carrie Ure

### We've Got Time to Help

*Continued from page 1*

tion.

Seth and Michelle are proud that We've Got Time to Help is not a nine-to-five organization. It was created as a way to connect people to people while bypassing the middleman. There is no bureaucratic process to go through before those who need help get it, and there are no restrictions on who can ask for assistance.

Seth and Michelle's philosophy is, "People who are reaching out and asking for help probably genuinely need it. It doesn't matter if they live in a million-dollar home. It is not our place to judge. If they ask for help, we will do our best to help them. It is about connecting neighbor to neighbor without the expectation of anything in return." It is a pay-it-forward mentality. Seth explained that knowing that there is no expectation for anything in return, everybody who has gotten in touch with them has said, 'This is what I need [and] here is what I can do to help.'

For Seth and Michelle the most surprising part of this project has been the overwhelming response in general -- not only from the volunteers who want to help, but from the people and

## How to be new at anything

**By Carrie Ure**  
*The Portland Upside*

You don't have to be a professional newbie to join the exhilarating ride called the learning curve. Whether you are looking to bring passion and excitement to the mundane aspects of your life or just anxious about an important upcoming life change, learning to embrace the beginner's mind can enhance your experience.

I arrive at a downtown Portland hotel, on time but rumpled and sweaty after hiking three blocks in my best heels. I stop for a name tag and choose a seat among dozens of jovial professionals as my panicky thoughts begin to drown out

the din in the massive ballroom. Will I fit in? Will I say something stupid? Will they know I'm new?

I have just entered my first continuing education luncheon in my new career as a real estate broker. I stop to take a deep breath and ponder my current situation: middle aged, divorced, on my third religion and embarking on my fourth career, and once again I have no idea what to expect. Yet having played the role of newbie hundreds of times, I know I will get a lot more than chicken salad out of today's meeting if I follow my own sim-

*Continued on page 7*

ing knowledge and constantly learning new things from those who are volunteering with us. We are showing people that there are people out there who care about you because you are a part of humanity."

Seth noted that people keep asking him, "Are you trying to change the world?"

His response is, "Yeah. We want to change the status quo and societal norms of everybody fending for themselves, being afraid to ask for help...We want people to open their eyes. There are people who need help everywhere. I'm just going through life, trying to get people to come with me."



**Left to Right:** Michelle King and Seth Reams, founders of We've Got Time to Help, stand with Trevor and Hall, two of their volunteers, after a project.

### Food/learning

*Continued from page 2*

sense of awe toward the Ouns. The odds were against this family of four from the very beginning. And yet, Phallon, Bophar, Thyda, and Seiha slowly began to thrive in their community. "It's amazing," Sara says. "All they've done and accomplished. I could never have done what they did."

Seiha, now 19, is a first year architectural student at Portland State University (PSU). She wants to design green commercial buildings. Thyda, 21, is on the dental hygiene program track at Portland Community College (PCC). She also works two part-time jobs. Bophar recently completed a pharmacy technician program. Yet, she proudly notes that her

children and their education are her number one priority, "I take Seiha to PSU everyday so he can get to his classes on time."

As for Phallon Oun, the past 12 years have been a rewarding challenge. From his initial encounter with Rob and the family's language sessions to his subsequent start as a machine operator during the day and a PCC student at night, Phallon persisted.

"I didn't see my father much," Seiha recalls. "He'd already be gone when I got up for school and come home after I'd gone to bed."

Despite the time away from

home, Phallon continued to work and study. From 1998 to 1999 he managed to contribute 500 labor hours to Habitat for Humanity to help purchase his family's first Oregon home in 2000. Four years later, he earned a degree from PCC's machine manufacturing program.

Today Phallon is a machinist who assists in the design and manufacture of orthopedic implants at Acumed. It was a struggle to balance family, work, and classes, but Bophar says she never doubted her husband's devotion to their family.

I asked Thyda if she remembers what it was like adjusting to life in the United States during those first few years. "I know it was a struggle for my parents," she says teary-eyed, "My parents have

done so much for us."

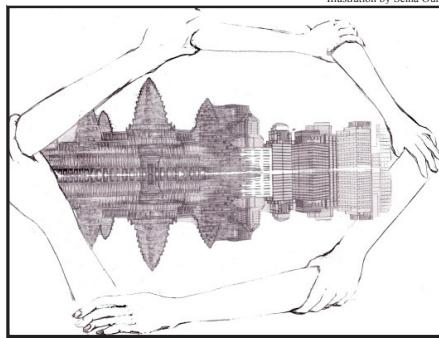
In fact, all of them have done so much to contribute to their family's well-being. This inspires people such as the Bednarks, who are pursuing their dream to bring uplifting stories to our community in hopes of inspiring others to appreciate the good in life.

I asked the Ouns to think of a few positive words that define their relationship with Sara and Rob. "Family" was the word of choice for Phallon, Bophar, Thyda, and Seiha. The countless family portraits on their walls and framed pictures of caps and gowns sitting along the tops of shelves and on end tables show the significance of the word for the Ouns. "Family" is what carried the Ouns through the past 12 years.

Rob agrees and adds that their relationship with the Ouns is a gift. Having sat with the two families to talk about how they met 12 years ago, I certainly agree. It is a gift, with or without the chicken feet.

### Helping Hands: A Transition from Cambodia to Portland

*Illustration by Seiha Oun*



**Nicole Morales** strives to connect people via multicultural education and writing. She teaches ESL at a private university outside of Portland and welcomes your inquiries at [nmorales.writes@gmail.com](mailto:nmorales.writes@gmail.com)

## Growing Gardens

Digging at the root of hunger

By Jessica DeVries  
The Portland Upside

**U**rban gardening is thriving in Portland and the organization Growing Gardens makes sure low-income Portland residents can enjoy food security by growing organic vegetables in their own yards. The goal of Growing Gardens is to get at the root of hunger by empowering families with the knowledge and experience they need to affordably grow gardens of their own.

Growing Gardens offers two main programs for the residents of Portland: Home Gardens, for individual families, and Youth Grow, which partners with schools and other youth organizations around the city. Growing Gardens also offers Learn & Grow workshops that are open to the general public. Topics range from natural pest control to raising chickens.

In 2008, the Home Gardens pro-

gram enrolled 62 families and in total, 139 people benefited from the services. Residents who participate in Home Gardens must live in North, Northeast, or Southeast Portland and must be at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty guideline.

Rodney Bender manages Home Gardens and says one of his favorite things about his job is the one-on-one time he gets with the gardeners, especially when they get excited about their garden.

Families sign up in the fall and early summer to receive assistance building beds specifically designed for their house or apartment. When spring comes, each family is paired with a mentor who helps them plan their garden layout and choose vegetables. This mentor stays with the family for the duration of the three-year program.

"We're not only building a garden and teaching people how to grow food. We are exposing them to

a more healthy lifestyle spending time outdoors and eating more delicious food," says Rodney.

Youth Grow currently works with five area schools and one Boys and Girls Club to provide after-school gardening clubs, summer garden camps, and organic vegetables to elementary-aged kids in Portland. The schools and youth organizations participating with Youth Grow must have 50 percent or more of their students receiving free or reduced lunches.



Illustration by Nick Young

**How to be new** *Continued from page 6*

ple rules for being new.

First give up all pretensions of expertise. No matter how well you have polished your shoes or your story, everyone can spot a beginner. Once I began to relinquish my need to know every fact and my obsession with appearing to know what I am doing, I relax into the kind of in-the-moment intuition that opens doors and increases my learning capacity. Others agree.

Nancy Thompson recently put her corporate business travel career on the back burner to follow her passion as an event planner. Her company, Flourish, based in Portland, targets successful women like herself by offering forums and events to enhance the body, mind, and spirit. With the open mind of a newbie, Thompson soon realized that despite a formidable professional business plan, she had no idea what she was in for. It wasn't

until she abandoned the plan, slashed her budget, and scaled back her operation that her concept began to take off, attracting best-selling authors in intimate venues, events which bring women back month after month. Says Thompson, "By letting go of the way I was supposed to look, I filled an unmet need in the Portland community."

Embracing rather than squandering your amateur status is another technique for the new in-the-know.

"You will never be more focused, more curious, or more passionate about your subject than you are at the beginning," says Nikki Gardner, top-producing realtor with Windermere Realty Group in Portland, now in her fourth year. Gardner used her natural drive to find that out from the get-go, winning the President's Elite sales award in only her second year.

Having more questions than your clients pays off, says Gardner, when it's time to compete for a listing or represent buyers in a transaction. Early on she understood that by replacing her fear of the unknown with a curiosity for what might be, she let her enthusiasm substitute for the momentum that she lacked. Beginner's luck is anything but!

Successful newbies also take advantage of their status as the new kid on the block. You will never be more popular or attract more goodwill than when you are new.

When I was learning to windsurf in the Columbia River Gorge, I rarely had to worry about getting my rig off the car alone in 40 knot winds. And if I was having difficulty with a particular move in the water, impromptu lessons regularly happened. People in this world-class windsurfing capital were more than happy to share their ex-

perience with me and to show me their secret tips.

For some, being new is a well-developed art form that begins out of necessity.

Rahul Vora, software engineer for the multinational software company, Autodesk, has mastered the art of being new. On arriving in the United States from his native India 24 years ago, Vora confesses being overwhelmed by the changes. Now as chief architect for multi-million dollar software products, he uses the skills he honed as a student in a brand new country.

Stress levels soar when deadlines loom and cultural and communication issues arise. Says Vora, "When I go into a high-level meeting with the thought that I am hearing these issues for the first time, I begin to relax and become more creative. Often my relaxation is enough to ease the tension of all the participants in the room."

I take a break from writing to attend my 12-year-old son's Little League game. Asher doesn't know that he is my favorite coach in the art of being new as he readies himself to pitch for the very first time. Good-naturedly warming up until it's time to take the mound as starter, he walks the first batter, strikes out the next, and then fumbles the ball, resulting in a stolen base. One of his throws sails way over the catcher's head. Yet his team rallies behind him, cheering him on until the inning ends without a score. Asher's wide grin across freckled cheeks tells the whole story of how to be new at anything—enjoy yourself and don't be afraid to make a few mistakes!

*Carrie Ure is a mother, writer, editor and spiritual consultant living in Portland. She considers "beginner's mind" to be one of her highest aspirations.*

## Good cheap manure for your garden

By Nancy Turner  
The Portland Upside

If you are an urban gardener as I am, you know the value of manure. It retains moisture, breaks down compacted soil, is rich with nutrients and works magic in the garden. And who doesn't want manure that's ready to use without waiting six to nine months for it to compost? Most of us want pure, clean, ready-to-use, organic manure. I think of it as brown gold, because it's that valuable for the productivity of my garden. The question is what kind of manure.

Not all manures are created equal. The common sources of manure are chickens, horses, steers, rabbits, sheep and dairy cows. Some of these critters produce manure so high in nitrogen it's considered "hot" and unless very well composted, it will burn plants upon contact. Horse manure often contains weed seeds and the last thing a gardener wants is more weeds. Cow manure generally has a nitrogen, phosphoric acid and potash ratio of 25-15-25, making it the most useful soil-builder around. The challenge is where

to find it.

There happens to be one remaining dairy in Multnomah County, merely a half hour drive from downtown Portland: the Vetch Dairy, on Sauvie Island.

Twice a day Don's cows saunter into the milking parlor where he and his assistant attach milking machines to four teats per udder. Without causing the cow any discomfort, the machines



**Don Vetch fills the backend with some of the good stuff.**

Don Posvar, manager of the Vetch Dairy, has 97 Holsteins. Of the 60,000 dairy farms across America, most are small, family-owned dairies. His herd is about average. When asked about cow manure, Don says, "Come and get it!"

simulate a sucking calf with a pulsating vacuum. A well fed cow will produce about ten gallons of milk per day.

The only things getting rich on this dairy are the milk and the manure. The average dairy farmer gets about 30 cents on the dollar

for milk you see on the grocery shelf. The cost of fuel for tractors, milking machines, keeping cows warm in winter, transportation, and other supplies, has gone way up while the farmer's income goes down. But Don's dairy has been in the family for generations and his wife and kids live on the land. He's not going anywhere. His 85 year old uncle Bob still drives a tractor and says, "If I stop working I'll die, so I keep at it."

It's reassuring to know that milk is the most highly regulated food product in the country. All milk is carefully tested for antibiotics. Don doesn't use them except when a cow gets sick or has mastitis, an inflammation of the cow's milk ducts. Milk from a medicated cow is discarded. No antibiotics make it into the milk he sells to Tillamook Dairy, Alpenrose, and the Northwest Dairy Association. He doesn't give his cows growth hormones. This is good news for those of us who are concerned about what we put on our vegetables. When you consider how pure the milk is, you know the manure is too.

Cows utilize about 30 percent of what they eat, eliminating the rest. At the Vetch dairy all cow waste is contained in a

large cement "pond," where it creates aromatic slurry. This is sucked up through a vacuum hose to a gigantic dehydrator that separates the solids from liquids and spews the solids into a huge pile inside a metal shed. Here the manure cooks to 170 degrees. It's smoking! Don says one day he was hauling manure in his truck and someone flagged him down, yelling, "Hey buddy, your load's on fire!"

When you're ready to amend the soil and fertilize your garden, give Don Posvar a call (503-545-5092) to be sure he's not out plowing the back forty. Watch for children and dogs as you cruise down his driveway toward the barn. For \$10 cash, he'll hop on his tractor, fill a front-end loader, and dump it into the bed of your pickup truck. Remember to take a tarp to keep bits from blowing off during the drive home. With a thousand pounds of brown gold to "invest" in your garden, just think of the great rate of return. There's nothing finer than a lush garden of colorful flowers and a bountiful supply of food.

*nturner@easystreet.net*

**Destiny** *Continued from page 2*

he can respond in mock indignation. There's the one in the wheelchair who always asks me how my cats are doing, prompting a hush from the crowd as I relate the latest stories of penny chasing, rude awakenings, and paper bag hide-and-seek. And every day these folks express fascination with my every tale, whether rehashed or unique.

I've never been a father, but sometimes with my gang on the "fun bus" I get a glimpse of the dad I'd be. I even see a little of my own father in how I tease and play with them. I sometimes wonder if I'd keep this job if I won the lottery. Yes, I might travel the world awhile, but I'd soon return from my sabbatical to see those faces again. It's hard to imagine driving any less than part-time.

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