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The Portland Observer

'City of Roses'

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Committed to Cultural Diversity

Community Honors Rev. Dr. LeRoy Haynes

Celebrating Decades of Faith, Service and Leadership



Pictured from left: Marcus Washington, Ron Herndon, Rev. Dr. Mark Knutson, Rev. Matt Hennessee, Robin Wisner, Keith Edwards, Rev. Dr. LeRoy Haynes, Mark Washington, and Kevin Moodica. Photo courtesy of Antonio Harris Photography

Community members and leaders gathered Tuesday, October 20, 2026, to honor, recognize and celebrate the life, faithful service and lasting impact of Rev. Dr. LeRoy Haynes, Jr., whose work in ministry, civil rights, education and community advocacy has spanned several states and decades.

A native of Beaumont, Texas, Haynes is the husband of Mrs. Doris Mays Haynes, father to daughter Robin and grandfather to Conner. Throughout his career, he has dedicated himself to faith, education, community organizing and efforts to advance social justice.

Haynes earned a bachelor's degree with honors from the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas. He went on to receive a Master of Theology with honors in Social Ethics from Southern Methodist University's Perkins School of Theology in Dallas, Texas, and a Doctor of Ministry from Texas Christian University's Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas. He also completed post-doctoral studies through Boston University's Pastoral Excellence Program in Boston, Massachusetts.

His professional career includes serving as chaplain and professor of religion at Southern University in New Orleans, Louisiana; dean of chapel and professor of religion at Huston-Tillotson College in Austin, Texas; and dean of chapel and professor of religion at Texas College in Tyler, Texas. He also served as assistant director of urban ministry for the Greater Dallas Community of Churches in Dallas, Texas.

Haynes' pastoral experience includes serving as senior pastor in Beaumont and Fort Worth, Texas, and Tulsa, Oklahoma, within the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. He presently serves as senior pastor at Allen Temple CME Church in Portland, Oregon, and as presiding elder for Oregon, Washington and Alaska.

In addition to his pastoral responsibilities, Haynes has served as emeritus president of North Portland Bible College

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Urban League Celebrates Jamii Center

New Northeast Portland Hub Serves the Black Community



Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR), former Oregon State Sen. Margaret Carter, Nkenge Harmon, President and CEO of Urban League of Portland, Multnomah County Chair Jessica Vega Pederson, Colas Construction President & CEO Andrew Colas. Photo courtesy of LC Strategies.

The Urban League of Portland today celebrated the grand opening of the Jamii Center in Northeast Portland with U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR), former Oregon State Sen. Margaret Carter, Multnomah County Chair Jessica Vega Pederson, Colas Construction President & CEO Andrew Colas and dozens of community members and elected leaders from across the city.

"The Urban League goes to where people need us to go most. We shapeshift to meet the needs of the day," said Nkenge Harmon, President and CEO of Urban League of Portland. "We offered shelter during the pandemic at the Jamii Motel because it was so very necessary, using our very own model to support people in our community. I say 'shelter' because Urban League doesn't operate 'homeless' shelters. You come in off the street and then you don't leave until you have keys to your own apartment. For us it was part of the continuum of stably housing and supporting community members."

The Urban League says the Jamii Center, located at 3934 NE MLK Jr Blvd. in Northeast Portland, is a declaration of what community can look like when barriers are removed and belonging is the baseline. Named for the Swahili word for community, Jamii Center is a permanent neighborhood anchor where housed and unhoused neighbors can come together as equals, where resources meet relationships, and where the Urban League's 80-year legacy of racial equity and civic empowerment takes on a new, enduring form.

"The Urban League has been a lifeline for Black Oregon for 80 years," said Sen. Wyden at the grand opening celebration. "Today I am here to celebrate because the lifeline has a new home for decades to come. Urban League never stops. It never quits showing up. We are kicking off a wonderful center that is going to make a difference for decades to come. I am thrilled to be your

The Jamii Center carries forward the legacy of the Jamii Motel, which served as a critical emergency shelter during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2024. When the motel program closed in June 2025 after having fulfilled its mission of protecting lives during an unprecedented crisis, it set the stage for something larger and more lasting. The center symbolizes Urban League of Portland planting deep roots in Northeast Portland as an enduring community fixture.

"Part of what brings us here today is a partnership between the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

A New Chapter of Leadership

Warner Pacific University Celebrates Presidential Investiture Amid Institutional Growth

Warner Pacific University celebrated the investiture of Dr. Christina M. Schnyders as its ninth president on October 9, 2026, marking a new chapter of leadership for the Christ-centered university in Southeast Portland. The ceremony comes at a time of renewed institutional momentum, including enrollment growth, expanded academic offerings, and continued national recognition for social mobility and educational opportunity.

Held in McGuire Auditorium, the investiture brought together members of the university community to celebrate Warner Pacific's legacy, reaffirm its mission, and formally recognize Dr. Schnyders' leadership. The ceremony was part of inauguration celebrations centered on the theme Rooted in Promise. Rising with Purpose.

In her inaugural address, Dr. Schnyders reflected on the generations of faith, sacrifice, and perseverance that have shaped Warner Pacific since its founding in 1937, while calling the university community to embrace its responsibility for the generations still to come.

"Today, we stand between inheritance and possibility," she said. "Behind us stand the generations whose prayers, sacrifices, and faithfulness made this moment possible. Before us stand generations we may never meet, students whose lives will be shaped by what we choose to do in this season and even today."

Dr. Schnyders officially assumed the presidency on August 1, following a nationwide search conducted by the university's Board of Trustees.

Before joining Warner Pacific, she spent 19 years at Malone University in Canton, Ohio, most recently serving as Provost. Her experience spans academic leadership, counseling, and student development, reflecting a longstanding commitment to Christ-centered higher education, academic excellence, and helping students discover their calling.

A professor of Counseling and Human Development and a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor, Dr. Schnyders brings a leadership philosophy grounded in relationships, belonging, and service.

Throughout her inaugural address, she emphasized the distinctive mission of Warner Pacific as a Christ-centered, diverse university offering a liberal arts education with career-ready pathways. She acknowledged the challenges facing higher education while expressing confidence in the university's mission and the collective responsibility of its community to carry that mission forward.

Dr. Schnyders begins her presidency as Warner Pacific experiences encouraging institutional progress. This fall, the university welcomed its largest incoming class since 2020, with new student enrollment increasing 15% and first-time freshman enrollment growing nearly 48% compared with the previous year.

The university has also expanded its academic offerings, including the launch of its Pastoral Studies program and the addition of five concentrations to its Master of Business Administration program, creating additional pathways for students pursuing careers in business, ministry, and service.

Warner Pacific continues to receive national recognition for its commitment to educational access and student success. In the 2027 U.S. News & World Report Best Colleges rankings, the university ranked No. 1 among Top Performers on Social Mobility in the Regional Colleges West category and No. 7 overall among Regional Colleges in the West. Additionally, Niche's 2027 rankings recognized Warner Pacific as the No. 2 Most Diverse College in Oregon.



Dr. Christina M. Schnyders

These distinctions reflect Warner Pacific's commitment to creating educational opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds and preparing graduates to make meaningful contributions to their communities.

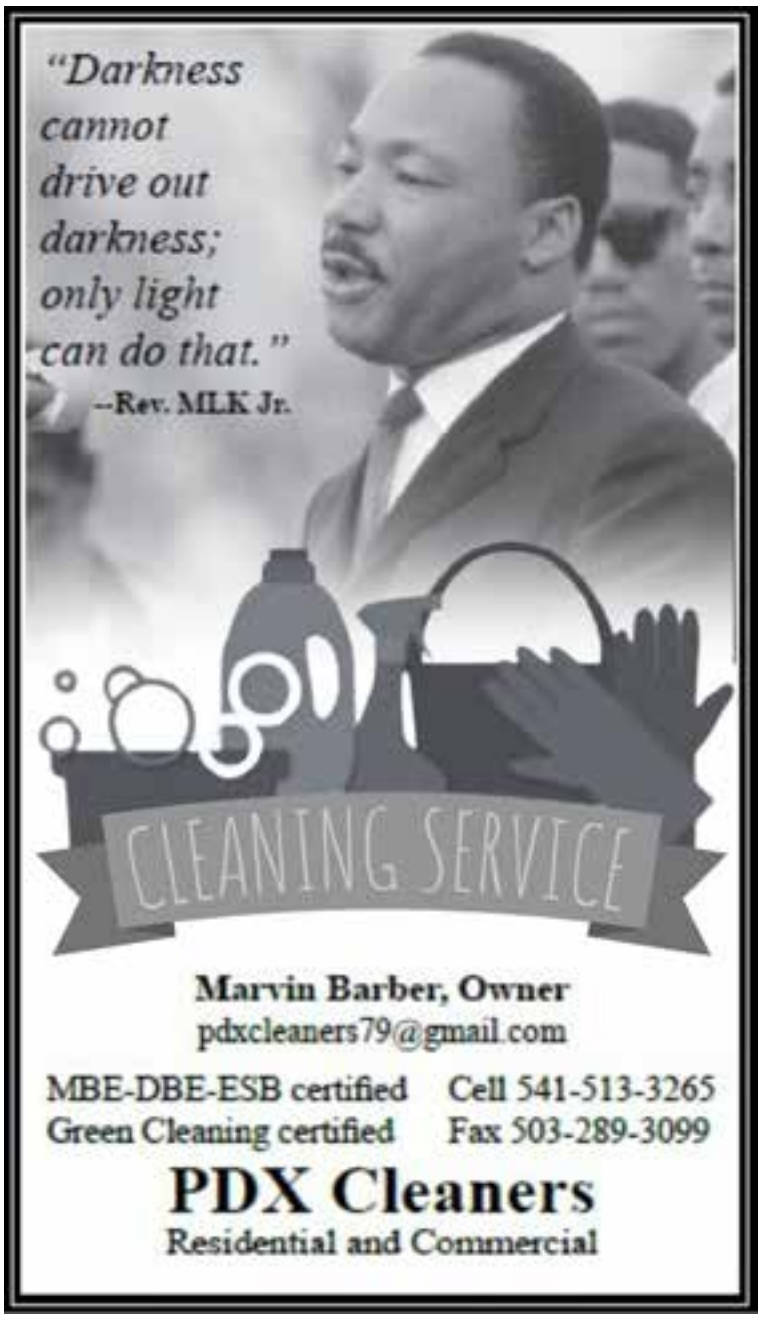
During her address, Dr. Schnyders emphasized that Warner Pacific's future will be shaped through the collective efforts of students, faculty, staff, alumni, trustees, churches, and community partners.

Drawing on the biblical account of the feeding of the five thousand, she encouraged the university community to recognize the resources and opportunities already entrusted to them and to use those gifts in service of students seeking opportunity, belonging, meaning, and hope.

As Warner Pacific looks toward its future, Dr. Schnyders called the university community to move forward together with faith and determination.

"Let us move forward with humility. Let us move forward with courage. Let us move forward with conviction. Let us move forward in hope," she said.

Her investiture represents both a celebration of Warner Pacific's enduring legacy and a renewed commitment to its mission of preparing students to lead, serve, and live with purpose.



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Local News

Rose Festival Court Enters a New Era



Photo courtesy of rosefestival.org

New Model Expands Student Opportunities

The Portland Rose Festival Foundation is excited to announce a new chapter for the Rose Festival Court beginning in 2027, introducing a district-based selection process and an increased scholarship commitment from longtime partner, The Randall Group.

For generations, the Rose Festival Court has celebrated outstanding female leaders throughout the Portland community. As the Foundation looks toward the future, the program is evolving to expand opportunities, increase accessibility, and ensure this cherished tradition continues for generations to come.

Beginning in 2027, the Court will transition from its traditional school-based recruitment process to a Foundation-managed, district-based model. The Court will consist of six participants representing designated geographic districts rather than individual schools. This change opens opportunities to students beyond the traditional participating schools, with participants selected based on their leadership, experiences, community involvement, and connection to the Rose Festival. The heart of the program remains the same: celebrating young leaders and providing meaningful opportunities for personal and educational growth.

Along with these changes, the Foundation is proud to announce that The Randall Group has increased its scholarship commitment from $5,000 to $7,000 per Court member and will become the Presenting Sponsor of the Rose Festival Court. This increased investment reinforces The Randall Group's longstanding commitment to supporting the next generation of community leaders.

As the Rose Festival Court enters this new chapter, the Foundation remains committed to honoring its history while creating opportunities for future generations of young leaders.

Applications for the 2027 Rose Festival Court open December 2, 2026. Additional information regarding eligibility, geographic districts, and the application process is available at rosefestival.org

Dance Program Opens Doors for Youth

Free Workshops Build Creativity and Confidence



Photo Courtesy of Heidi Duckler Dance Northwest

Heidi Duckler Dance Northwest is inviting children and teens ages 7–18 to participate in a free after-school dance program at the Baltazar F. Ortiz Community Center in Northeast Portland.

The weekly dance classes will take place Wednesdays, beginning November 18, 2026, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Participants will have the opportunity to learn dance choreography and explore creative expression while building self-confidence alongside their peers. No prior dance experience is required.

The program will conclude with a final group performance in January 2027, giving participants an opportunity to share what they have learned with friends and family.

The workshops are part of Heidi Duckler Dance Northwest's commitment to the transformative power of artistic expression and its ability to foster joy and justice by bringing the arts to families and communities throughout the Portland metropolitan region.

The program takes place at the Baltazar F. Ortiz Community Center, located at 6736 NE Killingsworth St. in Portland.

Bienestar de la Familia was established to serve the Latino community in Multnomah County. Today, its staff also work with the Somali community, other immigrant and refugee families, and residents of the Cully neighborhood. Services include mental health and addiction services, case management, after-school programs for teens, and a free produce market held every two weeks.

Registration is available online at https://heididucklernorthwest.org/bienestar/.

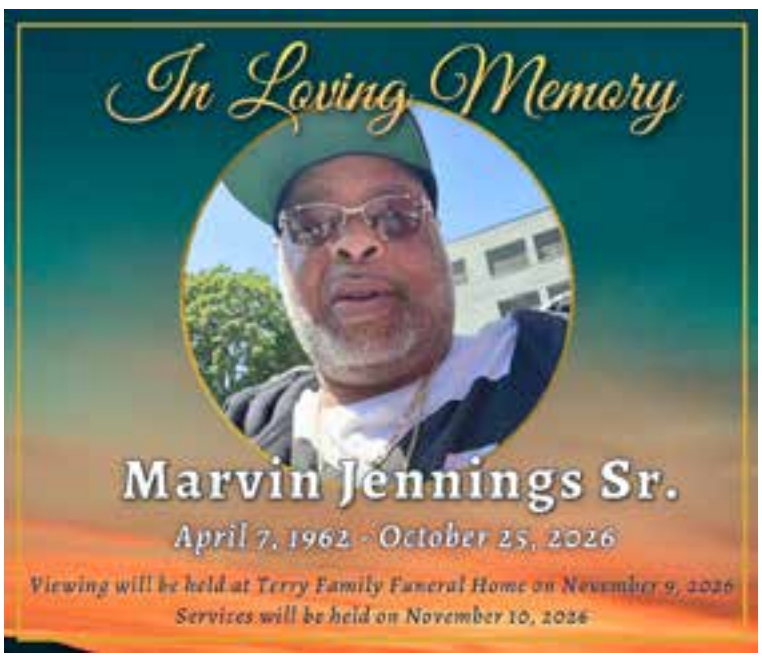




Photo courtesy of LC Strategies.

Urban League Celebrates Jamii Center

Continued from Front

Urban League and Multnomah County that began in crisis," said Chair Vega Pederson. "In 2020 during the height of the COVID pandemic, we worked together to open the Jamii motel shelter designed for black adults with higher risks of contracting COVID. From there it grew into a program for older BIPOC adults living with chronic illness or disability. Today we are seeing its evolution to a permanent community center for all Black Portlanders."

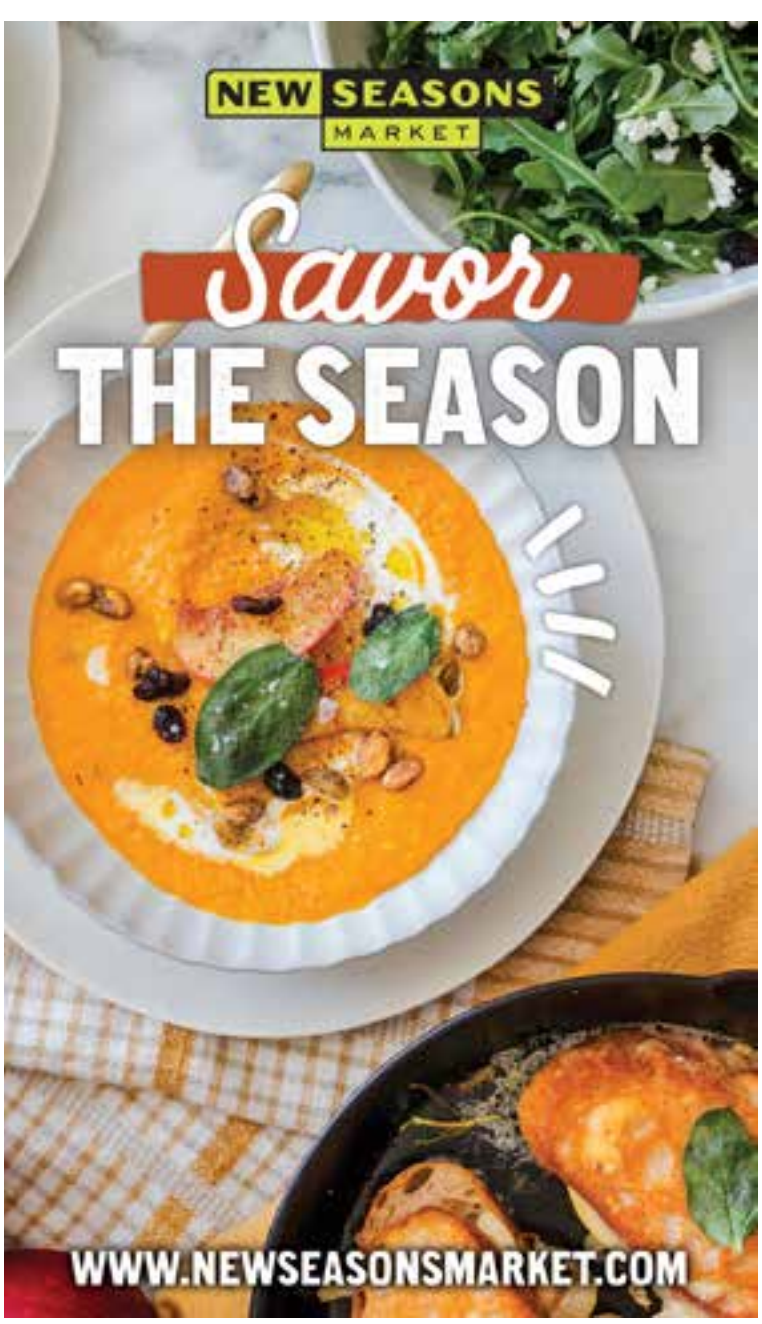
The Urban League of Portland says the Jamii Center offers one front door, bringing people together in a safe, supportive space with resources and services including housing connections, financial empowerment and workforce opportunities. The center carries the Urban League's more than 80-year legacy of racial equity and civic empowerment into a new, enduring form, where every neighbor, regardless of address or economic standing, is welcome.

Its programming is designed to meet community members where they are and move them toward stability, opportunity and self-determination. Services include MSST assessments, which connect people to coordinated support tailored to their needs; fair housing guidance, which helps residents know and exercise their housing rights; and notary services, which offer accessible, professional document support for people navigating legal and administrative processes.

The center is a newly renovated space in the Heritage Building in Northeast Portland's King neighborhood. Colas Construction, a longtime partner of the Urban League of Portland, led the building renovation.

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Community Honors Rev. Dr. LeRoy Haynes

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

and Evangelical Christian College in Portland. He also served as president of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon in 2012 and president of the Albina Ministerial Alliance in Portland.

His commitment to civil rights and community advocacy dates back to the early 1960s. During that time, Haynes served as a youth organizer for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in Southeast Texas under Martin Luther King Jr. He later worked as a community organizer for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in Austin, Texas, under Congressman John Lewis and Stokely Carmichael.

Haynes also co-organized the Black Panther Party in Dallas, Texas, helping expand the movement throughout the state.

His community organizing efforts continued through the founding of the Resurrection Drug Abuse Program in Fort Worth, Texas, and Portland, Oregon. In Portland, he served as chairperson of the Albina Ministerial Alliance Coalition for Justice and Police Reform, leading efforts to file a federal lawsuit that resulted in a court-ordered Settlement Agreement.

He also organized the Balm of Gilead HIV/AIDS program in Portland and co-founded Common Ground Housing and Economic Development Corporation in Dallas, Texas, which developed 200 housing units and two credit unions.



First Lady Doris Mays-Haynes and Rev. Dr. LeRoy Haynes. Photo courtesy of Antonio Harris Photography

Throughout his career, Haynes has received numerous awards recognizing his leadership, civil rights advocacy and community service. His honors include the United States Department of Justice Attorney General Loretta Lynch Award for National Leadership in Community Policing and Community Engagement.

In 2018, he was inducted into the Oregon Historical Society for his civil rights and ecumenical achievements in Oregon. Other recognitions include The Skanner Newspaper's Drum Major for Justice Award in Portland in 2005, the NAACP Oregon/Washington Regional Award for Community Leadership in 2012, and the World Arts Foundation Martin Luther King Jr. Community Collaboration Award.

Additional honors include the Cascade AIDS HIV/AIDS Angel Award for Community Leadership in the Fight Against HIV/AIDS in Portland, the Steve Lowenstein Award for Civil Rights and Advocacy for the Poor in 2017, and the CME Church's John Lewis Good Trouble Award in 2024. He also received the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Award in Dallas, Texas.

Beyond his ministry and community leadership, Hayes is an author. His published work, God's Prophet in Non-Violence: The Theology and Philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., reflects his connection to the principles of faith and nonviolence that have been central to his work.

His decades of service across ministry, education, civil rights and community development reflect a longstanding commitment to uplifting communities and advocating for those in need.







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Open Enrollment begins as Oregon launches Explore Health, its new marketplace for private health insurance

New Health Marketplace Opens in Oregon

Residents Can Shop for 2027 Coverage

Oregon residents shopping for health insurance have a new option as open enrollment for 2027 coverage gets underway. Explore Health, Oregon's new state-based health insurance marketplace, officially launched Nov. 1, replacing HealthCare.gov as the place for residents to shop for private health coverage, explore financial assistance and enroll in a health plan.

Open enrollment runs from Nov. 1, 2026, through Jan. 15, 2027.

"This is an important milestone for Oregon and for the people we serve," said Chiqui Flowers, director of the Oregon Health Insurance Marketplace, part of the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). "With Explore Health, people can now shop for coverage through a Marketplace designed and operated here in Oregon. Our goal is to make it easier for people to understand their options, find savings, and get the best coverage that works for them."

Through ExploreHealthOR.gov, residents can compare 2027 health and dental plans, find out whether they qualify for federal financial assistance, including premium tax credits and cost-sharing reductions, and enroll in coverage. Free enrollment assistance is also available through trained insurance agents and community partners across Oregon.

People with 2026 Marketplace coverage through HealthCare.gov are being transitioned to Explore Health for 2027. They do not need to start a new application but should claim their Explore Health account, review their information, compare available plans and select coverage that meets their health care needs and budget.

People currently enrolled in the Oregon Health Plan (OHP), OHP Bridge, Medicare, employer-sponsored coverage or other health coverage generally do not need to enroll through Explore Health.

The transition to a state-operated marketplace was authorized by the Oregon Legislature in 2023 through Senate Bill 972. Operating its own marketplace gives Oregon greater control over enrollment services, improved access to data and flexibility to respond to changing state and federal policies.

Explore Health includes a new online enrollment platform, a dedicated Consumer Assistance Center and tools for community partners and insurance agents.

"Launching Explore Health is an important step in Oregon's commitment to helping people get and stay covered," said Fariborz Pakseresht, interim director of OHA. "Bringing the Marketplace home to Oregon gives us new opportunities to better understand the needs of the people we serve, respond to changes that affect their coverage, and create a more connected experience for people seeking health care coverage."

Free enrollment assistance is available through certified community partners and licensed insurance agents. Residents can visit ExploreHealthOR.gov or contact the Explore Health Consumer Assistance Center at 855-268-3767. All relay calls are welcome.

The assistance center is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Pacific Time during open enrollment.

Open enrollment ends Jan. 15, 2027. Residents must enroll by Dec. 31, 2026, for coverage beginning Jan. 1, 2027.

Opinion articles do not necessarily represent the views of the Portland Observer. We welcome reader essays, photos and story ideas. Submit to news@portlandobserver.com.

OPINION

At Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary School, a Mandarin Pathway Built to Last

By Minyana Bishop

This fall, Portland Public Schools' "rightsizing" scenarios again put Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary on the table, proposing to relocate its Mandarin Immersion Program, nearly two-thirds of the school's students.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary, or "King," as generations of Black Portlanders know it, sits in Albina, a historically Black community shaped by generations of displacement and resilience. Albina Head Start has served area families since 1965. In 2012, Executive Director Ronnie Herndon introduced Mandarin to its preschoolers to open doors for historically underserved children.

Kelley Corona, who helped Herndon build the program, remembers a PPS dual-language leader at a preschool graduation. "We began to imagine a future in which children could continue learning Mandarin beyond preschool," she wrote. In 2014, PPS opened a Mandarin immersion program at MLK so those graduates could keep going. "This was not simply the placement of a language program into a school building," Herndon wrote. "It was the creation of a pathway."



Photo by Molly Washington

I'm a former Albina Head Start parent of three, and this pathway is personal. For my youngest daughter, it means more than a second language. As a Black American child, she is gaining cultural exposure few children get and doors to future economic opportunity. This pathway cannot undo generations of displacement, but it is an investment in our children, a hope for restoration and an opportunity for the historically underserved children who follow.

I also see this through a trauma-informed lens. That means asking whether institutional decisions compound the harm children have already faced. At a Title I school like MLK, meeting children's needs is PPS's responsibility, not a favor. Decisions must weigh families' voices, stability and equitable access, especially in Albina, where our voices have been ignored for generations.

This Mandarin Immersion program had to crawl before it could run. The crawl occurred during the first years: a few small classes and families taking a chance, with uncertain community buy-in and cultural understanding that needed work on both sides. The program began to walk in 2018–19, when every grade, kindergarten through fifth, had Mandarin Immersion students. It began to jog when its first students reached Jefferson High School in 2022–23.

Today, the program is running. Its first students graduated from high school last spring. MLK's Mandarin Immersion Program serves 203 students, with 246 projected next year and two consecutive years of kindergarten waitlists. Albina Head Start graduates accepting MLK Mandarin Immersion kindergarten seats rose from six in 2021–22 to 26 last year. Jefferson's Mandarin classes are still small, because those students started during the crawl. Fuller classes are coming behind them, my daughter's among them.

At MLK, Mandarin Immersion is a truly multiracial program: 34% Black, 31% white, 19% Asian, 13% Latino, 2% multiracial (two nonwhite races) and 1% Native American or Pacific Islander, with multiracial students who are part white counted by their nonwhite race. Black students form the largest group. Schoolwide, counted the same way, MLK is about 43% Black, 22% white, 19% Latino, 12% Asian, 3% multiracial and 1% Native American or Pacific Islander.

"We believe that history matters," Herndon wrote. In 2021, PPS proposed moving Harriet Tubman Middle School into MLK's building, then reversed course after families spoke up, saying the new Tubman should "enhance–and not displace–existing school communities." Belonging cannot simply be relocated.

Twelve years ago, Albina Head Start and PPS made a bet on the children of this neighborhood, those who live within its boundaries and those who travel to get here because King has been home for generations. It is paying off now: full classrooms, a waitlist and graduates carrying Mandarin into the world. That return should make MLK the crown jewel of PPS. Dr. King dreamed of children of every background growing up side by side. At the school that bears his name, they are, in two languages. This pathway is finally running. It has earned the chance to keep going.

Minyana Bishop is president of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary PTA.

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Puyallup Author Passes Harriet Tubman's Legacy to the Next Generation

Free Online Book Launch on November 12 Introduces a New Program for Grandparents and Grandchildren

Harriet Tubman's grandmother, Modesty, was born in Africa. In Karol V. Brown-Jones's new book, Harriet remembers her grandmother's stories of being free, and of a people descended from kings and queens. "Her stories made me know I had a right to my freedom," Harriet says. Now Brown-Jones is inviting today's grandmothers to pass that same strength to their grandchildren.



Karol V. Brown-Jones

Brown-Jones will celebrate the third edition of The Harriet Tubman Way: An Inspirational Guide to Self-Love, Empowerment, and Legendary Leadership for Girls with a free book launch on Zoom, Thursday, November 12, 2026, at 6 p.m. Pacific Time. That evening, she will also release The Path to Healing: A Simple Guide to Aligning Your Spirit, Mind, and Body, Book Two of her Love in Actions series, which shares her own journey through loss and healing. Everyone is welcome.

With the book, she introduces a 12-week program that prepares grandmothers and other caring adults to share Harriet's lessons. For the first four weeks, Brown-Jones teaches the core lessons. For the next four, participants partner up and present a chapter of their choice. In the final four weeks, grandchildren and other family members join them, and the adults put what they have learned into practice. The program begins in the Seattle and Puget Sound area, with a vision of reaching communities across the country.

"Grandmothers United by Love is the New Underground Railroad," said Brown-Jones. "When we sit with our grandchildren and share Harriet's story, we pass love and leadership to the next generation."

The book is a 34-chapter curriculum told in Harriet's own voice, from her childhood in Dorchester County, Maryland, to the Underground Railroad and her Civil War service as a nurse, scout, and spy. Readers discover the creativity enslaved people used to communicate, hiding messages in songs like "Steal Away."

Every chapter opens with the words of a Black woman and a Black man, from Coretta Scott King and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to Maya Angelou and Malcolm X, along with surprising voices such as LL Cool J and India Arie.

The lessons are for every grandchild, granddaughters and grandsons alike. Families read together, then talk, journal, create, and plan a real act of service. The chapter "Volunteer to Serve" opens with Dorothy Height: "Without community service, we would not have a strong quality of life. It's important to the person who serves as well as the recipient. It's the way in which we ourselves grow and develop." It pairs her words with Muhammad Ali's: "Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth."

OREGON PROBLEM GAMBLING RESOURCE

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TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

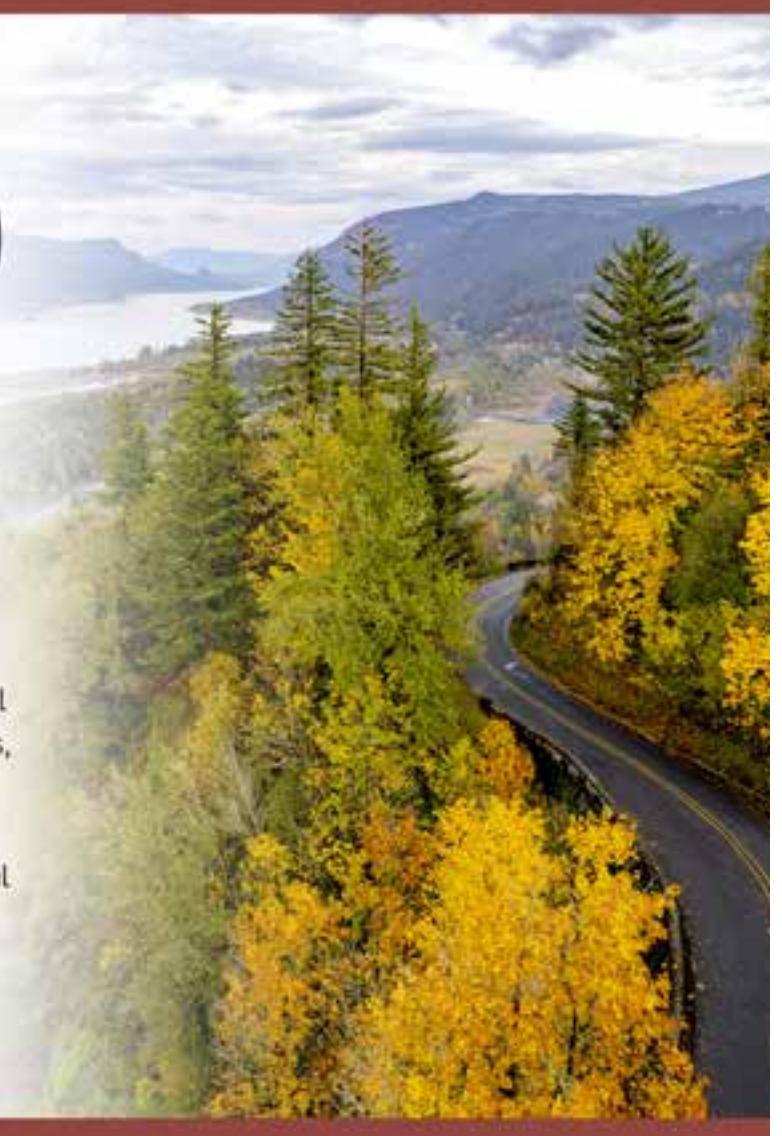


As the days get shorter and the holiday season begins, many Oregonians find themselves balancing family commitments and busy schedules. For some, gambling becomes a way to disconnect from holiday stress. Unfortunately, gambling can produce a host of stresses of its own.

Taking care of yourself isn't always about disconnecting. Sometimes, it's about checking in with yourself and talking with someone who can help you navigate life's challenges. Counseling isn't just for times of crisis. It can be a valuable tool for managing stress, exploring habits and behaviors, strengthening relationships, and supporting personal growth.



Oregon Problem Gambling Resource (OPGR) offers free, confidential counseling and support to anyone who wants to reconsider their relationship with gambling. Visit OPGR.org to connect with a counselor who's been there.



Find information, tools and support to help at OPGR.org