

# IRCO Job Skills Center helps youth, adults become self-sufficient

By Maileen Hamto  
The Asian Reporter

From citizenship classes geared for seniors to internship placement opportunities for high school students, the new employment skills training center at the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) is helping individuals change their lives.

“Our main purpose is to enable our clients to become self-sufficient by providing academic and employment support,” said Rowanne Haley, spokeswoman for IRCO, a nonprofit group committed to assisting refugees, immigrants, and multi-ethnic communities to develop self-sufficiency and cultural awareness.

Located at 631 N.E. 102nd Ave. in Portland, IRCO’s new employment skills center provides an avenue for job skills training for youth and adults. At an open house held recently, training class graduates who are now employed spoke about how IRCO gave them the necessary employability tools and skills. Classes range from English language and literacy classes to specific skills training in service industries, such as health care, child care,



food services, and more.

While IRCO has served many Asian refugees in the past, recent immigration trends have increased the number of workforce training clients who are of Slavic or African descent, says Haley. Still,

clients in senior citizenship classes and youth training initiatives come from various ethnic backgrounds.

Tina Phuong Do, program coordinator for the center, is at the forefront of providing citizenship instruction for

**THEY GOT SKILLZ.** The new employment skills training center at the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) is helping individuals change their lives. Pictured are Lisa Buffington, Training Service Unit Manager, and Tina Phuong Do, Program Coordinator. (AR Photo/Maileen Hamto)

seniors. Not only does she provide advice about the path to citizenship, she also plays a crucial role in helping elderly refugees who are in danger of losing benefits — such as food stamps and health insurance — through state assistance programs. Beyond her role as cultural literacy instructor, Do also helps clients connect to local resources.

“I find my job very fulfilling, because I’m able to help people,” says Do, a Vietnamese American, who joined IRCO in 1998.

IRCO also is championing a program that provides opportunities for at-risk and minority high school and college students to work alongside municipal staff members. In its second year of working with the City of Portland to place youth in summer jobs in the City, IRCO received more than 120 applications from young people age 16 through 20 for 68 internship positions. Fifty-two of 68 interns selected

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They don’t do it for the money. They don’t do it for the fame. It is a hard job. It’s dirty and sweaty and the hours are crazy. But they get to make a difference. They come into people’s lives when something has gone wrong and they do as much as they can to make it better. On a day-to-day basis they have no idea what kinds of situations will arise, what they’ll be called to handle.

The fire fighters of Redmond’s Station #1 are constantly training for emergencies they hope will never happen. A state-of-the-art training facility built with Lottery profits helps them do it. The 3-story, smoke proof, water proof, brick and concrete tower allows central Oregon fire fighters to practice just about every kind of high risk maneuver they can imagine. Because when stakes are high – when people’s lives are on the line – you don’t want to leave anything to chance.

Support for the services that help keep Oregonians safe is just one of the ways Oregon wins when Oregonians play. Lottery profits also go to economic development, education and watershed enhancement across the state.

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## Arm, hand amputees sought for University of Oregon research study

A University of Oregon researcher is seeking people age eight through 65 who have lost an arm or hand for a study of the effects of limb loss on brain activity.

Participants must commit to one three-hour appointment during which they will undergo magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) while they plan movements and undergo sensory and motor testing. Subjects will be reimbursed for their time at \$20 per hour, and receive travel expenses, meals, and overnight stays if required.

Data collection will begin immediately and will continue until March 2007.

Preferred subjects will be healthy persons who live in Oregon or downstate Washington, to allow for short travel times and reduced inconvenience to participants. Subjects with or without prostheses are welcome.

Anyone interested in participating in the research should contact Diana Alderetti at (541) 346-0337 or by e-mail to <dalderet@uoregon.edu>.

### Volunteers sought

The Nursing Mothers Counsel of Oregon is seeking new volunteers. Women with at least six months of breastfeeding experience who would like

to be a phone counselor, or those without experience who wish to volunteer in other ways, can attend free training beginning October 21 at Legacy Emmanuel Hospital.

Participants will learn how to counsel women on breastfeeding issues, teach breastfeeding classes, and improve the rates of breastfeeding in local communities. Women of diverse ethnic backgrounds and bilingual women are in very high demand.

For more information, call Rachel at (503) 380-2308 or visit <www.nursingmotherscounsel.org> and click the "Promote" button.

## Lewis & Clark launches small-business legal clinic

With 95 percent of Portland's businesses employing fewer than 50 workers, small businesses are the backbone of the local economy. But until recently there were no coordinated legal services in Oregon dedicated to serving the needs of small, low-income, and minority entrepreneurs.

Enter Lisa LeSage, assistant dean and director of business-law programs at Lewis & Clark Law School. LeSage has organized a law clinic to serve small-business clients in distressed areas that could not otherwise afford legal help. The Small



**REACHING OUT.** Lisa LeSage (left) has organized a law clinic to serve small-business clients in distressed areas that could not otherwise afford legal help. (Photos courtesy of Lewis & Clark College)

Business Legal Clinic will open its doors with an official ribbon-cutting ceremony on October 5 at 11:00am.

"The Small Business Legal Clinic is a powerful example of how public/private collaboration and a passion for economic justice can create a much-needed resource for marginalized communities, while simultaneously providing valuable education to future lawyers," said LeSage.

With funding commitments from Portland law firms Tonkon Torp, Schwabe Williamson & Wyatt, and Stoel Rives, as well as the Portland Business Alliance and Bank of the West, LeSage approached the Portland Mayor's Office and the Portland Development Commission and suggested a partnership between the City and Lewis & Clark. The clinic received a \$100,000 grant from the City and reduced-cost office space from the Portland Development Commission

in the Commission's building on the corner of N.W. Fifth Avenue and Everett Street.

"This is a win-win situation for business-transaction lawyers wanting to do pro bono legal work, and clients who otherwise are unable to access traditional legal services," said Maggie Finnerty, former finance lawyer for Stoel Rives and newly hired clinical law professor for the Small Business Legal Clinic. "It brings together lawyers, law students, and clients in a way legal education and traditional legal services never have before."

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## Nissan Pathfinder features three-row seating, powerful 4.0-liter V6, and off-road features

When it was introduced in 1986, the Nissan Pathfinder sport utility vehicle was the lone SUV in Nissan showrooms in North America. Today the family of Nissan SUVs has grown significantly in size and scope, encompassing the full-size Armada, Xterra, Murano, and the rugged Pathfinder. The Pathfinder remains true to the roots of the original with a powerful design featuring three-row seating, enhanced off-road capabilities with a 4.0-liter version of the award-winning Nissan VQ-series V6 engine, and a fully boxed, all-steel frame based on the full-size Armada.

For 2006, Pathfinder adds minor refinements including the addition of a six-disc autochanger to the SE Comfort Package, leather first- and second-row seats on the SE model, satellite radio, Desert Leather available on the Off-Road model, and a new exterior color — Majestic Blue.

The 2006 Pathfinder evolves the now classic look of the previous generations, including a large, powerful hood and headlights, solid shoulder line, large integrated fender flares, and short front and rear overhangs. Pathfinder also bears a strong family resemblance to the larger Armada, especially in the angled strut-style grille and powerful overall presence and straightforward functionality.

Standard equipment includes power windows and door locks, tilt steering wheel, dual front and rear 20-ounce cup holders, four 12-volt DC outlets (two in front, one in rear, and one in the center console box), eight-way adjustable driver's seat, and overhead console with sunglass storage.

Like the full-size Armada, the 2006 Pathfinder combines rugged body-on-frame construction with the superior ride and handling characteristics of four-wheel independent double-wishbone suspension.

Utilizing the Armada's platform as a basis, the Pathfinder builds from a fully boxed, all-steel ladder frame and adds an all-steel double-wishbone front suspension with coil-over shocks and stabilizer bar.

Powering the Pathfinder is a standard 4.0-liter DOHC V6, rated at a class-leading 270 horsepower and 291 lb.-ft.



Nissan Pathfinder

of torque. The engine is part of Nissan's award-winning VQ engine series found in the 350Z, Maxima, Altima, Murano, and Quest. The engine features a longer stroke than the 3.5-liter version and has been specifically tuned for SUV and truck applications. Maximum towing capacity (when properly equipped) is rated at 6,000 pounds. An integrated tow hitch is standard on all 2006 Pathfinders.

The Pathfinder's list of safety features and equipment includes front and rear crumple zones, Nissan Advanced Air Bag System, and three-point front seat belts with pretensioners and load limiters. Also available are supplemental front-seat side-impact air bags and roof-mounted supplemental curtain air bags for side impact and rollover protection for passengers in all three rows.

The 2006 Nissan Pathfinder starts at \$28,500, and the SE 4x4 model we tested was priced at \$36,685. For more information, visit <www.nissanusa.com>.

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for the program were born in nine other countries, and 56 consider English their second language.

Steven Phan, a senior at Benson High School, was among the interns selected for the program. With his interest in law enforcement, Phan secured an internship with Portland's Office of Emergency Management. While his internship at the office started with routine administrative tasks, Phan's enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity soon earned him more responsibility. "The more I worked with everyone, the more I learned. Our office has the best of the best, from Portland Police

to Portland Fire & Rescue. Our planning mitigation and outreach teams were always on top of their game. I was able to see how the chain of command works inside an office, by seeing how different teams under a single leader can work efficiently to achieve our main goal," he said.

Patty Rueter, Planning and Mitigation Program Manager, was impressed with Phan's initiative and excellent communication skills. "Stephen was a great asset: enthusiastic, willing, and capable. He is a very high-quality individual and I hope that we can enlist him again in some way," she said. "This is the second year that we have participated in this program and it

has been very worthwhile both times. The program is simple to participate in — which makes it very attractive. Not only do we get to connect with the teenage perspective, but we get help in the general operation of our day-to-day busy schedules and tasks."

At the recent employment skills center open house and dedication ceremony, several IRCO clients were on hand to share their stories. Also in attendance were Lonnie Roberts, Multnomah County Commissioner, and Joseph Quinones, City of Portland Diversity Development/Affirmative Action program manager.

For more information about IRCO and its programs, call (503) 234-1541 or visit <www.irc.org>.

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