

The Oregonian
Columnists

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

What Works

By Jonathan Nicholas

After U.S. cities went up in flames in the 1960s, a presidential commission issued a stern warning. America, it said, was becoming "two societies, one black, one white -- separate and unequal."

Lynn Curtis knows a lot has changed since then. After all, he once said, we did develop a national housing policy for the poor. It's the ongoing orgy of prison-building.

Curtis leads the Eisenhower Foundation, based in Washington, D.C. Its goal is to identify projects that offer opportunity to kids all too often excluded from the American Dream, then to encourage and to duplicate "what works."

Curtis thinks he's found a piece of what works in Portland.

After learning of work being done at Portland's House of Umoja, the Eisenhower Foundation helped train Portlander Johnnie A. Gage for his leadership role there. It then arranged for Gage to work with other program directors around the country and train them.

Since leaving Umoja in 1998, Gage has worked for Portland City Commissioner Jim Francesconi, then led the Youth Employment and Empowerment Coalition. He leaves to join the Eisenhower Foundation in D.C. to help develop what Gage calls "a new community policing concept in the projects, offering free rent to law enforcement officers and their families."

Gage, busy this week "taking virtual apartment tours over the Internet," hopes to start work in the capital early in March.

GIRL TALK

Five sisters, scattered around the globe, gossiping about everything from glass ceilings to nudie bars. Is this a concept with legs, or what? After a slow-lane start last summer, the "Satellite Sisters" of radio, on KOPB (91.5 FM), are hot on the back bumper of those guys on "Car Talk," the show they follow each weekend on National Public Radio around the

country. Kristen Armstrong, wife of bicycling legend Lance, is scheduled to appear this weekend. In the driver's seat for the sisters is Portlander Liz Dolan, former goddess of global marketing at Nike.