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City grants match neighborhood spirit

By BRIAN KIDD

According to Mayor Greg Nickels, one of his top priorities is building strong communities, and one way his administration plans to accomplish this is through the Neighborhood Matching Fund program. Several times a year, Seattle officials host the Small and Simple Project Awards where funds are given to groups committed to building a better community. The groups, already engaged in fundraising, have their locally raised money, donated materials and volunteer labor matched with public funds.

This year's awards were recently announced, and of the \$163,958 donated by the city for neighborhood projects, the following south neighborhood projects have benefited.

Fifteen thousand dollars went toward Benefit Park for playground improvement, which aims to purchase and install age-appropriate play equipment by a dedicated neighborhood volunteer group.

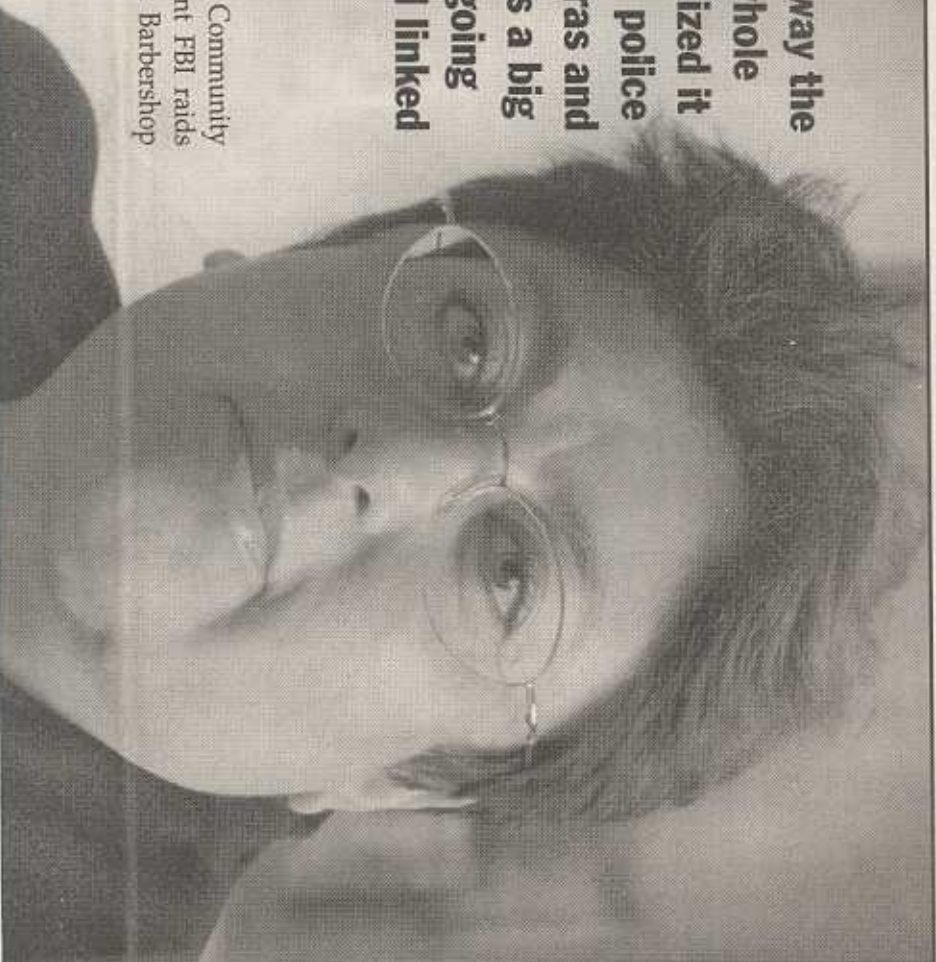
The Georgetown Historical Project received \$14,977 to create and implement a plan to identify, collect, preserve, exhibit and publish unique aspects of the history of Georgetown. It would also establish a system that would allow for the orderly and appropriate continued preservation of the photographs, documents, stories, and artifacts unique to Georgetown.

Local Muslim community disturbed over insinuated ties to terrorist activities

'We're very upset at the way the media portrayed the whole event. They sensationalized it with the helicopters and police cars and the video cameras and made it sound like it was a big terrorist organization going down, and it wasn't at all linked to terrorist acts.'

RITA ZAWAIDEH,

Chairperson of Seattle's Arab American Community Coalition commenting on the two recent FBI raids targeting the South End's Crescent Cut Barbershop and Gambia International Gift Store.



Other South End beneficiaries include Beer Sheva Park Playground with \$15,000; Liga Hispana Rainier Youth Soccer with \$15,000; the Rainier Beach Community Festival at \$12, 255; the Salvation Army Intergenerational Innovations program received \$10,000; and the Cambodian Cultural Museum received \$15,000.

For more details about this year's Small and Simple Project Awards, please visit www.cityofseattle.net/mayor

Lose Your Blues jeans-drive to benefit needy

From Dec. 26 through Jan. 2 the Bon Macy's will be collecting used-jean donations in exchange for a \$10 discount toward a new pair. Bring used, clean and preferably well kept jeans to the gift wrap department and choose from select new brands in misses, juniors or young men's departments.

The donated jeans will be given to Goodwill Industries of Seattle to distribute to neighborhood Goodwill retail stores with the goal of helping fund Goodwill's local employment and training programs. For more information, visit www.seattlegoodwill.org.

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By CHRISTINA M. McDONALD

A string of recent federal law enforcement actions in the South End have so far divulged no terrorist links while showing no connections between the raids, according to Emily Langlie, Spokesperson for the US Attorney's Office.

Raids at the Crescent Cut Barbershop and the Gambia International Gift Store concluded with various charges against the operators, but no terrorist links to their actions have been officially established.

"No charges related to terrorism have been filed at this time," asserted Langlie.

The owner of the Crescent Cut Barbershop, Rabben Shumpert, was already in the King County jail at the time the search warrant was conducted. Incarcerated, he faced charges for possession of counterfeit money and being a felon in possession of a firearm. Shumpert was not in the shop during the raid. Other men arrested in the separate raids were charged with being a felon in possession of a weapon, conspiracy to assist immigrants in fraudulently obtaining asylum, and lying on asylum applications.

"The information came in initially and developed from there, but the cases are not related," said Langlie.

The FBI is remaining tight lipped as to the reason behind the raids and how the charges have developed.

"We cannot talk about the case because it is still ongoing," Robbie Burrows, Press Information Officer for the FBI said. "The goal of the investigation was to file federal charges, and federal charges have been filed in the U.S. District court."

Many local print and television media outlets tried to link the raids to Muslim-based

terrorist organizations by creating images such as showing pictures of the Abu-Bakr mosque in their news shows or pictures of men being taken away during their daily prayers. However, officials with the South-End-based organization Hate Free Zone, which strives to help the area's Muslim and minority communities needing representation, believes these links were made because one of the men arrested had converted to Islam.

"It was a huge jump to thinking terrorism was involved, such as the way the raid was done and some media articles done," Melissa Bailey, community support services director of Hate Free Zone, said. "I think that they would be treated differently if they weren't Muslims, which is sad."

Bailey asserted that the repercussions of 9/11 are still firmly in place nationally and in the Puget Sound, albeit slightly changed years later.

"Directly after 9/11 it was very obvious attacks, such as Muslims being shouted at and threatened," Bailey said. "Now it is more subtle and harder to pick out, such as employment or religious discrimination, and special registration required for men from certain countries, which all, except for one, happen to be Muslim countries."

This string of recent sting operations on men of Middle Eastern or African origin has some Muslims in the South End of Seattle questioning whether racial profiling and religious identity are holding a stronger place in the Terror Task Force's profiling of terrorists than the gathering of hard, reliable evidence.

"There are some raids that you can justify and there is validity in why the raids take place," said Someireh Amirfazl, executive director at Refugee Women's Alliance. "How-

ever, more often than not, I think it's based on racial profiling and religious identity."

Local members of the Muslim community are shocked by the portrayal of the men arrested as terrorists and horrified by the lines that the general public seems to draw between terrorism and Muslims.

"A number of the people arrested had previously converted to Islam but the general public hears the word Muslim and in their eyes Arab equals Muslim, which equals terrorist," Rita Zawaidh, chairperson of Seattle's Arab American Community Coalition said. "We're trying to get that out of people's minds, but I think there isn't any case since 9/11 that doesn't involve racial profiling, and especially with anybody who is Muslim or a male there's racial profiling involved."

The FBI adamantly asserts that this was not the case.

"I can tell you there was no racial profiling involved in this case," Robbie Burrows, press information officer for the FBI said. "We don't crack down on areas of town. We investigate areas of federal jurisdiction."

But some still assert that the way the raids were conducted is the reason why the public drew the conclusion that a terrorist organization was being cracked down on.

"We're very upset at the way the media portrayed the whole event," said Zawaidh. "They sensationalized it with the helicopters and police cars and the video cameras and made it sound like it was a big terrorist organization going down and it wasn't at all linked to terrorist acts."

In fact, after the feds raided The Crescent Cut Barbershop and Gambian Gift Interna-

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Photo: Bradley Enghaus



Photo: Bradley Enghaus

South End FBI stings yield no terrorist ties

FBI actions temporarily closed Gambian International Gifts
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terional, Zawaidah asserts she confronted King 5 television news reporter Lori Matsukawa about her information after a news-shoot highlighting the raids. Zawaidah asked Matsukawa where she got the facts, telling her they were completely wrong.

Zawaidah insists that people need to understand the effect these style of police raids, coupled with inaccurate reporting covering them, have on the community.

"The communities in the South End and Rainier Valley are very scared. The elders from the Abubakar Mosque were so scared too even meet with the Joint Terrorism Task Force or the Seattle Police Department," Zawaidah said.

Additionally, members in the local Muslim communities are afraid to "rock the boat," according to Amrifaiz.

"People in the community do feel frustrated by the recent stings but also feel a sense of fear and a sense that anybody, even if you're a citizen, can be framed and deported," Amrifaiz said. "So they have an attitude to stay quiet so they don't get in trouble or get deported."

According to Sean Whitcomb, a

media relations officer with the Seattle Police Department, SPD officials have set up advisory councils aimed at helping the area's population affected by misinformation concerning their religion of choice and their country of origin.

"These advisory councils are a conduit for information, and officers liaison with the community," said Whitcomb. "The public disseminates [this information] to their friends and colleagues who, in turn, can tell us what's going on."

According to one unidentified source, officers of the Seattle Police Department have their hands tied in regards to giving the public information regarding the recent federal raids.

"The Seattle Police Department in the South End are really very good and are trying to help and to work with the community, but their hands are tied. They can't say anything or do anything because they're being told what they have to do by the U.S. Attorney's Office," the source said.

However, despite the efforts of Seattle's police, and various groups

advocating equality for both religion and race, more attention seems to be focused on linking Muslims with terrorism.

"The media pays a lot of attention to militant Muslims and doesn't show that so many Muslims want peace," stated Amrifaiz. "Being over zealous, militant or destructive doesn't have anything to do with being Muslim and people constantly are bombarded by images of Muslim fanatics engaging in acts of violence, but don't pay attention to Muslims committed to doing good. We have to put things in perspective."

Amrifaiz came to America from Iran to go to college and has stayed ever since. She praises the greatness of this country but is overwhelmed with sadness of the events that have taken place in the last few years.

"It's devastating because this country is great, and it's dangerous to the greatness of this country if we don't mind and uphold what this country was built on, which was freedom of expression and freedom of religion," asserted Amrifaiz.