

NEIGHBORS AS HEROES**Grover W. Sparkman**

Grover Sparkman is a past president and now board member of the Foster Business Association. He helped form the association about five years ago from the old Foster Boosters Association, which he had been involved in for about 25 years.

As a real estate agent, Sparkman has a professional interest in helping outer Southeast Portland, but people who know him say his work goes far beyond that. For years, he has been an informal liaison between businesses and the city, helping them and stay in the neighborhood.

At City Hall, Sparkman says, "unfortunately, if I walk in and I'm well known, I get something. If I'm not, I don't."

Sparkman is well known. Until about three years ago, the Foster Business Association was about the only group of activists in outer Southeast, said City Commissioner Gretchen Kafoury. Sparkman and some of his associates would "talk about their problems every time they could get a forum." Eventually, Kafoury said, people at City Hall began to pay attention.

Sparkman was one of the few representatives from Southeast involved in Mayor Vera Katz's Prosperous Portland plan. And he has been active in helping business owners negotiate with planners on the Outer Southeast Plan. The planners have a tendency to try to make everything the same, he said. Foster Road isn't Hawthorne Boulevard.

"There's no way you could have that kind of a revitalization on Foster Road. Foster Road needs to have the lumberyards, the appliance dealers, the home improvement centers, the Morlan plumbings, because we're different."

