

2001 in Review

A look back at the faces, races and cases that kicked off the 21st century
by Jim Radosta

Portland Public Schools board member Derry Jackson outraged the community in July when he said, "I see the Jews running everything." This came just months after his failed effort to lift the district's ban on military recruiters. During that ordeal he sent an e-mail to colleague Sue Hagmeier, calling homosexuality a "behavior" as opposed to race, which is determined at birth.

More than 30 people formed Portlanders Against Prejudice, promising to launch a recall effort as soon as possible. According to Oregon law, they can't file a petition until officeholders have served six months of their current term, which means they could start gathering signatures next month.

But times have changed since last summer, according to Kathie Humes, who attended that initial meeting. Although she doesn't speak for everyone, she no longer is interested in recalling Jackson.

"For me personally, Sept. 11 changed things," Humes says. "I think we need to focus the energies of our community on taking care of each other and our children. Such a campaign right now would be divisive."

Meanwhile, fellow Portlander Against Prejudice Mark Wiener says current events make a response to Jackson's anti-Semitic and anti-gay



Derry Jackson apologizes July 25 at the Blanchard Education Service Center

comments more important than ever. "I think the reasons that he shouldn't be on the school board are just as valid...if not more so, given what's happening in the world."

According to Wiener, the recall effort still could happen. He says people are gauging their level of interest and will make a decision within the next month.

A farmer found the body of Loni Kai Okaruru, a 28-year-old trans woman, Aug. 26 in a field near Hillsboro. It was the first homicide to be classified as a bias crime in Washington County.

Investigators think a driver offered Okaruru a ride under the assumption that she was a woman but became angered upon learning

otherwise. Washington County Sheriff's Detective Michael O'Connell said a similar incident had happened at least once in the victim's past.

More than 500 people attended a candlelight vigil Sept. 14 at Pioneer Courthouse Square to remember Okaruru as well as the thousands of lives lost in the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. About 150 mourners gathered Oct. 7 at the steps of the Washington County Courthouse for a Rally Against Hate.

In July, *Just Out* wrote about a 7-year-old youth support group coordinated by a counselor at McMinnville High School. Susie Alin says Counter Balance continues to struggle financially.

"For a while I received a small stipend to help cover my time as a professional," she reveals. "I applied for another grant last year, but no luck. So this year, as in other years, I have been personally covering the expenses."

After being without a home for four months, a McMinnville church agreed to give Counter Balance a place to hold meetings. According to Alin, between two and 20 kids show up every week.

"There are at least three students who have told me that they are alive and well today because Counter Balance is there for them," she says. "There are others who have been helped in other ways; safety and respect of oneself are frequent topics."

Debra Walker, a 50-year-old sergeant from the Yamhill County Sheriff's Office, still is feeling the effects of the fallout after her transition from male to female.

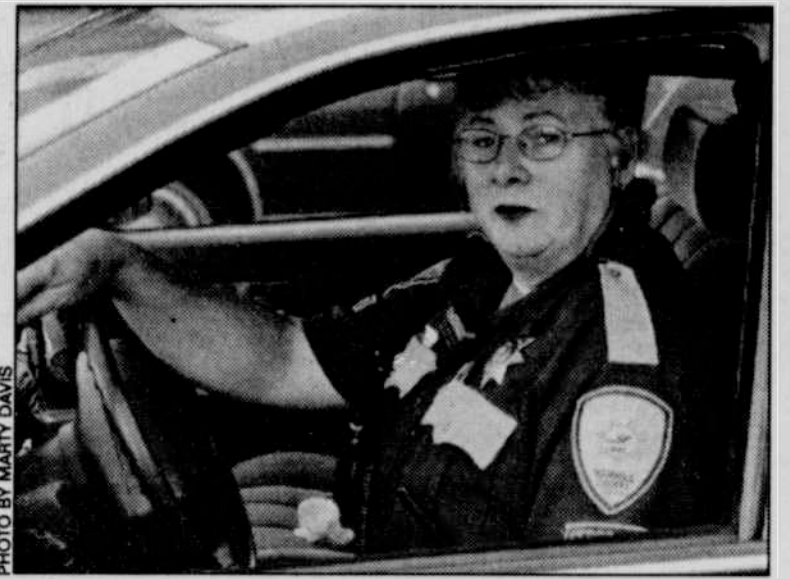
Despite an exemplary record, in the year after her announcement of a gender change, the department conducted six internal investigations into her performance. For more than a year, she was pulled off the road as field supervisor and reassigned to a desk job.

In mid-August, Walker was demoted from sergeant and placed on a year's probation. She thinks the county wants nothing more than to make her disappear.

"The probation thing meant the union can't represent [me] and that I could be terminated for any reason as it placed me as the lowest seniority member of the union," she says. "Didn't matter that I had 18 years' service with the county."

Openly gay City Councilor Jim Moeller faced a firestorm this year surrounding the Vancouver/Clark County Human Rights Commission. The basic goal of the agency, requiring about \$50,000 in annual funding, was to eliminate and prevent discrimination in work, housing, public accommodation, credit and insurance.

Critics saw it as a duplication of services provided by the Washington State Human Rights Com-

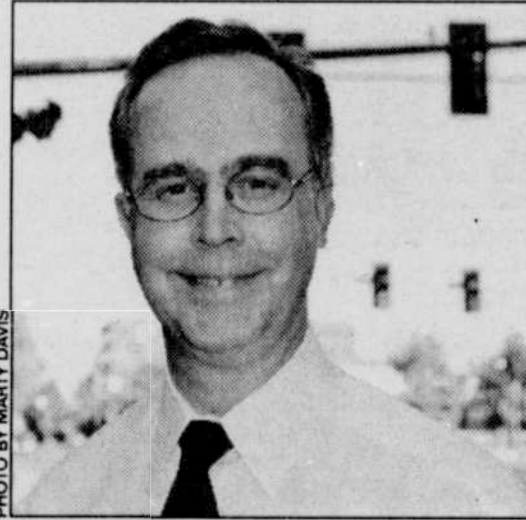


The Yamhill County Sheriff's Office demoted Debra Walker in August

mission. In addition, they honed in on Moeller's sexual orientation, saying he established the agency to expand sexual minority rights.

"The implication is that there is also some 'gay agenda,'" he told *Just Out* in September. "Sexual orientation currently is not protected in Washington state from discrimination in housing, employment or public accommodation, and since the local HRC will be based on state and federal laws, their concerns in this area are groundless and appear overtly bigoted."

Joanie Schrader led a petition drive to get the decision placed on the Nov. 6 ballot as a referendum. The commission was defeated 65 percent to 35 percent.



City Councilor Jim Moeller was accused of promoting a "gay agenda" in Vancouver, Wash.

Domestic partners continue to register with Multnomah County. Since Sept. 1, 2000, more than 300 have paid \$60 for the certificate.

But interest appears to be slowing. After an initial surge of 192 couples during the first four months, only 112 have registered so far this year.

The registry allows all unmarried domestic partners, including same-sex couples, to formalize their relationships as public

record. Although it is mostly a symbolic gesture, the number of couples who sign up will help determine when the next step might occur in granting some of the benefits afforded to married couples.

And as a sure sign of assimilation, a county official says "three or four" couples already have dissolved their partnerships. All they had to do was fill out another form and fork over an additional \$25. ☐



A mourner lights a candle for Loni Okaruru



Couples celebrate their domestic partnership registry