

The Portland Observer

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THE WEEK IN REVIEW

School Delays Heard In Many Tongues

If bad weather forces school closures and delays this winter, the information will be presented in nine different languages on the Portland Public School radio station KBPS 1450 AM. Announcements will be made in English, Spanish, Russian, two forms of Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Lao and Hmong. The information will also be provided to commercial radio, TV stations, and newspapers.

Wyden, Smith Win Nominations

U.S. Rep. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., and state Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Pendleton, won their party nominations in a special mail ballot Primary Election Tuesday to succeed Bob Packwood in the U.S. Senate. In their victory speeches, Smith attacked Wyden as a Washington, D.C. insider and liberal. Wyden said Smith represents extremist views, not in character with Oregon.

Mail Election Ease No Surprise

Traditional ballot boxes may give way in Oregon to voting by mail, according to University of Oregon political scientist Priscilla Southwell. She said the low number of complaints during last week's Republican and Democratic primaries is proof that voters like the idea of mail-in ballots, which until now, have been used only for non-primary and non-general elections.

Black-Owned Businesses Increase

The number of African American-owned businesses in the United States has increased 46 percent over the past five years, according to a new Census Bureau report. Receipts from these firms increased 63 percent during the period, from \$19.8 billion to \$32.2 billion, officials said.

Water Facility Coming To St. Johns

The largest public construction project ever built in the St. Johns neighborhood of north Portland was started Monday with a ground breaking ceremony at Cathedral Park. The City of Portland's \$8.6 million Water Pollution Control Laboratory will be used to analyze water quality.

Gift Boxes Go To Local Kids

Northwest Medical Teams International is distributing 3,000 Gift of Hope boxes to children in the Portland, Salem and Vancouver area. The boxes, filled with sweat shirts, hygiene items, books, school supplies, snacks, candy, stuffed animals and toys, were distributed Monday to north and northeast Portland children enrolled in Albina Head Start.

Portland Observer

25th ANNIVERSARY

Celebrating Its 25th Anniversary Portland Observer Praised For Family Values



BY PROMISE KING

At 25 years of publication, the Portland Observer is holding its head high as a multi-cultural newspaper geared toward promoting family values and community pride.

Dignitaries from the business world, high-level politicians and ordinary community folks who read the newspaper weekly, braved the bad weather Friday night to witness this testimony at a 25th anniversary celebration.

First, it was Congressman Ron Wyden who gave the Portland Observer kudos for bringing insight on issues that impact metropolitan Portland.

"I read the Portland Observer carefully, because in it, I find news that is relevant to our day-to-day lives. News about the values we cherish as Americans and news about our commitment to responsibilities. I am here today in support of this cause," Wyden told an elated crowd.

Portland Police Chief Charles Moose was the keynote speaker. His accolades came in a subtle tone.

"The Portland Observer is a real community newspaper that is very involved in building pride. It shows the pictures of neighborhood kids and this has reinforced their pride in our community," Moose said.

In a swift stride, the police chief chided the Portland-based minority-owned newspaper for not always being "politically correct" a comment that drew a smile out of Joyce Washington, the newspaper's publisher.

"Your paper," Portland Mayor Vera Katz agreed in written testimony, "has consistently offered a voice that reinforces the positive aspects of the great diversity of our city. For this, we have all been made stronger in our determination to work together as a community."

State Rep. Margaret Carter, D-Portland, concluded that the success of the Portland Observer speaks clearly that a "family can run a successful business in our community." Carter said others could emulate the Washington family.

Portland Urban League President Lawrence Dark, Portland tourism official Roy Jay, and Skanner Publisher Bernie Foster, were among the community leaders who were at the occasion.

"We are very glad that our job has made a difference in someone's life. That we are very proud of," Joyce Washington said.

Portland Police Chief Charles Moose, Portland Observer Publisher Joyce Washington and Tony Washington attend the newspapers' 25th Anniversary Celebration. See related story and photos in Metro section, inside.

(Photo by Johnny Obina Maxey)

Congressman Mfume Named To NAACP Presidency

The NAACP board of directors Saturday elected U.S. Rep. Kweisi Mfume, D-Md. as new president of the nation's oldest civil rights organization.

Mfume, 47, has represented the Baltimore area in Congress since 1986, is to take up his post at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in mid-February, officials said.

In his acceptance speech, Mfume said he spoke Friday with President Clinton and Democratic congressional leaders "to advise them of my decision to leave the Congress in mid-February to assume this new challenge."

Mfume is the 16th House Democrat to

announce they would leave their posts or not seek re-election.

"The decision to accept this new opportunity did not come lightly," he said. "At this point in time, however, I am convinced, without reservation, that I can best affect social, economic and political change in the broader capacity that the NAACP represents."

Mfume, who will be responsible for day-to-day operations and serve as the NAACP's principal spokesperson, said the organization is at "the most critical point," and must increase its political power "by organizing and energizing voters in every congressional district in America."

He also called for more emphasis on

"educational excess and individual responsibility, and "creating an infrastructure for empowerment and economic parity."

The board chose Mfume to replace Benjamin Chavis, who was fired last year amid accusations he misused organization funds to head off a sex discrimination lawsuit against him.

Chavis himself had originally been seen as a chance for the NAACP to regain its political position after a period of steady decline in the 1980s.

Founded in 1909, the NAACP extended its membership across the country and was a key player in the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

In recent years, however, it saw many of its 2,250 NAACP local chapters slip into inactivity and the average age of its 500,000 members rise to 55 — signalling a failure to reach a new generation of black activists and voters.

The Ethnic NewsWatch reported in August that the NAACP is battling a \$3.8 million budget deficit and needs to raise \$10 million just to retire its debt and carry the group through 1996.

A life-long NAACP member, Mfume was chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus for two years and now serves on the House Banking and Financial Services Committee and the Small Business Committee.

Denny's Settles Racism Suits

Denny's Restaurants says the company will pay \$46 million to settle two class-action lawsuits charging racial discrimination.

Denny's, a subsidiary of Flagstar Co. Inc., will pay 158,523 minority California claimants \$177.71 each. In the second case involving all other states, 136,014 claimants will receive \$132.28 each.

The lawsuits were brought by African-American customers who were the victims of alleged discrimination between 1987 and 1994. According to their testimony, African-Americans were discouraged from patronizing Denny's and the restaurant chain had few or no black managers or franchisees.

The company has since instituted fast track training programs for minority candidates and diversity workshops for all its 50,000 employees.

Denny's said it also has added minority representation on the board of directors of the parent company and increased the number of minority-owned franchises to 26 restaurants from one in 1993.

Court-approved claims administrators have completed the claims administration process and are distributing checks to 294,537 class members this month, Denny's said Monday.



Area kids try on some of the colorful coats at the Salvation Army Coats for Kids event. Thanks to the donations by many residents, the Salvation Army and the Oregon Dry Cleaners Assoc., nearly 2,000 needy children received warm coats for the winter.

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