

Scholarship gives Renfro chance to finish college

Mel Renfro has a chance to go back to the University of Oregon and finish his degree.



See Metro, page B1.

Merry Christmas
&
HAPPY KWANZAA

New Generation Chorale

Flashy Choir conductor Ricky Dillard's New Generation Chorale album is a smash.



See Arts & Entertainment, page B1.

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THE WEEK IN REVIEW

Court blocks execution

The Supreme Court blocked today's scheduled execution of a Virginia man who gathered international support in his plea for a new trial. The court held up the execution of Joseph O'Dell, who had been scheduled to die by injection today, until it can act on his appeal. O'Dell, convicted of raping and murdering a woman in 1986, claims he is innocent and that DNA tests will show that blood stains found on his T-shirt were not from the victim.

Lovers plead innocent

Amy Grossberg and Brian Peterson, the 18-year-old lovers accused of killing their newborn son, will stay behind bars for now. At a court hearing Tuesday in Wilmington, Del., the judge denied a request to free the teens on bail while they await trial, but scheduled another hearing to consider the issue next month. Both Grossberg and Peterson pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder charges. And defense lawyers said there were serious questions that the baby they are accused of killing and dumping in a motel trash bin would have lived. They contended it had congenital brain damage.

Simpson alternate dismissed

An alternate juror at O.J. Simpson's wrongful death civil trial has been dismissed. A source close to the case tells Reuters that the dismissed alternate juror had written in a Christmas card to a friend that he was on the celebrity case. The friend happened to be a deputy sheriff and he notified the judge. In testimony Tuesday, a forensic expert back-tracked on the testimony he gave Monday. Michael Baden, a New York State Police medical examiner, said that two assailants might have killed Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman. He conceded the facts point to only one killer.

Nursing home plan killed

The Clinton administration has killed a controversial plan to curtail inspection of nursing homes that care for Medicare and Medicaid patients. The move follows a warning from a consumer group and an advocate for the elderly that care could be hurt by the plan.

Fed doesn't change rates

The Federal Reserve has decided to keep interest rates unchanged amid signs that the see-saw economy is settling down to steady growth as 1996 draws to a close.

Winter storm hits plains

One of the worst winter storms in recent memory engulfed the northern U.S. plains today, stranding thousands in their homes amid white-out conditions and bitter cold. Snowdrifts as high as four feet have closed highways in the Dakotas and authorities say many roads were reopened immediately because plows have been unable to keep up with the drifts.

Red cross says six slaughtered

The International Committee of the Red Cross says six Western staff members of the relief agency were murdered in their beds at a hospital compound in the breakaway Russian region of Chechnya today. A Red Cross spokesman says two Norwegians, one Dutch, one Canadian, one Spaniard and one New Zealander were killed. The Red Cross says it has suspended all its activities in Chechnya.

\$300,000 invested future workforce

Major donation to state's leading reading program challenges others to "Get SMART"



U.S. Bank of Oregon recently committed \$300,000 to the Oregon Children's Foundation SMART (Start Making A Reader Today) program, Oregon's leading program dedicated to increasing literacy among elementary school students. John Eskildsen, president and CEO of U.S. Bank of Oregon (far left) and Neil Goldschmidt, former Oregon governor and founder of the Oregon Children's Foundation (far right) learned first hand how to "Get SMART" from northeast Portland Woodlawn Elementary School students (left to right) Celia Orduna, Dominique McCallister, and Robert Conde.

As one of Oregon's top ten employers, U.S. Bank has committed \$300,000 to the Oregon Children's Foundation SMART (Start Making A Reader Today) program, Oregon's leading program dedicated to increasing literacy among elementary

school students. U.S. Bank's challenge grant marks the largest donation received by SMART since it began in 1992.

"U.S. Bank's contribution gives us the framework to greatly expand SMART and meet our goal of reaching more than 200

schools statewide," said Neil Goldschmidt, former Oregon governor and the founder of the Oregon Children's Foundation. SMART currently serves 78 schools in 10 counties, involving 3,900 students and volunteers. Over the next three years, U.S. Bank will provide \$300,000 to the Oregon Children's

Foundation to help implement their long-range plan for expanding SMART statewide.

The bank challenges the community to collectively match this \$300,000 during this same three-year period to bring SMART to children throughout Oregon.

"Encouraging children to read and enjoy books at an early age critical to the development of important skills which will increase their future opportunities," said John Eskildsen, CEO and President, U.S. Bank of Oregon. "SMART has proven to be effective in developing these skills. I encourage companies large and small, and individuals, to 'Get Smart' and join us in our support of this outstanding program."

SMART volunteers read one-on-one with children in grades kindergarten through second. SMART students are further encouraged to read at home with parents or siblings through gifts of two new books each month. SMART students have received more than 140,000 books since the program began. The goal of SMART is to create enthusiastic readers who can read at their grade level when they finish elementary school.

Currently, SMART programs are offered in Clatsop, Crook, Deschutes, Jackson, Jefferson, Klamath, Lane, Linn, and Multnomah Counties. SMART area managers around the state have seen this program at work.

"SMART generates tangible, immediate results and offers kids positive adult role models," Mary Jubitz, Executive Director Oregon Children's Foundation. "We can actually measure improvement in a child's academic performance as a result of the extra attention focused on reading skills."

Area businesses or individuals interested in supporting SMART through a contribution of dollars or time are encouraged to call Jubitz at (503) 721-7175.

NORPAC annual meeting draws pickets

Demanding the same rights and respect that American workers enjoy, Mexican farmworkers and their supporters gathered Tuesday in Salem to speak out against repressive labor practices by Willamette Valley growers.

The protest by more than 40 people was led by Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN), Oregon's union of farmworkers. Bearing red flags, placards and banners, the demonstrators met outside the Quality Inn on Market Street, host to the annual meeting of NORPAC growers. NORPAC, a group of 250 growers who own several canneries as well as an international marketing and distribution system, is the largest food processing company west of the Mississippi River.

Among the demonstrators were several members of the Oregon Farm Worker Ministry. Religious supporters have lately played a key role in the Oregon farmworker struggle. Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO), representing 2,000 churches and 17 denominations throughout Oregon, voted November 13 to endorse PCUN's national consumer boycott of NORPAC products sold under the labels "Flav-R-Pac" (frozen fruits, vegetables and juices) and "Santiam" (canned fruits and vegetables). Also, members of two Methodist churches in Salem assisted workers protesting low wages, lack of job security and the collection of \$3.00 per day from each worker for rides to the field at Five Oaks Farms, owned by NORPAC board member Jerry Ditchen. Ditchen eventually paid \$10,500 in compensation to workers after extensive negotiations between his attorney and an attorney representing the workers.

EMO has repeatedly called on NORPAC to respect farmworkers' right to vote on



Farmworkers picketed NORPAC's annual meeting in Salem

whether they want union representation, a right that workers have in NORPAC canneries. NORPAC has ignored these requests and also refused to agree to a policy of non-retaliation against workers who openly organize on their farms, according to Leone Bicchieri, PCUN Boycott Coordinator. In the summer, many workers will begin harvesting fields at 7 a.m., work all day, take a shower and work the swing shift at a NORPAC cannery.

The NORPAC boycott has been in effect since 1992 and has received the official endorsement of more than 50 local, regional

and national organizations, including the United Farm Workers of America, the National Synod of the United Church of Christ, Oregon Public Employees' Union and Council #75 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. PCUN is also working to get companies to respect the NORPAC boycott. Currently, Wholesome & Hearty Foods, maker of "Gardenburger" and a company that promotes itself as socially responsible, is being boycotted because of its distribution contract with NORPAC's business group.

An important concern for workers along

with wage and hour issues is pesticide exposure. "In the strawberries, there's a white powder that when we're picking it gets in my eyes and makes rashes on my hands", said Hermilio Herrera, 32, of Molalla, one of the workers at the protest. Strawberries are one of the crops with the heaviest use of pesticides.

Between the boycott and field organizing pressure, and the experience at Five Oaks Farms, growers are now "thinking the unthinkable." "It's no longer a matter of 'if unionization will occur in Oregon agriculture', a prominent grower recently told a