

Portland Observer **Family**

**Time for some child control**

CONTRIBUTED STORY FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Earlier this year, a six-year-old boy pulled out a gun at school and killed one of his classmates at a school in Mount Morris Township, Michigan. Her name was Kayla Rolland. She was cute, rosy-cheeked blond girl with intelligent eyes. She came from an apparently normal, loving family. Her killer did not.

No, the little boy's family could be called a lot of things, but normal wasn't one of them. The family's collective police record reads like something out of an Iceberg Slim or Donald Goines novel. His 28-year-old father is in jail - again - and his mother has demons that prevent her from coping with the pressures of keeping a job, paying rent and raising her three children. She left her two boys with an uncle. That's when a sad story turned sordid. The uncle was a drug dealer whose home was a crack house.

A lot of foolish people tried to turn this story into a gun control issue and babbled about trigger locks for handguns. They don't live in neighborhoods like the one that trapped the boy, and they know little about drug dealers.

A drug dealer, to survive in the "profession," must be totally ruthless. He must be willing and able to kill at a second's notice. There are no trigger locks in a crack house. You won't find tenderness, mercy or morals, either. Frankly, the safety and well being of his nephews was probably the last thing on the uncle's mind.

A crack house is a vile place Words cannot describe the filth and squalor.

Neighbors, out of fear, did not call the authorities to rescue these children. They told reporters they saw the children, sad-faced and forlorn, sitting in front of the house as crackheads staggered in and out.

Teachers and parents also rushed to tell their stories. The boy, they said, was a problem child. He was hostile and bullying and once stabbed another classmate with a pencil. But no one cared enough to take the time to really look and ask what was wrong with his life. When the boys came to school unkempt and tired, no one called child protective services. His father knew that something was wrong, but what could he do? He was in jail. A time bomb was left ticking. When it exploded, little Kayla died. Kayla's mother was one of several hundred thousand women who spent Mother's Day in Washington, DC at the so-called Million Mom March. With all due respect and sympathy to a grieving mother, I wish I could tell her that it wasn't a lack of unbending gun control that killed her daughter - it was lack of child control. Raising decent, moral children is hard and sometimes thankless work, but Kayla would be alive today if those boys had at least one real parent.

Years ago, my father told me children who were not reared by strong parents who possessed a guiding hand and watchful eyes were dangerous to themselves and to the entire neighborhood. That little boy in Michigan and the two monsters of Columbine High School in Colorado are perfect examples.

There are those who hesitate to place any blame at the feet of the parents of the Columbine killers Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris, but not me. When I

was ten years old, someone gave me a copy of Mandingo. It was an extravagantly trashy novel, part Southern Gothic and part sex romp. I didn't understand a lot of the words, but I knew it was something my parents wouldn't approve of.

I read it in secret, and hid the offending book in my toy chest. It took my mother, who I swear would've made a fine FBI agent, only two days to find it. The parents of Klebold and Harris were unaware their sons had an arsenal in their rooms. That is parenting set on the autopilot, and it leads to tragedies big and small.

There may, however, be a happy ending for the boys in Michigan. The authorities stepped in to try to save this family. They don't live in a crack house anymore. The kids are living with an aunt. They will attend a private school at the state's expense. Their mother, in exchange for admitting her parental ineptitude and taking a parenting class, may regain custody and get another chance to do right by her kids. There is a tiny glimmer of hope for this family. It's just such as shame that Kayla Rolland had to die to give it to them.

The line between a good kid and a troubled one is not wide. Many times, the only thing standing between a child and disaster is Mom and Dad. So don't be afraid of what your sophisticated friends or even what your child thinks. Guide your child. Be there. Teach them with fairness, kindness and firmness, and don't hesitate to exercise your right to control their actions. Practice child control. You may not get a thank you, at least not until your child has children of his or her own, but you may save a life.

**NE Portland residents join Kaiser Permanente's newly formed member advisory council**



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Two residents of the Concordia neighborhood in northeast Portland have joined Kaiser Permanente's newly created Member Advisory Council.

Beverly Johnson, a retired principal of Llewellyn Elementary School in southeast Portland, was elected vice chair of the council. Also serving on the 19-member council is Audrey Haynes, who

retired as principal of southeast Portland's Franklin High School.

Johnson, Haynes and other council members will advise Kaiser Permanente on policy, promote effective use of health care services, and suggest service improvements. Members of the council were selected from about 100 volunteers from throughout the health plan's service area.

They represent diverse ages, genders, ethnic groups, work experience and length of coverage.

Michael Johnson, who chairs the new council, says, "Though this council, Kaiser Permanente and its members can be partners, not just as a doctor-patient relationship, but on a larger scale." Kaiser Permanente Northwest President Barbe West says, "We already survey members in a variety of ways. I'm excited about adding this different opportunity - a way to listen directly and to share ideas."

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**Weekly unemployment payments to increase**

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Beginning July 1, the amount paid to Oregonians filing for state unemployment insurance will increase slightly. According to the Oregon Employment Department, the state agency that administers the unemployment program, the maximum weekly payment will rise to \$376, while the minimum amount will be \$88.

Under Oregon law, each year the Employment Department recalculates the maximum and minimum amounts paid weekly to those filing for unemployment benefits. The

amounts are set as percentages of the average weekly wage earned by Oregonians.

The minimum unemployment figure is 15% of average weekly wage, and the maximum amount is 64%. Both dollar amounts are rounded down to the nearest dollar as required by law.

The new payment amounts are up slightly from those paid over the past year. The maximum payment over the past 12 months has been \$360, with a \$84 minimum payment. The change affects new unemployment insurance claims filed on or after June 30. Those with existing unemployment claims will continue to receive the same weekly amount.

**Queenie's retirement party**

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Fun, fabulous, classy, event of the millennium were words used to describe Queenie Samuel's retirement (graduation) celebration. After 30+ combined years with the City Bureau of Health and Multnomah County Health Dept., Queenie has retired or as her sons Allen Wilson of Fremont, CA. And Nathaniel Wilson of Las Vegas, NV, said, "mama" has finally graduated to a new phase in her life. Both sons were present along with 150 other friends and family, at McMinnamns Kennedy School to wish Queenie well.

The attendees were welcomed with Ghanaian drumming by Israel Annoh of the NW African American Ballet. Followed by hors d'oeuvres and libations. The program co-hosts were

Wilma Smith BS-PNP and James E. McDonald MS-FNP. Queenie's work history was provided by Billi Odegaard, retired Director of MCHD. Lillian Shirley the sitting Director of MCHD presented Queenie with an award plaque, of appreciation from the Health Dept. the highlight of the evening was the African American tap group, age 9-16, called the HotShot Tap Dancers.

They performed to a continued standing ovation. (If you have never seen them perform - take this writers advice run, don't walk, to their next performance). The evening was completed with dancing to the band called "Smooth" with leader Rico Lopez. They also gave a stellar performance.

Queenie's plans for the future include volunteer work with the SMART reading program, work with the non-

profit organization Friends of Public Health, and she has just been elected to the Oregon Nurse Assoc. Board of Directors.

Her immediate plans were treating her grandchildren and their parents to a week at Kah-Nee-Ta Resort and then back to the Oregon coast for a stay at Gearhart by the sea. Travel, which has always been a hobby for Queenie (most recent out of country travel in Nov. 1999 was 2 weeks in Jerusalem visiting the Holy Land and one week in Egypt at the Sphinx and Tombs of the Pharaohs) starts with an Eastern Caribbean cruise to the US Virgin Islands.

Queenie wishes to thank all who were present at the celebration for making it a success and apologize to those unable to get tickets because of the capacity crowd. Thank you for the memories - and may God Bless!!

**13<sup>th</sup> annual Blues Festival breaks events records for donations of food and funds**

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From teen idol Jonny Lang to Blues legend Pinetop Perkins, a diverse cast of musical talent drew droves of fans to Tom McCall Waterfront Park in Portland over this Fourth of July weekend, filling Oregon Food Bank's coffers and trucks with \$300,000 in cash donations and 97,000 pounds of food. Exceeding the Food Bank's goals of

\$250,000 and 80,000 pounds of food, donations at the Safeway Waterfront Blues Festival will help garner a total of 1.9 million pounds of food, the equivalent of about 1.4 million meals for hungry people in Oregon and Clark County, Washington.

The Oregon Potters Association's Empty Bowls Project contributed proceeds of more than \$17,000 toward the donation total. The year's pottery sales topped a previous record of \$13,000 and brought the group's six-

year donations close to \$100,000. Thanks to sponsorship of the festival, 100 percent of blues fans' donations will go to Oregon Food Bank. Oregon Food Bank uses proceeds from the festival to collect large-scale donations of food industry, and to warehouse and distribute that food throughout a network that links 700 hunger-relief agencies in Oregon and Clark County. OFB also operates education, food security and nutrition and budgeting programs