

Life on Alberta 2002

Street fair embraces multicultural neighborhood

Students from King School and the surrounding neighborhood (left) cycle down Alberta Street as part of the community's Street Fair Parade last Saturday.

PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Bridget Smith (right), a 5th grade teacher at Boise Eliot Elementary, shows off some glass work at the Alberta Street Fair. Smith makes the artifacts with school counselor Laurie Fenk and two other school secretaries.

PHOTO BY DAVID PLECH/
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Christina Baldwin and Tony Kiene carry the banner of the Black United Fund of Oregon with its motto "Helping People Help Themselves."

PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Senator Pleads Case

Sen. Avel Gordly of northeast Portland appeared before lawmakers last week to issue the following statement on the impact of the proposed cuts on mental health services in Oregon:

I am here this afternoon because of my profound concern for the people of our state with mental health needs. The proposed cuts to their programs would cause irresponsible and irreparable harm in our community.

You know my personal interest in mental health and how it has affected my family. You may not be as aware that my office worked very hard last session with the Governor's office and Rep. Kruse for passage of HB 3024, which embodies the recommendations of the Governor's Mental Health Alignment Work Group.

I served on that work group which studied the history of providing services for the mentally ill in Oregon and which made recommendations to repair and build on a badly broken system. Removal of the funding for local mental health plans in Oregon counties will eliminate much needed collaboration between the local and mental health authority and local law enforcement. Given the dramatic increase in demand for mental health services statewide, particularly for acute and long term care, eliminating collaboration at this time would stall progress on potential remedies to a system already in a resource crisis and facing legal challenges.

If you look closely at the impacts on people and services in the proposed cuts to mental health, you will find people removed from services that make it possible for them to work; Thirteen programs that will close; Loss of jobs; More civil commitments and not enough space in the state hospital; More homelessness; More crime; More children without access to treatment in times of psychiatric crisis; Clients that may have to stay in jail longer and potential for legal action.

We are talking about thousands of Oregon citizens who will be unable to be treated and to function in the community, many of whom will find their illnesses worsening; some will become suicidal. This is not an exaggeration. The cost of the consequences of the cuts will far exceed any savings.

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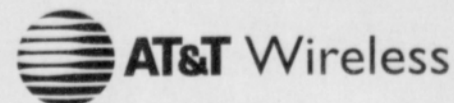
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