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The



City of Roses'

Volume XXXII • Number 43

Established in 1970

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www.portlandobserver.com

Wednesday • October 30, 2002

THE WEEK IN REVIEW

Sniper suspects linked to Tacoma murder

Long before a series of sniper attacks terrorized the suburbs of Washington, D.C., the suspects may have begun their reign of terror on the West Coast with the slaying of a Tacoma woman and a shooting at a synagogue, police say.

Gas Russians used was opium derivative

The mysterious gas Russian forces pumped into a theater to end a hostage crisis was an opiate, a chemical related to morphine, Pentagon officials said Monday. The gas killed 116 of the hostages as well as the hostage takers.

Auto dealer gets probation, community service

Portland auto dealer Scott Thomason pleaded guilty Monday to charges related to a hit-and-run and was sentenced to 18 months of probation and 100 hours of community service.

Student Opens Fire in Class

A student opened fire in a class at the University of Arizona nursing school Monday. Authorities said four people, including two professors and the attacker, were killed. The attacker was a Gulf War veteran and an Arizona nursing student.

Diplomat gunned down

An American diplomat in Amman, Jordan was assassinated Monday in front of his house, gunned down by eight pistol shots in the first such targeted attack on a US diplomat in decades.

Amish buggy accident kills 2

A horse pulling an Amish buggy apparently got spooked, sending the buggy into a pond and drowning two children in the town of Leon, about 40 miles south of Buffalo. Also Sunday, a van hit a horse and Amish buggy, injuring seven family members in central Pennsylvania.

Student drug tests constitutional

Requiring drug tests of students who want to participate in extracurricular sports doesn't violate search and seizure protections in the state constitution, the Oregon Court of Appeals ruled. The decision upheld the Oakridge School District in Salem, which excluded a student from playing volleyball after her parents refused to consent to have her tested for drug and alcohol use.

Dog shoots man in accident

Pheasant season took an ugly turn for Michael Murray, 42, when Sonny, his year-old English setter pup, shot him. Last Saturday, Murray was lining up a photo of the seven birds his hunting party shot. A loaded 12-gauge shotgun lay on the ground near the frisky dog, who stepped on the trigger and shot his owner in the ankle.

Humbolt Turnaround

Principal puts faith in children's success

BY DAVID PLECHL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Principal Judy Bryant expects a lot from her students. In turn, her students expect a lot from themselves.

In the six years since she took over a troubled Humbolt Elementary, Bryant has seen test scores rise and the confidence of students soar.

Last week she was honored with the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award for outstanding service, along with \$25,000. The award sheds light on what has been a highly successful yet difficult adventure.

"I knew it was going to be tough, but I didn't know how tough," Bryant said of the work to put Humbolt back on its feet.

When Bryant first came to the school in 1997, the building was in disarray. Student performance was slumping, parents and teachers were frustrated.

Bryant quickly made her expectations clear. She created a team atmosphere, bringing community members and parents together in support of greater academic standards.

"When I came here I had a vision of what it could be," she said. "I was trying to get the best out of the kids, and they rose."

Bryant grew up poor in a multicultural neighborhood in Oakland, Calif., but her parents stressed the value of education and activism.

"I was coming out of the civil rights movement seeing positive black people doing positive things," she said. "Kids need advocacy."

Bryant has spent her whole career with



Humbolt Principal Judy Bryant expects a lot from her students. Her tenacity has helped raise student achievement scores at the north Portland school that was once rated the lowest performing in the state.

PHOTO BY DAVID PLECHL/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Portland Public Schools. She was a curriculum specialist for a number of years and then taught at Hosford Middle School. She was vice principal at West Sylvan, back when it was the highest performing middle school in the state.

"It doesn't matter where I'm at," Bryant said. "The kids respect me and we communicate."

Bryant's presence draws attention. Third

graders lining up to file into class after recess hush themselves as Bryant walks watchfully by.

"I like your hair today," says one little boy.

"Why thank you," answers Bryant, "what a nice compliment."

Her rapport with the children is natural. They sense her honesty and caring insight. They respect her expectations.

"I really identify with kids. I see myself in them," she said. "Sometimes we don't see the intelligence."

For a while Bryant stopped eating in the faculty lounge, preferring to stay in her office. Soon she had up to nine girls eating lunch with her. Often the girls stayed through their after lunch recess just to chat and socialize.

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Helpline Turns Tide on Displacement

Community Alliance of Tenants tackles renters' issues

BY DAVID PLECHL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

It's hard to be a renter. Between slumlords, skyrocketing rents and the ever present threat of eviction, the future may seem bleak, but help for renters is just a phone call away.

"People are getting kicked out on a daily basis," said Anita Rodgers, director of the Community Alliance of Tenants (CAT), the only tenants' organization in the state.

Its rental help hotline collects dozens of calls a week. Rodgers said the hotline gives callers information about their rights and suggestions for actions they should take.

Most of the calls are repair or eviction related. Reasons for eviction vary but CAT focuses its help on renters who feel they have been treated unjustly or are otherwise confused and seeking advice.

The hotline is staffed by volunteers. Messages pile up quickly and are returned in order of arrival as quickly as possible. Rodgers said her volunteers have lived through these same issues and want to give back.

For many renters, notice of eviction comes as a complete surprise. Landlords can issue a "30 day no cause" and terminate the rental agreement within a month. The form of eviction does not legally require an explanation.

Rodgers said sometimes tenants are evicted after requesting repairs or simply

se the landlord doesn't like them.

She tells the story of one woman's apartment that was completely overrun with cock-

roaches. She said the renter told the landlord the infestation to which he flatly

responded — "If you don't like it, move!"

Another woman lived respectfully in a

apartment for 6 or 7 years and was late on her rent. After requesting some

repairs, she promptly received a 30-day no-

cause eviction.



Arthur Payne gives credit to the Community Alliance of Tenants for helping his Park Terrace neighbors organize to keep rents at the north Portland apartment complex affordable.

PHOTO BY DAVID PLECHL/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

We demand that urban renewal not be urban removal.

— Anita Rodgers, Community Alliance of Tenants.

"Sometimes a landlord is tired of someone requesting repairs," Rodgers said. "Retaliation like this is illegal, but hard to prove."

Away from the hotline, CAT's efforts focus around organizing tenants against the loss of subsidized section 8 housing.

As Interstate Max, the Portland Develop-

ment Commission and the city pours millions of economic development dollars into north and northeast Portland, Rodgers considers CAT to be a safety net against those that could be pushed out in the process.

"We demand that urban renewal not be urban removal," Rodgers said.

As rent costs rise and the economy sags, making rent can be an issue. Unfortunately options are few for those seeking help.

"There isn't a whole lot of money out there for rent assistance," explained Rodgers.

Rising rent costs make it hard for many in the area and across the state. Landlords can raise rent every 30 days without reason. There are no rent caps in Oregon.

"If a new owner has a higher mortgage they may double or even triple the rent," Rodgers said.

Fortunately, CAT recently lobbied for \$150,000 in rental assistance and urban displacement prevention funds. But Rodgers said the long-term outlook is dependent on a reliable source of funding for rental assistance.

"There is a deep power imbalance between landlords and renters, especially people of color, were working to change that," she said.

One of the main weapons in that fight has been resident councils and tenant unions. The idea is to organize tenants collectively.

"If you work together it is less likely that you will be individually retaliated against," Rodgers said.

When Section 8 subsidized housing contracts moved close to their expiration date at the Park Terrace apartments in north Portland, the private owner of the complexes wanted to terminate the contracts with the hope that the units could be rented at a higher rate.

A number of tenants, mainly elderly, disabled and primarily African American residents were threatened with displacement.

CAT helped residents form councils within each building. Renters were encouraged to come up with specific strategies in order to retain the Section 8 status.

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