

EDUCATION

Students Rally Against Budget Cuts

Students hope to raise \$487,000 to save outdoor school

BY DAVID PLECHL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A boisterous group of students rallied downtown Saturday to save Outdoor School from Portland School District budget cuts.

"It's a great experience that every kid should have," said Lars Burkholder, a middle school student. "It's nice to get out of the classroom and meet other kids from other schools."

The program connects sixth grade students from local elementary schools with middle and high school aged mentors. Then twice a year, the sixth graders get to spend two weeks with their mentors in an outdoor educational environment.

Adrian Lebrasseur, a student at Grant High School, said outdoor school takes the pressure off the educational process.

"It's so nice and comfortable. Everyone is accepting," she said. "You can make a fool

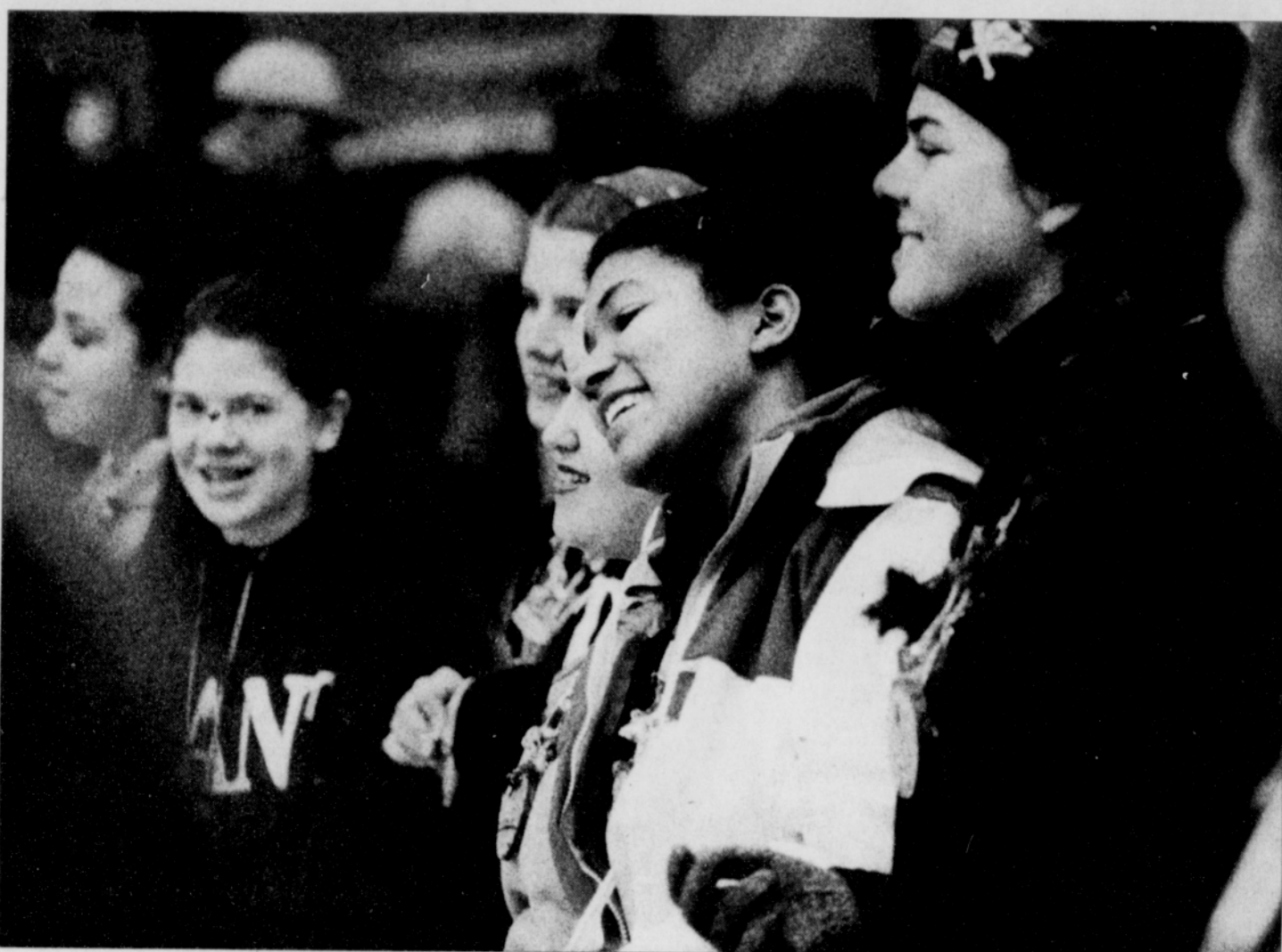


PHOTO BY DAVID PLECHL/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Nilina Mason-Campbell (second from right) and other students sing during a rally downtown on Saturday to save Outdoor School from Portland School District budget cuts.

"Outdoor School is one of the rare opportunities to have a real impact on sixth graders lives,"

-Ana Quiroz, Outdoor School student leader

of yourself and no one cares."

City Commissioner Erik Sten, Liel Goldschmidt, Mayor Vera Katz and Gov. Ted Kulongowski have all given their endorsement to the group.

The rally kicked off a month of fund raising in hopes of raising \$487,000 by Feb. 15 to save the program. Franklin High School students have already pledged \$600.

Benson High School senior William McCloskey has been to Outdoor School half a dozen times as a student leader and is optimistic the students will be able to save the program.

"We're feeling pretty positive that we'll be able to raise the money in time," he said.

Holiday Did Not Come Without Turmoil

continued ▲ from Front

ordinance for city workers later that year.

At that time, Commissioner Dick Bogle criticized his colleague Mildred Schwab for voting against the holiday. She retorted that the law favored some workers at the expense of others, the very thing that King had fought against during his life. Ultimately, through intense negotiations, the issues were resolved in time for the first celebration of Martin Luther King's birthday in January 1986.

The battle continued in other states.

The Arizona legislature adopted the holiday in 1987, only to have it repealed by executive order of maverick Gov. Evan Mecham. A Superbowl planned for Phoenix was moved, and the state lost hundreds of millions of dollars in convention and tourist business, before the holiday was finally readopted in 1992.



In 1986 Coretta King (left) witnessed the signing of the Martin Luther King Holiday into law by president Ronald Reagan.

New Hampshire, the last hold-out, adopted the holiday in 1999.

Given the turmoil in enacting the holiday in Oregon and elsewhere,

there was special significance to Gov. Atiyeh's pronouncement as he signed the holiday into law: "Black people have many virtues,

but I don't think any exceeds their patience. Our national shame is our benign neglect of the blacks among us," Atiyeh said.

"With this holiday, Dr. King takes his place as the father of the second American revolution, the revolution for civil rights,"

-U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy speaking on the day the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday into law

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Emotional Journey

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leader" who drew people to him "like a magnet. "Without him, I don't think we would be where we are today," he said. "As human beings were naturally look for leaders. Every so often somebody special comes along. Martin Luther King was one of those people."

Weber is white, a factor that generates a certain curiosity when he speaks on black history, but he says it also "opens a lot of doors for me."

He thanks Darrell Millner, the African American historian at Portland State University, for giving him a great deal of help and encouragement.

"My real goal is to help generate more interest on the part of both black and white people," he said.

"The stories behind many successful black people are both amazing and exciting. They are also down right heart wrenching. I am brought to tears on a regular basis."

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