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Week in The Review

Stolen disguise is a no go

A woman who caused a fender-bender in Stuart, Fla. fled into a Kmart bathroom and tried to conceal her appearance with hair dye, makeup and a change of clothes stolen from the store, authorities said. Police said they found Melissa Anne Nunziato, 28, in the bathroom, along with empty boxes and price tags for the stolen items in the trash. In spite of her attempt to disguise, the other driver identified her and Nunziato was charged with leaving the scene of an accident, theft, obstruction of justice by disguise and driving without a license.

Offer: Free car with marriage

A New Jersey man is promising a free sports car to the woman who marries him. Sandy Grossman was serious about finding a bride by Valentine's Day, and drove around in a 1959 Cadillac ambulance topped with a billboard advertisement for a bride. The electric sign promised "Free Sports Car With Marriage" and listed his e-mail address, photo and vital stats: "43, 5'11, 175 pounds and NEVER MARRIED." He only received five e-mail responses (and no "I do's") since his campaign began earlier in the month. "I'm a romantic," he said. "I think this is the ideal way to find somebody."

A church that charges

Worshippers can now pay their church collection with a charge card - at least in one village in northern Sweden. In Norrjaerden, just outside Piteaa, 560 miles north of Stockholm, the church is offering its worshippers "a modern opportunity" to make a contribution. Pastor Karin Sandlund said she had often joked about fixing a card reader to the collection bag with her husband, who works for a bank in Norrjaerden. "We thought it was time to give the younger generation an alternative. The church must keep up with things," Sandlund said.

Surgeons see a rise in penis extensions

Penis extensions are the top cosmetic surgery treatment for British men while women choose liposuction or breast enlargement, medics said. The Harley Medical Group, which runs 10 private clinics in Britain, released figures for 2002 which showed more than a third of operations on men were for penis extensions, followed by nose surgery and liposuction.

14-year-old girl is the Thal fetus-thief

A 14-year-old Thai girl has been charged with robbery after confessing to police she helped steal fetuses from a hospital museum for use in black magic rituals, police said. Thipawan Prakaithong surrendered her teenage daughter to authorities and the youth confessed she had been paid to serve as a lookout while her friends stole fetuses and skulls from the museum of Thailand's oldest medical school at Siriraj Hospital.

Meek Future in Doubt

Parents, teachers react to possible closure of northeast school

BY DAVID PLECHL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Ken Berry, principal at Meek Elementary, talks a little faster than usual these days.

He has to. As head of one of four elementary schools identified by the Portland School District for possible closure, Berry is busy answering parents' questions and allaying their worst fears.

"There are two paths right now," Berry said. "The path of the regular school year, and the path of uncertainty."

Superintendent Jim Scherzinger will announce Feb. 27 which schools are recommended for closure. The school board will finalize the decision March 17.

In the meantime, papers are piling up on Berry's desk and his voice mail is full. Still, he takes the time to answer parents' questions one by one.

Through it all, he remains thorough and thoughtful, but blatantly realistic about the future of the school, located at 4039 N.E. Alberta Court.

Berry said he will support the direction the school board wants to go while doing his best to keep the threat of closure from interrupting his mission as principal.

"We have budget constraints but we also have budget responsibilities," he said. "We need to make sure our academic program is on target. I'm just trying to work with the students first."

The decision to close Meek is based upon the district's Space Allocation Committee recommendation on the most efficient use of funds.

Ed Bettencourt, director of student achievement for the Madison Roosevelt cluster of schools, told parents at a meeting last week that the move is necessary in the face of a \$50 million budget shortfall.



Principal of Meek Elementary Ken Berry listens as district officials tell parents and teachers that the school may close at the end of this year as part of a plan to cut district operating costs.

"By closing four schools we'll save one million dollars the first year and one and one-half million every year after that," he said.

ment to top just 150 students next year. "In a larger school there are other opportunities and support systems that aren't

will transfer to Vernon Elementary.

Parents questioned the recommendation. They say Meek's small size has contributed to its success as a school.

Charline Romig has two grandsons enrolled in head start at Meek. She said fewer students means fewer distractions. If the school closes, she fears the personal touch will be lost.

"You walk in and almost every teacher can call you by name," Romig said. "How many schools can you say that about?"

Teachers at Meek agree that the school's small size makes for an ideal learning environment.

"There are two paths right now - the path of the regular school year, and the path of uncertainty."

—Meek Elementary Principal Ken Berry

He also told parents the optimal size of a school should be around 300 students. Small by most standards, Meek expects enroll-

available in a smaller school," Bettencourt said.

If the school is closed, students at Meek

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PHOTO BY WYNDE DYER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs President and Founder Sam Brooks guides Asian business leaders from Seattle around the OAME facility in north Portland. The Seattle group plans to start a business incubator program that's similar to OAME.

OAME to Serve as Model

Seattle's Asian business leaders look to Portland for answers

BY WYNDE DYER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A small group of ambitious Asian business from Seattle came to north Portland Thursday to tour the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs facility and learn from Samuel Brooks, OAME's African American president and founder, who was able to build an organization off its feet. The advice of Conrad Lee, United Small Business Administration Re-administrator for Alaska and the Northwest, representatives of the Vietnamese Merchants Organization and the Chinese Information Service plan to design their own business incubator in Seattle off OAME's successful model here in Portland.

"If it works for one community it can work for others," Lee said. "I see OAME as one of the best examples of a multicultural organization that fosters economic development by bringing people together."

Seattle's new multibillion-dollar light rail project will displace at least 200 hundred small business owners in predominately Asian communities. The city has offered the businesses, social service agencies and residents more than \$50 million in compensation for their displacement, but Lee sees this as a mixed blessing.

"This is a brand new opportunity to build a strong community," he said. "But having a resource like that and not knowing what to do with it can cause money to be trickled away."

Lee's fear is that unless the small business owners collaborate across cultural and linguistic barriers, the now-prosper-

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Powerful Puppets

Kids on the Block program packs a punch at school bullies

BY WYNDE DYER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Calling names, starting rumors, stealing lunch, pushing, punching and just plain old meanness - school bullies are an age-old problem.

At El Monica Elementary School in Beaverton the children in Mrs. Wells' second grade class know the problem all too well. Last Thursday they got a visit from a pair of Kids on the Block Awareness Program puppeteers and their puppets, Eddy and Clare, to help them learn how to say, "You're not the boss of me!"

Dressed all in black and acting from a script, performers Harriet Saxe and Ramona Fouts dazzled the classroom with a powerful puppet scenario.

The story involves Eddy, who was once the witness of an act of bullying and later

becomes the victim, and Clare, his friend who teaches him that it's okay to report a bully to someone who can stop the activities. After the presentation, children get to ask the puppets questions.

"It's a magical opportunity when the children connect with the puppets," Fouts said. "When they talk to Eddy and Clare it's like they're talking with their buddies - it's totally different than one-on-one adult to child communication."

Because of a statewide mandate that all schools in Oregon provide for their students some form of school safety and anti-bullying education, the Kids on the Block Awareness Program on school bullies has been in high demand.

Many of the 152 schools the program visits with its 15 informational puppet shows on everything from sexual abuse to divorce, to drug and alcohol prevention and cultural difference, are on the waiting list just to get

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Nightclub Stampede Kills 21

1,500 inside Chicago club rushed for locked doors

(AP) — Hundreds of screaming guests rushed the exits of a crowded Chicago nightclub Monday after security guards used a chemical spray to quell a fight, and at least 21 people were crushed to death or smothered in the panic, officials and witnesses said.



Maria Lopez reacts outside the Epitome Night Club Monday Feb. 17, 2003 in Chicago as she searches for information about her fiancée.

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Knight Library
1299 University of Oregon
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