



Tourney Upset

Jefferson falls in 4A opener
See story in Sports, page B6

Bound for France

Local dancers go international
See story, Metro section, inside



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Week in The Review

Man chokes for attention

A short, dumpy man has been going around Punta Gorda, Fla. faking choking episodes, apparently to get attention from women. He flails his arms, coughs and sputters. After a woman rushes over to help, he showers her with gratitude, hugs and kisses. The sheriff's office has gotten about a half-dozen calls about the Choking Man, as the Charlotte Sun Herald dubbed him. So far he has not committed any crime, though a woman on Monday went to the hospital with an anxiety attack after an encounter.

Brothel to serve dog's life

A German artist has applied for a license to open a brothel in Berlin for sexually frustrated dogs. Karl-Friedrich Lenze says his brothel will be the first of its kind anywhere. The 54-year-old says he plans to charge dog owners about \$45 per half hour of happiness. Lenze says if dogs cannot get what they want, they get cranky, just like people. He says his establishment would offer patrons a variety of carefully vetted employees of both sexes, rooms for private encounters and even a bar where customers could sniff out their preferred partners.

Damages won for 'Dracula' bite

A Virginia court jury awarded \$800,000 to a woman who said she was bitten on the breast by an employee of a Dairy Queen restaurant. Brenda K. Chappellear testified that she went into the restaurant in Ashland about 3:30 p.m. on Dec. 31, 2001, and asked to use the phone book. Employee Ayman Ahmed Hasaballa moved beside her and pulled her sweater down, scratching her chest, and bit her on the breast. "I am like Dracula," Chappellear said he told her.

'Underwear Bandit' faces life term in prison

A Southern California man who became notorious in the 1980s for forcing women to hand over their underwear at gunpoint could be sentenced to life in prison under California's "three strikes" law following his conviction for commercial burglary and possessing stolen property. Bruce Allen Lyons, 48, was convicted of breaking into a chiropractor's office on Oct. 4 to obtain the phone number of a woman who did not want to date him.

Fisher hooks cannabis

A Hong Kong angler made an unexpected catch when his fishing rod hooked onto a large bag packed with cannabis. The 20-year-old man was fishing off a pier in Kowloon when he reeled in a bag loaded with 15 kilograms of the drug on Thursday night. The drugs had been packed into 16 plastic bags and were soaked. When dried out, the drugs would have fetched an estimated \$1.35 million in Hong Kong.

Meek School Closure Stings

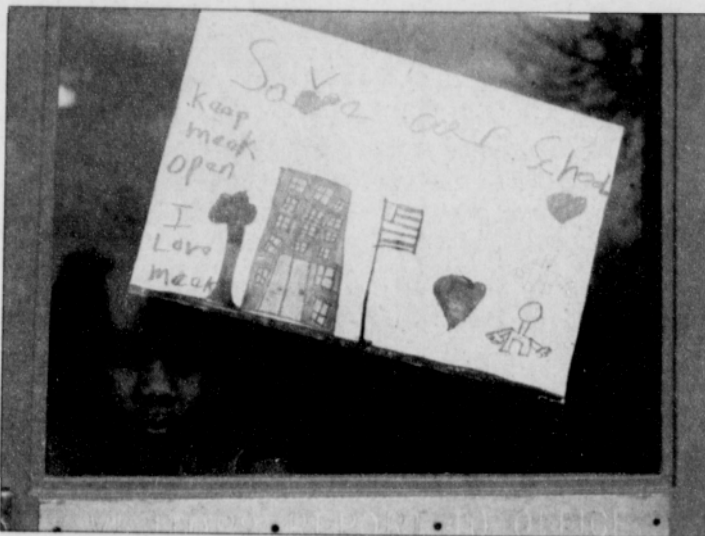


PHOTO BY DAVID PLECHL/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Meek Elementary student Aujha Robertson peeks out of the window below a sign that reads "Save Our School."

Same northeast neighborhood loses yet another school

BY MICHAEL LEIGHTON
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Northeast Portland residents were left devastated and angry Monday after the Portland School Board decided to close Meek Elementary School at 4039 N.E. Alberta Ct.

School district officials said the closure, along with closing Brooklyn Elementary at 3830 S.E. 14th, was because of declining enrollments and the effort to reduce district expenses.

African American board members Derry Jackson and Lorenzo

Poe were the only board members voting against closing Meek. Poe was the only board member to vote against closing Brooklyn.

Meek parents, who packed into the school district's boardroom for discussion on the closure issue, said they felt they were being discriminated against based on the school neighborhood's socioeconomic status. Meek serves a low income to working class neighborhood.

Plans to close two other schools serving more affluent families were recently pulled from board consideration, including Reike Elementary in southwest Portland.

Poe said his issue was one of equity.

"It's ingenious and we are mak-

ing certain allowances for certain parts of the community," he said.

Residents around Meek have seen both public and private schools closed in their section of the city several times in recent years.

Just a few blocks away from Meek, Whitaker Middle School was closed two years ago because of the dilapidated condition of a building that first housed John Adams High School, which was closed in the 1980s because of declining enrollment. In 1986, the private St. Charles Elementary School on northeast 42nd and Emerson was closed and in 1975, the historic and public Kennedy Elementary School

continued ▼ on page A5



PHOTOS BY WYNDE DYER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Female impersonator Kevin Cook is seen reflected in a mirror as he pats dry his mascara before taking to the stage at Darcelle XV Showplace for his Poison Waters performance. "Fake eyelashes are a trip," Cook said.

The way I see it, you're not going to please everyone, so you might as well just be yourself.

—female impersonator "Poison Waters" Kevin Cook

BLACK Beauty

Kevin Cook as "Poison Waters" performs at Darcelle XV Showplace at 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. each day and Saturday night.



Performer pushes aside negative stereotypes to establish unique identity

BY WYNDE DYER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

There aren't many African American men who can say they've never experienced racism. There aren't many openly homosexual men who can say they've never dealt with homophobia. But there is one — and he wears a dress.

Kevin Cook is "Poison Waters" in Portland's drag community and for him, there is no line drawn between black and white, gay and straight or male and female. He thrives on blending those lines and showing others with that people are just people and they're all beautiful.

"I just can't relate when it comes to discrimination," Cook said. "I can't say I've experienced racism or homophobic stuff. I don't listen to any negative stuff — I don't have the energy to waste on anything that isn't positive. Either you're too black or not black enough or you're too gay or not gay enough. The way I see it, you're not going to please everyone so you might as well just be yourself."

Cook's optimism has made him not only a popular performer on Friday and Saturday nights at Darcelle XV Showplace, downtown at 208 N.W. Third, but also a role model for gay youth who are trying to accept their sexuality.

Through his website, www.poisonwaters.com, Cook offers Dear Abby-style counseling to members of the community on how to deal with life's obstacles. Through the "Ask Poison" section of the site, Cook personally answers dozens of professional and per-

continued ▼ on page A6



Kevin Cook puts the final touches of powder on his face before a show.

Urban League Gets New President

Young executive brings extensive experience to the table

BY WYNDE DYER
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

At the age of 35 Vanessa Gaston, the new President and Chief Executive Officer for the Urban League of Portland, has more education and experience in



Vanessa Gaston

social services than many people twice her age. She also has the desire to help impoverished communities in her blood.

"My mom was extremely committed to serving the poor," Gaston said. "She was a social services supervisor for 25 years. We grew up poor, so we understood what it's like to struggle."

Born in Rapid City, S.D. to a Native American mother and an African American father, Gaston spent her childhood just outside the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Her parents encouraged her to get an education and work hard to be successful.

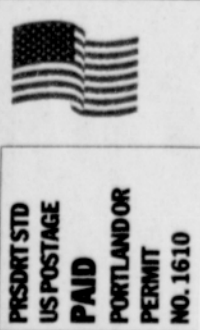
After high school, she briefly attended Ohio State University until she lost her residency status and scholarships when her parents moved to Alaska. With no money to finish her education, she decided to join the Army.

"The recruiter came around to our dorms and all he had to say was, 'We do have money for college,' and I was in," Gaston said.

Three years of service as a legal specialist for the Army took her to Germany, France and Spain and gave her a chance to test out her managerial skills before she was 21. Gaston supervised the Public Defenders Office at Fort Lewis before retiring into the reserves.

After serving her duty, she took a job in Tacoma, as an executive assistant for the Martin Luther King Center. The non-profit group worked on homeless issues and

continued ▼ on page A3



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