

METRO

The Portland Observer



Coach, Mentor Inspired by Youth

Jenean Dunn honored for
volunteerism

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SECTION B

Community Calendar

Honoring Our Legacy

The Oregon Alliance of Black School Educators holds the 23rd annual Student Achievement Awards and Scholarship Banquet at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, May 20 at the University of Portland Common's Building, 5000 N. Willamette Blvd. Tickets are \$25. For more information, call 503-284-4268.

Take Charge

IRCO's African Refugee Community Self-Help program hosts the African Youth Leadership Conference: Taking Charge of Your Education and Your Future from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. May 22 at the IRCO Community Center, 10301 N.E. Glisan. For more information, call 503-234-1541 ext. 222.

Nature Near Home

Enjoy the outdoors with an Evening Bird Walk at Orchard Park in Hillsboro, led by Metro, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Thursday, May 20. Register by calling 503-797-1850 option 4.

Know Your Rights

APOC is holding a Know Your Rights public training for people of color from noon to 3 p.m. Saturday, May 29 at Bethel AME Church, 5828 N.E. 8th Ave. Childcare and lunch will be provided. For more information, call 503-288-5429.

Plan On It

A Juneteenth Planning Committee will meet every Friday at 6:30 p.m. through June 4 at the Philadelphia Missionary Baptist Church, 236 N.E. Mason. For information, call 503-282-2216.

Better Homes

A Fix-It Fair is a free neighborhood resource for building a better home and growing a greener garden from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, June 5 at Helensview High School, 8678 N. E. Sumner St.

Canine 101

The Oregon Humane Society explains problem pooches at Canine 101 classes on Saturdays, June 5 and 19 at 11 a.m. A \$10 donation is suggested. For more information, call 503-285-7722 or visit www.oregonhumane.org.

Going Green

Our Garden, Inc. is holding its 8th annual Our Garden Kids Party and Plant Sale from 12-4 p.m. Sunday, June 6 at King Plaza, 3939 N.E. MLK Blvd.

Birth Ready

Whether you need childbirth preparation classes, or just a refresher, Providence Health Systems has a workshop for you. Prepare for pain, take a weekend seminar or prepare big sisters and brothers-to-be throughout the summer by visiting www.providence.org/classes or call 503-574-6595.

Juggling Meds

An Aging Forum at the Providence Center, 4805 N.E. Glisan St., helps older adults learn how to manage multiple medications at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 16 in the social room. To register, call 503-574-6595.

Women Speak

Women have a voice at Women in NAACP, a new women's group, meeting from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. the first Saturday of each month at the American Red Cross Building, 3131 N. Vancouver Ave. For questions, call 503-249-6263.

Farmer's Market in Season

For all the season's best locally grown produce, meats, dairy and baked goods, visit the Portland Farmer's Market, opening this week. Live cooking demonstrations are on Saturdays at 10 a.m. and Thursdays at 6 p.m.

Mice Infest Vernon School

Community questions building's maintenance

BY JAYMEE R. CUTI
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A recent mouse infestation at Vernon Elementary School is a part of life in the city, according to officials with Portland Public Schools.

But some parents and other community members are unwilling to accept that answer and ask whether this rodent problem isn't another example of a pattern of neglect plaguing northeast Portland schools.

Low Frederick, a spokesman for the district, said during his 11 years with the district, mice have been a problem at all schools, approximately three different schools each year. He said location and economics were not factors in Vernon's outbreak.

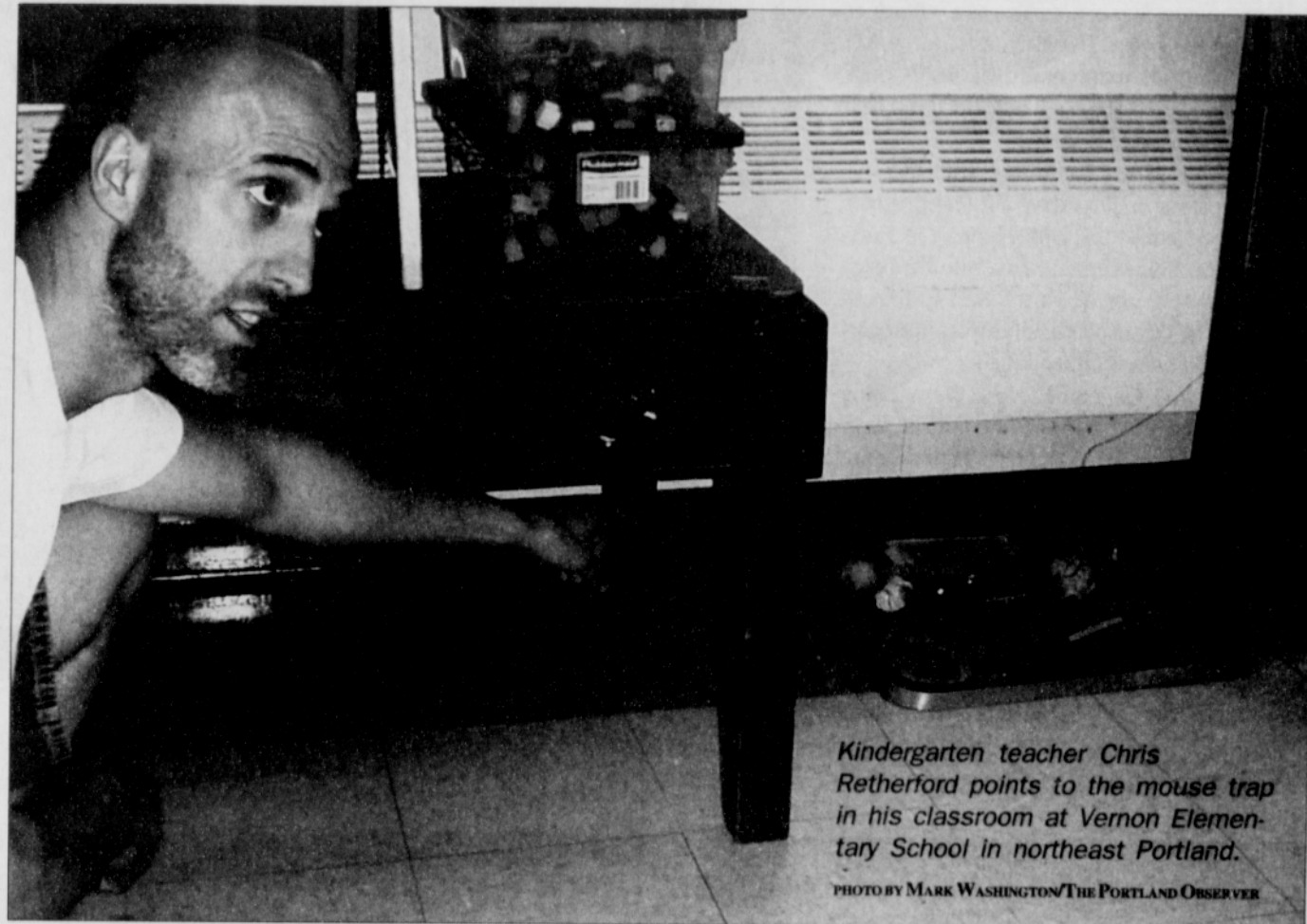
"Last year, the mouse problem was at Duniway (Elementary School) in southeast Portland, and that's one of the wealthiest schools in the district, so it's not a matter of a particular area of town," Frederick said.

Exterminators have laid non-toxic traps throughout the school and are catching four to five mice each night. Faculty has cleaned up materials that might be used as food or bedding for the creatures. That's the best it can do until school is out, insiders say.

"We'll do much more extensive things when school is out but we don't want to put bait down while kids are around," Frederick said.

According to Frederick, Multnomah County Vector Control had been notified but a call to Vector Control Supervisor Chris Wirth said there was no record of the complaint.

Wirth said Vector Control does not provide site inspections for mouse infestations,



Kindergarten teacher Chris Retherford points to the mouse trap in his classroom at Vernon Elementary School in northeast Portland.

PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

but it would recommend pest control, troubleshoot and suggest literature available on its Web site for control and prevention.

Joan Miller, principal at Vernon, said exterminators told her the problem is confined to storage rooms and the teacher's lounge,

but students have reported seeing mice and

droppings in classrooms.

She also said that a maintenance staff will search the building's perimeter and seal holes where the mice are entering the school.

"Mice infestations and ants are something we unfortunately have to deal with

due to a sheer number of buildings we own and they tend to wear out," Frederick said.

A few years ago, the former Whitaker Middle School and John Adams High School site in northeast Portland was forced to close permanently because of poor maintenance and structural failures.

Interstate District Investment Restored

Money Put Back into Neighborhoods

BY LEE PERLMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

When some north and northeast neighborhoods made their urban renewal budget requests, the Portland Development Commission cut them to the bone, drawing neighborhood protests. Last week, the PDC capitulated.

At stake was \$500,000 for a variety of programs in the Interstate Urban Renewal District designed to protect and benefit local businesses and residents, provide improvements to area parks and improve other amenities in area neighborhoods.

The district was originally conceived to generate \$30 million to help create the Max Light Rail Yellow line. But it was eventually made larger to accommodate a long wish list of potential projects, including \$6 million to the HOPE VI project to modernize the former Columbia Villa of low-income housing.



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

An urban renewal district that pays for the new Interstate Max Yellow Line will bring some money for local business and community development projects after all.

PDC's original budget for the district, unveiled in mid-April, took advantage of low interest rates to pay off most of its debts for light rail and HOPE VI. To the consternation of community leaders, funding for social and business improvement programs had been either cut to the bone or lopped off entirely.

Jennie Portis, a member of the Interstate District Advisory Committee, and others argued that, given the increased values the Max line is expected to bring to the area, the programs cut are critical to the ability of residents and businesses to remain.

The new "proposed budget" unveiled May 12 earmarks \$200,000 for redevelopment projects, \$150,000 for community livability, \$100,000 for business finance tools and \$50,000 for housing.

Advisory Committee co-chair Walter Valenta told the PDC commission, "I'm very happy. We feel we've been heard. Now we have a new opportunity on the horizon."

Local Business Honored

Big City Produce owner Hugh Gray stocks fresh greens at his north Portland market

BY JAYMEE R. CUTI
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Green business practices can both save money and make the environment better, as many local companies are proving.

Big City Produce, a jewel of a business known for catering to the diverse populations of north and northeast Portland, was recently distinguished for promoting a sustainable food system.

Owner Hugh Gray represented one of 10 local companies that received an Environmentally Sustainable Tomorrow (BEST) award from Portland's Office of Sustainable Development.

The winners' showcased successful ways to conserve energy and water, reduce and recycle waste, promote

transportation alternatives, create new and environmentally-friendly products and develop sustainable

Owner Hugh Gray represented one of 10 local companies that received an Environmentally Sustainable Tomorrow (BEST) award...

food systems.

Big City Produce is at 722 N. Sumner St.



PHOTO BY JAYMEE R. CUTI/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER