

# LAW & JUSTICE

## Local Juvenile Crime Rises

### Increase may signal effects of budget cuts

Juvenile crime in Multnomah County rose slightly in 2003, according to the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice. Despite the overall increase in crime, recidivism among youth offenders continued to drop.

After falling for five straight years - a period in which juvenile criminal referrals declined nearly 30 percent - juvenile criminal court referrals rose by 5 percent in 2003, from 3,849 to 4,065.

While juvenile crime rose in 2003, the number of youth committing those crimes continues to fall. Last year, a total of 2,811 youth offenders were referred by police to juvenile court for criminal charges, a decrease of 32 percent, 1.1 percent, from the previous year. This data suggests that a smaller number of youth are responsible for a larger proportion of the crime.

Multnomah County Chair Diane Linn said the county is paying close attention to the rise in youth crime referrals.

"The bad news is that juvenile crime is up. The good news is that our juvenile probation department continues to drive down the number of kids committing new crimes," she said.

Researchers could not speculate why the increase occurred, but experts note that the spike in juve-

nile crime corresponded to major cutbacks in state and county funding for services aimed at troubled youth, including a 70 percent reduction in state funding for juvenile crime prevention services in Multnomah County.

State Senator Avel Gordly said, "We should all be troubled by this

"We're putting our focus on the highest risk kids. It's where we can make the biggest difference in protecting the community and it's the best use of our increasingly limited resources."

The rise in juvenile crime was driven in large part by a surge in property offenses. Auto theft jumped 47 percent in the last year and burglary rose 19 percent. Theft saw a 10 percent increase.

Juvenile person offenses such as homicide, sex offenses, robberies and assaults declined 5 percent in 2003, continuing an overall trend in the country. In the last five years, person offenses committed by youth have dropped 36 percent in the country.

However, juvenile homicide referrals doubled over the past year, from seven to 14, although more than three quarters of these fourteen were 'attempted' homicides, which may be a result of the recent surge in gang violence. Weapons offenses also increased 20 percent last year. Drug offenses continued to fall steeply, down 31 percent from last year. Overall, juvenile drug offenses dropped 55 percent since 1998.

To view the full report, visit [www.co.multnomah.or.us/dcj/evaluation.shtml#juvenilereports](http://www.co.multnomah.or.us/dcj/evaluation.shtml#juvenilereports).

uptick in the numbers. We appear to be going backwards at a time when we see an increase in violence among young people. Are we paying attention? And what are we, as a community, prepared to do about it?"

Joanne Fuller, Director of the Department of Community Justice, which oversees youth on probation and operates the county's juvenile detention center, said,



## Mentally Ill Teens Housed in Jail

### Thousands of kids await care in detention centers

(AP) — Thousands of mentally ill youth are unnecessarily put in juvenile detention centers to await mental health treatment, a House committee reported.

Centers usually are not equipped to treat mental illness, and in some cases the youths have not been charged with a crime, said the report by the Democratic staff of the House Government Reform Committee.

"The use of juvenile detention facilities to house youth waiting for

community mental health services is widespread and a serious national problem," said the report, which found that two-thirds of juvenile deten-

tion facilities hold youths who are waiting for mental health treatment.

"This misuse of detention centers as holding areas for mental health treatment is unfair to youth, undermines their health, disrupts the function of detention centers and is costly to society."

The report, which its authors said was the first national study of its kind, was prepared at the request of California Rep. Henry Waxman, the House Government Reform Committee's top Democrat, and Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, chairwoman of the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee.

"Thousands of youth who are in need of community mental health services are stuck in jail until these

services become available," Waxman said in a statement. "This is deplorable. Congress must ensure that our children have access to the mental health care that they need."

Collins scheduled a hearing on the issue where Waxman was testifying along with experts on mental health law, youth behavior and juvenile detention.

The report identified 698 juvenile detention facilities in the United States, defined as correctional facilities holding people age 21 and younger awaiting charges or trial or recently tried. Seventy-five percent of the facilities, or 524, responded to the survey, including facilities from every state but New Hampshire. The survey covered six months, Jan. 1, 2003, to June 30, 2003.

The report did not attempt to determine why so many youths who needed mental health treatment were being put in juvenile detention but said administrators blamed the lack of other treatment facilities.

One detention center administrator from Louisiana wrote, "We appear to be warehousing youths with mental illnesses due to lack of mental health services."

Among the report's findings: In 33 states, mentally ill youths were being held in detention centers with no charges against them.

Over the six-month period of the study, nearly 15,000 youths spent time in juvenile detention while they waited for mental health help. Nearly 2,000 youths are in detention waiting for mental health services every night, representing about 7 percent of all juveniles being held.

Youths who are waiting for men-



## CRIME STOPPERS

(503) 823-HELP 111 S.W. 2nd Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97204

### Bank Fraud Suspect at Large

The FBI, in cooperation with Crime Stoppers, needs your help in finding a person wanted for bank fraud.



Ayesha Elizabeth Johnson

Ayesha Elizabeth Johnson, 22, was indicted by a federal grand jury for bank fraud. The indictment stems from crimes committed in Washington.

Johnson opened bank accounts, inflated the balance with worthless

checks and made off with the money. Johnson is described as a black female, about 5 feet 8 inches tall and about 165 pounds. She has black hair and brown eyes.

The FBI says that Johnson has ties to Portland and Salem. While agents have checked past addresses without success, she is believed to be in the area.

### Crime Stoppers Seek Public Help

Since April, the Portland Fire Bureau has responded to twenty separate vehicle fires in east and southeast Portland, caused by acts of arson. Based on information gathered by investigators, it

is likely that these fires may be the work of one person.

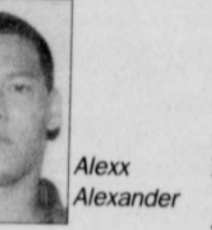
Police believe the targeted vehicles have been chosen at random and set on fire during the night. The estimated amount of damage is set

at more than \$100,000.

Several of port-a-potty fires have occurred in the same geographic area and during the same time frame. These might also be the work of the same suspect.

### Dispute at Car Show Turns Deadly

On Sunday, June 6, as a low-rider show was letting out at the Portland Expo Center, police were called to a shooting near North Victory Boulevard and North Expo Road. When they arrived, they found 16-year-old Alexx Alexander, suffering from gunshot wounds. He was riding in a car at the time of the shooting.



Alexx Alexander

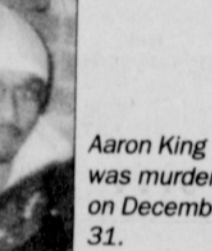
Alexander was transported to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead. He died of a gunshot

wound to his head. Detectives believe this homicide followed an argument between 13<sup>th</sup> Street and 18<sup>th</sup> Street Hispanic gang members near the front doors of the Expo Center.

Detectives want to talk to anyone who saw the argument and can identify people involved or who has other information about this homicide. They would also like to see pictures and videos people may have from the low-rider show.

### Public Help Sought for Unsolved Murder

The Portland Police Bureau, in cooperation with Crime Stoppers, needs your help in solving a homicide.



Aaron King

On Dec. 31, 2003, at about 6:45 a.m., an Oregonian delivery person heard the sound of gunfire in the area of North Michigan and North Shaver. A few minutes later, she found 17-year-old Aaron Michael Prasad-King lying in the alley between North Mason and North Shaver, just west of Michigan. She

called police. According to detectives, Prasad-King suffered multiple gunshot wounds and later died as a result. This occurred on a cold, otherwise

quiet, Wednesday morning. Portland was in the middle of a winter storm and snow covered the ground. Little is known about Prasad-King's activities leading up to his death, or why he was in this alley at this particular time. Detectives would like to hear from anyone who has any information about this homicide or anybody who may have seen Prasad-King, or knows what he was doing, the night before he was killed.

Crime Stoppers is offering a cash reward of up to \$1,000 for information, reported to Crime Stoppers, that leads to an arrest in this case, or any unsolved felony crime, any you need not give your name. Call Crime Stoppers at 503-823-HELP.

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