

The Portland Observer

'City of Roses'

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Jefferson Guards Sign Letters

Jefferson basketball players join their coach to announce plans for college

See Metro section, inside



Week in The Review

Hotels for Evacuees to End

FEMA will stop paying for hotel rooms for most evacuees of hurricanes Katrina and Rita on Dec. 1, officials said Tuesday as the agency pushed victims to find more stable housing. The Federal Emergency Management Agency estimates that 53,000 families remain in hotels after losing their homes to the storms that devastated the Gulf Coast.

50 Cent Plans Book Line

50 Cent will again turn his reality into fiction with a new line of hip-hop novellas and graphic novels featuring his former G-Unit rap crew buddies. Pocket/MTV Books

promised the venture would showcase "gritty" stories and cover much of the same terrain as 50 Cent's raps.

Senate Rejects Iraq Timetable

The Republican-controlled Senate easily defeated a Democratic effort Tuesday to pressure President Bush to outline a timetable for a phased withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. It then overwhelmingly endorsed a weaker statement calling on the administration to explain its Iraq policy.

Iraq Detainees Found Abused

Iraqi and U.S. officials disclosed Tuesday that more than 170 malnourished Iraqi detainees had been found in a weekend raid at an Iraq Interior Ministry detention center and that some appeared to have been tortured.

Abortion Comments Downplayed



Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito distanced himself Tuesday from his 1985 comments that there was no constitutional right to abortion, telling Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif. in private that he had been "an advocate seeking a job."

Baseball Steroid Penalties

Major league players and owners have agreed to toughen penalties for steroid use to a 50-game suspension for a first failed test, 100 games for a second and a lifetime ban for a third.

DRUG FREE ZONE DEBATED

Safeguards Wanted

BY LEE PERLMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Mayor Tom Potter is drawing community support for instituting new civil liberties safeguards in the city's drug and prostitution free zone ordinance.

The law allows police officers and judges to order anyone arrested for drugs or prostitution-related offenses to stay out of designated neighborhoods for up to 90 days. A conviction of such offenses carry a penalty of being excluded from the designated zones for up to one year and while excluded, people who enter the restricted turfs can be arrested on sight for illegal trespass.

Advocates call the ordinance an important tool to combat street crime. Rather than taking the time and energy to build a prosecution case against drug dealers and prostitutes, only to see them released immediately, law enforcement can simply bar the suspected violators from problem areas.

Critics say the law gives too much power to police, allowing them to infringe on rights without even charging people with a crime. Such critics also fear police use the law to practice racial discrimination.

Last month, during the ordinance's three-year review, Mayor Tom Potter called for the zones to be continued as they are until Feb. 2, but scheduled a series of forums to examine how the zones are used and get feedback from the communities they impact.

During a discussion at Emmanuel Temple Church, a mostly African-American congregation in north Portland, Potter suggested a series of changes to the ordinance.

He wants police to have the ability to void the exclusions after a review or if the district attorney declines to prosecute or if charges are dismissed in court.

City attorney David Woboril, who conducted the forum, said that 26 percent of the exclusions in the drug-free zones, and 36 percent in the prostitution-free zones, are already dropped through police internal review.

The district attorney's office declines to prosecute 20 percent of the drug cases and 13 percent of the prostitution arrests. Of those brought to trial, 95 percent result in convictions or plea bargains, he said. About 2,000 people a year are arrested for trespassing in the zones after exclusion.



Like the neighborhood it surrounds, a local market on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard advertises its restrictions to drug activity. The Portland City Council is considering adding new civil liberty safeguards in the city's drug and prostitution free zones.

Asked about the racial breakdown of the exclusions, Woboril said African-Americans make up 83 percent of those arrested in inner north and northeast Portland and 39 percent of those arrested downtown.

Asked for a show of hands from the 70 people present at the Emmanuel Temple forum, a clear majority had serious concerns about the zones. About one-third said they found the zones to be a worthwhile crime prevention tool, but a like number indicated they felt some changes were in order.

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Fairness of Law Questioned

BY LEE PERLMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Mayor Tom Potter appears to have the votes needed to soften Portland's Drug and Prostitution Free Zone ordinance to better protect individual liberties.

Potter said while the courts have upheld the constitutionality of the regulations that can exclude drug and prostitution offenders from certain neighborhoods, Portland's ordinance may be unfair to residents subjected to the regulations.

Commissioner Randy Leonard said because he's worked hard to give police the powers they need to do their jobs, the proposed changes present him with difficult choices.

"I'm keenly focused on the argument that these tools are used without due process," Leonard said. "We must protect individual rights. We can't just have a system with no checks and balances."

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Life After Doing Time Documentary follows prisoners

BY KATHERINE BLACKMORE
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

What happens when a person gets out of prison?

Most inmates are given a few bucks and put outside the gates of the facility. Unless they've planned transportation home, questions like where to seek shelter, where to find food and most importantly, what to do with their lives are up in the air.

Local filmmakers Brian Huston and Adam Blank are working on a documentary called "From Prison to Home," highlighting the issues that two inmates grapple with upon reentry, a term used to describe offenders making the transition back into society.

"These guys have none of the benefits with all of the hurdles," Huston said.

The film also sheds light on the African American Program—a unique organization in Multnomah County that helps offenders change the way they look at themselves and the way they see the world around them.

Participants in the program are taught how to live a healthy, fulfilling life in that



"From Prison to Home" documentary filmmakers Brian Huston (left) and Adam Blank (right) join Nate Roberts, a Multnomah County parole officer, at a sneak preview of the film.

world—away from drugs, violence or whatever else it was that put them in jail.

They learn how to find direction, with culturally specific information toward issues that black men face.

"What's hit on the most in the documentary is that it all comes down to economics. If I get pulled over, I have a different set of problems than a black man does," Blank said. "It's an issue of poverty, through and through. We're trying to show a population

that's not on the radar."

The program has only been around for 2 1/2 years, but it's already shelling out stories of hope and accomplishment.

"It's a lot of hard work," said Nate Roberts, parole officer for the African American Program. "We're focusing on a non-traditional method of supervising them."

In order to enroll, an inmate first has to write a letter of intent nine months prior to release. They'll then go to weekly meetings

before and after their release that teach them life skills such as: how to find and be successful in a career; how to access mental health, health care, food and housing programs; how to combat the negative influences they once dealt with; how to be a supporter and be supported; and how to be a leader.

"It's designed for success and lends

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