

# Daycare Injury Leaves Mother in the Dark

## Head Start can't explain slap to toddler

BY SARAH BLOUNT  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Like many new parents, Mandisa Brown struggled to balance her protective instincts with placing her daughter in the care of licensed professionals for the first time.

Last October, Brown enrolled 18-month-old Akosha Taylor in an Early Head Start Family Center at the Normandale school site on Northeast 52nd Avenue. She said she had a difficult time watching her daughter cry and clutch her each time she was taken to the class, but reminded herself transitions are tough.

By the end of her sixth classroom visit, however, Brown says her child's face was not only tear-stained, but bruised on the left side from her eyebrow to the bottom of her cheek.

Brown said she peppered the classroom teacher Lisa Graves with questions about the bruise, but Graves couldn't explain the welt across her face and only said "I don't know" repeatedly. Then, she said, instead of filing an incident report, Graves informed the mother she was in a hurry to leave and would discuss the incident during their next home visit.

From that point Brown tried to consult with the school's head coordinator, Shannon Burroughs Campbell. But Campbell wasn't there, so a secretary attempted to fill out an incident report but could not find one.

Oregon state law mandates that childcare workers must make reports if they have reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect. The secretary eventually found an incident report, photographed Brown's daughter and told her she would leave a message for the coordinator.

Brown said wanted to know what happened that day, and at her insistence the secretary arranged a con-

ference call between the school nurse and Campbell. Brown said she was denied a chance to meet with the staff present during the time her child was injured, but was

Emanuel Hospital and contacted Oregon Department of Health and Human Services, and over the course of the next several months waited for answers that never came.



Members of the Oregon Department of Human Services concluded that a child was injured at the Normandale Elementary School Head Start, but the investigation stopped there because there were no signs of sexual abuse, the child's mother says.

repeatedly assured by the coordinator that she would "get to the bottom of this."

"Campbell suggested I take Akosha to a physician and asked me to think of a discipline measure that should be taken against Lisa (the teacher)," Brown said.

She took her daughter to Legacy

She said her child was severely traumatized by her experience at the day care, and in the months afterward became uncharacteristically withdrawn.

"My child was abused at a state-funded program and it seems as if no one cares enough to investigate," Brown said.

*My child was abused at a state-funded program and it seems as if no one cares enough to investigate.*

—Mandisa Brown



PHOTOS BY SARAH BLOUNT/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Mandisa Brown comforts her daughter Akosha Taylor. Last October, Brown picked up the toddler at an Early Head Start in northeast Portland and found a large bruise across her face that teachers and officials couldn't explain.

Portland Head Start officials declined to comment on the incident, but Normandale site supervisor Michelle Forrette, who wasn't there on the day of the Taylor was injured, said the case was closed and "everyone has done their work."

"It sounds to me like mom has a different view on it," she said.

Requests for Head Start policies concerning injury or abuse were denied.

Brown said a DHS caseworker eventually told her the daycare center acknowledged that her daughter had been injured under their care, but that the investigation would not continue since nobody knew how it happened.

Una Swanson, manager of DHS child protective services, said the agency doesn't investigate unless a family member or someone living in the household is involved. Otherwise they refer cases to law enforcement. Taylor's case was referred to Sergeant Pat Kelley, who told Brown her daughter's case was not serious enough to warrant an investigation.

Brown's next stop was the Multnomah County district attorney's office. She spoke with a legal assistant, but because the police Child Abuse Team was not investigating, the assistant told the Portland Observer there was nothing they could do.

Brown had left her job with AMB Janitorial at the U.S. Bank Tower to care for her daughter after the incident, placing her in therapy that included exercises to help her interact better with other individuals.

She said she recently returned to work since her daughter is feeling better these days, but finding child care is a struggle for this single mom. Even so, she has sought legal representation and said she will not let the case go until that school takes responsibility for what they did to her child.

"I don't believe police pushed the investigation hard enough, and they (Head Start) are trying to sweep it under the rug."

# Dumpster Fires, Vandals

## No suspects or motive found

BY SARAH BLOUNT  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Strange things are happening on Alberta Street.

Portland Fire and Rescue workers had a busy night last weekend fighting deliberately set fires that erupted from recycling bins along Northeast Alberta Street. By the time rescue workers had responded to an apartment fire early Saturday morning, another fire had broken out nearby, then another and another.

A total of five fires were set within four hours, said Portland Fire & Rescue spokesman Lt. Allen Oswald. Flames caused nearly a half million dollars in damage to the Regency Park North apartment complex at 5026 N.E. 31st Ave., along with \$65,000 worth of residents' personal possessions. At least 13 people were forced out of their homes but there were no injuries.

The second dumpster fire broke out at a building at Northeast 28th Avenue and Alberta. Just minutes later crews were alerted to a third fire in a recycling container belonging to La Sirenita, a Mexican restaurant across the street on Northeast 31st Avenue, while a fourth dumpster lit up in a nearby alley.

The fifth fire was discovered later that morning when Sandra Galli arrived at her Buffalo Gardens nursery, at 30th and Alberta, and discovered flames had consumed the sheepskin seat covers of her Volkswagen van and destroyed the interior.

Oswald said investigators are certain arson was the cause of all of the fires, but have no suspects in custody and no motive. Anyone with information can call 503-823-3791.

"It appears to be a crime of opportunity," he said.

The string of arson comes on the heels of an accidental fire April 9 at the Vita Café at Northeast 30th and Alberta. The restaurant suffered extensive smoke damage after a pack of linens with oily residue spontaneously ignited.



PHOTO BY SARAH BLOUNT/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Red Cross volunteer Marcella Lewis provides food and hot drinks to occupants of Regency Park North apartments on Monday. Some residents escaped Saturday's arson, but weren't lucky enough to avoid a second fire on Sunday night that was caused by faulty wiring.

While fire officials ruled out foul play, owner Karen Woodbury said the Vita has had a series of break-ins since she and her husband, Aaron Woo, took ownership of the café a year ago. She hopes to reopen by next month's Alberta Street Art Hop.

"I hope the police increase their patrol of this area, because this is just ridiculous," Woodbury said.

Across the street, Portland Fret Works owner Todd Mylet recently had to repaint the front of his guitar restoration shop after some weekend vandalism.

"We get graffiti two to five times a year," he said.

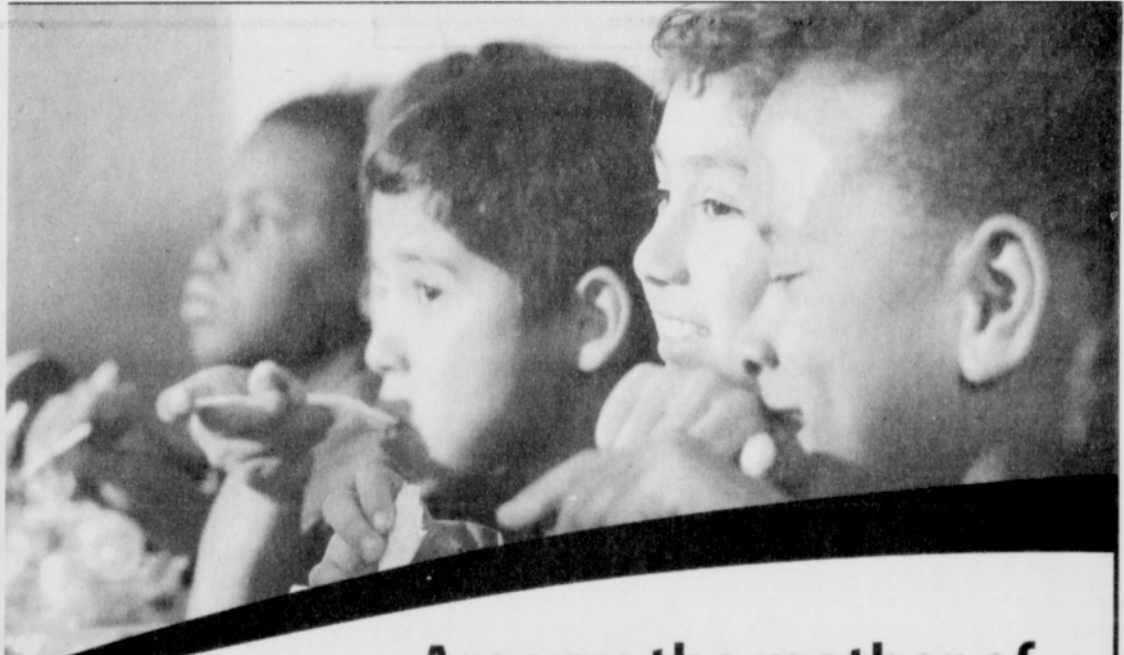
Churches are targets, too, as was evident on March 31 when two men spray painted graffiti, including death threats, on the walls of Victory

Outreach, a mostly African American congregation known for its anti-gang outreach programs at the corner of 30th and Alberta.

Northeast Precinct Cmdr. Bret Smith said crime has increased in the past couple years, as businesses sprout up along the strip.

"I think the prosperity has provided an interest to commit burglaries," he said.

Smith said the precinct is working on a communication system that would allow businesses to interact with each other and the police, either as a group or in confidence, to help curb violence and share useful information. He said they've contacted a vendor with a program, but that it's difficult to get the numerous shop owners on the same page.



## Are you the mother of a child with ADHD?

OHSU is currently enrolling families in **PACT**, a research study geared toward learning the best ways to support families who are living with ADHD.

### Who is eligible to participate?

- Families with at least one child (age 4-21) with a diagnosis of ADHD
- Families who live in the Portland metropolitan area

### If you are eligible, you will be randomly assigned to one of two groups:

1. **A home-based approach** where a nurse visits your home at regular intervals to provide services and support that are unique to you and your family.
2. **An information-based approach** where families will be provided with literature about ADHD.

There is no cost for participating in the study. Mothers will receive a \$50 gift card every six months for 18 months for participating in the study, no matter to which group they are assigned. Additional family members will receive \$10 gift cards each time they complete a short survey.

For more information, please call 503 418-3603 or email [pact@ohsu.edu](mailto:pact@ohsu.edu)

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