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'City of Roses'

Volume XXXVII, Number 48



Leading the Pack
Kanye West has the most Grammy nominations
 See story, page A3

Opening Doors to Diversity

Career electrician promotes union workforce
 See story, Metro section



The Portland Observer

Established in 1970
Committed to Cultural Diversity

www.portlandobserver.com
 Wednesday • December 12, 2007

Week in The Review

Grannies on Trial

Charged with criminal mischief and unlawfully applying graffiti during a Good Friday protest at the Army Recruiting Center in northeast Portland, members of a group known as the Seriously Pissed-off Grannies faced a jury this week in a trial expected to last through Thursday at the Multnomah County Courthouse.

Obama, Winfrey Rally

Rallies for Barack Obama's presidential campaign drew thousands of people in New Hampshire and at the University of South Carolina over the weekend with the help of Oprah Winfrey who

told voters Obama was the person who could change politics in America. See story, page A2.

Crack Sentencing Eased

The U.S. Sentencing Commission voted unanimously Tuesday to allow some 19,500 federal prison inmates, most of them black, to seek reductions in their crack cocaine sentences. The ruling followed the Supreme Court's decision Monday that federal judges can impose shorter sentences for crack-cocaine crimes to make them more in line with those for powder cocaine. See story, page A2.

Vick Gets 23 Months

Having admitted involvement in the killing of at least eight dogs, former Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick was sentenced on Monday to 23 months in prison for his role in an illegal dogfighting ring. See story, sports page B5.

Feds Cut Interest Rate

The Federal Reserve cut a key interest rate by one-quarter of a percentage point Tuesday, trying to keep the country out of recession. Weak housing and credit markets are challenging U.S. growth, but the economy is fundamentally sound, senior U.S. Treasury officials said.

U.N. Offices Bombed

Car bombs exploded minutes apart Tuesday in central Algiers, heavily damaging United Nations offices and partly ripping the facade off a government building. At least 22 people were killed, including U.N. workers, and scores were wounded.

Olga Reopens Shelters

Subtropical Storm Olga drenched Puerto Rico on Tuesday and the Dominican Republic reopened hurricane shelters more than a week after the official end of hurricane season.



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PHOTOS BY PHIL INCORVIA

Issues like social acceptance and prejudice are dramatized in the theater production of "You B the Newbie" at Rosa Parks Elementary school. Pictured in the foreground, from left, are Ariana Vasamas Baker, Kaylee Combs, DeAngelo Clayton, Tyler Barron, Mar'Qeese Yarborough and Rakesh Nash, and in the background are Kenshawna James, Marnisha Lucas and Katie Tobar.

Confronting Alienation

Kids write play about social ills

A diverse group of local kids have produced and will perform a comedy revue that tackles a serious topic: the challenge of confronting isolation and prejudice as a new kid at an urban grade school.

The play called "U B the Newbie" follows two fifth-grade "newbies" as they blunder their way through motion-sensor soap dispensers, library rules and the embarrassment of telling inappropriate jokes.

The production at Rosa Parks Elementary

comes from a north Portland public school that's considered disadvantaged because most students qualify for free and reduced lunch. But thanks to Principal Tamala Newsome, an award-winning African-American educator, the school has had dance and drama in its regular curriculum for the past three years.

"This has resulted in a seasoned group of young writers and performers," said drama teacher Julie Sparling.

The fifth- and sixth-grade students will perform the original raps, dances and scenes from the play for school assemblies in the upcoming week. The production will also be filmed this week for Portland Public School's Television Series for later broadcast on Cable Channel 28.



Rosa Parks Elementary students Mar'Qeese Yarborough and Kaylee Combs perform in a play that tackles the social alienation that comes with being a new kid at school.

Mayor Honors Edna Robinson

For her many long-standing contributions

BY LEE PERLMAN
 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The city's annual Spirit of Portland awards, given each year to individuals and groups who have contributed to the city's livability, usually go to those involved in current activities.

This year, Mayor Tom Potter made an exception. In the category of Mayor's Awards, which he personally bestows outside the program's jury process, he is giving an award to Edna Robertson, an African-American leader who retired as Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods executive director in 1994.

"It's important that we remember the people who contributed so much to our community," Potter told the Portland Observer.

"I think it's wonderful," former Northeast Coalition board chair and Boise neighborhood activist Charles Ford told the newspaper. "Edna has never to my knowledge received an award for all the things she did. It's never too late."

After serving as staff to the federally-funded Model Cities anti-poverty program in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Robertson directed the neighborhood program from its founding in 1975 until her retirement in 1994.



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Edna Robinson reflects on the contributions she has made to the livability of the city from her home in northeast Portland. The longtime neighborhood activist is being honored by Mayor Tom Potter.

Robertson and the late Sharon MacCormack, Northeast Neighborhood crime prevention coordinator, were among the first to warn of California youth gangs migrating to Portland. Under their leadership the coalition gave birth to such service and crime fighting programs as the Graffiti Abatement, TriMet Rider Advocates, Workforce Center and Youth Gang Outreach programs.

Under Robertson's leadership, the coalition weathered tensions between longtime African-American community leaders and a newly-arrived, mostly white population with different priorities. They did so while internal tensions in the north and east Portland district coalitions tore these groups apart.

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Judge Censured

After homophobic, racist comments

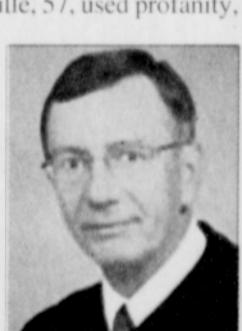
(AP) -- A Clark County Superior Court judge from Vancouver has been censured for "demeaning, offensive and shocking" behavior at a training conference in Los Angeles last year.

Judge John P. Wulle, 57, used profanity, made an obscene gesture after being asked to lower his voice and referred to a group facilitator as "the black gay guy," according to a nine-page document posted on the website of the Commission on Judicial Conduct, which issued the censure on Friday.

At one point, according to the panel's findings, the facilitator said, "Clark County gets a star" for finishing an assignment, and Wulle replied, "I don't need a star. I'm not a Jew."

He was ordered to take 10 hours of judicial ethics courses and seven hours of racial, religious, sexual-orientation and diversity training.

Wulle, a former assistant attorney general who has been a judge since 1997, also



Judge John P. Wulle

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