



Job Losses Worst in Years

Employers slashed 533,000 jobs in November, proof the county is careening deeper into recession
See story, page A5

Weary O.J. Put Away

O.J. Simpson chokes back tears with an apology and then is sentenced to at least 9 years in prison
See story, page A2



The Portland Observer

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Volume XXXVIII, Number 48

Wednesday • December 10, 2008

Week in The Review

Illinois Governor Arrested



The Governor of Illinois was arrested Tuesday on charges that he sought

kickbacks as he considered a replacement for the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by President-elect Obama. The FBI said Gov. Rod Blagojevich conspired to sell or trade the vacant Senate seat for personal benefits for himself and his wife.

Shinseki Joins Obama Team

President-elect Barack Obama has chosen retired Gen. Eric K. Shinseki, the former



Army chief of staff once vilified for questioning the Bush administration's war strategy, to be the next Veterans Affairs Secretary. Shinseki would be the first Asian-American to hold the post, adding to the diversity of Obama's Cabinet. See story, page A2.

Caroline Kennedy Eyes Senate



Caroline Kennedy, the daughter of President John F. Kennedy, has indicated she is interested

in the Senate seat that will come open when Hillary Rodham Clinton becomes Secretary of State. As a prominent booster of Barack Obama's presidential bid, Kennedy spent much of the year on the public stage.

Deadly Fighter Jet Crash

Both engines of a military jet fighter failed before the aircraft crashed and burned in a residential area of San Diego, killing four people on the ground as it destroyed two houses, a congressional aide said Tuesday.

Leno to go Prime Time

Comic Jay Leno will launch his own nightly talk show in prime time next year in a landmark television deal that keeps him from moving to rival network after his planned departure as host of "The Tonight Show," NBC said on Tuesday. The new one-hour show will air at 10 p.m.



Hudson Returning to Work

Jennifer Hudson is getting back to work. The singer is set to begin filming a video next week for her single, "If This Isn't Love," according to her label, J Records. Hudson was due to film the clip in Los Angeles when her mother, brother and nephew were discovered shot to death in their Chicago home on Oct. 24.

39
years of
community service



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Lauren Rimestad of Human Solutions introduces the public to a new Warming Center in northeast Portland for families left out in the cold. The center will be open seven nights a week.

Warming Center for Families Opens

Removing kids from dangerous elements

Good news for families who have nowhere to go when cold weather hits. Multnomah County and the City of Portland have joined forces to create two Warming Centers that will provide a place for the homeless to stay during the cold season.

The first center, operated by Human Solutions, opened Monday at 1435 N.E. 81st Ave., focusing on families.

The second center, which will open soon, will be located in the downtown area. Details for that center are still being worked out.

The county and the city combined to put up \$300,000 to pay for the centers, which will be open seven nights a week

We know that without the Warming Center, there are families who would have no place to stay, and would otherwise be sleeping in cars, unheated buildings, and outside. — Jean DeMaster, Human Solutions executive director

from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m.

Recently, a count of the homeless by the county's Human Services Department found that on any given night, more than 700 families have nowhere to stay indoors. And with the souring economy, officials and social service advocates expect that number to rise.

Human Solutions, a nonprofit agency dedicated to helping low-income and homeless families move toward self-sufficiency, will operate the family Warming Center.

"We know that without the Warming Center, there are families who would have no place to stay, and would otherwise be sleeping in cars, unheated buildings, and outside. This is too dangerous for families with small children," says Jean DeMaster, Executive Director of Human Solutions.

To support the Warming Center, officials with Human Solutions are looking for help from the community in the form

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Frigid Air Moving South

Portland braces for low temps, possible snow

A blast of winter could hit the Portland area this weekend.

The coldest air of the season is forecast to start moving from the arctic region to across northwest Oregon and southwest Washington Friday night and then intensify Saturday, Sunday and through early next week.

Whether it gets cold and wet enough to snow remains to be seen. The National Weather Service says snow could fall in higher elevations like the West Hills with a chance of snow on most Portland streets.



PHOTOS BY JAKE THOMAS/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Portland City Commissioner Randy Leonard receives a golden plunger Monday from Varner Seaman of Sisters of the Road Café during a ceremony marking the completion of a new public restroom in Old Town.



A public toilet called the 'Loo' on Northwest Glisan Street and Sixth Avenue is a prototype meant to address a longstanding need and fundamental human right.

Prototype for Public Decency Restroom seen as fundamental right

BY JAKE THOMAS
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Until recently LaVergne Smith, a 41-year-old homeless woman, has had a reoccurring problem with something so basic many of us take it for granted: she needed to use the bathroom and had nowhere to go.

The city of Portland is hoping that Smith's problem will be less common.

On Monday, Commissioner Randy Leonard unveiled the first of a new line of public toilets called a "Loo" on Northwest Glisan Street and Sixth Avenue near the Greyhound bus station. The Loo is one of the city's latest efforts to address a longstanding and messy problem.

Leonard noted that many politicians aspire to have public buildings named after them, but said,

"it looks like I'm going to have to settle for a restroom," and added that the facility fulfilled "a fundamental human right."

A Loo looks like the toilet from the future. It is a sleek, metallic structure with an oval shape. Three photovoltaic panels line the top, which soaks up sun and powers the Loo putting it completely off the electric grid.

Mayor-elect Sam Adams gave

the Loo its maiden flush, shortly after Leonard was awarded a golden plunger by Varner Seaman, an advocate for the homeless from Sisters of the Road Café.

Anna DiBenedetto, a staff assistant to Leonard, explained that the city took care to prevent the Loo from becoming a magnet for unsavory activities. It has louvers on the top and bottom, which allow onlookers to see how many

people are in it.

Leonard said the structure's sturdy build was intended to serve the largest cross section of people as possible including visitors, homeless, and downtown businesspeople.

"It's designed to be abused," he added.

There is also no sink in the

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