

Five Rose Court Schools Put on Notice

After falling short on applicants

By Jake Thomas
The Portland Observer

The Rose Festival Court has been a The hallmark tradition in Portland for decades. Girls clamored to be selected as their high school's representative to the court and for a chance to win scholarship money, a new wardrobe, and connections that could help them excel in life.

However, this year has been different on a number of fronts.

The Rose Festival revamped the application process, which has hit some schools off guard. As a result, five Portland schools were placed on notice this year for failing to muster up five qualified applicants. The schools are Madison, Marshall, Jefferson, Benson and Lincoln.

If any of these schools can't come up with five qualified applicants next year, the school will lose its automatic spot on the court and individuals from those schools will have to compete in a new at-large metro position.

The at-large spot grew the number of princesses to 15 this year. It also generated 69 qualified applications from 18 suburban schools.

So why such little interest in the



Princesses on the Rose Festival Court line up Saturday during a dance practice and court orientation session.

five Portland schools.

"The reasons varied," said Matt Shelby, spokesperson for Portland Public Schools.

Shelby said that many students have part-time jobs and other activities that made them shy away from the big commitment that comes with competing in the court system. "Being a Rose Festival princess wasn't all that relevant in their lives," he said.

However, changes in the application process itself caused the schools to stumble, according to the girls representing them.

Last year, the Rose Festival as-

sembled a taskforce to overhaul how princesses were selected and it resulted in sweeping changes.

Girls are no longer selected by a student vote, but by a panel of judges. It also upped the grade point average to a 3.0, required 20 hours of community service, and an essay, among other requirements. The program is now largely administered by the festival not the schools.

Alisha Moreland-Capuia, who represented Jefferson over a decade ago, expressed concern about the changes, telling the Portland Observer a year ago that by expanding the court to subur-

ban schools it would diminish its importance, and that the program's success would hinge too much on how well school administrators promoted the program.

She also felt that widening the pool to metro schools suggested to Portland schools "that they're not good enough."

Moreland-Capuia is now shocked that so many schools were placed on notice.

Although she couldn't quite put her finger on source of declining interest, she said that the new requirements may have had something to do

with it.

The girls representing the schools on notice said that this year's princess selection process was poorly promoted and slowed by snow days, while at the same time applicants were caught off guard by the new rules.

"It was more of a popularity contest, and now it's who could really present themselves," said Mataya McNeil, the current princess from Madison.

She said about 20 girls at her school were interested in the court, but many had forgotten about the deadline right after winter break and didn't scramble quick enough to get all their materials in by the Jan. 9 deadline.

Cynthia Harris, principal of Jefferson, agrees that the snow days slowed down the promotion of the court. The fact that the program is now largely run outside of the school also caught Jefferson off guard.

Leslie Goodlow-Baldwin, this year's Rose Festival Court chair who helped institute the new rules, said "Never in a million years would I have thought we'd have five schools that didn't make the cut."

She said that she tried to get the schools to get the ball rolling in October, and is now encouraging schools to hold an assembly the year before so that they have ample time.

She also stated that the program is not going to renegotiate the standards, but wants to work better with schools in the future.

Surrender Means Second Chance for a Clean Slate

By Jake Thomas
The Portland Observer

Anthony DeWayne Cunningham walked what might have been the longest one and a half block of his life.

For six years, Cunningham had been on the run from drug and weapons charges, as well as probation violations. But on Monday, sick of never being able to see his family and sleeping on couches, he turned himself in to authorities with the help of Project Clean Slate.

The initiative founded by local African-American businessman Roy Jay seeks to get people like Cunningham back on track. It's run in conjunction with the Multnomah County District Attorney's office among others, and helps people get their drivers license back, expunge parts

of their record and helps rehabilitate them.

"I feel like I've been in jail on the outside," said Cunningham, as he stepped from a parking garage, downtown. "It's not fun at all. It's tiring."

"You know I'm proud of you," said Jay, who flanked him while speaking to reporters.

Jay explained that Clean Slate receives inquiries from thousands of people wanting to clear up non-violent criminal and civil records. He said that there are plenty of people like Cunningham who made some bad decisions or ended up at the wrong place at the wrong time.

"We're not talking about a Bernard Madoff here," said Jay, referencing the disgraced banker. "We're talking about a



PHOTO BY JAKE THOMAS/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Project Clean Slate founder Roy Jay (left) accompanies Anthony DeWayne Cunningham to the Multnomah County Courthouse on Monday as Cunningham turns himself in to clear up several outstanding warrants.

kid that really wants to change his life."

Jay stressed that the DA and the courts will ultimately determine what happens to people like Cunningham, but said that they will take it into account his

volunteer surrender, and pointed out that there is no program like it anywhere else in the country.

"That's because we live in Portland, Oregon and think different," he said.


Jay also emphasized that people in program aren't going to have it easy.

"This is not the I'm going to be your homey and you're going to get a drivers license and everything's going to be fine," said Jay. People who enroll in the program must take a class on personal re-

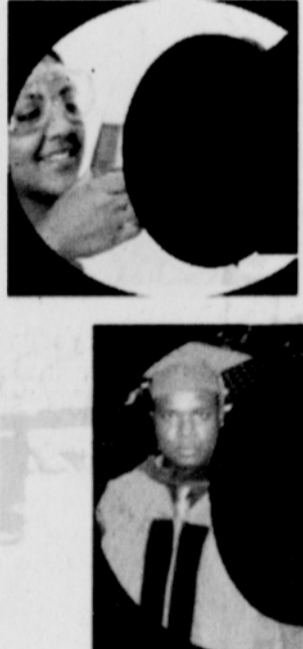
sponsibility and do community service.

"Don't be scared. I'm going to get a smile out of you," laughed Jay in his booming voice before turning southward to walk to the Multnomah County Courthouse. "You don't want to be doing no mug shot."

On the way, Jay laughed and joked while slowly walking up through the crowded street. Cunningham nervously fidgeted with his cell phone before disappearing into the courthouse.



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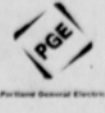
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