

Last Thursday

continued **▲** from Front

Magnus Johannesson, the owner of the real estate company Urban Focus and an early promoter of the event, said that the event has always been loosely organized, lacking any committee or point person.

"There never really was an infrastructure," he said.

Johannesson, whose office on Alberta and 24th Avenue has bullet holes from gang battles, explained that because the event lacked any top-down structure it attracted people looking for an "authentic" gathering where people could showcase their art.

"It wasn't at all hard to find artists," said Johannesson.

But as the event grew, it's become increasingly unpredictable and rowdy. Some worry that the celebratory nature of the event has eclipsed its original goal.

Neighbors complain about the noise from amplified instruments on Alberta, the lack of parking, loud parties making their way home, and deposits of vomit, garbage, and feces on their lawn. Others, like Johannesson, feel Last Thursday had become more of a "frat party."

Larry Holmes, the chair of the Vernon Neighborhood Association, said that residents in the nearby neighborhood vary on how they feel. Some despise it. Others think it's cool.

"I do feel Last Thursday has developed into something different," said Gaurdino. "When people show up at the door to my gallery, they're already drunk."

Allan Oliver, the manager of Onda Gallery on Alberta, isn't sure the event even helps his business since people are so overwhelmed by the event before they even walk in his door.

"I sort of have a love-hate thing with this," said Oliver. "Spontaneity is very overrated."

Things reached a fever pitch in April 2007, when a riot nearly erupted outside The Nest, a bar on Alberta.

According to Oregon Liquor Control Commission records, police officers were trying to clear the street filled with people dancing and reveling. A small group began resisting, and one of them grabbed an officer's Taser.

The incident quickly escalated with patrons at The Nest making lewd hand gestures and hurling beer bottles at the officers.

Since then, the street has been closed off during the festival. Last year, the city stepped up its involvement, adding a greater police presence, garbage cans, and port-a-potties.

But it costs the city \$10,000 a month to offer these services from May through October, which is prompting city officials to look

into imposing some sort of formal structure on the event to recoup costs.

Both First Thursday and Saturday Market have point persons that the city can contact to resolve issues—something Last Thursday lacks.

Next week Mayor Sam Adams and Amanda Fritz will be holding an open meeting to get feedback on what should change. The session will take place on Monday, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Acadian Ballroom, 1829 N.E. Alberta St.

Roy Kaufman, spokesperson for Adams, said that the City Hall doesn't want to use a heavy hand to shut down Last Thursday.

"That's not at all the goal," he said, pointing out that events like Last Thursday keep Portland unique.

But he did note that there needs to be some sort of shared responsibility, maybe with Alberta Street Business Association or Art on Alberta.

Fritz, a former neighborhood ac-

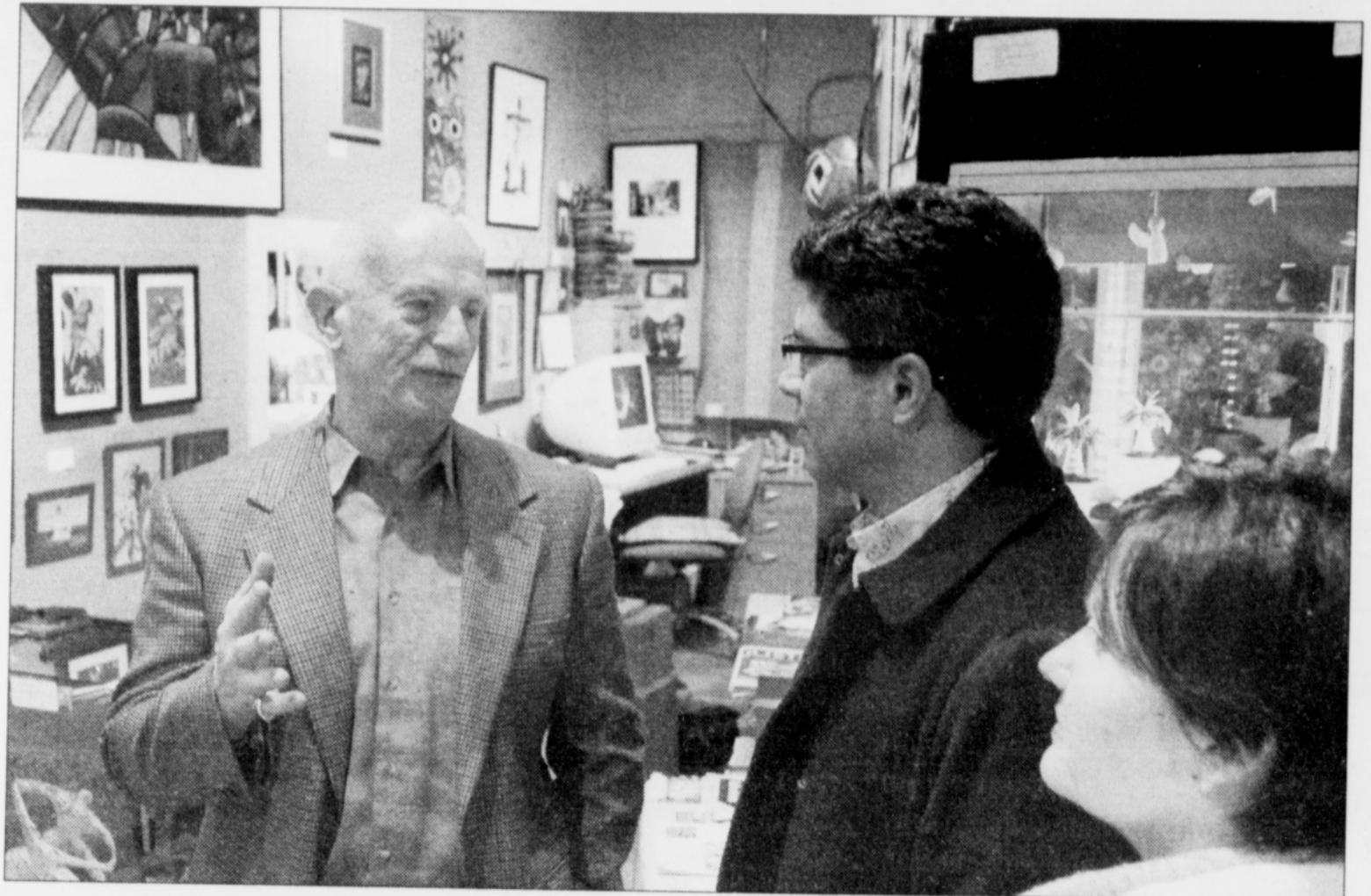


PHOTO BY JAKE THOMAS/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Allan Oliver, the manager of Onda Gallery on Northeast Alberta Street, chats with customers who wandered in during the monthly arts celebration 'Last Thursday.'

tivist, said that she wants to use the meeting to get a sense of where people are on the issue. She said that it's a "huge problem" that there is no person or group in charge of the event to take responsibility. All options are

on the table, Fritz added, including shutting it down, which she isn't sure how that would happen.

Becky Guest, an artist who braved the cold last month to showcase her handmade copper bracelets, said she

loves how the event brings people together, and hopes the city will think twice before it imposes any sort of structure that stifles the event.

"Why would they do that?" she said. "What's the problem?"

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