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'City of Roses'



HOUSING  
Special Edition

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# Young, & Black & Gifted

## Recognizing kids on right track

BY JAKE THOMAS  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Portland's African-American youth are often caught up in a net of negative public perceptions brought by news of gang violence, the sobering achievement gap and school drop out rates.

But there's plenty of young black kids in Portland who are on the right path, making good grades, headed to college, and are making positive contributions to the city. A new photographic tribute recognizes the hard work of some of these students and shows that there is still reason to be optimistic.

"Young, Black & Gifted," a photo essay putting the spotlight on the accomplishments of high-achieving African-American students, opens to the public on Monday, April 5 at Portland School District headquarters at 501 N. Dixon St. and will later be moved to the Lloyd Center Mall.

The project is the brain child of Reiko Williams, the district's family and community engagement manager, who said she got the idea after having a conversation with someone who seemed shocked when she mentioned an African-American student that was excelling. After the conversation she worried that all the attention on the problems of young black students was drowning out the hard work of others.

"You hear so much about deficits and achievement gaps," she said.

Williams said the exhibit came together with a call for nominations of black students doing well district-wide, and the recruitment of a photographer and web developer.

Skylar Holt, a freshman at Jefferson High School is one of the 13 students featured in the exhibit.

Holt gets A's and B's in school. She does especially well in English classes, taught by Anne Novinger, one of her favorite teachers, and chemistry is getting steadily easier. Holt plans to go to college and is thinking about law school down the road.

"I'm enjoying it a lot," she said of her high school. "I like

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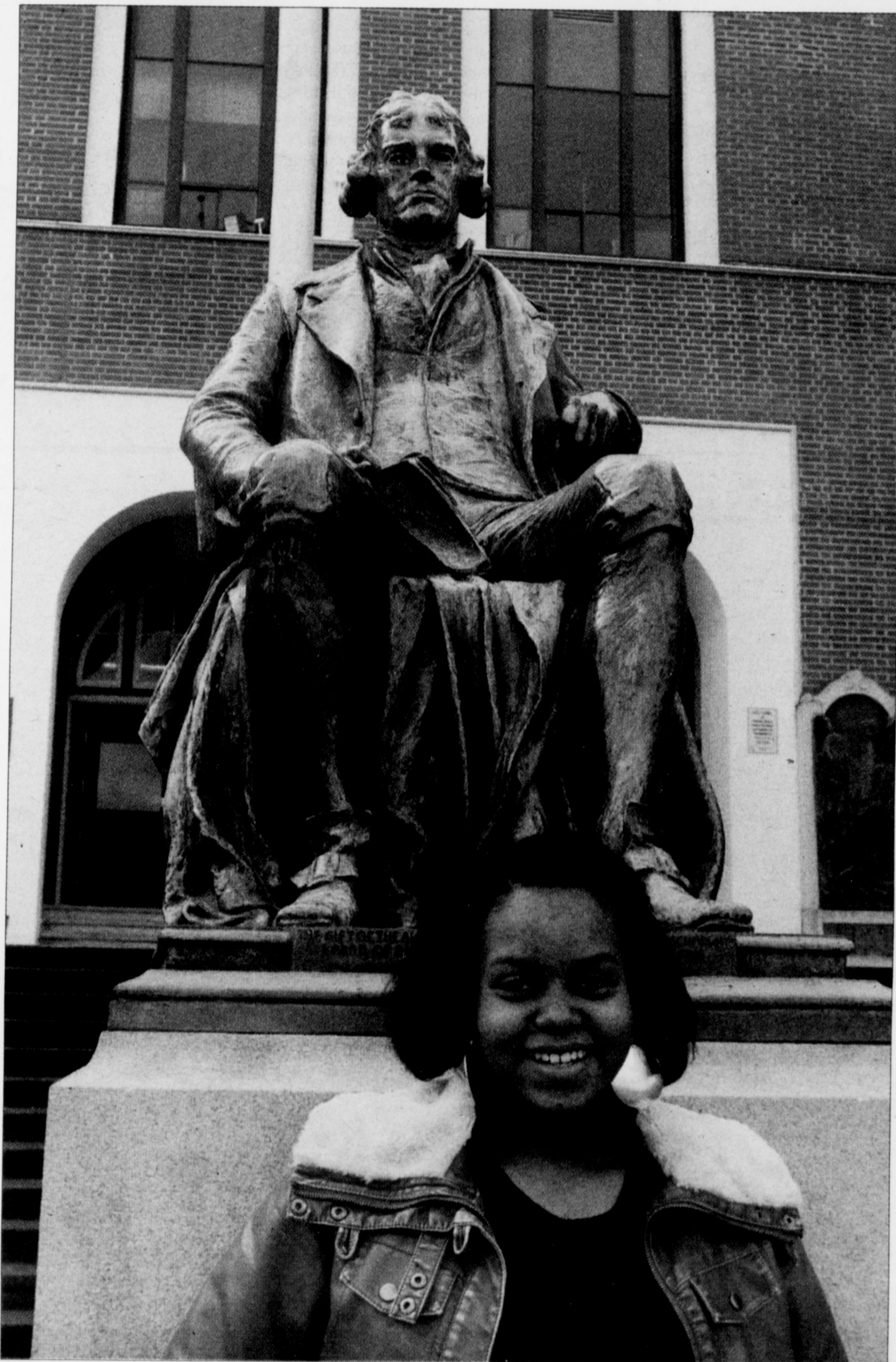


PHOTO BY JAKE THOMAS/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Skylar Holt excels as freshman at Jefferson High School in north Portland. Her contribution as one of the city's "Young, Black & Gifted" students is part of a new exhibit coming to school district headquarters and Lloyd Center Mall.