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Last Thursday 'After Hours' Upsets Neighbors

BY LEE PERLMAN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Last Thursday on Alberta has been a contentious issue for some time. Lately it has become the focal point for a larger debate, with the Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods squaring off against Mayor Sam Adams, Commissioner Amanda Fritz, and the group Friends of Last Thursday.

Originally conceived as an Arts Walk to promote the art galleries on the street in the manner of the First Thursday exhibits in the Pearl neighborhood, the Alberta event has evolved into a free-form party.

The street is closed to motor vehicles from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. and the road is lined with vendor booths. But the bone of contention is what happens after the festival theoretically "closes."

Residents say that revelers, many of them drunk, continue to congregate into the wee hours. There have been complaints of participants trespassing and depositing garbage on neighbors' lawns, and public urination.

Two years ago Adams, who oversees the Portland Police Bureau, and Fritz, in charge of both the Office of Neighborhood Involvement and its Mediation program, began attempts to bring some order to the affair.

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Street

A grass roots group, Friends of Last Thursday, was formed to both promote and oversee the event. Earlier this year, the mayor's office oversaw the hiring of a director, Tucker Teugsch, to supervise Last Thursday's operations.

However, critics contend, the problems continue, and they lay their complaints at the steps of City Hall.

Why, they ask, is this event not held to the requirements of other street festivals such as the Mississippi Street Fair or Good in the Neighborhood? Why are organizers and vendors not required to get permits and obtain insurance? Why is the City supplying \$100,000 a year in police officers and other support for this event?

At a meeting with the Northeast Coalition's executive committee earlier this month, Fritz disputed the amount of local taxpayer monies going into the event, saying the figure was exaggerated.

She said that the city's hands were tied to some extent and calls to simply end the event wasn't an option.

"It would literally take the National Guard to shut it down," she said. Nor could the city tell Friends of Last

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Musicians pick up their instruments for an impromptu concert along the sidewalk during a prior Last Thursday on Alberta Street event.

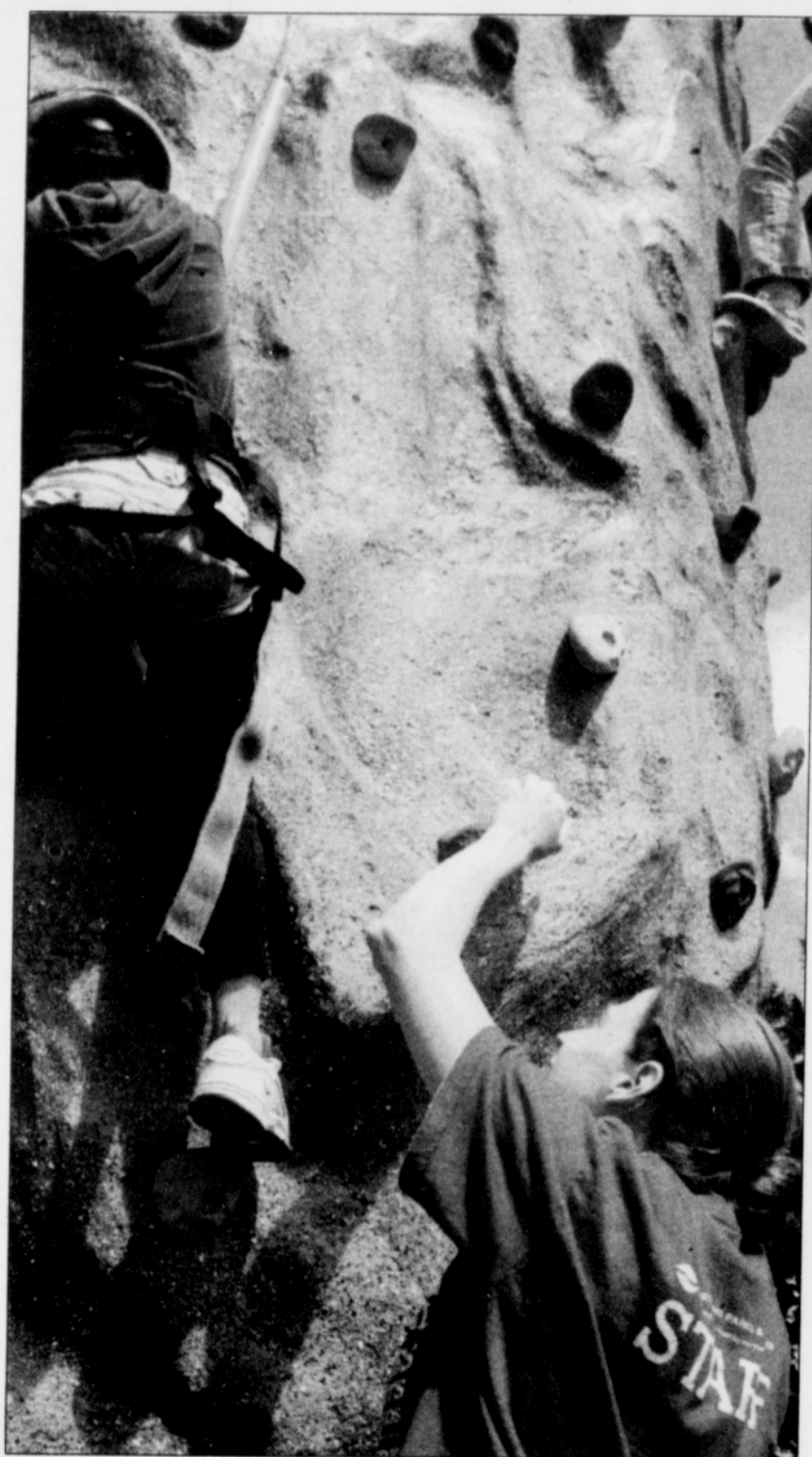


PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER
Charissa O'Brien helps a young girl learn the ropes of Rock Climbing on Thursday at Alberta Park, where northeast residents took part in the Summer Free for All provided by the City of Portland's Parks and Recreation Division.

Rock Climbing in the Park

Throughout the summer 38 sites around Portland are offering fun activities for kids, including a traveling rock climbing wall that will be located at nine different parks throughout northeast Portland in the coming months.

The traveling rock wall is part of the efforts of Portland's Parks and Recreation Division to provide free, family-friendly activities and events throughout the summer months.

Free lunches for children ages 0-18 are also served at most sites.

Times and locations vary each day, but the rock wall will be located at Alberta Park next on August 4 and 8.

For more information, a daily schedule and updates call 503-823-5446.