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The Portland Observer

41
years of
community service

'City of Roses'



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Wednesday • August 3, 2011 Committed to Cultural Diversity

One Love for Alberta

*Advocates strive to
keep the diversity*

BY CARI HACHMANN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

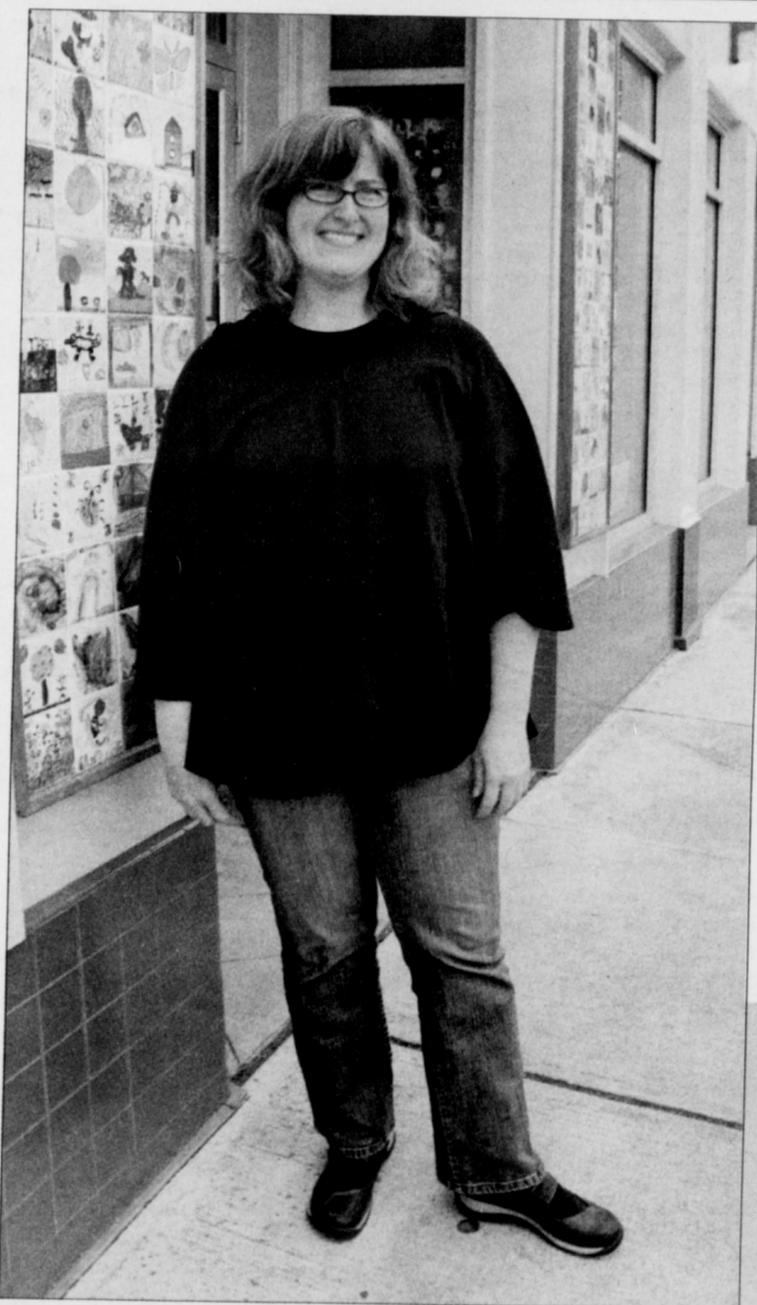
Once largely the essence of African American community and culture, Alberta Street has transformed dramatically over recent years. Now a vibrant arts district colored with people of all persuasion and strewn with trendy shops, cafés, bars and galleries, the historical hub has evolved at a lion's pace.

Longtime residents witness from their front porches a demographic shift taking shape as a flux of newcomers, largely white, move into a once familiar neighborhood. Fixed in nostalgia's grasp, many question the price of change, while others stroll the street unaware of its past.

Despite an unshared history, most living in the area can agree that Alberta Street has always been the heart of a northeast Portland community, where the peoples' love for the unique neighborhood is a common one.

As final preparations are made for the annual Alberta Street Fair coming Saturday, Aug. 13, a four-committee team of 55 volunteers, a majority of who are residents from the neighborhood, are striving to make the Alberta district a better place and keep diversity at heart.

Sharing the love for the community is Sara Wittenburg, the executive director of the community group Alberta Main Street.



A Wisconsin native and nine-year local to Portland, Wittenburg brings 20 years of experience in community development and public service to her job. Once a Peace Corps volunteer in Belize, she worked as a non-profit consultant before turning her attention toward another passion, Alberta Street.

Wittenburg and her volunteers rallied for a grant that would designate Alberta as part of the Main Street program, an approach developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation that advocates a return to community self-reliance, local empowerment, and the rebuilding of urban and historic commercial districts.

Last summer, Alberta Main Street became one of three Portland neighborhoods, including St. Johns and Hillsdale to receive city funding that would begin the revitalization of the Alberta commercial district.

"The love that people have for this community is heart wrenching and impressive," said Wittenburg. "People move here to take part in a unique community unlike other business districts," she said.

She points across the street to the two businesses that suffered fire damage earlier this year and describes how neighboring owners offered them another storefront so they could stay open while finding finances for repairs.

Along the same neighborly mindset, Wittenburg said she is keen on keeping Alberta local, sustainable, and diverse, defending the statistic that 68-cents of every dollar spent at a locally-owned business stays

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Astounded by the amount of compassion and interest residents and visitors have for Alberta, the new executive director of Alberta Main Street, Sara Wittenburg, along with a team of volunteers, are committed to keeping the heart of Alberta Street community diverse, local and sustainable.

PHOTO BY CARI HACHMANN/
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Community Comes Together for Teen's Funeral

Yashanee Vaughn Remembered

Friends and family gathered Saturday at the City Bible Church to remember and celebrate Yashanee Vaughn, the young girl who went missing four months ago after she was believed to be killed by her boyfriend.



Police recovered her body Yashanee Vaughn

from Rocky Butte in northeast Portland two weeks ago. After long mourning the disappearance of their 14-year old daughter, Yashanee's family finally had the chance to give her a proper memorial.

At the funeral, a group of girls danced and sang songs celebrating the friend they called "Bonnie B."

Red ribbons adorned her family and clergy matching flower garlands that draped over

Vaughn's casket. Near a thousand people filled the church pews to celebrate Yashanee's life and grieve for her family's loss.

"I wasn't going to stop until I found my baby, and I admit that," her mother Shaquita Louis said. Vaughn's family told the audience they never gave up looking for their daughter and thanked friends and supporters who help to keep her search in the public's eye.

"She's always going to be in everybody's hearts," Reynelda Hayes, Vaughn's grandmother, told Fox 12. "I'm

just going to remember her as a happy, bubbly carefree girl. I'm not going to forget her, ever."

Former teachers remembered Vaughn as a social butterfly, always bonding with those around her. "Yashanee was easy to friend and love," Ellon Manly remembered.

Elizabeth Jenson, the principal of Open Meadow Middle School where Vaughn attended, said, "I have never met anyone in 12 years of working with the students

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