

# The INSIDE

VANCOUVER page 6

LAW & JUSTICE page 7

MIETRO pages 11



Arts & ENTERTAINMENT pages 12-14

OCTOBER CALENDAR page 15

HEALTH pages 16-17

CLASSIFIEDS page 18

OPINION pages 20-21



EL OBSERVADOR pages 22-23

FOOD page 24



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What's on your list today?

## LOCAL NEWS

### Police Openings Draw Crowd

In past, competitive process yielded few minority hires

BY CARI HACHMANN  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER  
Just 10 minutes after the Portland Police opened online registration for 24 new positions last week, over 300 prospective officers submitted applications, officially closing the recruitment process for the quarter with only the first 200 applicants to be considered.

"The process is very competitive," said Lt. Vince Elmore, of the Portland Police Bureau for 22 years. "Applicants are competing with people across country to get applications in quickly."

The Portland Police has historically been criticized for the lack of diversity on the force, including women, African-Americans, Latinos and other minorities.

Despite bureau claims of progress, over the past six years there has been little to no significant percentage changes in hiring minorities, with less than 1 percent increases for women and blacks, and a 1 percent increase for Latinos and minority women.

According to 2011 bureau figures, of 956 sworn officers, 151 or 15.8 percent are women, 35 or 3.7 percent are African-Americans, and 32 or 3.4 percent are Latino. Whites make up the majority of 819 law enforcement workers, or 85.7 percent of the police force.

In Portland, African-Americans comprise 6.4 percent of the population, and Latinos make up 8.8 per-



PHOTO BY CARI HACHMANN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER  
Cara Sweeney is a recruitment officer for the Portland Police Bureau.

cent, which is nearly double and triple their lack of representation on the police force.

Elmore said the bureau is working to increase diversity within the organization. Even if the numbers do not reflect change, the police assure us that progress is being made.

"The Portland Police should reflect our community," Elmore said. "The bureau should look like the people we service."

This year, the bureau hired 43 new officers. Three are black, six are Hispanic, one is Asian, and one is Native-American. Of the 43, five are women.

One month ago, the police hired the first Hispanic female in 10 years,

the first African American female in about five years, and of the last four people hired, police say 35 percent have been people of color or women.

Historically, police say minorities and women have not been interested in becoming a police officer, but police are doing more to educate and encourage them to have a competitive advantage.

Right now there is only one officer of color working with gangs. In response, police said, "It is not about the color of your skin, but experience."

Recruitment officers said that about 50 percent of prospective officers are recruited out of state in

*continued* ▼ on page 4

### Roosevelt Teacher of the Year

Spanish teacher Elena Garcia-Velasco, who teaches at Roosevelt high school in North Portland, was named Oregon's new teacher of the year on Thursday.

Recognized for her teaching skills and ability to connect well with students, Garcia-Velasco is known throughout the educational system as someone who transforms the lives of her pupils, especially students from the Latino community.

Garcia-Velasco was awarded \$5,000 and will travel to Washington, D.C. to meet President Obama with the other state winners.



Roosevelt High School's Elena Garcia-Velasco has been named Oregon teacher of the Year.