

Gun Violence Explosion

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felon, has any warrants, and see if there are any restraining orders or domestic violence problems," she said.

Licenses dealers also see if a person is of age. In the state of Oregon, you must be 18-years-old to buy a long gun, which is basically a rifle, and 21-years-old to buy a handgun or an assault weapon.

Okamoto said so-called kitchen table or private sales, such as purchases on Craig's List, bypass any

background check requirements as long as the seller is dealing in fewer than 25 firearms, something she calls a problem because criminals can get guns with no questions asked.

"You do not need to do a background check for that. People can, but it costs money with a small fee," she said.

Another way to get a gun is known as a 'straw' or 'straw man' purchase. It happens when someone with a clean record is paid to purchase a gun for someone else.

"Say you have got someone who

is 22-years-old with a clean record and needs to make some money. Give this person money and have them go into a dealer and buy 200 guns," she said. "The person walks out with as many guns as the person wants, and it is completely legal."

Simpson said state laws and local ordinances controlling firearms are good and helpful, but there is such a prevalence of firearms in the community, it is difficult for them to have a major impact.

"Our goal is to make it harder to get a gun if a criminal or juvenile," he



On July 16, members of the Portland Police Bureau Gun Task Force and Gang Enforcement Team recover three handguns from two apartments on Northeast 82nd Avenue. The guns had previously been reported stolen.

PCC Seeks Candidates for Zone 2 Board Vacancy

Portland Community College is seeking applications to fill a vacancy on the Board of Directors. Applicants must live in Zone 2 (North Portland, Northeast Portland north of Sandy Blvd., and portions of eastern Columbia County including St. Helens) and must be registered to vote.

The selected candidate will serve on the Board until June 30, 2013, and can seek election to the position in May 2013.

Applicants must submit a letter indicating their interest and qualifications, a current résumé and references. Letters of recommendation are appreciated but not required.

Applications must be received by Friday, August 10 at 5:00 p.m.

For more information, visit www.pcc.edu/boardmember or call 971-722-4696.

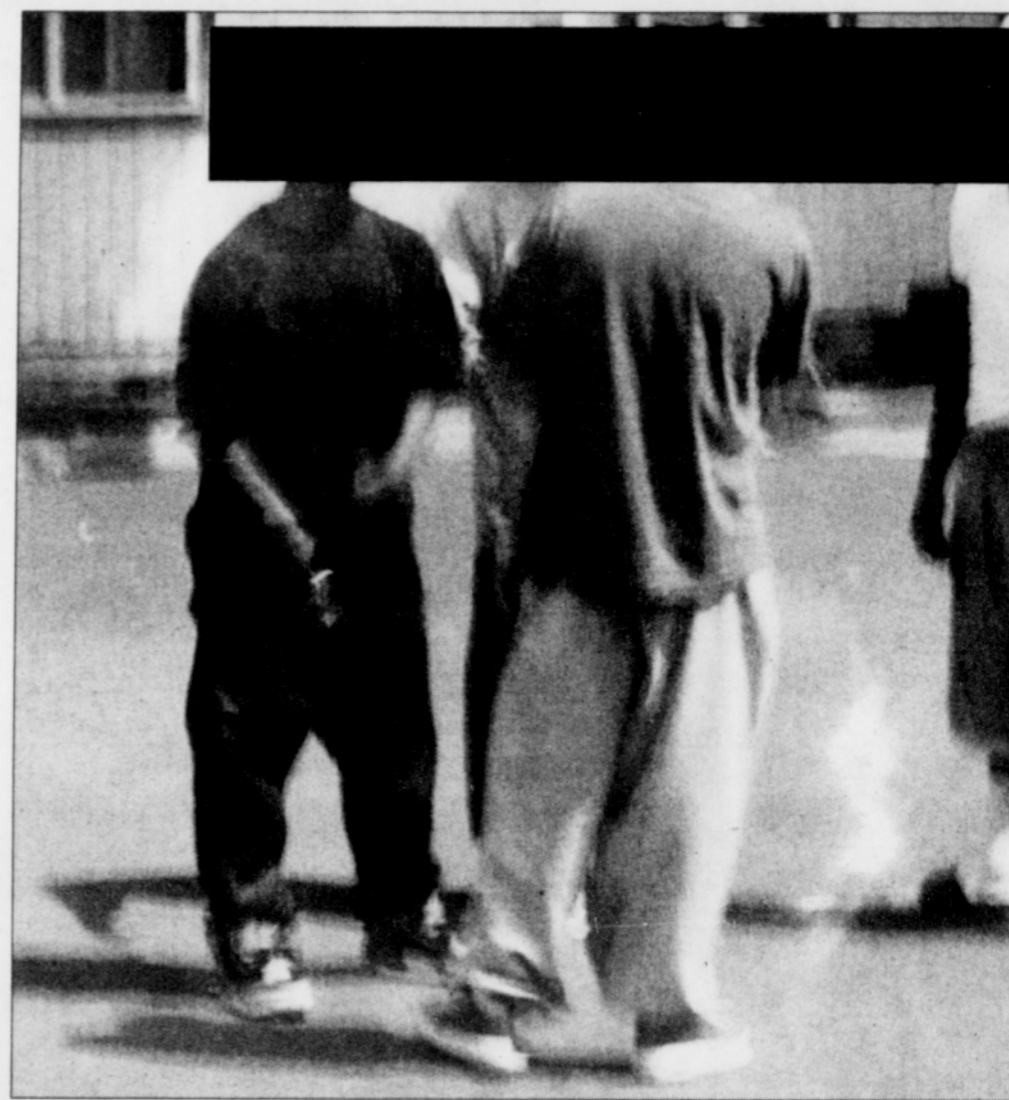


Portland Community College

said. "The laws are effective, but you have to have enough people to enforce them, and the sheer number of guns makes it difficult to know all the different avenues they can be used within the community."

In 2010, in an effort to curb the rate of gun violence within the city, Portland Mayor Sam Adams worked to pass five ordinances involving gun safety.

The local laws addressed the endangerment of a child by allowing access to a firearm; increased consequences for the failure to report a lost or stolen firearm; enhanced sen-



A suspected gang member shows others his gun outside a southeast Portland apartment. The police surveillance photo, with the faces blacked out, was taken on July 17 just before a high-risk traffic stop that escalated into a police shooting of a 17-year-old armed suspect.

tences for the possession of a loaded firearm in a public place; added new restrictions on youth curfew; and forbid the use of illegal firearms in designated neighborhood "hotspots."

Police say the ordinances have a direct impact on the pervasiveness of guns within the community, but Okamoto said these kinds of laws should be statewide, if not nationwide.

"What the gun control movement knows is once you put requirements in one county, the gun dealer's move out of that county to a different county, where they know they don't have to worry about that law," she said.

Okamoto said she would like to see more enforcement of the child access prevention ordinance, in an effort to prevent older gang members from furnishing weapons to gang members who are minors.

"Get them away from messing with these kids and messing with their lives," she said. "These guys are not going to stop because it is illegal. Murder is illegal, but people

commit is every day. But if you don't make a law against it, then no one would ever worry about retribution."

She would also like to see a background check for every gun sold.

Simpson sees the biggest impact on the reduction of youth violence beginning with the family.

"Strong families can prevent kids from becoming gang members. Police have really low impact on whether or not a child will become a gang member," he said. "But if a 5 or 6 year old grows up in a home where gang violence is accepted by the family, it is incredibly likely they will become a gang member themselves."

He also said the gun can't be blamed for the high level of violence within Portland. "It is like blaming spoons for obesity. There is a human element here that is at work that is complicit to getting guns into the hands of youth," he said. "Guns are not the problem. Lawful, legal gun ownership is not the problem. The problem is the guns that flow into the hands of people who should not have them."

The biggest hope, he said, is that parents will be more vigilant with their children, who are vulnerable to gang lifestyles. "Waiting for someone else to fix the problem is not going to help. The single biggest impact to curb the rising rate of gang violence is going to be family," he said.

Okamoto agreed. "We need to get our children educated, not just about gun violence, we need to get them into good schools and college to give them a chance, so they aren't going to join gangs," she said.

Ceasefire sponsors their next collection of unwanted firearms on Saturday, Aug. 18, from 10 to 2 p.m. at the north side of Memorial Coliseum, in the Rose Quarter parking lot off North Benton Avenue.

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