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What's on your list today?.

LOCAL NEWS



PHOTO BY ALLI MAKI MAYA

Photographer and teaching artist Julie Keefe, working with students at Sunnyside Elementary, will represent the city as Portland's first Creative Laureate.

Portland's First Creative Laureate

Julie Keefe guides new program

In one of his last official acts as Portland's mayor, Sam Adams appointed photographer Julie Keefe as the city's first Creative Laureate.

Keefe is a professional photographer with 25 years experience working predominantly in the photojournalism, documentary, and community-based art fields. She was one of the first teaching artists at Caldera, the award-winning arts program for underserved youth, and for the last 14 years has worked intensively with underserved youth and communities, introducing them to the fine arts of photography and writing in a variety of community

settings.

She created the "Hello Neighbor" Project in 2007-2008, which used interviews and photographs to introduce children to their neighbors and ultimately neighbors to each other by displaying large-scale photographic portraits with text in six cities throughout Oregon - creating the state's largest collaborative public art project.

Keefe is currently working with the Right Brain Initiative in area classrooms and the Portland Art Museum in its Object Stories program.

"It is my hope that the position of Creative Laureate for the City of

Portland will afford me the opportunity to continue advocating for the ideas I so strongly believe in - that art creates conversation, conversation creates community and everyone loves poetry written by first graders reflecting on their first photographs," Keefe said.

Mayor Adams created the Creative Laureate program, administered by the Regional Arts and Culture Council, to create additional opportunities for creative industry leadership and arts advocacy in the community.

"I think Julie Keefe is a fantastic example of the kind of artist that makes Portland a national hub for culture and creativity" Adams said.

New Year Rings in Pay Hike

Oregon's low-paid workers got a raise with the New Year, when a 15-cent increase to the state's minimum wage took effect.

The increase from \$8.80 to \$8.95 per hour means an extra \$312 a year for a family with one full-time minimum wage worker. The increase is the result of Measure 25, approved

by voters in 2002, which pegged Oregon's minimum wage to rises in the cost of living.

"Strengthening the buying power of low-wage workers is especially critical in this economic climate," said Chuck Sheketoff, executive director of the Oregon Center for Public Policy.

He noted that a recent study by the National Employment Law Project showed that, while 60 percent of jobs lost during the recession have been middle-wage occupations, low-wage occupations have accounted for 58 percent of jobs created in the post-recession recovery.