



Roosevelt Science Club members line up with their adult mentors outside the north Portland high school. The students, teachers and volunteers are working on a project to improve air quality after a study found the school had the some of the worst air pollution in the nation.

PHOTO BY DONOVAN M. SMITH

Science Club Works to Clean Up the Air

Roosevelt students respond to poor air quality report

BY DONOVAN M. SMITH
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

It is safe to say Portland is becoming known worldwide for our progressive values, politically, socially, and perhaps even more so, environmentally.

So the fact that nestled away on the north side of the city, Portland's statistically poorest high school, Roosevelt, is home to some of the worst air quality in the nation, may come as a frightening surprise

to many Rose City residents.

In a USA Today study from 2009 measuring air quality in schools across the country, Roosevelt ranked at the bottom one percentile. The report also cited the neighborhood as having the worst air pollution in the city of Portland.

When Portland State University Urban Studies graduate Ronald Pate came across the study a couple months ago, he was shocked into action.

He immediately linked with Roosevelt science teacher Kendall Jensen, and together they have developed a project for students to be proactive about improving the air quality of their school.

Pate calls the ventilation system at

Roosevelt "marginal" at best. He said the 93-year-old building has barely functional vents in the ceiling and windows that can help keep air circulating.

Joining with other volunteers and Roosevelt students themselves, the school is adding indoor plants to classrooms to help absorb harmful toxins in the air.

Using what is called a snake plant, the vegetation is fashioned into pots with fans, which help filter healthier air back into the room. They have set up four snake plants in a room, as a demonstration project with four state of the art air monitors loaned by another PSU environmental science graduate to track the changes, if any in the air.

Jensen who has taught at Roosevelt for four years is excited about what the project could mean for her students.

"I really believe in this idea of service learning and community-based learning," Jensen says. "I feel like if our curriculum is meaningful and the kids are working on stuff that's affecting the community they see that connection, they see how it connects to science, or history, or English."

The project is only made possible by a small legion of Science Club and other students coming together after the final bell rings.

Freshmen Nathan McEmrys says even

continued on page 18

Refunds Offered for Arts Tax

Based on a new analysis of Portland's new arts tax, some people are eligible for a refund.

The city has reevaluated the requirements for people who get most or all of their income from Social Security or the Public Employees Retirement System and determined that those types of income, often taxable at the federal level, are not taxable by the city.

The \$35 arts tax was approved by voters last year to support arts programs in public schools and the metro area arts community.

The City Council will continue to study the tax and will consider further revisions. A notice explaining a refund process, if you have already paid the tax and don't qualify for the levy, is posted on the city's homepage, portlandoregon.gov.

The Week in Review

Lauren Hill Sentenced

Laurn Hill will serve three months in prison and three months of home confinement for failing to pay about \$1 million in taxes. The 37-year-old Grammy-winning singer was sentenced in Newark, N.J. on Monday. She is scheduled to report to jail July 8.



Fiery Woodlawn Crash

A Mercedes crashed into a Honda and burst into flames after a police pursuit on Northeast Ainsworth at 15th Avenue Monday evening. The driver helped a female passenger from the car, disappeared into the neighborhood but was later apprehended and taken into custody.

Dealer Gets 20 Years

A Portland judge sentenced a heroin dealer to 20 years in federal prison Monday. Aleskey A. Dzyuba distributed the drug to a 17-year-old Milwaukie High School who died of a heroin overdose.

Limo Fire Turned Deadly

A limousine burst into flames on a San Francisco area bridge Saturday, taking the life of a bride-to-be and five others celebrating her bachelorette party. The source of the limousine fire was unknown; the driver and three other passengers survived.



Shots Fired Near J Lo

Shots rang out on a Fort Lauderdale, Fla., beach Sunday during an interview with Jennifer Lopez for "Entertainment Tonight." Lopez was quickly removed by security.