

Oregon Teacher of the Year

Franklin educator receives top honor



Mercedes Muñoz

Franklin High School special education educator Mercedes Muñoz was named Oregon's 2020 Teacher of the Year during a surprise assembly Friday.

Director of the Oregon Department of Education Colt Gill was joined by Portland Public Schools Superintendent Guadalupe Guerrero and Franklin High Principal Chris Frazier in honoring Muñoz for the encouragement, equity and voice she offers to her students every day.

"Great educators are at the heart of student success in Oregon's public schools," said Gov. Kate Brown. "What Mercedes has done to advance equity and inclusion at Franklin High School, especially with students from historically underserved communities, is a great example of the standard we must continue to strive for to ensure that every student in Oregon, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to learn and achieve."

As a learning specialist at Franklin since 2013, Muñoz has been instrumental in the development and implementation of the special education push-in model. She is a member of the school's equity team and safety and poetry slam committees. She is also highly involved in the recruitment of historically underserved students in Franklin's Advanced Placement

Program.

"Every student deserves a teacher who is unwaveringly committed to their success," said Colt Gill, Director of the Oregon Department of Education. "As a special education teacher, Mercedes delivers daily hope and encouragement to a wide range of students with varying academic, social and emotional needs. I look forward to her impact as a model for all teachers across our state this coming year."

In a letter of recommendation, Muñoz was referred to as "a force of nurture" at Franklin, a champion in advocating for the learning needs of all students and ensuring they are seen, heard and prepared for the transition from high school.

"Teaching requires excellence and grace, which means staying up to read the article that will inform your instruction for weeks to come," said Muñoz. "Teaching is so much more than issuing a grade or collecting an assignment. Teaching is a revolutionary act of social justice that empowers children to evolve and grow."

The Week in Review



Deadly Smith Tower Shooting

A dispute over a caregiver fueled an elderly man to shoot three people in the lobby of Smith Tower Thursday, a retirement community in downtown Vancouver, killing a male neighbor and injuring two women, authorities said. The 80-year-old suspect was taken into custody after a police standoff. He faces murder and attempted murder charges.

Drone Used to Steal

A man who reportedly used a drone to break into the Piedmont Station Food Carts on Northeast Killingsworth Street was arrested last week. The owner of Hapa Howie's food cart said the burglar, identified by police as Christopher Behurst, 34, used a drone for surveillance after closing hours and then snapped the lock right off of the door and helped himself.

Town Surprised by Snopp Dogg

An appearance from celebrity rapper and actor Snoop Dogg surprised authorities in a small eastern Oregon city Saturday. Thousands of fans flocked to Ontario, which sits on the Idaho border, to celebrate a marijuana dispensary's grand opening. The sudden influx backed up traffic for miles.

TV Legend Dead at 84

Diahann Carroll, the first African-American woman to star in a network sitcom with her starring

role in the 1968 series "Julia," died Friday. She was 84. Carroll also performed as the wealthy and cultured Dominique Deveraux in the 1980s ABC prime-time soap opera "Dynasty."



Hotelier Rebukes Congress

Gordon Sondland, the Portland hotelier appointed ambassador to the EU after donating \$1 million to Trump's inauguration in 2016 and a key figure in the Ukraine controversy that was set off after President Trump asked Ukraine to investigate Democrat Joe Biden, was ordered not to testify before Congress Tuesday by the Trump Administration. House Democrats say the move is interference and an impeachable charge.

Plea Against Death Penalty

Defense attorneys for Jeremy Christian, who is accused of aggravated murder in the killings of two passengers on a MAX train, filed court papers last week asking a judge to dismiss the death penalty murder charges against him. The attorneys say under a new law passed by the state Legislature, he would not be eligible for the death penalty if he's found guilty.

Protesters Sue Police

Three protesters filed a federal civil rights lawsuit Monday against the city and Portland Police Bureau claiming officers used excessive force against them during a demonstration in August 2018. Aaron Cantu, James Mattox and Tracy Molina claim the police response was in part because they disagreed with their anti-fascist political message and sympathized with fascists.



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