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DOJ on Portland Police

Feds mandate reforms in use of force on mentally ill

By Helen Silvis
Of The Skanner News

A Department of Justice investigation has concluded that Portland Police Bureau has a "pattern or practice" of using excessive force against people with mental illness.

Assistant U.S. Attorney General Thomas E. Perez explained the findings of the 14-month investigation at a Sept. 13 press conference, flanked by U.S. Attorney Amanda Marshall, Mayor Sam Adams and Portland Police Chief Mike Reese.

"...we have concluded that, while most uses of force were lawful, there is reasonable cause to believe that PPB is engaged in a pattern or practice of using excessive force against people with mental illness, or those perceived to have mental illness," Perez said.

"We found that encounters between PPB officers and persons living with mental illness too frequently result in a use of force, or in a higher level of force than necessary.

"We further found that, when dealing with people with mental illness, PPB officers use electronic control weapons, or tasers, in circumstances where the use of tasers was not justified, or deploy them more times than necessary.

"Finally, in situations where PPB officers arrest people with mental illness for low level offenses, we found that there is a pattern or practice of using more force than necessary in these circumstances."

Former state legislator and longtime police accountability activist Jo Ann Hardesty (formerly Bowman) welcomed the report, which she said was much worse than she had expected, even after a decade of monitoring police issues.

"It was just horrifying reading this report to see how egregious the behavior is, and how thug-like some of the Portland police officers act," Hardesty said.

"The federal government has confirmed

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LAST THURSDAY



PHOTO BY LISA LOVING

The monthly Alberta Street arts walk saw controversy last month, when police reported 10 fights among young people, starting at dusk. However organizers – who will be holding the last Last Thursday on Alberta Street of the summer next week — have regrouped and are working with businesses and law enforcement to smooth out difficulties after dark. Here, DJ Prashant teaches Bollywood dance steps in the street in July. The event is looking for more volunteers; find out how to help and get a free t-shirt at www.lastthursdayonalberta.com.

Report Finds Science Education Lags

Oregon has 1.7 STEM openings for every qualified jobseeker

By Helen Silvis
Of The Skanner News

If you're looking for work it helps to have education and skills in the STEM subjects: Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. "Vital Signs," a new report by the Washington DC-based nonprofit, Change the Equation, found that on average there are two open jobs in STEM fields for every qualified applicant.

Yet in the Northwest, and across the country, education in

STEM subjects still lags. And an achievement gap leaves Black, Hispanic and Native American students at the bottom of the heap, along with girls of all races.

"States are undertaking a lot of really heroic work in STEM education," says Linda P. Rose, Change the Equation's CEO. "Vital Signs represents an incredible opportunity for business leaders, educators, and policymakers to accelerate this work and identify a path forward in STEM learning, and we

hope that leaders will capitalize on what they learn from the data to improve STEM learning in every state."

The state-by-state analysis of STEM education and training opportunities found high demand for STEM workers in the Northwest. But not enough workers have the education and skills to fill those jobs.

In Oregon, jobseekers outnumber all available jobs by 4.26 to one. But in STEM fields, for each qualified jobseeker, 1.7 jobs are available. In Washing-

ton, jobseekers outnumber all available jobs by 3.7 to one. But in STEM fields, for each qualified jobseeker 2.1 jobs are open.

"Business leaders in Oregon have sounded an alarm," the report says. "They cannot find the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) talent they need to stay competitive. Students' lagging performance in K-12 is a critical reason why."

The report also looked at how

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Fresh Exchange at Farmer's Markets

SNAP cardholders get financial boost for buying produce

Bruce Poinsette
Of The Skanner News

Roughly one in five Oregonians receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, (formerly known as food stamps), according to Oregon Department of Human Services.

Putting healthy food on the table is a

struggle for many of these families.

Enter the Portland Farmers Market Fresh Exchange token matching program.

"It helps whittle away at the two prong food system," says Trudy Tolliver. "There is, in some people's minds, a theory that wealthier people can eat fresh food while less wealthy people eat processed food. This helps to break that down pretty significantly."

Since its birth in the King neighborhood market in 2009, Fresh Exchange has expanded to other markets and seen a significant increase in shoppers.

Originally called Foodshare Fund Northeast, Tolliver says the program sprang from a meeting between the Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods, the Alberta Food Co-op

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