



Loss rate slows in Portland schools

Head count | District enrollment, pegged at 46,378, is expected to level off at about 44,000 students

By PAIGE PARKER
THE OREGONIAN

Portland Public Schools enrolled 630 fewer students this year, continuing an 11-year decline, but the loss is beginning to look more like the gradual slide of demographers' predictions and less like the plummet of years past.

About 46,378 students attend Portland Public Schools, according to the district's preliminary count conducted Oct. 2 and released Thursday. The district does the count each year, as do all districts in Oregon, where state school money is distributed per student. Final numbers will be sent to the state Department of Education in November.

In Portland, the annual enrollment tally has taken on additional significance as a barometer of the district's reputation, the housing market and the city's standing as a place families want to live.

District enrollment has fallen by about 9,200 students since the 1995-96 school year. Low birth rates, high home prices and fewer families with children moving to Portland are driving the drop, demographers say. They have predicted that enrollment will level off at 43,000 to 44,000 students.

"While the drop is still taking place at the upper grades, it looks like elementary schools are starting to stabilize a bit more. It does go along with what demographers are predicting," said Sarah Carlin Ames, district spokeswoman.

Declining enrollment has triggered neighborhood school closures

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Paid-for trips jog memories of lawmakers

Ethics | Two more state legislators report previously undisclosed travel

By JANIE HAR
THE OREGONIAN

Two more legislators stepped forward Thursday with previously unreported information on travel paid for by lobbying groups, as required by law.

Rep. Billy Dalto, R-Salem, reported to the state ethics commission a \$5,000 trip to China in December 2003, sponsored by the American Council of Young Political Leaders, a bipartisan group based in Washington, D.C., that promotes cross-cultural political exchanges.

And Sen. David Nelson, R-Pendleton, reported a 2004 trip to a Maui conference, courtesy of the Oregon Beer and Wine Distributors Association. He had failed to record the \$2,600 trip.

Revelations by The Oregonian last week that seven former and current Oregon lawmakers failed to report 2002 and 2004 trips to Maui, paid by the beer and wine distributors group, has prompted a parade of legislators to correct their annual disclosure forms.

On Tuesday, House Speaker Karen Minnis, R-Wood Village, said she had neglected to report a \$4,000 trip she took to Israel last year sponsored by the Portland Jewish Federation. And on Wednesday, Sen. Bruce Starr, R-Hillsboro, reported he was on the same \$4,000 trip to Israel; last week, he disclosed that he, too, had attended the 2002 Maui conference, estimated

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Ex-Sutherlin official dies in Iraq

Decorated soldier | Army Pfc. Dean Robert Bright, father of two, was going to remarry his ex-wife

By RICHARD L. HILL
THE OREGONIAN

A decorated soldier from Sutherlin who had been in Iraq for six months was killed Wednesday when his unit came under attack, his family said Thursday.

Army Pfc. Dean Robert Bright, who would have been 33 next week, died when a bomb exploded

in Taji, Iraq, said Becky Bright, his former wife. Family members had been notified by Oregon National Guard officers, she said.

Bright was a cavalry scout assigned to the 4th Infantry Division, based at Fort Hood, Texas. He was the 77th member of the military from Oregon or Southwest Washington to die in Iraq or Afghanistan since 2001.

Bright, who served on the Sutherlin City Council five years ago, "always wanted to make a difference, both in his community and for his country," said Becky Bright.

"He was proud of being a soldier," she said.

"After 9/11, he felt it was a calling. It's something he always wanted to do."

Bright joined the Army in September 2005 and was sent to Iraq in March. He received the Bronze Star this summer for helping rescue soldiers from a Bradley Fighting Vehicle that had been demolished by a remote-controlled device.

Becky Bright said she received a phone message from him earlier this week telling her "things weren't good there, but not to worry." She said they had been divorced for five years but planned to remarry in January in Reno when he was

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Bright
On City Council, earned Bronze Star



Members of the Diaz family hold candles Wednesday night during a rally in support of the Beaverton residents. The family - (from left) daughter Jennifer, son Luis Jr., father Luis Sr., mother Irma and daughter Monica - is to be split up next week. Irma, Luis Jr. and Monica are scheduled to be deported for illegally entering the country in 1993.

STEPHANIE YAO
THE OREGONIAN

Deportation to break up Beaverton family

Mom, 2 children to head back to Guatemala; father, younger daughter stay here — for now

By ESMERALDA BERMEDEZ
THE OREGONIAN

BEAVERTON — All around the modest double-wide that has been home to the Diaz family for years there are signs that their time together has all but run out.

Outside, a window sign publicizes the sale of their home. Inside, rally placards — "Diaz Family Forever" and "Do not break them apart" — line the wall. On a cluttered desk rests a last plea for help: a letter to President Bush.

After waging a decade-long battle for political asylum, Irma Diaz and her two

oldest children, 21-year-old Luis Jr. and 20-year-old Monica, have been ordered to leave the country by midnight Tuesday. They would return to their native Guatemala, leaving behind father Luis Sr., who is appealing his request for political asylum, and Jennifer, an 11-year-old daughter who is a U.S. citizen.

"I know what I did. I know I don't deserve to ask for rights," said Irma, who entered the country illegally in 1993 with her older children. "But I ask for compassion. This country speaks of human rights. We came here because we faced threats in Guatemala. Please don't send us back."

The final order of deportation brings a summer of uncertainty to an end for a family who has built a life in Beaverton and doesn't see a future in Guatemala. While community members in recent months rallied in support of the Diazes,

calling them ideal Americans, the family waited for help. They first hoped Congress would act on new immigration law and then counted on a private bill presented in Washington, D.C., on their behalf.

But federal discussions on immigration reform have stalled, and in September, the private bill was dropped.

Next week, Irma and her children are expected to join the national stream of nearly 116,000 illegal immigrants who

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Sightseers flock to the Long Beach Peninsula on Thursday to see a massive humpback whale that died at sea then floated onshore Wednesday afternoon. Scientists plan to examine the mammal today to determine a cause of death.

BOB CLINE
SPECIAL TO
THE OREGONIAN

Rare giant lands ashore, drawing gawkers and scientific interest

By PETER SLEETH
THE OREGONIAN

A whale of a humpback drew gawkers to Washington's Long Beach Peninsula Thursday, after the 54-foot goliath died at sea and then floated ashore on Klipsan Beach.

Humpback whales — which are currently feeding off the Northwest coast — rarely grow to 54 feet in length. Only females get close to that size but typically do not exceed 50 feet in length, said Bruce Mate, a leading expert on whales and a professor at Oregon State University. Females can weigh up to 50 tons, he said, with males somewhat smaller.

Scientists are discouraging people from visiting the site, about 110 miles northwest of Portland.

The whales are an endangered species known for their almost lyrical singing. They feed on krill and small fish all summer before migrating south toward Mexico.

"They should be in prime condition," Mate said. "It will be interesting to see what they get out of the necropsy."

A necropsy is planned for today. The mammal is to be buried on the beach immediately afterward. Biologists will be battling the tides in getting their job done,

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Death penalty option reinstated; jury picks life sentence anyway

Murder | A judge reverses herself after the issue of a Banks man's dangerousness is raised

By HOLLY DANKS
THE OREGONIAN

HILLSBORO — In a surprising reversal, a Washington County judge on Thursday changed course and let a jury consider the death penalty for a Banks man convicted of aggravated murder in the death of an Aloha teenager

Circuit Judge Gayle A. Nachtigal said attorneys for Petronilo Lopez Minjarez forced her hand when they asked their own expert witness how likely the defendant would be to reoffend.

The jury of nine women and three men on Thursday night made the legal gymnastics moot when they bypassed the death penalty and recommended that Lopez Minjarez spend the rest of his life in prison for the murder of 18-year-old Darwin Lopez Jovel.

Before the testimony of neuropsychologist Richard Kolbell, Nachtigal ruled Wednesday without jurors present that prosecutors had not presented enough evidence for them to consider future dangerousness, by law one of three death penalty questions. It was the first such ruling in Oregon.

Kolbell, who was hired by the defense to interview Lopez Minjarez, described the defendant as passive and submissive to his abusive father but said there was a "low to low-moderate risk" that he would commit future violent acts.

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» Online:

To read earlier stories on the trial of Petronilo Lopez Minjarez and the death of Darwin Lopez Jovel, go online to <http://washingtoncountyupdates.blogs.oregonlive.com/> and click on "Continuing Stories."