

# METRO | NW

The Sunday Oregonian

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NEWS FROM THE PORTLAND AREA AND THE NORTHWEST



STEVE DUIN  
COMMENTARY

## Float, and sting, like a butterfly

The long knives are out in the new year. The steak knives too, for all I know. News accounts are rather vague.

A truck driver was stabbed several times at an Interstate 5 viewpoint east of Corbett early Friday after he was confronted by two goons in an SUV.

On Wednesday, Steven Ray Abbott was sentenced to 18 years in prison for killing his longtime partner, Scott Allen Brehm, who died last January of stab wounds to the heart and lungs.

And three hours into 2013, police say, a 23-year-old sportsman stumbled into the emergency room at Portland Adventist Medical Center bleeding from knife wounds he claimed were inflicted during the furious climax of a game of ...

Beer pong. It's hard to imagine what that was about, especially since the guy didn't realize he'd been stabbed until friends complained about the blood leaking onto the pingpong table.

A re-racking beef? "Beer pong is generally not a violent sport," notes Sgt. Pete Simpson, a legend on the tailgate circuit.

That's why the beer-pong piercing would be hard to beat, but for the justice served up to one Robert James Thomas.

Just six hours into the new year, police say, Thomas, 31, became physically abusive with his girlfriend in a Southeast Portland home, a tall fir or two east of Mt. Scott Park.

Thomas has been known to throw his weight — 215 pounds — around. He's due in court on another assault/harassment combo Jan. 15.

This time, however, the girlfriend had backup: two defenders, one of whom was packing a butterfly knife.

When the women — "first stabber" and "second stabber" — are a tad awkward, so let's call them "Thelma" and "Louise" — told Thomas to knock it off, he punched Louise in the face, knocking her to the ground.

As he turned his fists on Thelma, Simpson says, she pulled the butterfly knife and slashed Thomas across the chest. "I'm guessing," Simpson added, "he didn't know she was armed."

Because he was still swatting her upside the head, Thelma tossed the knife to Louise, who was on the ground. She made do, stabbing Thomas in the leg.

At that point, apparently, Thomas finally collapsed. Thelma and Louise collected the girlfriend and fled the house.

"When the police get there," Simpson says, "they find him"

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Photos by DOUG BEGHEL/THE OREGONIAN

Cindy Criss (left) and Sue Johnson check out a copper rain chain created by Lindsay Scott of Cowdawg Creations in Mulino, just one of the many creative solutions for Oregon's wet weather on display Saturday at the Portland Build, Remodel & Landscape Show, which continues today.

## Beat the Oregon rain in your own backyard

Homeowners at the Portland Build, Remodel & Landscape Show look to turn their properties into year-round living spaces

By **CHRISTIAN GASTON**  
THE OREGONIAN

When Steve and Dorie George bought their West Linn home a little over a year ago they inherited a mess in the backyard.

The deck needed replacing and morning glory cropped up in spring, leftovers from the previous owners.

"I don't know why they would plant them," Dorie George said.

But now they're on track to reclaim the space, and step one was to ditch the lawn. "We took out all the grass," Dorie

George said. Now the Georges are planting native species and looking to add an outdoor fire pit so they can enjoy chilly evenings outside.

Poking around the Portland Build, Remodel & Landscape Show at the Oregon Convention Center on Saturday morning, the Georges weren't alone.

Homeowners looking for ways to turn their soggy backyards into year-round living spaces were easy to find browsing among the roughly 170 vendors selling everything from gutters to doormats.

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### If you go

**What:** Portland Build, Remodel & Landscape Show

**When:** 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. today

**Where:** Oregon Convention Center, 777 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

**Cost:** \$6 adults; 17 and younger free. For \$3 discount coupons, see the story at [oregonlive.com/portland](http://oregonlive.com/portland)



Stone patio and fountain ideas from Matt Sander Landscape Services of Hillsboro offer a glimpse of outdoor "hardscaping," which allows homeowners to use their backyards in the rainy months.

## Immigrant families get chance to stay intact

Families with undocumented members will not be separated as long thanks to a hardship waiver

By **ANDREA CASTILLO**  
THE OREGONIAN

When Cesar Vallejo and his wife, Claudia, married 13 years ago they knew that someday she would have to return to Mexico for an unknown period to apply for her green card.

Vallejo, 32, of Salem is a U.S. citizen. His wife, however, is undocumented.

So when Claudia Vallejo, 32, unexpectedly got pregnant with their first child several years ago, the couple decided to hold off on her residency application, hoping immigration law would someday change in their favor. Cesar Vallejo said he had heard stories of families separated for years before the visa process was completed.

"Children should grow up with both parents," said Vallejo, who runs a Latino market in Keizer. "It would have been too difficult for me to raise them alone. Apart from that, we were afraid of the insecurity that exists in certain parts of Mexico."

But the Vallejos may no longer have to worry because of a change announced last week that will let families like theirs stay together.

The new rule issued Wednesday by the Department of Homeland Security will reduce the time some undocumented immigrants are separated from their immediate American relatives while they apply for permanent residency. Starting March 4, individuals who can prove that separation from a spouse or parent who is a U.S. citizen would cause

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Courtesy of THE VALLEJO FAMILY

A change in an immigration rule may make it easier for the Vallejo family of Salem to stay together while mom Claudia (center) gets her visa. With her are (from left) daughters Camila, 2, and Sophia, 4; husband Cesar, 32; and son Cesar, 9.

## KBR confident it will prevail on appeal, exec says

A Portland jury decided for soldiers from the Iraq War over the contractor

By **MIKE FRANCIS**  
THE OREGONIAN

When a federal jury in November awarded \$85 million to 12 Oregon National Guard soldiers and veterans who sued defense contractor KBR Inc. in a Portland courtroom, it marked a first step in what is sure to prove a long course toward legal resolution.

Waiting for their day in court in Oregon are two dozen more plaintiffs and, in Texas, more than 100 other soldiers from Indiana and elsewhere.

All claim they were exposed to hexavalent chromium, a carcinogenic component of an anti-corrosion compound while protecting KBR contractors at the Qarmat Ali water treatment plant in southern Iraq in 2003. They say they suffered injuries or stress or both as a result.

For much of the trial lawyers for each side were under a court-imposed gag order that blocked them from discussing the case publicly. After the gag order was lifted last month, Mark Lowes, KBR's vice president of litigation, agreed to discuss the case and other matters with The Oregonian.

This is the first window into the way KBR views the case brought by Iraq War veterans against the contractor, which earned \$480 million in 2011 on revenue of \$9.26 billion.

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Lowes "Anywhere but Oregon, it's a zero"

Read more about the suit against KBR brought by soldiers of the Oregon National Guard and the jury's verdict at [ORne.ws/orguardkbr](http://ORne.ws/orguardkbr)



Sorting out the truth in politics  
[PolitiFact.com/oregon](http://PolitiFact.com/oregon)



This is the 15th Truth-O-Meter ruling on statements made by Sam Adams. See **Page B2** for a recap of how he fared.

## Touted grad rate is partly quirk of stats

By **RYAN KOST**  
THE OREGONIAN

With his term officially over, Sam Adams took some time to look back at his tenure as Portland mayor. In a newsletter, he recapped what he said were his biggest accomplishments, from arts and transportation to economic development and education.

The education category caught our attention, in part because the mayor has little control over the way public schools operate.

In the introduction to his term-in-review, Adams said the city is now on track to greatly increase the graduation rate in high schools over the next few years, thanks to a trend



that began while he was in office. "Last year," he wrote, "the graduation rate for our combined six-district footprint jumped 5.5 percent (from 56.8 percent to 62.3 percent)."

Is that last bit right? Portland City Hall reporter Brad Schmidt forwarded us correspondence with Adams' former spokeswoman Caryn Brooks, who noted that their source was All Hands Raised, an education nonprofit.

All Hands Raised analyzed data from the Oregon Department of Education and found that the percentage of students graduating on time rose to 62.3 percent in the most recent data from 56.8 percent the year before, an increase of 5.5 percentage points. (Wonks will note that the actual percent-

age increase is roughly 9.7 and that Adams should have said percentage points. But we'll let that go because he included both years' graduation rates. It's clear what he meant.)

The numbers aren't wrong, but there's a big caveat: The 5.5-point increase may not be as robust as it appears.

Last January, Portland Public Schools announced a 5 percentage point increase in its graduation rate from the 2009-10 school year to the 2010-11 school year. It was an eye-popping improvement for any district, but especially for Portland, which has one of the lowest rates in the state.

The problem, though, as The Oregonian's education reporter Betsy Hammond

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