METRO

NEWS FROM THE PORTLAND AREA AND THE NORTHWEST

The Sunday Oregonian



COMMENTARY

Float, and sting, like a butterfly

he 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 Abbett 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

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

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

Please see **DUIN,** Page B2



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

hen 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. Please see **GARDENS**, Page B2

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



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



PolitiFact.com/oregon









meant.)



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

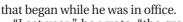
With his term officially over, Sam Adams took some time to look back at his tenure as Portland mayor. In a newsletter,



arts and transportation to economic development and education. The education category caught our at-

tention, 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



"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-

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.

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

The numbers aren't wrong, but there's a

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

Please see **POLITIFACT,** Page B2

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

Please see IMMIGRATION, Page B10



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

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

All claim they were exposed to hexavalent chromium, a carcinogenic component of an anticorrosion 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.

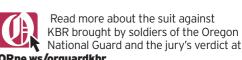
For much of the trial lawyers for each side were under a court-imposed gag order that blocked them from discussing



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.

Please see KBR, Page B10



Continued from Page B1

Steve Dubarko of Cornerstone Hardscapes in Tualatin said the economic downturn introduced people to the "staycation," and they've turned to their backyard for year-round

"The fireplaces in particular have really come on strong in the last three years," Dubarko

On the front burner for Kara McFall of Southwest Portland was remodeling her kitchen. But she was also looking for ideas about how to make an adjoining patio more welcom-

ing. "I want something that's us-" McFall said. able year-round," McFall said. That's something Matt Sander has heard before.

For 30 years Sander has run a landscaping business out of Hillsboro. He said the first of his clients to make a push for extensive covered patios were new arrivals from California.

Now he's installing a mix of masonry, artificial turf, outdoor heaters and even televisions to create backyards that can be lived in year-round. Sander brought a display to

trend toward "hardscaping," which focuses on patios and planter boxes instead of grass and sod. "There's a lot to look at

the show that exemplified the

here," Sander said. "But very little to take care of."

Lindsay Scott's display of copper garden art was drawing a lot of interest Saturday, but her installations aren't just decorative Scott, of Mulino, said that

over the past few years customers have been clamoring for her floral rain chains to use with rainwater collecting buckets. The idea of using the sculpture that way didn't occur to Scott until a customer suggested it, but once she started marketing the chains that way, they were a hit. "I glean a lot of ideas off of

what customers responses are to things," Scott said. Walt and Gretchen Hollands

were looking for a creative so-

lution to Oregon's rainfall too. The deck behind their home in Portland's West Hills is rotting and the patio is cracked, casualties of a combination of sloping terrain and thick tree

The Hollands were at the show looking for paving stones that could create a permeable surface and allow water to naturally drain into the ground below. They want to modernize their backyard, but want to avoid wood that will rot or smooth surfaces that will turn

"It's very important to us that what we do is environmentally friendly," said Gretchen Hollands.

rainwater into runoff.

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Wood carvings and tables by Pudding River Wood Carving Studios of Aurora draw a lot of interest Saturday at the Portland Build, Remodel & Landscape Show at the Oregon Convention Center, which continues today.

NORTHWEST

Dock cleanup finds species native to Japan

A crew has scrubbed a dock that washed ashore on a wilderness beach on Washington's Olympic Peninsula and scraped off more than 400 pounds of organic material, including species native to Japan but not found in the



Jan. 5 & 6 Hours: Sat 9-6, Sun 9-4

Admission \$10 503-363-9564 United States, a spokesman for a state agency

The dock is considered likely debris from the March 2011 tsunami in

Washington Ecology Department spokesman Curt Hart said a six-member team from Olympic National Park and the state Department of Fish and Wildlife removed protective bumpers and decontaminated the outer dock surface with a diluted bleach solution Friday.

Hart says initial lab results identified as many as 50 plant and animal species on the dock that are native to Japan, including algae, seaweed, mussels and barnacles.

— The Associated Press

PolitiFact's scorecard on Sam Adams

Altogether, we've checked 15 of his

statements, including the new one to-

day. As mayor, Adams hit the full range

of our rulings, except the lowest rank-

ing, Pants on Fire. We reserve Pants on

Fire rulings for statements that are not

Now that Sam Adams has moved out of City Hall and taken his place in history as Portland's 51st mayor, Politi-Fact Oregon decided to take a look back and sum up our Truth-O-Meter rulings on Adams.



The statement is accurate and there's nothing significant

missing.



The statement is accurate but needs clarification or additional information.



The statement is partly accurate but leaves out important details or takes things out of context.



The statement contains some element of truth but ignores crucial facts that would give a different impression.



only false but also ridiculous.

Here is Adams' PolitiFact report

card, with a sample summary of three

rulings we found most interesting. All

of the full PolitiFact items are available

The statement is not accurate.

SAMPLES FROM THE ADAMS YEARS

"Only 18 percent of Portland elementary schools have art instruction compared to 83 percent nationally."

This shocking statistic turned out to be True. Though the numbers might not be perfectly comparable, only 18 percent of Portland-area elementary schools offer art education with a certified art teacher, while more than 70 percent of elementary schools nationally can say the same.

The city of Portland has a onetime \$22 million surplus.

We found that Adams was cherrypicking budget projects and ruled this comment a Half True. His analysis ignored ongoing spending that, though not required, was customary. By one count the surplus was closer to \$6.7

"In the last four years, we've cut \$36 million in ongoing revenue."

We gave this one a False. As it turned out, the city budget had actually grown over that period. It's true that the city wasn't able to spend \$36 million that it needed to maintain current services over the four years but the council chose to direct \$10 million of that to other programs and the remainder was based on an expectation of maintaining the status quo.

— Ryan Kost

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discovered, was that "most of the gain is due to deeper digging through old records, not new techniques teachers and counselors used with stu-

The district, it turned out, had not been closely tracking students who transferred and had been counting them as dropouts. After the class of 2011 graduated, Hammond reported, the district's manager of state reporting "asked principals to dig through paper files to check whether students whose electronic records indicated they were dropouts in fact had transferred away.'

The principals found that

Duin

chest.

alone?

I wish.

Continued from Page B1

lying in the driveway, bleed-

ing from his right leg and

Utterly and miserably

"The girlfriend was render-

was the case for hundreds of students and documented the transfers. That raised the 2011 graduation rate substantially and gave an artificially rosy picture of the district's year-over-year improvement. Hammond calculated that "better handling of paperwork accounted for 3 percentage points of that 5-point gain.

In May 2012, the district went back and dug deeper into both the 2011 and 2010 graduation data. The state was convinced by the district's new evidence and revised Portland's graduation rate upward for both years. Those higher figures are the ones All Hands Raised used in its analysis. However, the size of the year-to-year increase is probably inflated because it was easier to track down accurate information about

ing aid," Simpson says. "It's

classic domestic violence. The

victim protects the aggressor.

ship would seem a bit rocky

Thomas was stitched up

at the nearest emergency

room, then carted down to

the Multnomah County jail

and charged with two counts

of fourth-degree assault - at

least he didn't inflict serious

'The future of the relation-

the 2011 graduates than the 2010 graduates. Basically, it's hard to say how much of the increase is better paperwork and how much is genuine improvement in graduating students. We asked Nate Waas Shull

at All Hands Raised whether his organization knew how much of the increase was due to the improved paperwork. "There's no way to know," he said. "That would be a pretty complex study."

Still, he said, it certainly had something to do with the recent improvement. "My sense is that, across the board, every district has become motivated to really know, to no longer let kids disappear. Districts are tracking students down.'

We called and emailed Adams' temporary spokeswoman for comment but never heard back.

We did get Amy Ruiz, Adams' chief of staff, on the phone. She said simply that improving graduation rates

takes time.

Adams' figure relied on graduation statistics that benefited from, at least in part, better record keeping and not just better student retention. Waas Shull at All Hands Raised said as much. That's an important detail.

We rate this claim Half True.

Sources: Interview with Nate Waas Shull. vice president of partnerships for All Hands Raised, Dec. 28; interview with Amy Ruiz, chief of staff to Sam Adams, Dec. 31: Sam Adams, Term Review, Dec. 20; Oregon De partment of Education, graduation statistics, Dec. 28; interview with Matt Shelby, spokesman for Portland Public Schools. Jan. 4; The Oregonian, "Better paperwork was the main factor," March 11

> Ryan Kost: 503-294-5144; rkost@oregonian.com

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Please join us on the OES campus for the following events:

Grades Pre-K to 5 (parents) Tuesday, January 15, 2013 from 7:00 to 8:30 pm Grades 6 to 8 (parents and students)

Grades 9 to 12 (parents and students) Thursday, January 17, 2013 from 7:00 to 8:30 pm You are invited to join us to discover and discuss OES!

Wednesday, January 16, 2013 from 7:00 to 8:30 pm

OREGON EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

derhill's office did not return calls on what it has planned for Thomas. I'm guessing another whiff of probation won't rock his world.

injury - and domestic-vio-

District Attorney Rod Un-

But the next time Thomas

lence-related harassment.

turns that ugly temper on a girlfriend, I hope he's slowed by the memory of that knife. The audacity of that tag

And the realization that two out of three women have figured out that some guys, unlike beer pong, are violent at their core, and are prepared to deal with that.

Steve Duin: 503-221-8597; 1320 S.W. Broadway, Portland, OR 97201; sduin@oregonian.com; oregonlive.com/duin

Derelict ship seized

The Washington Depart-

ment of Natural Resources has seized a derelict ship that

has been docked since Oct. 1

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Celebrating 40 Years in 2012

at Port Ludlow. The ship is a hulk, with its engines removed and no fuel on board.

The state stepped in Thurs-

day after George Marincin, president of VicMar Inc. of Tacoma, was unable to carry out his plan to tow the 180-foot ship to Mexico to be scrapped, the Peninsula Daily News reported.

Now Marincin will be billed whatever it costs the state to scrap the ship.

- The Associated Press