

Homeowner confronts prowlers, is killed

Fatal shooting in Vancouver called a home invasion

By BECCA ROBBINS
The Columbian

Vancouver police said Monday they now believe the fatal shooting early Saturday

morning in southeast Vancouver was a random home invasion by vehicle prowlers in the neighborhood. Police were called to an assault investigation about 4 a.m. in the 10400 block of Southeast French Road. Police found a man with serious injuries. He was taken to an area hospital where he later died, the police department previously said.

Investigators learned the victim, whose identity has not been released, had a rental car parked in his driveway. Several people were seen in the driveway, who earlier had been checking vehicles in the area, according to a police news release. Officers believe those people found the victim's garage door opener, and they went inside the garage. Shortly after, police said, the victim confronted the group, and they shot him. Before the shooting, officers were called to a house on Northeast 15th Street for reports of several people prowling vehicles, and investigators said they believe those people are the same involved in the shooting, the news release states. Police said they believe the shooting was random,

as they have no information that the victim and people involved in the shooting knew each other. Officers are working to identify the people involved, according to the news release.

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POLICE REPORT

Ryland Kinnan, 18, a senior at Columbia River High School, talks with Quinten Miller and Tim Carballo of JNB Mechanical. Kinnan handed off his resume and talked about interests.



Marissa Rekucki, 18, a senior at Ridgefield High School, talks with Chris Stubblefield of Parr Lumber. Rekucki said she's interested in an electrical career.

COURTS REPORT

Man gets 43 years for fatal shooting

Judge: Evidence shows shooting was premeditated

By BECCA ROBBINS
The Columbian

A judge sentenced an Ocean Park man Friday to more than 43 years in prison for the 2022 fatal drive-by shooting of a Vancouver man.

A Clark County Superior Court jury found Yana Cook, 27, guilty March 20 of first-degree murder.

Judge John Fairgrieve said there was strong evidence that the shooting that killed 26-year-old Brandon Lombardo was premeditated. He noted evidence presented at trial that Cook and another person waited

in the parking lot of an apartment complex for hours for Lombardo to arrive. Cook and the other person then followed Lombardo's car before pulling alongside it, at which point Cook shot Lombardo in the head, the judge recounted.

Senior Deputy Prosecutor Dan Gasperino asked the judge Friday to sentence Cook at the top of the sentencing range. He noted Cook's lengthy criminal history, which included firearms crimes and an assault conviction. He also pointed to the severity of the shooting near the busy intersection of Northeast Fourth Plain Boulevard and 65th Avenue in central Vancouver.

"What we saw was in the trial is the definition of premeditation," Gasperino said. Defense attorney Marina Spencer asked the judge to sentence Cook to the low end of his range. She noted that much of Cook's criminal history was from when he was a juvenile and that he was a young adult at the time of the shooting.

Lombardo's family told the judge about his generous personality and how



Yana Cook
Prosecutor notes lengthy criminal history

Students explore trade careers



Photos by JAMES REXROAD for The Columbian

Zahyra Garcia, 18, of Skyview High School shakes hands with Tim Bobrick of NW Flooring Solutions as classmate Rylee McCollum, 18, prepares her questions. Clark County high school students, parents, employers and educators packed Hudson's Bay High School's new Endeavour Technical Trades Building on Friday for the second annual Grade 13 job fair.

Job fair with dozens of employers showcasing trade careers 'shows collectively that it's worth it, and students' only route isn't college'

By BRIANNA MURSCHEL
The Columbian

Clark County high school students, parents, employers and educators packed Hudson's Bay High School's new Endeavour Technical Trades Building on Friday for the second annual Grade 13 job fair.

Quail Homes' nonprofit Careers in Construction organized the event to connect students with workforce opportunities in the trades after high school.

This year's event attracted about 75 students and 52 employers, up from 30 students and 28 employers last year, said Jon Girod, owner of Quail Homes. After last year's job fair, 26 students landed jobs, he said.

Students with resumes in hand met with representatives from construction, landscaping, electric, plumbing and other companies.

Columbia River High School

senior Ryland Kinnan, 18, was determined to meet with JNB HVAC.

"I'm looking for an entry-level position in the trades and that hands-on experience," he told The Columbian. "It's important to have skilled individuals in the trades."

He said his interest in the trades stemmed from talking with his father, who works at Apollo Mechanical. Kinnan saw firsthand his father and co-workers working on a site, which he said got him excited to start working after he graduates.

Once a seat opened up at the JNB HVAC table, Kinnan sat down, shook hands and introduced himself. He handed off his resume and started talking about his interests.

"With the trades, you get to start right away, but with college, you have to get the degree first," Lyle Kargel from JNB HVAC told Kinnan.



Kai Marquez, 18, of Troutdale, Ore., a Reynolds High School senior, comes prepared to learn about work opportunities. Clark County high school students are invited to network with local trades employers to start potential career paths into the workforce after graduation.

TRADES, Page A7

Judge OKs venue change in lawsuit against county, councilors

Ridgefield man filed suit over Belkot's C-Tran board ouster

By SHARI PHIEL
The Columbian

Rulings in both a lawsuit and ethics complaint against the Clark County councilors delivered a double dose of bad news for Ridgefield resident Rob Anderson, who filed both.

Skamania County Superior Court Judge Randall Krog granted a motion for a change of venue, moving the lawsuit to Clark County, during a hearing Thursday.

In addition to suing the council as a whole, Anderson also named Councilors Sue Marshall, Glen Yung, Wil Fuentes and Matt Little individually. In his suit, Anderson is seeking to reverse the council's March 12 decision to remove Councilor Michelle Belkot from the C-

Tran board. The suit alleges the council "intentionally and willfully" removed Belkot from the transit agency's board despite not providing the required public notice.

"They took final actions without public notice or added to (the) agenda. The public was denied input," Anderson said by email Friday. "They are defiant and believe this is how decisions should be made."

The council voted to remove Belkot from the board

after Marshall, who is also on the C-Tran board, raised the issue during the council reports section of the meeting. Marshall said Belkot voted against the council's majority opinion to support light rail funding during a C-Tran board meeting the day before. In February, the council voted 4-1 in support of the funding, with Belkot the lone dissenting vote.

Belkot said county policy does not require individual councilors to vote in line with the rest of the council. In its motion for a change of venue, the county said although Skamania County is a proper venue for suits against Clark County, it is not a proper venue for claims against the individual county officials.

Additionally, the county's motion said state law makes it mandatory for such cases to be heard in the same county where the alleged actions that gave rise to the lawsuit occurred.

Anderson said he is now waiting to see which judge is assigned to the case and for the next hearing date to be scheduled.

Ethics complaint

On Wednesday, the county Ethics Review Commission unanimously voted to dismiss Anderson's complaint against Marshall, Little, Fuentes and Yung during the hearing.

LAWSUIT, Page A7

VPS names interim superintendent

Blechschiidt will not be candidate for permanent leader

By BRIANNA MURSCHER
The Columbian

Vancouver Public Schools' board appointed the district's associate superintendent and chief financial officer as interim superintendent during

Thursday's special board meeting.

Brett Blechschiidt will replace Jeff Snell, who took a role leading the Washington Association of School Administrators. The district will search for a new, permanent superintendent to take over starting in the 2026-27 school year.

Blechschiidt has worked for the district 11 years and spent an additional 19 years working for Educational

Service District 112.

"To ensure a fair and open process, both the board and Mr. Blechschiidt have agreed that he will not be a candidate for the permanent superintendent position," a letter to district staff and families states.

The district plans to include student, staff, family and community voices in the search to learn what qualities and priorities

should matter to the next superintendent, according to the letter.

"Our primary focus this year will be to maintain the district's stability, continue progress on our strategic plan, and support the staff and students who carry out this important work each day," the letter states.

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Legislature does not fund Dolly Parton Imagination Library

2 years after going statewide, program cut in budget crunch

By MITCHELL ROLAND
The Spokesman-Review

SPOKANE — Faced with a budget crunch, Washington lawmakers opted not to fund a program launched by country music legend Dolly Parton that provides free books once a month to children under 5.

Parton started Imagination Library in 1995 in her hometown in Tennessee. It has provided more than 200 million books to children free of charge over the past 30 years. Across the country, more than 2 million children receive books monthly through the Imagination Library.

The program currently serves 9,800 kids in Spokane County, and has provided more than 200,000 books to nearly 15,000 kids in the county since it began.

As the program expanded statewide in Washington, Parton joined a collection of elected officials for a reception in Tacoma to promote it.

The day was hailed as a day of celebration for the state, with a formal proclamation signed by governor declaring Aug. 15 as "Dolly Parton Day." The event included a discussion with the music legend, as well as a performance of her 1971 hit song "Coat of Many Colors."

During the event, Parton said the program helps "instill a love for reading and the love for books."

"I do other things, but I don't think I'll ever do anything more important or more personal to me than this," Parton said.

With the expansion, Washington became the 11th state, and the first on the West Coast, to allow any child to sign up for the program free of charge.

Less than two years later, legislators did not include a request for \$7 million to help fund the program over the next two years in the operating budget adopted by both the House and Senate over the weekend.

"This is a heartbreaking loss to our team, our 46 local Imagination Library partners, and, most importantly, the 121,000 children across Washington, who receive the gift of a free book each month," Brooke Fisher-Clark, executive director of Imagination Library of Washington, said in a statement.

According to the Imagination Library of Washington, the program is funded equally through public funds and local Imagination Library partners.

Chris Reykdal, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, hosted the on-stage chat with Parton during the 2023 event. In an emailed statement Thursday, Reykdal said the Imagination Library "is an effective and cost-efficient program to engage our youngest learners and their families in reading."

"The Legislature unfortunately had to make tough budget choices this session, and I am disappointed that funding for this program was not prioritized," Reykdal said. "Because the program is funded by a 1:1 state and local partner match, a total elimination of state funding has a deep impact."

Reykdal said his office is still reviewing what the funding cut means, and how it will impact the children currently enrolled, though he pledged to work with the Legislature to restore the funds.

The Dolly Parton Library is also asking the public to donate money to fund the program. Information about how to donate can be found at imaginationlibrarywashington.org/donate.

Courts

From Page A3

deeply his family and friends grieve his death.

"There's nothing in this world that will ever justify what you decided was a good idea that day," Lombardo's mother said to Cook, who was seated at the defense table during the hearing.

Cook declined to make a statement after Spencer said she'd advised him not to because they intended to appeal his conviction.

During the trial's opening statements March 11, Gasperino described how first responders initially thought they were investigating a fatal car crash.

Lombardo was pronounced dead Nov. 6, 2022, after his car veered off Northeast Fourth Plain Boulevard and crashed. An autopsy revealed that he had died from a gunshot wound to the head, according to investigators.

Gasperino said investigators used phone records and surveillance video to identify Cook as the shooter.

He showed jurors video of Lombardo's Chevrolet leaving a nearby apartment complex and being followed by an Infiniti with its headlights off, despite the 8 p.m. darkness.

Cook could be seen entering the passenger's side of the Infiniti, the prosecutor said.

Cook's phone records placed him in Vancouver the weekend of the shooting and showed that he left town afterward, Gasperino said.

Cook was arrested, Gasperino said, when he arrived for a probation check-in with the Washington State Department of Corrections in Raymond.

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Lawsuit

From Page A3

ing its regular meeting.

Commission Chair Adam Murray said the complaint included a number of allegations challenging the procedures the councilors followed and characterized them as ethics violations and as violations of the state's Open Public Meetings Act.

After meeting in executive session, the commission voted to dismiss the complaint.

"Mr. Anderson's complaint does not allege misuse of a public position for personal gain. Instead, the complaint amounts to an appeal of a Clark County Council decision. Moreover, state law provides a cause of action and remedies for violations of the Open Public Meetings Act," Murray said. "Because we're not an appellate body for county council decisions and since other bodies have jurisdiction to consider those decisions and to rule on alleged violations of the Open Public Meetings Act, I do not think that the allegations in Mr. Anderson's complaint fall under our review."

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Jason Ordway of Columbia West Engineering talks with Perry Wastradowski, 18, of Washougal High School. Quail Homes' nonprofit Careers in Construction organized the Grade 13 job fair to connect students with workforce opportunities in the trades after high school.

Trades

From Page A3

Greg Stutz of Builders First Source reiterated this. As he pointed around the building, he said, "This event shows collectively that it's worth it, and students' only route isn't college."

Careers in Construction also helps to provide schools with trade facilities (like the Endeavour Technical Trades Building), programming and resources for career technical education. In the 2023-24 school year, about 700 students were enrolled in construction classes. Three years earlier, only about 100 were enrolled, according to Careers in Construction's website.

"The workforce is aging. We need to continue to develop it," Girod said. Friday's event drew



Jon Girod of Quail Homes, founder of Careers in Construction, addressed the crowd. This year's event attracted about 75 students and 52 employers, up from 30 students and 28 employers last year, Girod said.

educators from throughout the county, including superintendents from the La Center and Vancouver school districts, as well as construction and trades teachers.

Ridgely High School senior Marissa Rekucki, 18, said she's interested in an electrical career, which

will help her in the future to work on her own home and provide for her family.

"Graduation is about a month away, and I'm ready to get out and start working," she said.

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Police search for fugitive who escaped from Seattle's airport in handcuffs

SEATTLE (AP) — A man fled custody inside Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and was able to take a light rail train into the city, authorities said.

Port of Seattle police were notified around 11 a.m. Sunday that a man had escaped from the airport while he was being taken to Kentucky, where he was wanted on warrants. In a statement, airport spokesperson Perry Cooper said a "contracted

agent" lost control of the suspect during the check-in process at the ticket counter and that he fled toward the light rail station.

Cooper did not immediately respond to follow-up questions from The Associated Press, including who the contract agency was, how many people were with the man when he fled and the nature of the warrants he was being sought on. The Seattle Times reported he

fled in handcuffs.

Officials said Port of Seattle police confirmed through video camera images that the man had boarded the train headed north, and security with Sound Transit confirmed he was seen leaving a station in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood.

Authorities searched baggage claim and other parts of the airport, and operations at the airport weren't affected, the statement says.



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WONDERWORD By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

CARDIO OUTFITS Solution: 9 letters

G	D	I	N	S	I	L	A	T	E	D	A	N	C	E
V	N	N	D	N	A	B	D	A	E	H	C	T	A	W
E	E	I	A	M	E	D	E	R	E	Y	A	L	S	I
L	P	N	R	B	E	N	U	S	T	R	O	H	S	N
B	T	E	T	T	T	T	E	F	L	E	E	C	E	D
A	H	N	O	I	S	S	E	R	P	M	O	C	L	B
T	G	A	J	I	L	W	I	P	P	L	D	H	M	R
S	I	R	O	A	O	A	A	R	O	O	O	S	A	E
U	E	M	G	P	C	N	T	R	W	O	E	I	E	A
J	W	B	G	O	E	K	F	I	D	M	Y	N	S	K
D	T	A	E	L	E	U	E	I	O	B	G	I	E	
A	H	N	R	A	L	T	E	T	I	N	I	L	R	R
E	G	D	S	R	E	K	C	A	R	T	K	E	P	R
V	I	S	O	R	F	O	O	R	P	R	E	T	A	W
E	L	T	T	O	B	R	A	C	E	R	B	A	C	K

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