



CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS CONTINUES at the north end of the city of Cave Junction on the new Siskiyou Community Health Center (SCHC). This view is from the east side. The clinic, with 10,000 square feet of space, will allow SCHC not only to serve more people, but through a partnership with Three Rivers Commu-

nity Hospital, will offer a full-service laboratory and X-ray facilities. From 1993 to 2003, SCHC has recorded an increase in patient visits from 7,600 to more than 38,000. On Thursday, Feb. 9 a progress report will be given during a public, hosted event at Wild River Brewing & Pizza Co. from 5:30 to 7 p.m. (I.V. News' photo)

Oregon's assisted-suicide law upheld by high court

"While there is much that we don't know about why some 30 people each year in Oregon choose physician-assisted suicide, the most common reason given for the decision is fear of losing autonomy and control," said Patricia Moran, an Oregon State University expert in end-of-life issues.

"Improving end-of-life care so that patients are well-supported throughout the process is critically important to all Oregonians, regardless of their desire to utilize Oregon's unique law," Moran said.

Moran, an associate professor in the Dept. of Human Development and Family Sciences in OSU's College of Health and Human Sciences, is the author of, "Perfectly Still: A Journey Through the Heart of Loss to Love." The book is about the

transformational power of death, based on close relationships with a graduate student who died of leukemia; and her mother, who died of a brain tumor.

She also has made numerous presentations across the nation on death and dying and has served as chairman of a Lane County community coalition subcommittee in Oregon called, "Spiritual Issues Facing the Dying and Their Families."

The U.S. Supreme Court cleared the way for Oregon's doctor-assisted suicide law this month, rejecting federal attempts to stop physicians from prescribing life-ending drugs to terminally ill patients.

Discussions spurred by the case are a big step in the right direction for a society that typically keeps death at arms length, said Moran.

"We are so afraid of death in the United States," Moran said. "To improve end-of-life (situations) everyone involved -- patients, family members and the medical community -- need to talk more openly about our feelings and desires around end-of-life care."

It's difficult for any healthy person, even for a researcher such as Moran, who has sat at the bedsides of dozens of patients, to place themselves in the mindset of the terminally ill.

But Moran said she anticipates that the number of people seeking physician-assisted suicide will remain low.

"Only a fraction of 1 percent of the thousands of people who have died in the state during the years the option has been available have selected physician-assisted suicide," Moran

said. "And while there is a lot of work that needs to be done in terms of support and end-of-life care, there is some really great work happening -- especially here in Oregon, where we are leading many states."

Oregon, she said, is a pioneer in assuring that patient wishes to have or limit life-sustaining treatment are noted and followed.

The state also has taken a leadership role in hospice care for the terminally ill. And Oregon doctors have stepped up palliative care in a number of ways, including aggressive treatment of chronic pain.

There are still many questions concerning physician-assisted suicide that have yet to be answered, Moran said.

(Continued on page 10)

ARC lists disaster classes

The Southern Oregon Chapter of the American Red Cross (ARC) is offering a series of free classes for anyone interested in becoming a Red Cross disaster relief volunteer.

Ten classes will be held between January and May at Red Cross headquarters at 60 Hawthorne St. in Medford, or at the Red Cross field office at 745 N.E. Seventh St. in Grants Pass.

The first class, which began Thursday, Jan. 26, is "Introduction to Disaster," and is the prerequisite for all other disaster classes. Other classes are, "Client Case Work," "Disaster Action Team," and "Shelter Operations."

Participants can take some or all classes, depending on their interests. Additional classes teach volunteers about logistics, Red Cross health services, driving and distributing food and supplies in the emergency response vehicle, and understanding cultural differences among people.

"We encourage people who want to help in a disaster to get their training now," said Bill Blakely, Grants Pass office manager.

"Then, when the next disaster strikes, whether it's a single-family fire in a neighboring town or an area-wide disaster like a wildfire or hurricane, you'll be prepared to help," Blakely said.

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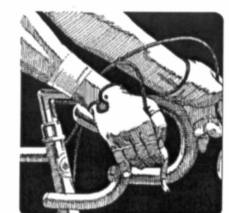
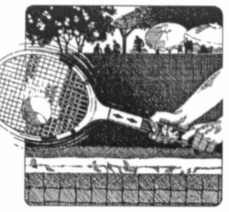
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