

EDITOR'S NOTE: *EW* has received an unusual amount of letters to the editor lately, so we are adding letters to our website this week. Visit www.eugeneweekly.com

UNDERWHELMED

Wow! Is there really a beer-guzzling guy in this stodgy old cow town who organized people to hold Howard Dean signs on a highway overpass? That's incredible! How innovative! Stop the *Weekly* presses and put this story on your cover!

Fortunately, *EW* has letters to the editor that are more comprehensive than some of your "news" features. For example, from Ann Tattersall's letter (12/11) we learned that Howard Dean is a downright Clinton-esque neo-con clone who supports the death penalty, NAFTA, WTO, corporate polluters and a bloated military budget. Notions that your cover story omitted entirely.

Can't wait for the next exciting political feature. What's it gonna be? Crank addicts in Albany who — get this — use bumperstickers to promote Joe Lieberman?

*Blair Bobier
Corvallis*

LANE COUNTY FOR DEAN

Many thanks for the front-page photo and cover story about the Corvallis Howard Dean supporters (12/11). I am glad that you guys felt covering them was important, considering how many of your readers are mondo Kucinich fans.

I'm sure there're a few *EW* readers, however, who might be curious about the Dean volunteers in the Eugene/Springfield area who are doing what they can to re-defeat Bush. Around 150 locals joined Lane County for Dean at each of the last two monthly meet-ups. Speakers have included former Governor Barbara



Roberts, civil rights activist Terry Bean and Secretary of State Bill Bradbury. We've hosted letter-writing parties twice a month and we even had a birthday party for Dean last month.

Some of the volunteers and I were out on the Harlow overpass on the Civil War day, letting I-5 drivers know how energetically we support Dean. It was cold, but that was nothing compared to Iowa next month. I'm shipping out there in two weeks, and I'll jump from there to one of the battleground states like Ohio or Florida. Just doing my part.

Readers can get more information about Lane County for Dean at www.dean2004.lane.or.us. If you're a supporter or just curious, I encourage you to attend the next Eugene meet-up at 7 pm. on Wednesday, Jan. 7 at Monroe Middle School.

Dean's recent success seems to be upsetting to many people, and there's a lot of misinformation flying around. I encourage everyone to spend some time in researching the candidates.

*Steve Ransom
Eugene*

LONELY ACTIVISM

I find myself in a very confusing place. I

am disillusioned with the level of activism in Eugene. How can that be? I have been in Eugene for 19 years, and have never felt so alone in my activism. I don't want to be too hard on you all because I know that it wasn't well publicized but there was an information session about a new youth centered program and there were only eight attendees. I went into a deep funk. Is Eugene going to fail me now? I want to believe that people didn't see the notice regarding the session, or maybe everyone was too busy. I have sent outlandish amounts of e-mails to individuals in the schools systems, the city, etc. I have had very little response.

In fact, I had to travel to Portland to even partake in a discussion with other youth allies. I am getting more support from a man in Seattle than I am here, in my "hometown." Odd.

The Youth Centered Youth Development Institute, and its sister program Soul of a Child, will be based in Eugene for at least the next six years. We will hopefully continue to build our network and develop relationships with other youth centered programs nationwide. I hope that, if there are individuals out there who hold highly the idea of "youth liberation," you will indeed contact me, and volunteer on the board, and even donate funds to support the program. If you need more information, go to the website or call or e-mail me (www.ycydi.org, 342-2349, ycydi@hotmail.com).

I don't want to compete for resources with other social justice programs, ever. I don't even want to compete for "the most oppressed group in society" designation. I want to see collaboration; I want to see solidarity; I want to see community building.

This is a challenge. I hope that you all live up to it. My disillusionment with Eugene may very well continue.

*Tonia Valadez
Executive Director
Youth Centered Youth
Development Institute*

TASTELESS 'TOON

I agree with Dan Schmieding's characterizing of the "Viagra Cartoon" (11/26). Tasteless, crude, vulgar. In a word: outrageous.

*RoseMarie Cassidy
Eugene*

CRITTER GIFTING

The spending season is once again upon us. We are inundated with ads trying to "help us" find the perfect gift for everyone on our list. Another option is available, one that will help some of the less fortunate beings in our community. We're told that our economy is improving (even Oregon's!) but there are still record numbers of hungry, homeless and innocent that need your assistance.

I'm speaking of all the abused, lost, abandoned and unwanted animals our society routinely discards. Unlike our less fortunate fellow homo sapiens, the animals have no voice and are simply euthanized when they become too numerous. One easy way to simplify our gift giving and share in addressing Lane County's animal welfare problem is to give a gift to the animals. There are several non-profit organizations in our community that need your support and will be happy to ac-

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



knowledge your donation.

For example, a gift to Greenhill Humane Society in honor of your favorite animal lover will help in countless ways and be acknowledged in their newsletter. The Lane County Animal Control Authority also accepts donations and for those you on the coast, consider the Florence Area Humane Society.

Whatever your preference, a charitable contribution can leverage your investment: You feel good, the person you're giving for will feel good, the animals will benefit, and you'll be able to add it to your list of tax deductions. How can that martini maker you were looking at even remotely compete?

*Greta Utech
Eugene*

DIAMONDS FOR NEVER

Most of us remember that catchy De Beers slogan, "Diamonds are Forever." After all, it was dubbed "Slogan of the Century" in 1999 by *Advertising Age* magazine. What is more important to remember is how that rock got to you.

To begin with, diamonds are ridiculously overpriced. When we talk about gouging the customer, we could say no one does it better than De Beers. The average engagement ring diamond costs De Beers approximately \$10 to mine, transport, cut, and polish. How is this possible? A little thing we call a monopoly.

De Beers thrives not only on consumer ignorance, but on cheap labor as well. The average weekly take home pay for one of their "employees" in India is about \$12. A corporation built on the backs of slaves knows how to take advantage of uneducated, vulnerable humans.

One of the diamond industry's latest travesties is currently taking place in Botswana, where the Bushmen of the Kalahari are being expelled from their land by the Botswana government; the same land on which they have lived for centuries.

It's important to mention that the Botswana Government owns half of Debswana, a mining company. The other half is owned by none other than De Beers. Of course, the government and Debswana will

tell you that the eradication of the Bushmen, the oldest civilization on the planet, has absolutely nothing to do with the enormous amount of precious gems that they are extracting from the very land from which the Bushmen are being eradicated.

I urge skeptics to look into the long, secretive and deplorable history of the diamond industry. The September issue of *The Ecologist* investigates this history in a featured article titled, "Dying for DeBeers." Greg Campbell also gives an accurate depiction of the atrocities of the diamond industry in his book *Blood Diamonds, Tracing the Deadly Path of the World's Most Precious Stones*.

This holiday season, give gifts of compassion that last forever, and please remember, diamonds are for-never.

*Joshua Welch
Eugene*

SECRET POWER

I've been enjoying the letters published lately on the Democratic hopefuls, but has anyone seen Dean lately? It's scary stuff, and I can't believe Al Gore has decided to back this man. I caught a speech on C-SPAN and earlier last weekend opened my *Newsweek* to find some Gov. Howard Dean publicity.

The speech I watched, with great interest and eyes agog, included Dean chanting "You Have the Power! YOU Have the Power!" Let's ignore the images of a football coach that flash in my head. I think back to the *Newsweek* that told me about Dean's 10-year-seal on many of his official papers — for "future political considerations" and four years longer than previous Vermont governors. Sealed. You can't see them. I can't see them. Neither can your representatives in Congress.

But if I have the power, I'd like to see those records. Someone tell me where to get the request forms. Wait, I've got the internet. I'll get the forms. You warm up the car. We're going to drive out to that remote state warehouse in Middlesex and use our power to obtain any information we might need to make an educated decision about our nation's leader. Especially that juicy stuff, the correspondence with advisers on Vermont's "civil unions" law and some stuff on alleged tax