

grassroots group, a business and the city. The Greenway Committee provides most of the volunteers, the Lane County Fair Board provides irrigation and some of the plants for the project, and the Eugene Stream Team donates additional plant material.

The most important factor for the success of the project, says Fair Board Managing Director Warren Wong, is volunteerism. Last November, about a dozen community members came out for the first planting of the creek's north bank. Fair Board staff planted trees to protect the native plants and shade the creek while adding aesthetic value by blocking the back side of the fairground from neighbors. Volunteers from the neighborhood, the Eugene Stream Team, and Looking Glass Youth and Family Services removed blackberries and planted native species.

"This has, frankly, been a dream of mine for a long time," says Belcher, who is a GIS data services specialist for the Forest Service as well as a Eugene planning commissioner. "It's an incredible opportunity to bring the environment to downtown. We're actually starting to do something about it instead of just talking about it. I'm jazzed."

HENDRICKS PARK

John Moriarty and Ginny Alfriend can't walk through Hendricks Park without stopping every few yards to pull up weeds. "Once you get to know these invasive plants, you'll never enjoy a guilt-free walk through the woods," jokes Moriarty, his hands full of a weed called Herb Robert (or, as he affectionately refers to it, "Stinky Bob").

"You become obsessive," adds Alfriend, piling up fistfuls of ivy along a sun-dappled park trail. "We have some serious problems here, and they're just getting worse."



organization. The city contracts crew members from the Walama Restoration Project and the Northwest Youth Corps to clear invasive species from the forest floor, and FHP volunteers contribute to the effort. In just three years, volunteers and crew members have cleared 16 acres of ivy, encouraging the growth of native plants. "There wouldn't be a forest management plan unless there had been citizen activism driving the effort," says Moriarty. "And the city reacted to it really well."

Public education seems to be making a difference. Little piles of ivy on the sides of

restore the landscape to its pre-development integrity. Lorna Baldwin, Eugene Stream Team's environmental volunteer coordinator, acknowledges that restoration is probably a misnomer. "When you say 'restore,' restore to what?" she asks, deadpan.

Nothing short of a mass exodus from Eugene, coupled with the tearing up of roads and houses and intensive ecological rehabilitation, could restore the area's native habitats in all their integrity. Rather than reverting Eugene open spaces to their historical states, local restoration projects are primarily educational. They involve community members

tion programs.

Duckett claims that local efforts have preserved the genes of more than 90 native plants. "We've started a groundswell in the Willamette Valley in working with native prairie and upland species," he says. "We have probably the most aggressive native seed program in the state."

But Pringle cites the Chamber of Commerce and developers as the groups most actively opposing restoration projects. "They have a very different view, which is, 'How can I make as much money as possible?'" Industry isn't the only group to blame, adds Pringle. Citizens who say they care, but do nothing to volunteer, are also responsible for ecological degradation in Eugene. "People who aren't part of the solution are part of the problem right now," he says.

HOPE FROM DESPAIR

On June 20, the most recent volunteer day at the FBP nursery, FBP Stewardship Assistant Hal Hushbeck stood alone in the nursery under the bright sun, waiting in vain for volunteers. Hushbeck, a 58-year-old environmentalist whose shaggy gray hair frames a handsome, sun-bronzed face, waffles between cynicism and hope.

"The effectiveness of restoration in the long run is dependent upon the community's willingness to sustain it — either with money or with volunteers — in relation to everything else that needs to be done," he says. "You have to recognize that any restoration is a demonstration project that has little chance of being applied across the whole society."

Restoration sets a hopeful example when people show up, says Hushbeck, and some-

Rather than reverting Eugene open spaces to their historical states, local restoration projects are primarily educational.

Moriarty, the forest management coordinator, and Alfriend, the acting-in-capacity gardener, are paid by the city of Eugene to oversee the ecological management of Hendricks Park. The 80-acre park — the oldest public space in the city, founded in 1905 — used to be a stretch of prairie and savanna, historically maintained with intentional fires set by Kalapuya Native Americans. But nearly a decade of fire suppression and nearby development allowed Douglas fir trees and English ivy to take over the forest, choking out the native oaks and prairie vegetation. The gravity of the situation incited the city to action.

In 2000, the city's Public Works Department released the Hendricks Park Forest Management Plan, which called for the removal of invasive vegetation throughout the park and a shift toward an oak-pine ecosystem. The plan inspired a group of neighbors to form a nonprofit corporation called Friends of Hendricks Park (FHP).

"When people started learning about the forest management plan, it spurred people to become involved," says Fred Austin, a founding member and treasurer of FHP. About 250 households, most of them neighboring the park, are dues-paying members of the organization. FHP collaborates with the city, operating in tandem with municipal employees like Alfriend and Moriarty. FHP is the primary sponsor of a native plant garden, but the city matches funds raised by the

trail indicate that concerned park users have been pulling out invasive plants. "It takes everybody being involved," says Alfriend. "After we started educating people about ivy removal, ivy started disappearing from lawns all over town. It has effects beyond the borders of Hendricks Park."

The headway made by volunteers and crew members is encouraging, but restoration in Hendricks is a continuous effort, and the forest will never be as healthy as it was a century ago. Fragmentation breaks up wildlife habitat and makes it difficult for a self-sustaining ecosystem to establish. "It's not really an intact forest," says Moriarty. "It's nothing but edge, really. Our efforts are management, not control. We don't have any illusions that one day it'll be perfect."

A delighted dog scampers up to Moriarty, tail wagging. It has no leash — an illegal offense in Hendricks. The dog's owner, seeing Moriarty and Alfriend, turns around and walks briskly away. "You're under arrest!" Moriarty jokingly tells the dog.

Alfriend smiles. "Here we are in the middle of town, and it's quiet," she says with a sigh. "I think it's important to have this kind of sanctuary. It's nice to go to a place where the loudest things are the birds and the wind."

RESOUNDING ISSUES

The term "restoration" suggests a return to a state of the past — and yet none of the restoration efforts summarized here can

and link diverse groups with common goals, demonstrating what can be done within the limitations of our urban environment.

Pringle is trying to make an example of his work along the Amazon. "I'm not just sticking plants in the ground; I'm doing an installation," he says. "I have constraints, but within those constraints, I'm trying to create something very beautiful here. I believe in my heart that a nice, peaceful setting has a lot of health and mental benefits. If we make the choice to destroy the whole place, at least we should at least see the beauty first."

Pringle laments that Eugene's restoration efforts lag behind those of other Oregon cities. "We have this green reputation, but when people from out of town come in and see the Amazon, they think we're not walking the walk," says Pringle. "Eugene has drifted toward being a larger Springfield. After Ashland, Corvallis, and Portland, I think we're running about fourth in terms of communities wanting livability."

The city of Eugene's natural resource manager, Scott Duckett, disagrees. "To be quite honest, Eugene serves as a model for most of those communities in terms of restoration projects," he says. For example, in mid-June Eugene hosted the Willamette Restoration Initiative, during which municipal employees from all over Oregon came to Eugene to learn from our local successes in natural restoration. Duckett says that Portland city staff members often contact the municipal Eugene staff for advice on restora-

times as many as 20 volunteers attend FBP's volunteer events. But when nobody comes, he says, "you rationalize it. It's a brain-fry in the summer, and in the winter it can be difficult to get up in the dark and go to work."

Restoration labor isn't easy. "It saps a lot of strength. It's a lot of physical work," says Hushbeck, absently scratching a muscular forearm with cracked fingernails. Seeing the destruction of local habitats also discourages Hushbeck. "We're ruining more than we're actually repairing," he says. "That's where that despair or cynicism comes in."

Despite its frustrations, local restoration work has undeniable rewards. It involves community members and students, it educates people about native and invasive species, and it raises the personal investment in our local natural heritage. Successful projects send the message that restoration work makes a difference in terms of local aesthetics and wildlife habitat. They also boost the local economy by investing in irrigation equipment rentals, landscape maintenance supplies, and garden suppliers. Nonprofit nurseries build a local seed base that preserve genetic variations unique to Lane County.

And, says Hushbeck, working with natural elements is good for inner peace. "People feel real clear about this work in that it's honest, valuable outdoor work," he says. "Volunteering builds a community mindset that everyone has a responsibility. That's the faith that we're working on." **EW**