

SUE THE CITY!

I'm only 15 years old, but I still remember that when our family moved to Eugene in 1994 we enjoyed the Eugene Celebration very much. At that time it used to be free and the only fences in downtown were to keep out car traffic.

Then, suddenly, admission pins were introduced, with their prices drastically rising every year, 'til it finally now has reached an outrageous \$15. This is preposterous! How can it be called the whole city's celebration when the admission price is so high? Many Eugeneans — large families with low income, minorities, youth, and seniors — cannot afford to pay this entrance fee, which means that they simply are excluded from the party...

If this weren't bad enough, during the "Celebration" weekend many of the downtown streets are usually enclosed by fences and guarded by security staff. All the booths and concert stages are set up in parking lots, on streets, and even on sidewalks. This automatically limits people's access to downtown. Last year my family and I had to walk for blocks trying to find an open street, but then, several blocks down that street, there was another barrier. The Eugene Celebration is literally shutting down the city center for people without entrance passes. This is outright unfair!

If you want to have a real celebration, then let the people celebrate for free. If it is just another moneymaking enterprise, then move it to some private property. The city streets must be accessible to anyone, regardless of one's ability to pay.

I've been to public celebrations in

France, Mexico, Lithuania and all of them, no matter how rich or poor the country, were free to all. I think people of Eugene should simply boycott this so-called "celebration" rather than pay the exorbitant price. People should protest and "trespass" the barriers. Moreover, sue the city!

*Gabriella Anelauskaitė
Eugene*

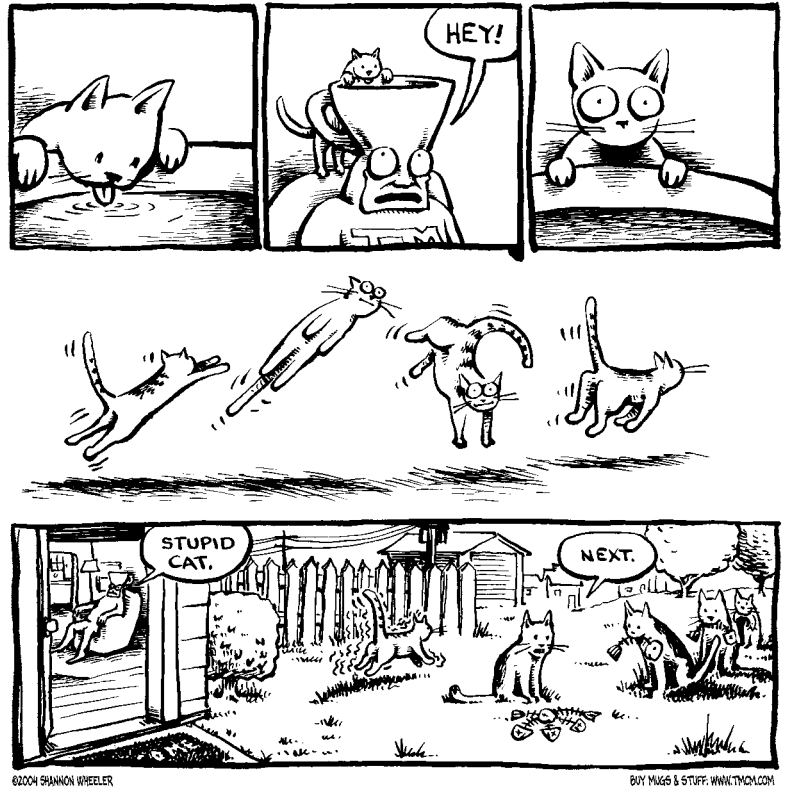
TWO GREAT MAYORS

Regarding "Publicity Stunt: Torrey Used Write-in to Push Conservative Agenda" (9/16): The "RunJimRun" campaign was ill-advised and unsuccessful. However, it does not diminish the accomplishments of Jim Torrey over the past eight years.

There is no better friend to Eugene's kids and schools than Jim Torrey. But for Torrey's demonstrative support for the \$34 million city/schools levy two years ago, the 3 percentage point victory wouldn't have happened. Period. While right wingers were slashing and bashing school budgets in Salem, Mayor Torrey visited every county seat in the state, advocating the need of stable funding. When it comes to kids and schools, Torrey gets it. It must come from all that reading to kids in schools.

Alan Pittman inaccurately labels Torrey as both "controversial" and "conservative." Wow! How? Torrey convened and/or promoted thoughtful dialogue in Eugene. A mostly symbolic, yet important resolution was passed by the City Council regarding the PATRIOT Act. Torrey — never a friend, at least publicly, of the religious right — didn't give a stage for the anti-gay wackos

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



to bring divisive issues to the city forums. A library was finally built, with support of the business community. A Police Commission was also formed, due to Torrey's ability to bring diverse parties together.

If Torrey was "controversial," it must be because he found that balance between the left and the right. That's a very tough balance for a leader to strike in Eugene.

Jim Torrey was a great mayor for all of Eugene. Kitty Piercy will also be a great mayor for all of Eugene.

*Steve Barnes
Eugene*

BAD SOLUTION

Oona Beall wrote (9/9) encouraging people not to vote because, in a nutshell, there are no good politicians and voting will "only encourage them." This is a bad solution to that problem. She argues that John Kerry will only allow for more sweatshops and injustices for people around the world; there is no difference between Kerry and Bush.

No, John Kerry will not be able to instantaneously fix all the world's problems and turn our country into a great, just nation, but he will still be an enormous and

viewpoint BY DAN GALPERN

Injustice in the Mirror
Don't enshrine unfairness in the Constitution.

In two weeks Oregon voters will receive their mail-in ballots for the November election. Among the choices confronting voters will be whether the Oregon Constitution should be altered to deny same-sex couples the right to marry. If Constitutional Amendment 36 passes, families headed by same-sex couples will be consigned to second-class status — stigmatized as less worthy than others. This is neither right nor just. Unfairness must not be enshrined in Oregon's seminal legal document.

The change proposed by Constitutional Amendment 36 seems simple enough — marriage is to be defined as between a man and a woman. Has it not always been so understood? But this provision is no mere proposal to Random House or Merriam Webster. Rather it aims to deprive same-sex couples of the protection of the cornerstone of the Oregon Bill of Rights.

Currently, Oregon's Constitution makes no distinction between persons on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender. Indeed, our state Constitution is decidedly egalitarian in its recognition of fundamental rights, declaring in Article One that all are "equal in right" (Section One) and guaranteeing that no law shall grant "to any citizen or class of citizens privileges, or immunities, which, upon the same terms, shall not equally belong to all citizens" (Section 20).

But by enshrining unfairness in the law of marriage in the State Constitution, Amendment 36 would overturn its basic nature as a bulwark against discrimination. In particular, if the amendment passes, Oregon's Constitution would no longer present a barrier to all unequal grants of privileges and immunities. Instead, it would require the state to distinguish those citizens who are entitled to marry from those who are denied the right. Much may ride on this distinction, since marriage is the gateway to an edifice of ancillary rights and benefits that serve to strengthen families against economic insecurity and buffer them in tragic times. Among these are the ability to



make critical medical decisions when a spouse is incapacitated, legal recognition as the parent of one's child, receipt of spousal health coverage, the confidentiality of spousal communications, and the right to inherit property.

Beyond these particular tangible legal rights and benefits, however, denial of the right to marry will demarcate same-sex couples and their children as social outcasts, inferior to other families. This constitutional consignment of same-sex couples to inferior treatment may encourage private parties to similarly discriminate in spheres ranging from housing to employment to insurance coverage.

Accordingly, our treatment of Constitutional Amendment 36 will tell us much about ourselves — in particular, about the strength of our commitment to equality under the law. True, the majority of voters who will evaluate the amendment will not suffer personally if it is passed, at least in the short term. This means, then, that in confronting this measure many of us are will need to rise above our own situation and think about the kind of society in which we wish to live. Will it be characterized by a renewed commitment to justice as fairness, or by the accretion of an opposing set of values?

Proponents of Constitutional Amendment 36 seek to justify their proposal by claiming that the sanctity of heterosexual marriage is jeopardized by the prospect of same-sex marriage. But this claim is incoherent; it is also pernicious. Extension to same-sex couples of the right to marry would in no way impede opposite-sex couples from marrying; neither would it diminish the significance of our commitments. Marriage and family formation is not a zero-sum competition between heterosexual and same-sex couples.

It is time for heterosexuals of conscience — particularly those of us who have availed ourselves of the right to marry — to stand up for the basic rights of our gay and lesbian friends, neighbors, relatives, and colleagues. Constitutional Amendment 36 is unfair. It is unworthy of our support. It must be defeated.

Dan Galpern of Eugene is the founder and chair of Heterosexuals for the Right of Gays and Lesbians to Marry (HGLM). The organization's webpage is at www.hglm.org