

news Briefs

Nancy Hughes



OPTIONS TO OPEN FIRES

For centuries the indigenous people of Guatemala have been poisoning their lungs, burning their bodies and incinerating massive amounts of scarce wood simply to survive.

The traditional method of cooking in the

indigenous communities is over an open flame called a "three-stone fire." These fires are contained inside one-room shanties with no ventilation. Women spend about six hours a day cooking and breathing in smoke, and because the fires sit directly on the ground, their children often fall into the flames, scarring them for life.

"It's not like they don't know they cook on the ground and that it's bad for them. But they're too poor to do anything about it," said Nancy Hughes, creator of a grant to replace the "three-stone fires" with healthier, more efficient stoves.

Hughes has accompanied Eugene-based Cascade Medical Team in conjunction with Helps International (www.helpsintl.org), a non-profit, non-denominational, Christian-based relief organization, on three trips to Guatemala to aid in essential care for the indigenous people who would otherwise be an economic impossibility for them. The team treats all types of medical needs, but began noticing a reoccurring pattern of burn injuries and respiratory ailments caused by the open fires.

"I began to realize that nearly 90 percent of the pediatric patients our team sees are burn patients or patients with lung and skin disease," Hughes said.

On one of her trips to Guatemala, a young burn victim stood up to tell of her run-in with a "three-stone fire" and to thank the team for its help. At that moment Hughes decided that she must do something about this issue.

Her goal from that



point on has been to prevent these health problems instead of treating them once they have already occurred.

The stoves that will replace the "three-stone fires" are made from cinder blocks and sit about three feet above ground, eliminating the possibility of falling in the fire. They are easy for the community members to put together and come with a chimney to direct the smoke out of the living space. The new stoves are extremely efficient, using 70 percent

less firewood, which is helpful to the families who must buy the wood and also helps to conserve the local forests.

This year, Helps International received an Ashden Award, a "Green Oscar," for its innovative efforts to provide a sophisticated fuel-efficient stove to the homes of Guatemala's rural poor.

One Guatemalan woman who has already received a new stove raved about it and said she now has time to pursue hobbies like basket weaving.

To facilitate her vision, Hughes established a grant in memory of her husband, Duffy Hughes, a physician in Eugene for more than 25 years. The goal of this grant is to raise \$25,000 per year for the next four years to replace the "three-stone fires" in

THIS MODERN WORLD

THINGS TO BE
THANKFUL
FOR THIS
HOLIDAY
SEASON

1) THE NEXT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IS A SCANT FOUR YEARS AWAY!
THAT'S A MERE 1,460 DAYS, GIVE OR TAKE!

OR, IF YOU PREFER, 35,040 HOURS!

BUT HEY, WHO'S COUNTING?



SLANT

• Mayor Torrey is always talking about how Eugene needs to grow and prosper, and his voting record consistently favors development, but is he actually giving Eugene a bad reputation nationwide by criticizing our planning process? Torrey is quoted in an article in the October *Planning* magazine by R-G reporter Scott Maben saying, "We are harder to do business with than a lot of other communities. ... We don't roll out the red carpet for anything that comes down the line. We don't allow all of our open space to be used up for development." It's a peculiar mixed message for the mayor to send out to 30,000 members of the American Planning Association. If Torrey really wants Eugene to attract new investment, he shouldn't be bad-mouthing our planning process. Instead he should be touting the city as a great place to do business, which it is. The story is in the archives at www.planning.org

• Here's a good quote from a private citizen, Ida Briggs, a software engineer



studying voter patterns in New Hampshire. Ms. Briggs seems to get it better than the "experts" we are supposed to rely upon. "Whenever there is even a perception that there is a problem, then there is a problem ... If people are raising questions then by God you sit down and you prove it so nobody has to take anyone's word for it. Why have four years of bitterness and doubt?" Briggs is the one who talked Nader into organizing a recount in New Hampshire, and is quoted in *Wired News*, Nov. 17.

• Where does DeFazio stand on the election shenanigans? We hear 12 members of Congress, all Democrats, have now joined Rep. John Conyers, adding their names to a letter that asks the Government Accountability Office to investigate electronic voting. DeFazio has not yet signed the Conyers' letter, but is writing his own letter to the GAO requesting detailed long-term improvements to the voting system. Stay tuned. These issues are not going away.

• And speaking of voting irregularities,

check out www.solarbus.org for an encyclopedia of electile disfunction. Don't read it at bedtime – tales of voter fraud do not inspire restful sleep or joyful sex.

• What does Thich Nhat Hanh have to say about the November elections? We thought you'd never ask. The highly revered Buddhist master doesn't squawk about stolen elections as we less enlightened partisans do, but rather offers a more detached and uncynical view. "For those of you who voted for Kerry, we must look deeply to see the Kerry elements in Bush," he says. "In this long and difficult campaign, Bush has learned many things from Kerry and those who voted for him.... Historically it has happened that the agenda of the left has been realized by the right. We have to speak out and keep speaking out, and it is possible that the Republicans will accomplish what the Democrats, what the left, had hoped to realize had they won. We also need to remember that even if Kerry had been elected, he



would also have had to partly realize the wishes of those who voted for Bush, and it is not sure that he would have been able to stop the war in Iraq."

The entire message can be found at www.deerpark-monastery.org/newselection.htm

• Speaking of those more enlightened, we are reminded of Depak Chopra's appearance on "Larry King Live" a few weeks ago when he was asked to

assess the importance of the presidential election. Chopra said our entire planet could be obliterated and the universe would not even notice.

• Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, is international Buy Nothing Day and we think it's a great idea, except of course everyone should patronize our advertisers every day. It's also Get Run Over in the Mall Parking Lot Day. Be careful out there, even if you're just window shopping.

SLANT includes short opinion pieces, observations and rumor-chasing notes compiled by the EW staff. Heard any good rumors lately? Contact Ted Taylor at 484-0519, editor@eugeneweekly.com