

# news Briefs

## SYMANTEC'S UNSTABLE JOBS

Symantec announced last week that it will double its jobs in Springfield to about 2,000, but it's uncertain whether the call center jobs will outlast the tax breaks in the volatile industry.

Symantec has been a leader in the controversial practice of outsourcing jobs to India, where salaries and benefits are a small fraction of what U.S. workers earn and taxes and regulations are negligible. In 2002, Symantec outsourced about 400 jobs to a subcontractor in its old downtown Eugene building to cut salaries and increase profits. Last year, Symantec terminated that contract, throwing 400 people out of work, and outsourced the jobs to India.

"We have outsourced the majority of our worldwide consumer support functions," Symantec reported to stockholders in its 2004 annual report, which discussed the termination of more than 500 workers.

The call center industry is notorious for moving jobs to seek tax breaks, taxpayer subsidies and lower and lower wages. Call centers are easy to move because they lack heavy equipment and don't need to be close to customers, raw materials or highly skilled workers.

Despite the layoffs, Symantec has received millions of dollars of enterprise zone tax breaks and will receive millions more for its expansion. Another big subsidy will come from the \$150 million I-5/Beltline interchange overhaul just down the street from Symantec's traffic-inducing location on the edge of the urban growth boundary.

Unstable, layoff-prone industries place a high burden on local social service providers and taxpayers who must then care for the unemployed. The low-wage, cubicle jobs at call centers (where individual performance is often monitored by computer) are rarely unionized. Symantec boasts in its annual report that except for in Europe, it's union free.

Besides outsourcing, another occupational hazard for Symantec workers is competition. Microsoft has recently entered the computer security business providing direct competition for Symantec's most profitable products. Symantec notes in an annual 2005 report filed this month that Microsoft has "significant advantages" including much more money, marketing and technological resources as well as control of the underlying Windows operating system and the ability to bundle security features. — Alan Pittman



## GIUSTINA IN LOGGING SPAT

A property fight is developing between the owner of Forest Floor Farms and Giustina Land & Timber Co. According to farm owner Randy Sturgill, who bought the Creswell property in April, Giustina claimed to have an easement on 1.5 acres of Sturgill's land, including his driveway. Sturgill retained a lawyer, who found that the company had no such easement. The company then admitted that it only had a deed from a 1991 land swap with International Paper, Sturgill says. Giustina began clear-cutting about 10 acres of adjacent forest land and felling trees on Sturgill's property regardless, he says.

"They straight up lied to me," Sturgill says. "They're felling trees across the fence line and damaging my land. They're clearly trespassing."

Cary Hart of Giustina declined to comment.

— Kera Abraham

## TAKE PULSE, CHUG SUGAR

Eugene School District 4J plans to buy 240 Polar wristwatch heart rate monitors and related equipment for about \$58,000 using federal grant money.

Polar markets the monitors, which allow data to be downloaded into a software program, as a way to more accurately track student performance. For example, a slow student in a run may still be trying hard if his or her heart rate is in a target zone.

4J is using the federal grant money to help combat the national childhood obesity epidemic with a fitness program. However, the district still contracts with soda pop corporations to deal soft drinks loaded with empty calories. It takes a child about an hour of strenuous exercise to burn off the calories in one can of pop. — Alan Pittman



## BIKE RIDING MADE LEGAL

So you're biking along in one of Eugene's many bike lanes and the lane ahead is blocked by a big pile of leaves, so you go out into the empty traffic lane to go around them. Later, there's a left-turning car stopped in the traffic lane. No problem, the bike lane is clear on the right so you roll through.

Bikes do this every day in Eugene without incident, but it's illegal. Current state law requires bikes to use the bike lane at all times when there is one, and forbids passing stopped or slower vehicles on the right.

The law is about to change. Last week the Legislature passed a bill to allow bikes to stray outside bike lanes and pass on the right when necessary in many situations.

The current law is rarely enforced, but Critical Mass bike protesters have com-



plained in the past that police have used such obscure traffic laws to harass them.

— Alan Pittman

## CAMPUS SEX 'PERK'

The Salem Statesman Journal published an investigative series last month faulting the state's higher education system for covering up and failing to aggressively confront the problem of sexual harassment on campus.

The paper found that state institutions had failed to: survey students about the prevalence of sexual harassment, set up harassment hotlines, publicly identify confirmed sexual harassers and establish clear policies prohibiting professors from having sex with their students.

The paper found 39 complaints of sexual harassment against campus faculty or staff in the past six years, with 22 resulting in discipline from formal apologies to firings. The Statesman Journal called for reforms including a bill to publicly disclose the identity of abusers.

"Sex with students is kind of, for many of these people, their personal prerogative. I've called it one of the perks of the profession," Billie Dziech, a University of Cincinnati professor and author of books on campus sexual harassment, told the Statesman Journal.

— Alan Pittman

## MORE SCHOOL DROPOUTS

Oregon's high school dropout rate for the 2003-04 school year was 4.5 percent, up from 4.4 percent the previous year, the Oregon Department of Education reported June 16. This is the first increase in state's dropout rate since 1997-98.

State Schools Superintendent Susan Castillo blamed a "disinvestment in our public schools" for the higher dropout rate and stalled achievement test scores. According to the Oregon Education Association, the Legislature has scaled back K-12 public school funding by \$800 million in the past three years, resulting in larger class sizes, cuts to elective programs and higher teacher turnover.

The biggest dropout rate increase was among Hispanic students, rising .5 percent to reach 9.6 percent, the highest rate of all ethnic groups. Asian students have the lowest dropout rate at 3.3 percent.

The 7,756 students who dropped out of high school in 2003-04 most frequently cited "lack of parental support for education," "working more than 15 hours per week" and "too far behind in credits to catch up" as their reasons.

Eugene 4J dropout rates were lower than the statewide averages. Both Sheldon and South Eugene rates fell to 1.2 percent, while the North Eugene rate increased slightly to 1.3 percent. Churchill in 2002-03 had the lowest 4J dropout rate, at 1.1 percent, and now has the highest, at 1.5 percent. — Kera Abraham



## CORRECTIONS/ CLARIFICATIONS

Our June 9 cover story, "Incision Decisions" incorrectly stated the human gestation period. According to the medical reference book *Williams Obstetrics*, the average pregnancy is 40 weeks. The story also incorrectly defined a classical c-section incision. A classical c-section is defined by the location and direction of the incision on the uterus, which is different from the incision through the skin. Most modern c-sections involve a lower risk incision on the lower portion of the uterus.