

• The local air pollution agency, LRAPA, seems to be taking baby steps to straighten itself out after the rockiest six months in its 37-year history. At the monthly board meeting July 12, conservative board member Faye Stewart made some progressive suggestions, such as working more closely with the J.H. Baxter neighbors and pushing bio-fuel production in Lane County (see news story on biofuels this week). But we're disturbed by the implications of recent decisions by the Lane County Commissioners and the Springfield City Council to withhold half of their annual LRAPA contributions. The county suggests that it will pay up if it's happy with the agency's new director hire, and Springfield hints that it will fork over its share if it's pleased with LRAPA's new (dubiously created) at-large board appointment. Both jurisdictions have implied that they want more industry-friendly policies from the already industry-friendly agency. There's a word for that: blackmail. Eugene is LRAPA's biggest contributor. The Eugene City Council and local environmental non-profits could pressure the agency to hire a public-health-minded director and appoint an environmentalist board member – or lose the city's funding. What's good for the goose is good for the gander. We may find hope, however, in Merlyn Hough, LRAPA's newest hire. He came on board to fill Robert Koster's old role as permitting and compliance manager, but he'll also take over Jim Johnson's spot as interim director.

• The July 10 *Sunday R-G* compared the concrete pit on Willamette known affectionately as "Aster's Hole" with the bizarre Disneyland-ish Bridgeport Village project in Tualatin, complete with dancing princess nymph. Makes Aster's Hole look pretty good, especially if it were to become a giant skate park or community pool. Which reminds us: With all the planning for commercial and residential development downtown, what about kids? What about open space? We're not hearing from either the developers or the city about the need for even a mini-park downtown. Wouldn't take much space for a few benches, a few trees and some playground equipment. *The Oregonian* July 7 looked at how urban Vancouver, B.C., is building kid-friendly spaces. Eugene should do the same to encourage families to join the downtown mix.

• Rachel Foster, gardening writer for *EW*, flew from Eugene to London July 7, the day of the train and bus bombings, to join her husband, Randy McGowen, UO history professor studying in England this summer. We asked for her impressions via the Internet. Rachel, who is British, responded: "I went straight from Heathrow to deepest rural Oxfordshire, with no computers in sight. In any case, you may have gathered that things were up and running again almost unimaginably quickly. By the time I arrived at Heathrow, I could have caught the tube into central London, had I need to. London has sort of shrugged this off. Seems there was little or no panic, but of course I know nothing that wasn't already in the paper. My friends don't even talk about it. I am very glad Randy was not in London, because all the bombing locations were on his daily routes, and the area worst affected is exactly where we normally stay in Bloomsbury. Bus blew up just about outside the flat where we lived for three months."

• The UO this week announced a \$6.5 million donation from former journalist and current PR mogul Lorry Lokey that will go toward renovating a music building on cam-

pus, and help establish a journalism program at the UO's Portland Center. This is good news for both programs, and our congrats to everyone involved. But plans for the Portland program – which is geared to public relations and communications man-

agement – have drawn criticism from those who think PR is not real journalism, just propaganda, and belongs in business schools. Strong arguments can be made. The skills taught in journalism schools, just like the skills taught in business schools, can be used for enlightened purposes, or for deception and greed. What is more disturbing is the growing popularity of PR courses, and the decline in students choosing the news-editorial track. Who do we blame? PR pays better than hard news reporting, and PR students help pay to keep the lights on at Allan Hall. But the UO also has a role in deciding which programs to promote and fund. Meanwhile, the voices of truth and justice across our nation are being drowned out by a cacophony of spinning corporate media schlock and deception. Public education's highest priority should be to serve the public interest.

• Any Harry Potter fans out there? Sales of the newest Harry tale are embargoed until Saturday, but we hear J. Michaels Books at 160 E. Broadway will be open at midnight Friday for people who just can't wait.

• Two third-year UO law students, David Skillman and Christopher Ledford, have prepared a detailed analysis of *Kelo v. City of New London*, the Supreme Court decision. The analysis can be found on our website this week at www.eugeneweekly.com



Happening people BY PAUL NEEVEL

Nancy Wood and Paul Safar

On the day they met, when pianist Paul Safar first played in singer Nancy Wood's jazz quartet, he told her of a Swedish folk tale he had read to his young son Julian: "I thought it had potential as an opera." Seven years later, Safar and Wood will present the world premier of their collaborative children's play, *Nisse's Dream*, Aug. 12-21 at the Lord Leebrick Theatre. It's the story of a boy who travels to the land of trolls to rescue his family's stolen cow. "I wrote the lyrics and he wrote the music," says Wood. "We both have children the right age to tell the story to." A competitive figure skater as a kid in Minnesota and later a professional dancer, Wood began teaching yoga as a new mom, and now teaches prenatal yoga and mama-and-baby yoga at Four Winds. Safar started classical piano at age 6 in Philadelphia. He's been teaching piano and performing in Eugene since 1994. The pair founded Cherry Blossom Musical Arts and released a CD version of *Nisse's Dream* in 2003. They've assembled a cast of 23, mostly kids, directed by Maggie Tryk, plus six musicians under Safar's direction. Visit www.cblossom.org for details.



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