

Seeing the devastation and living amidst the ocean of grief, it was easy to understand the importance of international charitable aid. The Center's tsunami work thus far has earned them NGO status from the U.N. Their house rebuilding efforts have excelled — more than 4,000 homes built in the last year.

The work of the center's many volunteers in this country in the aftermath of the Gulf Coast hurricanes has been profound as well. They are also giving aid and have pledged to rebuild in the earthquake devastated areas of Northern India.

To all in Eugene-Springfield area who have wanted desperately to help the people caught in these tragedies, I say with confidence that by donating to the M.A. Center, with it's less than 1 percent overhead, your gift actually increases in value, as Amma, the center's leader has often said, because the volunteers simply desire to give of themselves selflessly.

*Millen Myrmo  
Eugene*

**SAFETY IN NUMBERS**

In response to Michael Cleaver's letter (3/30), the Critical Mass bike ride is *not* about breaking the law, it's about raising awareness of the presence of bicycles on city streets and their viability as an alternative mode of transportation. Just because a small handful of cyclists have chosen to bend traffic laws in the past does not incriminate the whole group. Using that mentality, all legal peace rallies would be condemned because once in a while someone breaks a window.

I agree with Michael that vehicles pose an extreme threat to cyclists. As any law-abiding cyclist will tell you, their lives are constantly at risk on city streets from speeding vehicles plowing through red lights, ignoring stop signs and yield signs, or running them off the road. So far as safety is concerned, group bike rides are the one occasion where cyclists are somewhat protected by their sheer numbers. Michael's claim that the "focal point" of Critical Mass is running red lights suggests to me that he has never been on a ride before.

I find it disturbing that someone who considers a group bike ride to be a "violent disregard for human life" supports cops throwing people off their bikes to the ground.

Michael does a great disservice to cyclists everywhere by slandering the peaceful Critical Mass ride as a "mob on wheels." If he were truly concerned about bike safety, he would constructively participate in Critical Mass — instead of publicly attacking the rides, which only increases the risk that riders must face from thousands of already frustrated and impatient drivers.

*Josh Schlossberg  
Eugene*

**DEFAZIO GETS A 'PASS'**

The passage of Greg Walden's Forest Restoration Bill has, of course, been receiving a lot of press. Not only in our local papers, but in numerous papers across the country. It is nice to see that in each article it gives credit to those who worked so hard to get the bill passed through committee. What each, and so far, every article that I have read fails to do is point out that our current representative, Peter DeFazio, voted against this bill. Why is it that this isn't pointed out, considering the fact, that he voted against something that is so incredibly important not only to the people of his district, but also to the future economy of

Oregon?

The voters need to know what their Congressman is doing, or in this case, not doing for the people of his district. In the 20 years that DeFazio has been our representative, we have lost more than 14,000 timber-related jobs. DeFazio finally has the opportunity to help bring back some of these jobs to the 4th District, and he votes "no."

*Jennifer Thompson  
Springfield*

**BOOT THE KICKER**

Good news was recently presented to Oregon — our economy is recovering and the state could restore some of the cuts they made

to schools in the last session, so we could have reasonable class sizes and a full school year. Except that we have to kick the money back, instead of investing in students.

Imagine what schools could receive if the state gave the Oregon kicker law the boot. Money from the kicker should be invested in Oregonians.

Because the economy is on track for its strongest upswing since 1999 corporations will be receiving \$205 million in kicker checks. 85 percent of this money will go to companies not based in this state — it will be sent out of Oregon.

By investing in Oregon, not out of state multinational corporations, we strengthen

schools and other vital services that help attract new business and grow more jobs.

It's time we re-think our kicker law and reinvest the money in Oregon's education and human services. Think what services the state could restore if instead of returning \$600 million in individual and corporate kicker checks the money was invested in the state.

At a time when schools are facing deficits that translate into huge classes and less opportunities for students, it is time to retain the kicker funds the state collects and invest it in our state and our future.

*Val Rylands  
Marcola*

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