

• We're unabashed cheerleaders for the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference that begins Thursday and runs through Sunday afternoon at UO (see story this week on page 14). The 25th annual gathering once again puts Eugene on the global map for leadership in the kind of practical activism that builds a framework of ecological sanity in a mad world. Lawyers, students and activists come here from all over to share knowledge and tactics for holding polluters and government agencies accountable. There's not a lot of fuzzy talk about hugging trees and being one with nature; these folks talk about suing the bastards and winning. Registration is free for community members (donations are appreciated), and it's also OK to just show up at the law school, browse the tables and sit in on some of the panels, workshops and keynote talks.

• We got a letter last week from Jeff "Free" Luers, hand-written before the recent appeals court decision tossing out his 22-year sentence for arson. He's sticking by his rhetorical guns. "I am unapologetically militant," he writes. "In keeping with the history of social change, I believe that *both* nonviolence and militancy are contributing components of social change. A provocative act of sabotage – in this case arson – often brings publicity to an issue, creating debate and dialogue that would not otherwise have occurred." Is he right? It's a debate that will never be resolved. Eco-saboteurs have indeed raised awareness of issues, but they have also discredited and politicized the environmental movement. We've come a long way from the Boston Tea Party's act of political vandalism. We have more sophisticated tools now for organizing and educating the public. We are evolving as a species, and it's time to step above all forms of violence. Who has more impact when it comes to saving the environment? A hundred saboteurs with torches and monkey wrenches or Al Gore with his wonkish traveling slide show? We favor the latter.

• Eugene used to be known as "Track Town USA," but that label and image have faded over the years for a number of reasons, including our obsession with Duck football and men's basketball. We're pleased to see signs of a revival of running sports in town coming from both the community and the UO. It helps that Eugene has been picked for the 2008 Olympic track trials. Want to get involved in making Eugene a Track Town again? A series of town hall forums is coming up from 7 to 8 pm March 6, April 3 and May 1 in Heritage Hall in the Bowerman Building on campus, 15th and Agate. Contact Mike Black (mikesblack@comcast.net) or Michael Reilly, UO assistant athletic director, at 346-5243 for more info.

• Most anonymous letters to us get tossed in the recycling bin. But one letter last week from a former Eugene resident provided a perspective on "Savage Love" that's based on personal experience: *Too many parents today are trying to shelter their kids from the darkness when they should be educating them so they can get information from a trustworthy source. I was never spoken to about sex nor drugs, and when I got to college I got heavily into drinking, drug use and unprotected sex. Now I'm 32, HIV positive and just getting out of rehab. I know if my parents had ever sat me down and really told me the truth about these issues, I probably would not be a heroin addict, and I'm certain I would have listened when they spoke about STDs. Parents, please realize hiding your kids from the world only increases the chance that they will try to figure it out for themselves, often ending in tragedy.*

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

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



news Briefs

CITY HALL TO POP THE QUESTION

After spending \$1 million on planning for a plan for a new City Hall building with another \$1 million in the pipeline, the city of Eugene will finally ask citizens if they actually want to pay for the roughly \$120 million building.

In a 6-2 vote Feb. 14, the City Council directed staff to spend another million on City Hall planning and do a survey soon to find out if people want to pay for a new building.

Councilor Alan Zelenka made the suc-

cessful motion to move the survey up rather than delay it to the end of the planning process as staff had proposed. "If we get data back that says only 17 percent of the people want to build another City Hall, I don't want to spend another million dollars," Zelenka said.

City facilities manager Mike Penwell objected to the survey idea. Without giving people details of the City Hall plan including its location, "most people are just going to say no" to the new building, he said.

Mayor Kitty Piercy also opposed the poll. "Don't ask for what you don't want to hear," the mayor said. Passing a City Hall finance measure "is just by its nature a heavy lift," she said. The poll should be about finding out what kind of new City Hall citizens want rather than whether they want one at all, according to Piercy. "I don't think you need to go out and ask people, 'Do you want a new City Hall?'"

Councilor Jennifer Solomon said the city shouldn't stop the City Hall project. "If we stop now, we will have wasted a lot of money."

HAPPENIN' BiZ

JOSH PROUDFOOT AND JOSH SKOV OF GOOD COMPANY

Back in 2000, UO psychology grad and crew athlete Josh Proudfoot left a teaching job in Seattle to join his old rowing buddy Dag Hinrichs of L.A. and Hinrichs' cousin Josh Skov, then a grad student at Berkeley, in Eugene. Together the three founded Good Company to do research and consulting in sustainability. (Hinrichs has since moved to Vestas Wind Power in Portland.) "We got into this to help businesses and consumers make sustainable decisions," Skov explains. "Eugene has a legitimate shot at being a model sustainable community. We have the people and the political will to do it." GC has consulted with 15 colleges and universities to develop measures of sustainability. It works with ODOT and engineering and construction firms to integrate large projects into local ecosystems and economies. "The best example is the McKenzie River bridge at Armitage," says Proudfoot. "We're working with the Watershed Council to find the best use of demo material. We've got biodiesel in the cranes and heavy equipment and compost-based erosion control." Learn more at goodcompany.com – Paul Neevel

