

Boulevard. Responding to a Chamber of Commerce complaint in 1997, the UO warned staff opposed to Hyundai (now Hynix) building in wetlands to "avoid even the appearance of inappropriate uses of time or resources" in taking political stands. The UO didn't send the same warning to the many administrators and other staff using their positions to lobby for the corporation.

The city of Springfield has a similar urban renewal measure on the ballot and appears to be using its website to campaign for the measure. A city "fact" sheet on the urban renewal measure incorrectly states that it "does not impose new property taxes." Although state law requires such government information on measures to be neutral, the Springfield fact sheet does not say how much taxes will increase or mention that state school funding will lose about \$15 million because of the measure.

The city of Eugene didn't do an informational fact sheet, but did send out a voters pamphlet with a measure "summary" stating that urban renewal "does not impose new taxes."

In fact urban renewal in Eugene and Springfield can directly result in slightly higher taxes by increasing taxes to pay for bonds and levies, according to documents from city of Eugene staff and the Lane County tax assessor. Critics argue that urban renewal also indirectly increases taxes by diverting government revenue that has to be made up through higher taxes. — Alan Pittman

HEARING CENTER REBUILDING ITS STAFF

It's been a rough six months for the Eugene Hearing & Speech Center, but things are look-

WAR DEAD

Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq began on March 20, 2003

(last week's numbers in parentheses):

- **3,834 U.S. troops killed*** (3,829)
- **28,171 U.S. troops injured*** (28,171)
- **128 U.S. military suicides*** (128)
- **303 coalition troops killed**** (302)
- **933 contractors killed** (accurate updates NA)
- **82,203 Iraqi civilians killed***** (81,887)
- **\$462.1 billion cost of war** (\$460.2 billion)
- **\$131.4 million cost to Eugene taxpayers** (\$130.9 million)

* through Oct. 22, 2007; source: icasualties.org; some figures only updated monthly

** estimate; source: icasualties.org

*** highest estimate; source: iraqbodycount.org; based on confirmed media reports; other groups calculate civilian deaths as high as 655,000 to one million

ing up. Last May, the nonprofit center's five staff audiologists abruptly left following a dispute with management. Shortly after, Executive Director Alise Kermisch was fired and Laurence Hamblen, an attorney, long-time board member and foundation trustee, agreed to lead the agency with a focus on rebuilding.

"A lot of people thought we were shut down," says Sandi Curtis, a volunteer with the center.

TOXIC (SEX) TOYS DILUTE THE DELIGHT

The news is full of recalls of toxic kids toys and California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and the state's Legislature recently signed a ban on the use of phthalates in children's products. However the Coalition Against Toxic Toys (CATT) wants to warn adults that they are at risk too – from toxic plastics in their erotic toys.

Phthalates have been linked to cancer and reproductive defects. According to a study in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives*, exposure to phthalates by pregnant women can cause changes in the way their sons' genitals develop.

Many sex toys are made of polyvinyl chlorides (PVCs) and softened with phthalates. PVCs have long been criticized for their links cancer and birth defects. Softening a PVC product with phthalates creates a softer jelly-like texture popular in products used in sensitive areas from babies' teething rings to vibrators.

CATT is the only non-profit advocacy group for the adult sex toy industry. Most adult toys such as dildos and vibrators are sold as novelties and so the Environmental Protection Agency and the Food and Drug Administration do not have to oversee their manufacture and sale.

Greenpeace has called on the European Union to stop using phthalates in adult novelty items. Here in the U.S. the popular adult toy retailer Good Vibrations developed their own line of phthalate-free silicone for use in vibrators and dildos and marks products that are phthalate free.

The staff at Castle Megastore, the adult entertainment store in Springfield, was unaware of any store policies on phthalates in plastics, though aware of the concerns about the materials. Castle corporate headquarters had "no comment at this time" on the issue. — Camilla Mortensen



SLANT

• Is it really fair to promote the **Hult Center and Eugene Public Library** as examples of successful urban renewal projects? The glossy mailings in support of Ballot Measure 20-134 are flaunting these projects, but the Hult Center was built primarily with a bond measure, using only some urban renewal funds. We love and support the Hult, but today it's struggling to keep up with maintenance, and operating costs are so high it's difficult for local performing artists to afford to rent the facility. Our new library is another wonderful Eugene institution, but it's also struggling to maintain services, and the last operating levy barely passed. More importantly, both of these buildings are public facilities – taxpayer money spent to directly benefit the people of our community, and they are kept alive only by community support.

The urban renewal measure on the ballot might benefit our community in the long haul, but it's a big gamble and we know who the short-term winners and losers will be. The developers are guaranteed a profit. The building owners are guaranteed a huge profit. Established businesses renting in the buildings targeted for renovation or demolition are guaranteed eviction notices. And if KWG decides next year that the big project doesn't pencil out, the city is guaranteed to be stuck with some very run-down and overpriced properties.

• The **Lane County Fairgrounds** is back in the news contemplating a move to city-owned land in the Bethel area. So what will become of the old fairgrounds? We've always liked that property for a hospital site, but we hear from the residents in the area that they would prefer residential development, some mix of single-family and multi-family housing. There are advantages to boosting the population in that neighborhood, which is close to downtown. But will residential land sell for enough to buy out the financially strapped fairgrounds and its expensive move? Commercial zoning might be the only way to maximize the value.

Election Endorsements at a Glance

See longer arguments and stories in our Oct. 18 issue.

• **Springfield Measure 20-131: NO.** This measure would slightly increase taxes and divert at least \$43 million from school, city and county tax revenues for "urban renewal" projects in downtown Springfield.

• **Eugene Measure 20-132: YES.** This measure adds a 3 cents a gallon fuel tax to the current 5 cent tax, to be used to repair streets and roads.

• **Eugene Measure 20-134: NO.** This measure amends the downtown urban renewal plan to increase spending (public subsidies) by at least \$40 million.

• **State Measure 49: YES.** This measure repairs some of the damage and confusion created by the flawed Measure 37 that allows sprawling housing developments, strip malls, gravel pits and billboards on valuable farm and forestlands.

• **State Measure 50: YES.** This measure adds 84.5 cents per pack to the tobacco taxes currently in effect, with the proceeds going to bolster Oregon's Healthy Kids program.

A Devoted Life

On Thursday, Oct. 18, at 13th and Hilyard, the world of Eugene shrank to a screaming instant. And when that moment ended, our town, and our state, were left with a raw and gaping hole, a tear in our communal tapes-

try. Lucy Lahr, 45 when she was killed while crossing the street by a hit-and-run driver, was a bright star, an ever-cheerful, calm, steady force for good. More specifically, Lucy fought for social justice and human rights at work, in her union and in the wider community. She could – and often did – sum up fraught issues in simple words that cut through all of the bullshit. And she cared. How she cared. Her finely crafted sense of humor and her ability to smile through the worst political times couldn't mask her beacon of tenderness, her iron strand of love.

Moments before Lucy died, I was in New York, listening to the Cleveland Orchestra play Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 2. In the final movement, the composer set to music words that now bring me to sobs: "Oh, believe you were not born for nothing, have not for nothing lived, suffered!"

In the midst of our collective grief, in the midst of caring for Lucy's dear spouse and tending the strands that connect us to one another, we must remember that Lucy did not live for nothing. She worked purposefully, strategically, communally and with persistent hope to make a better world. She lived so that nurses like the one who tried to save her life might have a living wage. She lived so that undocumented workers had a witness and an advocate. She lived to build connections, to help us see the humanity in ourselves and in each other.

The unfairness – the absolute wrongness – of Lucy's death can never be healed. Yet those of us who remain must do our utmost to honor her. She was not born for nothing; she was born to live an enormously generous life.

That burden, and that joy, falls on us now, and always. — Suzi Steffen



Lucy Lahr