

What Matters to Teens?

South Eugene High students speak out

Old enough to have opinions but too young to be asked for their input, teenagers don't often get the chance to present their thoughts on issues of importance to them. So I decided that this viewpoint would not revolve around my opinions; instead, I wanted to voice the concerns of the teenage community.

To initiate the discussion, I sent out an online message to my classmates with a simple question: "If you could ask for something, something that the teens of Eugene could benefit from as a whole, what would you ask for?" I wanted to know what changes my classmates would implement here in their hometown, were the opportunity to present itself. I also wanted to see if they cared enough to respond.

The feedback I received was overwhelming. My simple question spawned a discussion forum of more than 80 comments on what issues concerned students the most and how they would shape their collective future if given the chance. Here are some highlights from the discussion.

- Students wish there was more money invested in the art programs, that funding was equivalent to the quality of teaching and the level of students' talent; and for art subjects to be taken as seriously as math and science – regarded as core courses and not "required samplers."
- They wish they had more time to indulge in their interests, like art and creative writing, but feel that the pressure to perform at a high level of academic and extracurricular achievement keeps them from enjoying non-academic pursuits.
- They wish that high school felt less like a "pressure cooker" environment, and that public education focused more on creating well-rounded, thoughtful and enlightened individuals and less on churning out future workaholics.
- They want subjects (especially science and math) to include realistic applications as well as theory. They want econ and personal finance to be required courses (so people can finally learn not to spend more than they make!), and they wish math, science, social and humanities classes were taught in a coordinated curriculum, instead of as isolated disciplines.

• One of the major points of contention in the discussion was sexual education programs. This might come as a surprise, but proponents for sexual education outnumbered the one person who was against it. (Proponents presented statistical evidence to prove to the one opponent that sex ed has a positive effect on teens by lowering risks of disease, infection and unplanned pregnancy.) Not only do they support sexual education because it "directly deals with the lives of students," but they wish for more funding for non-abstinence-only-based sex ed programs as well. One proponent also pointed out that school-based health centers are only allowed by district policy and state law to distribute condoms as a preventative measure *after* someone has tested positive for an STI, an issue about which most people, myself included, are probably unaware.

South students are only a fraction of Eugene's entire teenage population – but look at how much they have to say. Had the rest of Eugene's teens been involved in the discussion, just think of how many other issues and concerns would have arisen that are never otherwise mentioned.

My wish for the new year: a public forum, live or online, where students and teens can voice their concerns to a responsive audience. We are full of ideas and opinions, and our input is valuable. We are *not* apathetic; we are here, we are aware, and we *do* care.

All we need, Eugene, is for you to listen.

Mariam Wahed is a senior at South Eugene High School.



THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NOTHING WORTH READING

My friends and I were hanging out the other night and one of them brought up your newspaper. It seems that no one in my group is a regular reader. You always report on some boring city growth problem, the Eugene Police Department or run some rant from some regular letter writer that uses your newspaper like it's their personal platform to pontificate. Nothing of interest for us 20-somethings.

Well, last week Obama became president. Everyone I know was excited and everybody was talking about Obama. I saw your Jan. 15 issue and thought, "Right on, something interesting to read." I picked it up.

I shouldn't have been surprised when I opened to the story and there it was: Rants from regular letter writers pontificating freely. Nothing about the election from a news perspective. Nothing about our first African-American president. Nothing about the inauguration. Nothing newsworthy.

You figured out the formula. You can wrap dog poop in Obama, and somebody will pick it up. Consider these six Lane students duped.

Jennifer Crowley
Eugene

CLINGING TO HOPE

"Top 25 Censored Stories" (1/8) includes a token 25th position for the story of Eliot Spitzer's character assassination — astonishingly the only story on the list about the meltdown.

William Engdahl wrote the story for the Centre for Research on Globalization (Toronto), and that website perhaps above all others has continuously carried analysis that if disseminated widely would result in much needed higher levels of political-economic literacy at a time with great potential for public uptake of such information.

Instead, people who one might expect of having adequate background and perspective to know otherwise cling nevertheless to "Hope" and miss the big picture and implications of corporate statism being this

rogue nation's modus operandi. For that matter, a story that should have qualified is the one about Obama's public relations apparatus having portrayed their donor base as twice as large as it really was, hiding the role of repeat donors, large donors and bundlers and giving the still dearly held impression that "my" small donation ushered in a new era.

The neo-liberal acolytes in Obama's economic policy inner sanctum set this debt-fraud disaster in motion 15 years ago on behalf of the Wall Street titans who vetted Clinton — and Obama.

Robert Beal
Eugene

HOMELESS DEPOT

Sometimes I have trouble detecting the true definition of irony. I spotted a man on West 11th holding a sign reading "homeless" as he was wearing a bright orange Home Depot windbreaker. Izzat irony?

I'm always glad to come home to this town when I've been away, except when I see that sign on I-105 which reads "Entering Eugene." Nothing personal, people, I just don't swing that way. Izzat irony?

I was staring at the building that houses The Good Guys, "audio/video specialists," and noticed there was an antenna on the roof. Izzat irony?

When I drop an iron on my knee ... OK, I'll stop.

Glenn Leonard
Eugene

IT'S UP TO THE FAMILY

It is annoying and offensive that you chose to publish the "odd email" from "David Minor's Ghost" asking for the David Minor ghost bike memorial at the corner of 13th & Willamette to be removed. Apparently its author thinks the memorial is just generating negative energy or something. I'm sure the person who wrote it is well-intentioned, but that doesn't change that it's obnoxious, self-important, hippie-dippy bullshit.

I hope that memorial — which continues

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