

in the Bay Area, and she kept me up to date about what was happening there and in New York and London, too.”

Though she loved the theater, the 82-year-old served most passionately on the board of Sponsors, Inc., a local nonprofit that helps those recently released from various correctional facilities to find ways back into the community. “She got us involved with Sponsors years ago,” Willis says. “She thought that it would be a good thing to reorient people to everyday life through the arts.”

In consultation with Ron Chase, Sponsors' executive director, Willis decided that the Leebrick should make the second preview of its next play a benefit for Sponsors. Money from the pay-what-you-will Thursday, Feb. 26, preview of David Lindsay-Abaire's Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Rabbit Hole* will go to Sponsors. *Rabbit Hole* deals with the reactions of a couple to the death of their son, and the Leebrick's production stars Mary Fjelstad, Tim McIntosh and LCC's beloved Judith “Sparky” Roberts. “It's a gripping play that's both hilarious and deeply moving,” Willis says.

In a press release, Chase said that Nicholls was always “coming up with new ideas to serve our folks, and prodding us in only the way she could to increase our visibility in the community.

Tickets are available online at www.lordleebrick.com or 465-1506. Those who would like to support Sponsors in Nicholls' name can also send donations to Sponsors, 1756 Willamette St., Eugene, OR 97401. —Suzi Steffen

THE MOUSE THAT ROARED

Dunes City on Feb. 12 enacted a resolution calling for national comprehensive health care reform including a fair debate on single-payer-type solutions, such as “Medicare-for-all.” The sleepy bedroom and retirement village of 1,330 lakeside

residents is located south of Florence.

The audience at the City Council meeting broke into spontaneous applause following the vote, according to local retired attorney Rand Dawson. Dawson says the action could reflect a change in the mood of the country at large. Dunes City favored McCain over Obama in the November election.

Western Lane County health care activists are calling the unanimous decision “an important victory,” says Dawson.

Stu Henderson, a Florence resident who worked to place the matter on the city agenda, says, “We designed this to send a message to Congressman DeFazio, that single-payer-solutions need to be on the table for public review. Conventional wisdom says single-payer lacks political will, isn't realistic or is somehow un-American. The Council's fair-minded action rejects those arguments. We still believe a Congressman can't ignore when a city speaks. We will be moving to Florence next.”

The group believes this is the first city in Oregon to pass such a resolution. Their slides, meeting audio and video will be placed on YouTube soon for others to use, says Dawson. He can be reached at rdawson@oregonfast.net — Ted Taylor

VIOLENCE & VIGILANCE

A year has passed since the Valentine's Day massacre of five students at Northern Illinois University. An even worse shooting left 11 dead in Finland last September. Then on Jan. 25 of this year, a gunman randomly opened fire outside an under-21 nightclub in Portland, killing two teenaged students and wounding six others before shooting himself. Two days earlier, a young man went on a knife rampage at a Belgian daycare center, stabbing two infants and a female worker to death and seriously harming 12 others.

Happening people

BY PAUL NEEVEL

CHRIS BIRKE

“Growing up in Texas, you can get a bleak view of the world,” says Houston native Chris Burke. Birke escaped to Oregon in 2000 after he finished high school. “I resented the fundamentalist values. I love the culture here, where you can learn about community from an adult perspective.” Birke started at the UO as a philosophy major (“I'm a big thinker,” he says) but switched to multi-media to pursue an interest in digital technology that he developed as a kid tinkering with video games. A senior-year internship with video-game company Buzz Monkey Software turned into a job after graduation.

“I work really hard,” he says. “Games need to be ready for holiday time, so we work 10 to 12 hours a day during crunch time in the summer. It's fulfilling to be surrounded by talented people.” As an adjunct to his friend Cindy Ingram's Grrrlz Rock series of concerts last November, Birke organized a panel discussion of women working in divergent fields. “We had a judge, a truck driver, someone from EWEB, a video game artist,” he says. “Naomi Zach from the philosophy department was the moderator. Grrrlz Rock is about music, but I think it should be about feminism as well.”



• **More good news** in the local small biz community:

Eugene's Luna & Larry's Coconut Bliss, the first ice cream made from coconut milk, has announced its products will be available at select Whole Foods Market stores across the U.S. by April.

Leah Chava at Imagine Salon, 943 Olive, tells us her business has been growing steadily since it opened in September. The salon has a dozen stylists working five days a week from 10 am to 7 pm.

Bill Finneran of the Eugene Record Convention sent out an email Feb. 10 thanking volunteers and saying that “even in bad economic times we had a huge crowd, including many who traveled a great distance to be with us.”

We haven't seen the numbers yet, but the Asian Celebration at the fairgrounds Feb. 14-15 was packed with happy people. Great art, marketplace, food and performances.

• If the **out-of-touch city** government thinks that building new city offices while slashing services for taxpayers is such a good idea, the city should have the courage to refer the \$17 million new police station to voters. The voters aren't stupid; they've defeated the police building three times at the polls. But at the inward-focused city of Eugene, civil servants are apparently more about serving themselves from the city slush fund than we the pesky people.

• The seismic argument that voters have thrice rejected for building a new police station is a **quivering pile of hooey**. Police only use the basement as a locker room and parking garage. A few million dollars would shore up the existing building, and as it stands now, even in a major earthquake, it seems likely that only a few police cars would be lost. Officers have a higher risk of earthquake injury in their own homes. While pursuing its shaky City Hall fear mongering, the city government has shown little interest in the thousands of citizens who would be trapped or killed in schools, apartment towers, public garages, office buildings and stores in an earthquake.

• **Moving EWEB** out to use its building for a new City Hall would hurt Eugene's struggling downtown. While the city is paying millions of dollars in subsidies and tax breaks to keep people downtown to fight sprawl and global warming, it would be kicking one of downtown's largest remaining employers out to the west Eugene wetlands.

• We hear a **plastic bag proposal** is working its way toward the Lane County Board of Commissioners, perhaps landing on the agenda the first week of March. The city of Eugene has not followed up on the idea of discouraging plastic grocery bags (see News Briefs in EW archives, 4/12/07). Meanwhile, the U.S. uses 12 million barrels of oil a year to make billions of mostly unrecyclable plastic bags, which become one of the largest sources of urban litter.

The local bag proposal, coming from Terry McDonald of St. Vincent de Paul and Bob Cassidy of the EWEB Commission, would require all retail stores in Lane County to charge 10 cents for plastic bags. The fees would go to the county general fund, and stores would charge customers for the bags.

Paper bags would become more popular, but stores could charge for them as well, and keep the change. The county general fund can certainly use the money, though it would shrink over time as people abandon plastic bags. And there would be extra accounting work for businesses.

Instead of the county referring this proposal to the voters in an expensive and delaying election, could commissioners just hold some public hearings and implement it by ordinance? It's a far less risky proposition than past tax proposals.

• **Peter DeFazio** follows a long tradition in this congressional district of voting independently for principle. Think Jim Weaver, Charlie Porter. That's what we like in this part of Oregon.

In voting against Obama's final stimulus bill, DeFazio opposed the big tax cuts, the little infrastructure spending, the hurry-up and the ignorance of the content. We mostly agree on principle, but we think something has to be done right now, and we are willing to give Barack Obama a shot at it, knowing that Joe Biden's probably right – at least 30 percent of what they do will be wrong. We hope DeFazio will take a leading role in shaping the other two legs of this recovery plan, the “nationalization” of the banks and halting of foreclosures.

Congress, and the country, need Peter's smarts.

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

WAR DEAD

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

(last week's numbers in parentheses):

- **4,245 U.S. troops killed*** (4,243)
- **31,035 U.S. troops injured*** (31,010)
- **176 U.S. military suicides*** (167)
- **317 coalition troops killed**** (317)

• **1,123 U.S. contractors killed** (accurate updates NA)

• **98,992 to 1.2 million civilians killed***** (98,911)

• **\$597.4 billion cost of war** (\$594.5 billion)

• **\$169.9 million cost to Eugene taxpayers** (\$169.3 million)

* through Feb. 16, 2009; source: icasualties.org; some figures only updated monthly

** sources: icasualties.org, defenseink.mil

*** highest estimate; source: iraqbodycount.org; based on confirmed media reports; other groups calculate civilian deaths as high as 655,000 (Lancet survey, 2006) to 1.1 million (Opinion Research Business survey, 2008)