

Rapid Response

How we take care of each other

Two incidents in the last two weeks reminded me of who we are as communities and how that relates to health care.



On the last day of a month of camping in Australia, my digital camera lens wouldn't open to take a photo. I knew I would need to be recording field work the day after I arrived home in the states, and it's my only camera. I had a day and a half in Perth before leaving, so I inquired rather hopelessly at two camera stores, knowing they usually have to send cameras out for repair. A salesperson in the second store mentioned a fellow who repairs cameras in Perth, and gave me the address. Ambrose's Camera Repair was up three narrow flights of stairs, in a pair of tiny rooms, as if he were a 19th century violin maker. Ambrose said he could look at the camera, putting off other repairs he was scheduled to make. (At least a dozen cameras were in the waiting room.) I could come back the next afternoon, a few hours before I was to fly home. He wasn't hopeful he could fix it.

When I returned the next day he was elated. "Your camera was loaded with dirt and I cleaned it. But if you had come last week, I couldn't have fixed it without a new lens. Last week another camera repair person told me of a little trick of folding a tiny piece of paper and jamming it behind the lens, and it's working. It's the first time I've tried that!" Ambrose has been repairing cameras for 30 years.

Incident number 2. At 8:30 am I sat on my glasses in Richfield, Utah, breaking the thin cord, like fishing line, that holds the lens in. (I'm dead in the water without glasses.) I needed to head out at 9 a.m. to meet Forest Service staff an hour away to go in the field with them on some concerns I had. One optometrist office in Richfield. Opens at 9 am. I phoned at 8:45 am, hoping maybe someone would be there. They said to bring the glasses right over. I was out of the office at 9:06 am, off to the field meeting, with repaired (and cleaned) glasses.

Coming back to back, these two rather wondrous instances of rapid-response repairs reminded me that we really are communities of people who depend on each other. For identifying a clunk in the engine; for building a shoe insert for aging feet; for building a recycling center; for directing us to a repair person up three narrow flights of stairs on a small street in an unfamiliar city; for explaining which bus we should take to a particular part of our town.

And with that perspective, universal health care seems to affirm such a view of community. Recognizing that we depend on each other every day for a thousand details of daily living, we need to be there for each other for health. The very act of becoming a universal health care nation would reinforce that concept among us. We depend on each other and, in recognition of this, we will take care of each other.

Mary O'Brien has worked as a public interest scientist since 1981. She is currently dividing her time between Eugene and Castle Valley, Utah.

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'NEVER GIVE UP'

Leslie Brockelbank (cover story, 9/10) was our good friend and companion, our mentor and our role model who gave us more than we as a community yet realize. As I look back over the 43 years I have known Leslie, it is difficult to comprehend that David and I will not be hearing from her. Her calls to join her for supper, to attend an event with her, or a request to call a list of people she knew who need to hear about WAND or CALC or Maude Kerns or FOR or AFSC activities were part of our day. She was a woman of many generations whose ideas were always young and fresh and new. We always found a way to be with her.

We had fun together, with no negative talk about others but a positive and loving attitude towards everyone. She was an excellent listener without judgment. She could see through the most difficult conflicts when we counseled with her about our grievances concerning family, friends or the political situations in the world. She was focused and yet fun loving. She delighted in laughter and joy at being together.

Leslie was adamant about justice and equality for all. She stressed communication by dialogue, writing letters, lobbying representatives and working hard on a project to make changes to better the world for generations to come. What a legacy we all have to live up to! Leslie was a gentle warrior who would often say, "Never give up."

*Kit Frisinger
Eugene*

DISMAYED BY EUGENE

As a person who has been looking for a location in the U.S. to set up business and make a home, I identified Eugene as a prospective locale. Having visited for some time, attended conferences and enjoyed the modest sized city and its infrastructure of mixed use, density, bike paths, higher education and a functional train line, I am dismayed by what I read and see in terms of urban sprawl.

I have lived in communities throughout the U.S. and am looking for a place that

integrates nature with modern conveniences and an organic and holistic lifestyle rooted in food, development and way of being. If it is true what is being reported as transpiring in Eugene at the governmental level, then I sincerely hope the community rises up to focus on greening the city, new urbanism and processes that enfranchise all ages and abilities. The car culture is an outmoded way of being, one of privilege, discrimination and selfishness.

*Michael Bittner, Ph.D., RYT
Millbrook, NY*

WHAT GANDHI DID

Great on Alan Pittman for stepping on Eugene's carbon foot (cover story, 9/17), and for promoting the energy and climate kickoff events Sept. 26 at North Eugene High School.

When it comes to climate impact, his focus on transportation is spot-on. And he's right to publicize Portland's draft climate action plan. My only real problem is his sliding into that old boring "the city is the problem." As if "the city" is one thing. As if the city is the only player. As if we the people of Eugene don't have anything to do with it.

Gandhi's greatest contribution was not getting England out of India, but getting the people of India to realize they were co-creating their own oppression. England wasn't the problem. Their collaboration with and subservience to England was the problem. Gandhi gave them a way to stop cooperating and take back their power.

Getting involved in the city's climate and energy plan's public engagement process is a way to take these issues into our own hands. Sure, the plan that is produced will be important. But it can only be a tiny piece of the answer — and, believe it or not, the organizers realize that.

Most of the answers to these hot issues will lie in what we the people of Eugene decide to do together. Some of it will be what we do in our own lives and homes. Some of it will be the help we give to people already working here on these issues. Some of it will be new creative initiatives among



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