EXPLOITING PETS

I am writing in response to the last section of your Slant (1/13). In it, the editor describes a situation in which an attorney's concern for the welfare of a puppy owned by a homeless person is called "harassment" by another Eugene citizen. The issue of homeless people having pets has been bothering me for as long as I've lived in Eugene. I've seen many kittens strapped to backpacks so they cannot run around like normal kittens. People are drawn to pet them and the homeless person then gets attention (and often money). This exploitation of animals interferes with them having a normal life.

I have wanted to cry seeing kittens treated this way. I wonder what happens to these kittens once they become "inconvenient." A couple once walked by my apartment and the woman said she needed help because she was "trying to feed her new kitten." I gave her my whole bag of cat food. She hesitated, not even saying thanks, and said, "Uh, we need to eat too. Do you have money?"

I've been asked for money for dog food as well, and I just want to scream at people. If they can't feed their dog, they should give it to someone who can — but that would be "harassment" in some eyes. True, a poor person might care for an animal better than a rich one, but a person with no shelter for themselves or ability to reliably get food even for themselves should reconsider having a pet. I'm asked to pay for the meals of homeless people and their cats and dogs. Expressing concern for the animal welfare is harassment?

A dog might lend a lot of comfort to a homeless person sleeping under a bridge, but good pet owners take care of their animals. To exploit a pet to assist in your own survival should be considered a form of animal abuse.

Laura Paxton
Eugene

WHO DECIDES?

The Slant (1/13) about Steve Cornacchia's apparent harassment of a homeless pet owner really boils my blood. This is what I know from my own life: I am lucky enough to say that I have a home to live in and a job to go to, and the resources to care for several companion animals. In my case, I am able to provide high-end food, routine health care, and unexpected expenses.

I love my animals very much, and I believe that they love me; regardless, my relationship to them keeps me connected to something that is outside of myself. They give me some "one" to care for and on some days a reason to get out of bed. I find it almost impossible to believe that people who are homeless cannot enjoy the same relationship with their pets that I enjoy with mine. They may not be financially able to provide for their pet in the way that I am able to, but that in no way discounts the *mutually* beneficial relationship that exists between pet and guardian.

If it is all just a matter of degree, who gets to decide the benchmark? Isn't a puppy living with a homeless person who does the best he or she can to look after it, better off than a puppy in a euthanasia chamber because no one wants it? I think it is, and I also think that the sooner we recognize, and act on, how we can *help* each other rather than how we can make ourselves feel better by criticizing someone else, the better off we will be.

Victoria A. Williams
Eugene

LCC FALLING SHORT

Regarding "Tutor Time" (cover story, 1/3): What do we get from under-funded education? More struggling, fewer chances to make it in life? More prostitution, more crime, more violence? I believe that it is all of the above.

I live in the middle of Whiteaker, arguably one of Eugene's lower-income areas, and while I see a lot of awesome modded fish-fin cars; I also see a lot of desperate homeless teenagers. If education's goal is to prepare our children for the world, we are falling painfully short. The LCC campus is flooded with new students at the beginning of each term, who drop out after two or three weeks but collect their financial aid anyway (which Lane has figured out, so don't try it).

Looking around at LCC's clearly underfunded main campus, I can't help but wonder: Are they dropping out with the sole purpose of collecting the financial aid, or do we have a bunch of kids who can't hack it even at the community college level? I don't know, but I really hope someone follows up and gets the numbers. Maybe seeing something more concrete would kick the powers that be into action.

Rachel Hooper
Eugene

POSITIVE PIT PRESS

I cannot express how grateful I am to *EW* for giving positive press to the pit bull. The media really needs a boogie man to sell its wares and pit bulls have become a target in the past decade, resulting in people who do not know this breed to have a skewed view.

Case in point: The very same day that the positive article was released in the *Weekly*, there was an incident in Mt. Vernon, N.Y. where a man was mauled by two Rottweilers and a Wheaton terrier. Although the article clearly says that the dogs in question were not pit bulls, the headline declared "Pit bulls maul …" because really, most people read only the headline. This is a very common devious "marketing strategy" that is perpetrated on a daily basis across America. At the end of the day, they changed it to "Dogs maul …" but the damage was done. I read the comment section and everybody was talking about pit bulls.

A study a few years ago found that this misreporting happens 33 percent of the time. I've seen similar inaccurate reporting in *The Register-Guard.* Thank you, *EW*, for being a step above, it is much appreciated!

On a side note, the website dogsbite.org is really formed by a group whose expressed purpose is to ban pit bulls in the United States. They do not report