

NEWS Briefs

VOLUNTEERS IN MEDICINE DIPS INTO RESERVES

During the current recession some of the hardest hit people have been the working poor, presenting a challenge to organizations, such as Volunteers in Medicine (VIM), which serves this segment of the population.

VIM in Springfield is one of about 50 free clinics across the nation that provide free medical and mental health services to those who qualify under their mission. To be eligible for VIM's services a patient's income for the last three months must be between 85 and 200 percent of the federal poverty level. This works out to around \$900 per month for an individual. Those who are eligible for the Oregon Health Plan, Medicare, Medicaid, or any other insurance are not eligible for services at the VIM clinic.

The VIM clinic provides a range of health care services including mental health and primary care in an integrated model. This allows for more efficiency and better communication between primary care physicians and mental health care professionals. Two specialty clinics are on site, a diabetes management and education clinic, as well as a women's health care clinic. VIM runs an in-house dispensary that provides patients with medication at no cost. The clinic also can refer patients to local specialists. The VIM clinic is one of the only clinics in town to offer its services, including mental health care, in Spanish.

The current recession has made it difficult for VIM to continue to fill its mission. "When the clinic opened 10 years ago, there were an estimated 23,000 uninsured people in Lane County," says Jackie Mikalonis, VIM's executive director. "Now that number is approximately 73,000." She noted that during VIM's 10 years in operation, about 80 percent of patients came from working families.

VIM is a 100 percent community supported program. Mikalonis noted, "All services are free, there are no revenues from fees, so each year VIM has to raise more than \$1.5 million to deliver free medical services to the community. The recession has resulted in an increased demand for services; and at the same time, revenues are not keeping pace with expenditures." VIM has dipped into its reserves, for rather than cut services, she added.

VIM's clinic is located at 2260 Marcola Road, Springfield. It can be reached at

685-1800. Donations can be made on the web at www.vim-clinic.org and those interested in volunteering can email dmeashintubby@vim-clinic.org.

— Philip Shackleton

FOREST SERVICE ROADS & TRAVEL

There are enough roads in the U.S. National Forests — more than 375,000 miles — to circle the equator 15 times. According to panelists on the "Forest Service Travel Management" panel at the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference March 3, these roads are severely underfunded, are a primary cause of aquatic degradation, habitat fragmentation, erosion and unmanaged recreation.

The "travel management rule" directs all national forests to identify, through a science-based analysis, an ecologically and fiscally sustainable minimum road system by 2015. "We don't need new laws; we want the Forest Service to correctly implement the rules," said panelist Cyndi Tuell from the Center for Biological Diversity. CBD campaigned for the protection of the Oregon sand dunes from off-road vehicles a few years ago.

According to the panel, only about 20 percent of the Forest Service roads are maintained to standard each year. Additionally, harm from off-road vehicles such as, dirt bikes, motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles, are causing noise, water and soil pollution, disrupting the flora and fauna, water systems and enjoyment of the land by quiet users.

"I can't monitor all the roads out there, that's why I want the Forest Service to help me," Tuell said. She said she would like everyone using public land to help her as well by documenting evidence of road erosion. "It would be a huge help to have people regularly monitoring areas the same time of year, year after year, documenting with photos and GPS if possible," Tuell said. She recommends reporting information directly to the Forest Service to let them know about problematic areas.

Due to a shortage of maintenance money and issues with runoff from roads affecting bull trout and salmon, the Willamette National Forest is closing 132 miles of roads near Oakridge this spring.

For more information visit, www.biologicaldiversity.org — Heather Cyrus

PROTECT THE BATS

"Why save bats?" asked James Eggers, director of education for Bat Conservation International during a panel at the recent Public Interest Environmental Law Conference. According to Eggers, bats provide utilitarian values, including pest management, pollination, seed-dispersal and guano (aka bat poo) but we are in

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• We had the good fortune to go to **Lynda and Brian Lanker's** house for a DeFazio fundraiser last November. As many of you know, the walls of their splendid home display Brian's photography, Lynda's paintings, and on that autumn evening, brilliant bouquets of fresh flowers enhanced it all. Lynda said the flowers were Brian's province. As we reflect on that evening and read local and national tributes after Brian Lanker's too-early death, we better understand how his essential humanity and passion for social justice drove much of his truly profound photography.

• Can **Civic Stadium's sturdy old-growth structure** be saved from the chainsaw and bulldozer? We were pleased to see City Councilor George Brown last week push for more council input into the 4J School Board's decision-making process. This might buy a little time and get the three interested parties talking to each other about a public-private partnership that could benefit just about everyone.

Last time we checked, the Y and Save Civic Stadium (SCS) were not talking to each other after a year of discussions. Dave Perez, executive director of the Y, tells us money and parking were some of the big issues. "In the end," he says, "the cost of the stadium's capital restoration combined with unsustainable ongoing costs caused our organizations to part ways." The Y and its architects looked at vertical parking, but it was "cost prohibitive." So the Y's plans show a big parking lot and tennis courts in the middle of the site, surrounded by apartments, with an impressive new Y on the north side. The Y is also trying to finance a second new facility in north Eugene.

Meanwhile, Ron Crasilneck, SCS's board president, tells us he's frustrated that "the Y's refusal to consider anyone else's needs but their own demonstrates to me a lack of understanding of how to get things done." Crasilneck says the Y could benefit greatly from a joint proposal, and even get its new building site for free. "I see no reason for us to approach them again when they have shown no signs of willingness to work with anyone else besides an out-of-state housing developer."

The Y and SCS are no longer competing with each other so much as with the third proposal from Steve Master and Fred Meyer, which is finding favor with the cash-strapped school district. Will this motivate the Y and SCS to get over their past differences, sit down again and collaborate? Can parking across Amazon next to South Eugene High be utilized? Can Master add a commercial element to the mix (other than an ugly big box store) to make the package more viable? Three complex plans would need to merge, but saving a landmark would be a huge draw for community support and fundraising. The district would gain long-term lease income, the property would stay in public ownership as intended in the 1938 deed to 4J, and Civic Stadium would be restored as a venue for soccer and other sports, and as a vibrant community center.

• Good, impassioned discussion on **Envision Eugene** at City Club last week. Quality of life got a lot of attention, including the need to protect our shrinking agricultural lands from development. It was a bit disturbing to hear brownfields such as railyards and old industrial sites being written off as too expensive to clean up and redevelop. So do we just leave them as toxic eyesores while we pave over prime farmland? With a little visionary leadership, Eugene can do better than that.

• A bill for **single-payer** "public option" health insurance in Oregon had a public hearing in Salem March 11 with a good turnout in support. Rep. Paul Holvey is one of the sponsors of HB 3510, called the Affordable Health Care for All Oregon Act. Oregon is joining Vermont, Pennsylvania, California and 17 other states in promoting single-payer legislation as an alternative to the national legislation. U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden gets credit for language in Obamacare that allows states to pursue their own proposals that would meet the same goals of the federal legislation.

Why now when the economy is in the tank? The insurance industry takes a big bite out of the health care pie, and the federal legislation doesn't go nearly far enough in cutting costs. Proponents of the Oregon bill tell us we can't afford to wait. By their projections, state and local governments in Oregon would save \$900 million a year under single-payer, businesses would see their health care benefit costs reduced by 16 percent; doctors' costs to collect fees would decrease 30 percent; and families on average would save \$340 annually. Let's do it. And Oregon can once again serve as an example for the nation.

• **We're off to war again**, this time in defense of Libyans under attack by Gadhafi and his loyalists. Exercising U.S. military force always has unintended consequences. It's preferable to have these tough decisions being made by Barack Obama, the U.N. Security Council and the Arab League, rather than Dick Cheney, but what about the other Arab nations where newly informed and inspired citizens are rising up against their autocratic rulers who have been supported militarily by the U.S. for decades? Do we pick sides and inject ourselves into every budding civil war? Our Middle East foreign policy has been based on U.S. self-interest and ignorance rather than diplomacy in search of peace and justice. Obama will have a hard time turning around our bloody U.S. legacy. The civil war in Iraq is still raging with 129 civilian deaths just last week.

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

lighten up

According to Aristotle, the brain is used to cool the blood and not for thinking. Michele Bachmann proves him right.

— Rafael Aldave, Eugene