

GWEN MEYER

After graduation from St. Andrews Priory, an Episcopal girls' school in Honolulu, Gwen Meyer majored in Latin American studies at the University of Wisconsin. "I planned to join the Peace Corps," says Meyer, who instead stayed in Madison, got married, had two kids, and found a job caring for developmentally disabled women and girls. When the family moved to Eugene in 1979, she studied special education, earned a master's, got divorced, and worked as a special ed researcher until she retired in 2006. In 1996, she met Coast Range sheep farmer John Neumeister at a Zydeco dance class. They were married in 2003. A three-week visit to Kenya in 2002 led the couple to launch the nonprofit Friends of Kenya Schools and Wildlife to support community development in rural Kenya. Their first project, built in 2004, was a nursery school in the village of Kirepari. Since then, five more schools have been built, and 142 primary school students receive scholarships. FKSU initiated the Malo Wool Project, 45 women who knit little woolly animals. "They have earned \$24,000," says Meyer, who has made FKSU a full-time unpaid job. "It's fun for me. John and I go back every year. Fifty volunteers have joined us." The public is invited to a celebration of FKSU from 6 to 7:30 pm Thursday, July 7, at Tsunami Books. Online at <http://fksu.org>



manager to run it. It's a unique niche in the community and it will be a loss to the community when it goes." — *Ted Taylor*

BAGS AND BPA STILL OK IN OR

Oregon's Legislature has wrapped it up for the year, and while the border collie didn't get voted in as Oregon's state dog, Jory soil, that red dirt that's so good for growing pinot noir and Christmas trees, did finally get its due and is Oregon's official state soil. But soil aside, the environment made some gains and took some hits in the Legislature this session.

The proposed ban on single-use plastic bags was tanked by plastic bag industry. Though this might have less effect here in Eugene, where many stores like Kiva and Market of Choice already don't offer single-use plastic bags, it's still bad news for Oregon's landfills and for the ocean, where many bags end up.

The proposed ban on toxic chemicals in baby bottles and sippy cups didn't go through either, so moms and dads will need

to look closely at what they buy for their babies. The chemical bisphenol A (BPA) in the polycarbonate plastics used to make many types of sippy cups can seep into foods stored in those containers, according to the Mayo Clinic. And the National Toxicology Program at the Department of Health and Human Services has said it has some concern about the possible health effects of BPA on the brain, behavior and prostate gland of fetuses, infants and children. If you're looking to avoid BPA, note that the polycarbonate plastic is usually a hard, clear, lightweight plastic and often has the number 7 recycling symbol on the bottom. Washington state banned BPA in children's food containers in 2010.

Oregon's large-scale renewable energy industry — wind and solar — took a hit from the Legislature when the lawmakers decided to make changes to the Business Energy Tax Credit (BETC) program, but the good news is that small renewable projects can still get credits — under the new legislation, projects would be capped at 35 megawatts and could not receive more than \$250,000.

Also good news is that the latest attempt to hunt cougars with hounds once again was defeated, as were a number of bills

SLANT

• How great would it be if **Connecting Eugene** would reach beyond the Riverfront Research Park and connect other parts of Eugene, maybe the precious riverfront all the way from Valley River Center to Glenwood! Connecting Eugene is the one fierce group, mostly UO faculty and students, who persisted for years until the university, led by President Lariviere, Oregon Research Institute, the developer, and all the players agreed to put the new ORI building and its parking lot south of the railroad tracks instead of on the river's bank. That's a huge and complicated win for smart planning and the environment. Let's not waste the dollars and years that conflict cost. Connecting Eugene, Lariviere and the UO, ORI, EWEB, the city of Eugene, local architects, the public, plus the visionaries in the U.S. Courthouse could bring about a viable plan for the Willamette riverfront through Eugene.

• A dangerous incident June 29 involving an **agitated veteran** with a loaded shotgun at the VA clinic in Eugene could have gone much worse for everyone involved, but restrained action by Eugene police saved the vet's life. Good job. Maybe we're making some progress here. We recall other such encounters with emotionally agitated people that did not go so well.

• We were excited when **AG John Kroger** proposed an overhaul of Oregon's nearly 40-year-old public records law. Keeping the work of our public officials in the open is a key to good government. Our state's

open records laws are full holes and exceptions, and are not up-to-date — there's no mandate, for example, for public officials to save their text messages. Institutions from the Eugene police to the UO have been awfully cagey with their records on everything from cops who are a little too enthusiastic about using their weapons to what's going on with Uncle Phil and the UO athletics program. Kroger had proposed a 10-day initial deadline for responding to records requests, with five-to-30-day extensions possible if an agency demonstrated it had a good reason for needing more time, and he proposed that meeting minutes be available seven working days after the meeting. This would have gone a long way in helping *EW*, the *R-G* and other news sources get accurate info out quickly. Too bad the Legislature let Kroger's open records reform legislation die.

• Judging by the burnt red, white and blue garbage strewn on city streets, sidewalks and parks this week, the **Fourth of July** has become the national holiday that Americans celebrate by trashing their country from sea to shining sea. Come on people, have fun but remember America the Beautiful; show a little love for your country by doing your patriotic duty and picking up your celebratory trash.

• We hear this is a tough season, economically, for professional **wildland firefighters** around the Northwest and northern California. Firefighters are finally back at work and spending a lot of time away from home. The wet spring has kept Northwest crews

inactive and hungry, but all that long spring grass and lush undergrowth is turning to dry fuel.

On a barely related note, we have learned that seasoned firefighters (unlike Smokey the Bear) never pee on forest fires. It's considered uncouth. Once a fire is under control and cooling down, firefighters scout the ashes looking for hot spots to shovel up and mix with dirt. Smoke is not always visible, so they use their noses (smoldering wood underground has a distinctive aroma), and they also check for heat in suspicious spots with their bare hands. Even super-sooty firefighters get pissed if they stick their fingers in pee-soaked ashes.

• An intriguing suggestion popped up at a political gathering last week. If the Supreme Court really wants **corporations to be like people** and be able to influence elections, the court should set some basic rules. Corporations should be at least 18 years old before they can give money to political campaigns, and be U.S. citizens in good standing (no felony convictions among their managers). Maybe they need to register for the draft. Any other requirements come to mind?

• The conservative **Oregon Family Council** is crowing about a phone survey of 660 likely Oregon voters that indicates 50 percent would vote today to reaffirm Measure 36, which defined marriage as between one man and one woman. What they don't say is that Measure 36 passed by just 57 percent in 2004. A 7 percent shift in public opinion over seven years shows that Measure 36 is doomed.

ACTIVIST ALERT

• July 16 is the deadline for comments and suggestions for alternatives on a BLM proposal to return to using **four herbicides** along roadsides and in rights of way in the Eugene area. Between 100 and 500 acres would be treated with Glyphosate, Imazapyr, Triclopyr or Clopyralid. Send comments to Michael Mascari, BLM, 3106 Pierce Parkway, Springfield 97477 or email or_eugene_mail@blm.gov

• **MoveOn** is helping organize at least four local meetings in private homes Sunday, July 17, in its campaign called Rebuild the Dream. "The American Dream used to mean something in this country," reads the email campaign message. "That if you put in a hard day's work, you could

expect good American wages, benefits, a dignified retirement, and a better life for your kids. Everyone wasn't in the middle class, but everyone believed that — given a fair shot — they could make it there. That's the American Dream I'm fighting for." Information on the location of Eugene-area meetings and how many people have signed up for each one can be found at <http://wkly.ws/12v> and people can also sign up to host their own meetings.

• **Lane County Democrats** are holding their eighth annual Chili Cook-Off competition from noon to 3 pm Sunday, July 17, at Alton Baker Park Picnic Shelter #2. Live entertainment, food, raffle prizes, all for \$5 suggested donation. Contact cronin@uoregon.edu or call (503) 927-8189. The next monthly meeting of the Lane County Democrats will be at

6:30 pm Thursday, July 21, at EWEB. Contact chair@dplc.org or call 484-5099. Dems will also be celebrating Obama's 50th birthday from 5 to 8 pm Thursday, Aug. 4, at an open house for their new offices at 228 E. 11th Ave. in Eugene. Find the DPLC newsletter at <http://wkly.ws/12x>

• The second International **Copwatch Conference** will be July 22-24 at the University of Winnipeg in Manitoba. "Copwatching groups and individuals can share their experiences and knowledge of police in their communities, contribute to a larger understanding of police, and provide new creative tools and ideas to take back to our communities," according to the Copwatch website (<http://wkly.ws/12w>). For local Copwatch videos and information, search for "Picture Eugene" on YouTube or Google.