

news Briefs

A SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS

Shit happens to everybody, regardless of who you are or what you do. Showing up late for an important interview. Forgetting your anniversary. Running out of gas halfway between Sisters and Eugene. Getting soused the night before that big midterm. Cavities.

For Sara Iback, shit happened in a big way. Living in Wisconsin, she decided to use the \$2,500 she had saved up to move to Eugene and go to school. She'd been homeless once, but was able to claw her way back up and start anew. When she got to Eugene she found the apartment she had rented didn't exist, and her money was nowhere to be found. Back to square one.

Recently featured in a *Register-Guard* article, Iback is a member of a community in Eugene that has a somewhat dubious reputation. Anecdotes about altercations with police, aggressive panhandling, peeing and defecating on private property and other behavior issues downtown have created a distinctly negative impression on the minds of downtown residents, and

whether justified or not this impression has spurred a search for solutions.

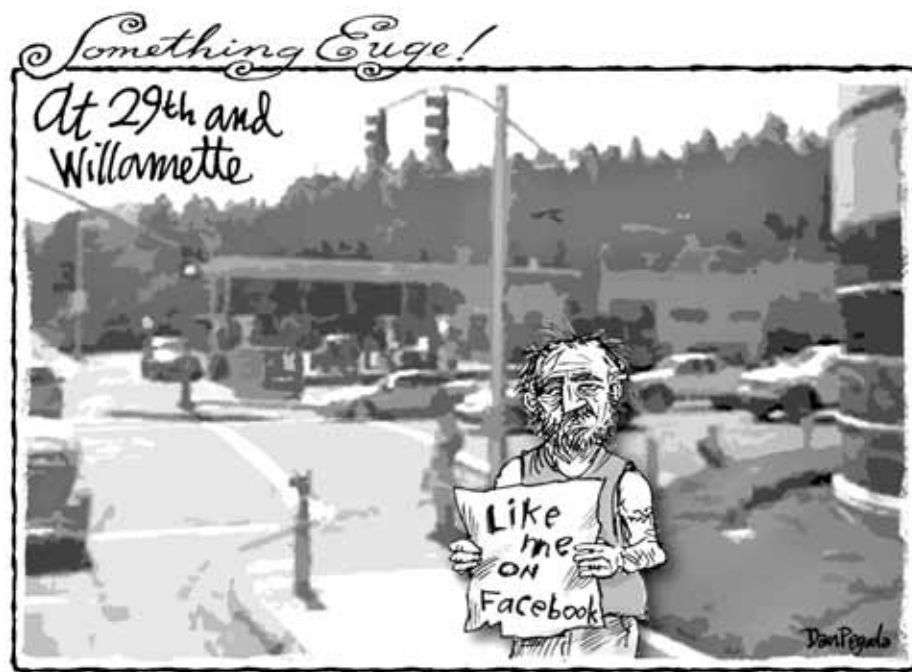
The Downtown Neighborhood Association hosted a meeting July 27 to do just that. A sort of informational session, the meeting introduced members of downtown: business owners, residents, travelers and several organizations that provide services to the homeless. Representatives from the Eugene Police Department, CAHOOTS, Womenspace, FOOD For Lane County and the American Civil Liberties Union fielded audience questions on everything from disappearing benches to more signage for public restrooms. Most of the questions dealt with what each service provided and what individuals should do in certain situations, only rarely delving into deeper questions surrounding the issue.

"I was delighted with the meeting," said David Mandelblatt, chairman of the Downtown Neighborhood Association. "I thought that people were very open and passionate."

"There were some obvious differences of viewpoint," he admitted. "But one of the strengths of downtown is our diversity, and I think we showed that quite nicely ... I hope that everybody felt they were heard."

Some people weren't as satisfied with the limited format of the meeting, seeking a more direct approach to the problem.

"The city needs to have a designated area where people can fly signs," said Iback, who also attended the meeting. "And they should provide permits for people who want to busk or sell on the



street. Even if it's only \$15 a week, you'd still get a lot of homeless willing to pay that. I'd be willing to do that, I don't want another \$575 ticket."

"I know that there are a lot of people who want to be out here," she said. "But there are a lot of us who don't."

"Society is very bigoted; people are very judgmental," she added.

"A lot of misbehavior is attributed to homeless people, whether it's justified or not," said Mandelblatt. "What I saw (on July 27), when we're talking about the homeless, we really don't know who we're talking about. When we're talking about the homeless, we're throwing a blanket over something that's too big for a blanket to cover."

"What we can do is mitigate the problem," he said. "If I feel bad about your behavior, that's a problem. If you pee in my doorway, that's another problem ... I can't control what you do, but I can control what I do. What kind of person do I want to be?"

The next steering committee meeting for the Downtown Neighborhood Association will be at 6 pm Wednesday, Aug. 24 in the Singer Room of the Eugene Public Library, where they will review the results of the July 27 meeting and discuss further action. All are welcome to attend, regardless of where they live. The DNA can also be contacted through its website at www.eugenedna.org, where it has a forum for posting comments. — Nils Holst



TWAC PROTESTS LOGGING

TWAC! "is the lovely sound of smashing patriarchy," say the organizers of a recent Trans and Womyn's Action Camp. It was also the sound of jaws dropping at the Oregon Department of Forestry office in Molalla when 30 TWAC protesters showed up on Aug. 1, some dressed only in their underwear, to call attention to clearcut logging on the Elliott State Forest.

According to a press release, "TWAC was formed out of a need to make space for marginalized identities that otherwise may not be represented within the broader push for environmental justice." The action was organized and carried out by women and trans-identified people.

Cascadia Forest Defenders and other direct action groups have resolved to make the proposed increase of clearcut logging on the Elliott from 500 acres up to 850 acres

a year the focus of a long campaign. The logging increase would result in 40 million board feet of wood being taken from the forest per year.

Last week three protesters were arrested after putting up blockades and tree sits in the forest. That action was also the culmination of a CFD action camp in which activists attend workshops educating them on everything from forest issues to how to climb trees.

On the same day as the TWAC protest in Molalla, a banner was dropped over a Seven Feathers Casino billboard on I-5 that proclaimed, "Log exports? More clearcuts? Hell no!"

The Elliott State Forest is a coast range forest with some of Oregon's last remaining native, unlogged trees. It is home to endangered species-listed marbled murrelets and spotted owls. One of the demands the CFD tree sitters made, in addition to stopping the logging of Oregon's native forests, was to "end the slaughter of the mountain beaver."

Kevin Weeks, ODF public information officer, says, "There are an extraordinary number of mountain beavers within the Elliott." He says it is a "different genus from the iconic beloved Oregon beaver," and calls them "large rodents." He says the mountain beaver eat the seedlings that are planted when a clearcut is reforested.

Weeks adds that ODF has had a policy of trapping mountain beaver in the Elliott for some years and kills about 3,000 of the animals a year.

ODF supports "the right of anyone to express their opposition to the forest management plan," Weeks says. But "when peaceful opposition crosses a line into damage of public resources, impacts to public safety or unlawful acts," the agency will call in law enforcement.

Jason Gonzales of CFD says the Molalla protest, which was in solidarity with the Elliott tree sit, shut down Highway 211 for several hours and resulted in the arrest of three protesters.

Meredith Cocks, who participated in the CFD action camp and was one of those arrested in Molalla, calls the clearcutting in the Elliott, "the worst in the state."

According to the Molalla Police Department, the three women who were arrested had locked themselves together "utilizing interlocking improvised arm tubing." About 30 other protesters, many in bright pink, some in fishnets and others in bras and panties, chanted and held signs in the ODF office, and later moved outside to the lawn.

Gonzales says CFD's message to ODF is "we're in the fight to win."

— Camilla Mortensen