

OCCUPY WALL STREET AND EUGENE

After what seemed to be a media blackout, the Occupy Wall Street protests caught the eye not only of journalists but also of unions, luminaries and everyone in between. Airline pilots in uniform, author and professor Cornell West, mothers with children ... all have shown up in the financial district in lower Manhattan. Hundreds have been arrested. Now the movement has come to Eugene.

According to occupywallstreet.org the protest is a leaderless resistance movement made up of "the 99 percent that will no longer tolerate the greed and corruption of the 1 percent" and is inspired by the Arab Spring tactic of mass occupation that brought change in Egypt and elsewhere.

Occupy Eugene, in the space of a week, rapidly grew to more than 1,400 members on its Facebook page and has already held two general assembly meetings. Shalaya Cass, one of the organizers, says the group started when her friend Sam Chapman simply created a Facebook group page. She says, "He wanted to reach out to the community and see if there were like-minded people who perhaps wanted to take part in standing in solidarity with the ongoing protest in NYC."

Cass says, "The main goal right now is really about educating the public about the occupation on Wall Street." The group has handed out flyers and talked to people at Saturday Market.

Some have criticized Occupy Wall Street for having too many diverse grievances, but Cass says the diversity is part of the beauty of the movement. Foreclosed homes, unemployment, college debt — "all of these things do stem from the way our country is being managed by the few wealthiest citizens," she says.

She says the general consensus of the group — at least 40 people are actively involved at this early stage in addition to the more than 1,400 Facebook members — is that in addition to standing in solidarity with Occupy Wall Street, they would like to start an occupation protest of their own in Eugene.

Occupy Eugene, like Occupy Wall Street, seems to be garnering support. Local grant-making organization the McKenzie River Gathering (MRG) Foundation put out a call for applicants for grant requests on Facebook, writing, "Organizing in Oregon in solidarity with Occupy Wall Street? Our Critical Response grants are up to \$2,000 to support organizing in response to unexpected opportunities to build a movement for racial and economic justice. Find out if your organizing can get some support from us!"

For more info on MRG grants go to <http://wkly.ws/14e> and to find Occupy Eugene go to <http://wkly.ws/14f> or occupyeugene.com — *Camilla Mortensen*



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