

• **Great to watch the Ducks** do their thing at the Rose Bowl game that left a lot of us without fingernails. One of the most entertaining moments was the fourth-quarter fumble recovery by Duck Michael Clay right in front of Chip Kelly on the sidelines. The excited coach was bouncing up and down like a Jack Russell terrier. The guy's got legs. Congrats to the whole team for a memorable season.

• **Protesting Councilor George Poling** at his family's residence (twice so far) might have seemed like a good idea at the time, and we can all use a stimulating dose of mid-winter nudity, but the predictable media focus on fear and intimidation made this particular action polarizing, and the message about Poling's objections to a warming fire at Occupy Eugene was lost. One useful thing that's come from all this is a lively discussion on the OE online forum on what constitutes an effective action, under the topic of "Who else can we piss off to help the homeless?" And a related issue that traditionally divides activists: Can we restore economic and social justice within the system, or do we need to tear down the system? Another question might be was the topless protest "terrorism" as Poling claimed? Weigh in at <http://wkly.ws/15k> and send a letter to the editor. Meanwhile, we got a note from one EW reader saying, "If they show up at my house, they can show me their tits all they want. Just stay off of my lawn!" Everyone has their limits.

• The Eugene City Council approved expansion of St. Vincent de Paul's **Car Camping Program**, as we reported on our blog in December, but the expansion has gotten little attention in the media. Terry McDonald, executive director of St. Vinnies, says the program can use more donations of campers, trailers, pop-ups, vans, cars and trucks that can be used to shelter homeless campers who were evicted from Occupy Eugene. Before the program was expanded, St. Vinnie's managed 50 campers in 29 sites, including the parking lot near the Science Factory and Cuthbert Theater. "One of our great hopes is that everyone will have a permanent home in the next few years," says McDonald. Call Roxann at the Lindholm Center, 607-0439, if you can help with cash, a vehicle donation, or provide space on your property.

• As we go to press this week we hear that **an appeal was filed Jan. 3** with the Oregon Court of Appeals regarding Circuit Court Judge Thomas Carlson's adverse ruling on the effort to take county redistricting to the voters. "By the time the judgment was entered, it was too late to try to salvage the referendum by any legal means," says attorney David C. Force. "So now the case will be about whether Lane County's charter and ordinances, guaranteeing a right to referendum petitions and elections on redistricting ordinances, are unenforceable as Carlson concluded." Force tells us if the Court of Appeals agrees with Carlson that "any three commissioners can prevent referendum challenges to their ordinances, then the people of Lane County need to take a look at amending the charter to make all five commissioners accountable to the voters of the whole county."

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

PROTECT THE ENDANGERED SNAIL MAIL

"Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds," is not the U.S. Post Office's official creed, though most people think it is. And it turns out that it's not the weather that could stop the mail from coming — or coming on time — it's finances.

In December the U.S. Postal Service recommended that mail distribution centers in Salem, Pendleton, Bend and Springfield's Gateway location be closed and have their work picked up by Portland's facility. In other words a letter mailed from Eugene to Springfield would first have to go a hundred miles up I-5 to Portland before coming back south to be delivered.

The USPS also recommended that first-class delivery be slowed down by a day or so, and that a number of small, rural post offices be closed, including, Deadwood, Swisshome and Walton in Lane County's Coast Range, and Agness in Curry County to the south. These are all part of cost-saving measures for a postal service billions of dollars in debt. There has also been discussion of dropping Saturday mail delivery.

Residents of these rural communities


were among the participants in an Occupy the Post Office statewide day of action. In Deadwood, a community with a population of less than 200, at least 80 people turned out for the Dec. 19 rally, including a team of draft horses — the "Deadwood Pony Express." Walton had a turnout of about 20, and that included several Occupy tents that were pitched as part of the protest.

Agness has since been taken off the closure list, so residents no longer need to fear driving 70 miles round-trip for postal services.

Some point fingers at the internet, email and social media for the postal woes, but others say the Postal Service's financial crisis also stems from the Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act passed by Congress in 2006 that forces the USPS to prefund employee retirement benefits at \$5.5 billion a year. The funding cutbacks in postal services benefit private mail carriers, such as FedEx and UPS, but private carriers are not inclined to serve unprofitable small-population, rural areas.

Congressman Peter DeFazio has introduced two pieces of legislation to help solve the financial issues facing the USPS: HR 3591, Postal Service Protection Act and HR 3592, Protecting Rural Post Office Act. Sen. Jeff Merkely has introduced companion legislation to HR 3592 in the Senate.

— Camilla Mortensen



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