

COUNCIL ASKED TO ALLOW LEGAL CAMPING

Winter is coming. But Eugene's Opportunity Village, a housing for the homeless pilot project now slated for a site near North Garfield Street and Roosevelt in the Whiteaker, won't be up and running for at least four to six months. That's why Safe Legally Entitled Emergency Places to Sleep (SLEEPS) representatives are urging the City Council to repeal Eugene's camping ban through the winter and designate specific camping areas.

About 15 SLEEPS members have pitched their tents at the Wayne Morse Free Speech Plaza in front of Harris Hall — where City Council is couch surfing until a permanent City Hall solution is worked out — to keep the issue in the public eye.

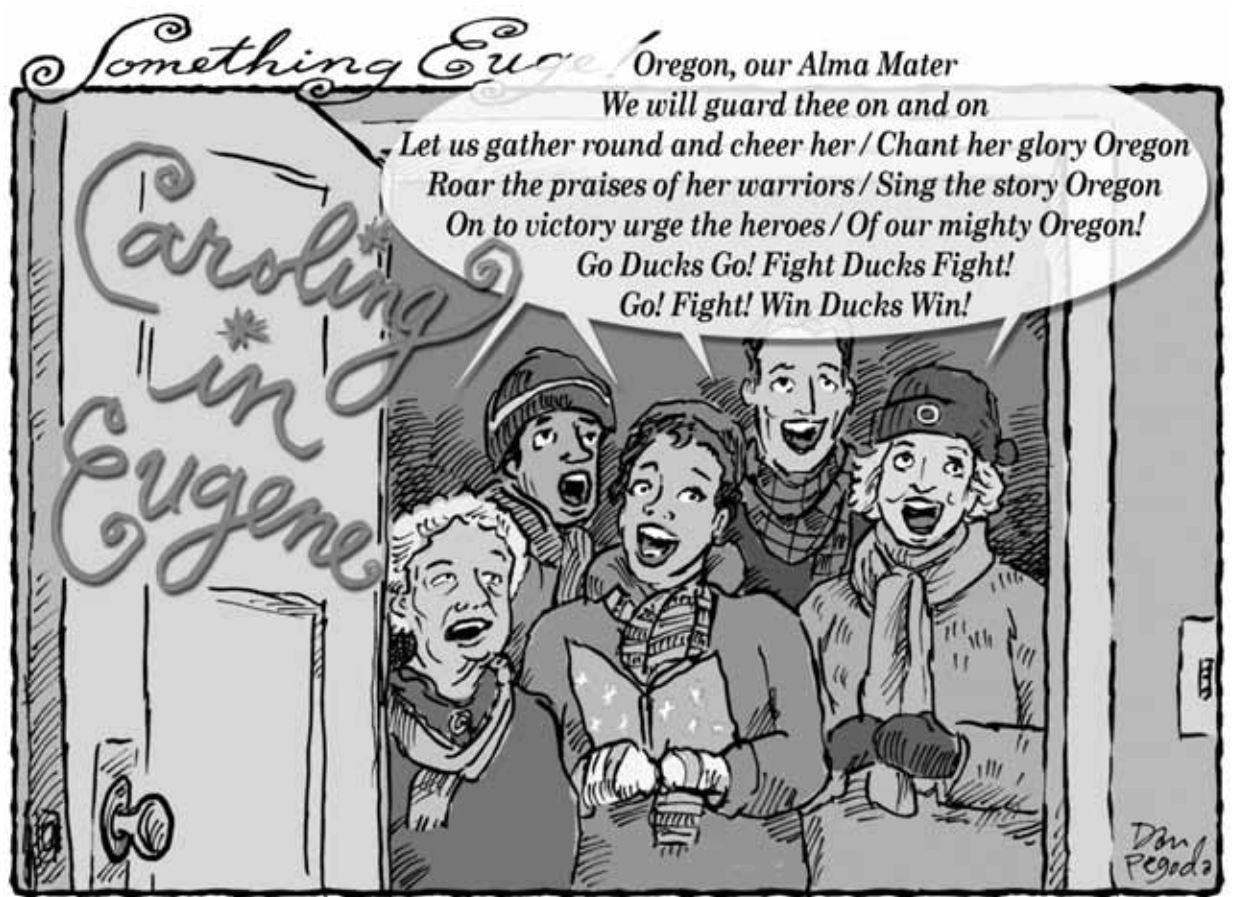
Eugene Municipal Code bans camping, and it defines campsites as anywhere where some sort of bedding is used or a stove or fire is placed. Critics of the law say that it makes surviving on the streets a lot harder, especially during the winter months.

SLEEPS members say that even if the Opportunity Village site were to open immediately, it wouldn't be able to immediately help on the same scale that lifting the ban could. "Opportunity Village, even when it opens, is 30 people," says Jean Stacey, a SLEEPS member. "We've got 1,500 minimum, so now we've got to be talking about lifting the camping ban, getting those folks bathrooms, garbage containers, allowing them to cook food over hot fires and protect their boundaries, determine who comes into their camps."

The SLEEPS request to City Council asks that, under the emergency circumstances exception in the city code, the mayor make an emergency declaration to temporarily lift the ban from 9 pm to 6 am downtown and dusk to dawn elsewhere.

The campers plan on continuing their camping protest. "We've limited who can camp here to people who are enrolled in SLEEPS, who've gone through all our training programs, who've signed our community agreements — no drugs, no alcohol, no violence — and who are really understanding of our mission, supportive of it and know how to forward it," Stacey says.

In the meantime, councilors voted to move toward including Conestoga huts, small wood-framed structures, as permitted sleeping places in the city's car camping program. — Shannon Finnell



TOXIC AIR TESTING

Farmers and parents in the Highway 36/Triangle Lake area west of Eugene have been fighting for years to put an end to toxic aerial sprays of pesticides by private timber companies that drift onto nearby homes and gardens. After residents, including children, in the Triangle Lake area tested positive for the chemicals atrazine and 2,4-D in their urine, the Oregon Health Authority and other agencies begin to investigate the drifting pesticide issue.

According to an update on the Hwy 36 Exposure Investigation sent out by Karen Bishop of the Public Health Division the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) Region 10 has been seeking funding to develop "passive air samplers" that could be used in the investigation. Region 10's grant proposal was accepted for an EPA "regional methods" grant, and the update says work on the air samplers will begin this summer. Passive air samplers do not require a pump to pull air over a collection device and

are more easily deployed in more steep and remote parts of the Coast Range than heavier equipment.

Longtime pesticide protester and Pitchfork Rebellion founder Day Owen, who has been concerned about various hold-ups the investigation has faced, says, "We are happy that our work has led to the development of new equipment that can then be used not only here but all over the country."

According to the grant proposal, atrazine and 2,4-D are usually cleared rapidly from the system, so the amounts that were found in the residents' urine suggest ongoing exposure, and increases after recent aerial sprays were probably due to inhaling the spray as it drifted off the intended spray site.

While passive air samplers exist for atrazine and 2,4-D, the grant seeks to develop air samplers for other herbicides frequently used by timber companies in western Oregon. — Camilla Mortensen

LIFE FOR LIEF SUPPORTS CRITICALLY ILL BOY

Lief O'Neill, a 9-year-old Monroe boy who is severely autistic but also highly communicative, came within hours of dying in late November after being denied a heart transplant in Oregon due to his disability. But doctors at Stanford's Lucille Packard Children's Hospital heard of his plight and agreed to do a surgical procedure that will hopefully keep him alive until a suitable heart can be found. He was flown from Doernbecher Children's Hospital in Portland to Palo Alto and had the surgery Dec. 4.

Finding a donor heart could take months, says family friend and former Eugene neighbor Carole Biondello.

"Through the dedication of his parents, Lief has learned to communicate via computer," Biondello says. "It was the key to unlock his world and for the first time, Lief was able to share just how much he knew. It was beyond profound, not only a huge milestone for Lief, but for all parents of kids with autism who didn't believe it was possible." One reason autistic children are reportedly denied organ transplants is because they are not always able to communicate and participate in their recovery.

Lief's parents are Jessica (Sunshine) Bodey and Cyrus Parsons. The family owns Great Mist Trees, a pesticide-free Christmas tree farm in Monroe. While the family is at the bedside of Lief in California, volunteers have taken over tree sales in the parking lot of The Healthy Pet at 28th and Friendly in Eugene. A Facebook page called "Life for Lief" has been set up to keep family and friends up to date on his medical condition, and the next fundraiser for Lief will be a holiday bazaar and "Sensory Safe Santa" event (for kids with autism and special needs) from 10 am to 4 pm Saturday, Dec. 15, at the Boys and Girls Club, 1645 W. 22nd Ave. in Eugene.

The family is getting support from A-Team, a nonprofit with about 300 members dedicated to children who are autistic and their families, says family friend Tiffany Mamalove, who is overseeing the tree sales from her wheelchair. Mamalove is herself the mother of three children with autism. "The donations have been amazing," she says, "coming from all over the area." Various fundraisers so far have generated about \$13,000. — Ted Taylor



PHOTO COURTESY LIFE FOR LIEF