

HUNGER STRIKE FOR SHELTER

Conrad Barney says you never have it all while being homeless. "It almost seems like places have two out of three things that you need," he says. "We have an ample supply of material; we have water and clothing and blankets because our community cares." Barney commenced a hunger strike Dec. 11, he says, because the city's camping ban makes something that's important in rainy cold Eugene, shelter, difficult to attain.

Eugene Municipal Code prohibits camping on public property, which means the tools of shelter — like bedding, tents and heaters — can't be used, making it difficult to sleep and to stay dry and warm. Police often wake campers and tell them to move along. "It's really detrimental to the health of our homeless community," Barney says. "They're constantly being awoken, and it's causing sleep deprivation, which can be hazardous, as well as exposure to the elements."

To find an acceptable public place to protest or sleep, homeless activists might have to go back in time. In 1995, activist-turned-attorney Tim Ream spent 75 days in a tent on the steps of the old Federal Building to protest the controversial salvage logging rider. On the last day of his protest, more than 100 people set up tents in the federal

plaza to join him for the night, uninterrupted.

Since beginning his hunger strike, Barney has gotten support from shelter advocacy group Safe Legally Entitled Emergency Places to Sleep (SLEEPS), and he is drinking water and taking nutritional supplements. "The first week there were issues," he says, "but before my hunger strike I was woken up many times and would be lucky to get two or three hours of sleep at a time. It takes its toll."

Since the group set up its first camp Dec. 10, SLEEPS representative Jean Stacey says, it has been evicted from its camping protest sites eight times, including three times at county-owned Wayne Morse Free Speech Plaza, twice from the old Federal Building, once from the new U.S. Courthouse, the courthouse gardens and the City Hall parking lot.

SLEEPS sought an emergency injunction to allow its protest at the old federal plaza, but federal Judge Ann Aiken denied the motion. "Judge Aiken did not give us the temporary emergency injunction because she said there were plenty of other places to protest," Stacey says. "However, we've been to eight places and we've been kicked out of eight places. It involves city, county and federal land. So where are we to go?"

Barney would end his strike with the creation of a forum, the backing of an organization or a platform of some sort, "anything," he says, that would give disenfranchised people a voice and gather resources for the community to solve the issue of shelter. — Shannon Finnell

'It's really detrimental to the health of our homeless community.'

- CONRAD BARNEY

GUN SALES SOAR BUT DEALERS NOT TALKING

In a curious case of human logic, public opinion is growing in favor of better gun control regulations, but gun sales are up, and the businesses that sell firearms won't talk. Cabela's, Bi-Mart, Walmart and S&M Gun Shop didn't respond before press time, while Eugene shooting range and gun retail store Baron's Den refused to comment. The reluctance to respond to repeated phone calls could be an indicator of how uncomfortable firearm distributors nationwide have become in the wake of shootings in Clackamas and Newtown, Conn., among others.

According to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, a database run by the FBI, the Saturday before Christmas 2012 ranked the second-busiest day in history, as 102,222 background checks were made in that 24-hour period alone. The record was set on Black Friday 2012, the day following the Thanksgiving holiday.

Gallup Polls conducted from Dec. 19-22, soon after the Dec. 14 Connecticut shooting, indicate that 58 percent of Americans are in favor of strengthening the laws pertaining to the sales of firearms, an increase of 15 percent from 2011. Additionally, 47 percent of Americans are in favor of passing new gun laws, a 12 percent increase from 2011. There is an increase in support of a firearms ban, but that is interestingly juxtaposed with the fact that guns sales are up.

Statistics show that, since the December shootings, the U.S. population is collectively purchasing more firearms than previously recorded rather than steering clear. The FBI requires background checks on those who purchase firearms — except for sales at gun shows, or from private sellers in most states, including Oregon. According to its monthly figures there were 1,534,414 background checks made as of Dec. 27.

'Gun manufacturers rely on the NRA and the gun lobby in general to create an atmosphere of fear.'

- CEASEFIRE OREGON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR PENNY OKAMOTO

The Ceasefire Oregon Education Foundation, a gun-control group committed to improving the safety of communities by reducing gun violence, has signed 17 state legislators to co-sponsor a ban on assault weapons. While sponsoring annual gun turn-ins for 17 years, Ceasefire Oregon has collected a total of 7,787 guns from throughout the state.

There are about 270 million guns in civilian ownership in the U.S., says Ceasefire Oregon Executive Director Penny Okamoto. "With a market that saturated, the gun manufacturers rely on the NRA and the gun lobby in general to create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation to increase sales," she says. "Far from protecting the Second Amendment, the NRA has turned part of our Constitution into a marketing tool. Shame on the gun industry and shame on the NRA."

According to *Willamette Week*, there has been a notable increase in nationwide sales of the AR-15 style rifle, the type of gun used in the Clackamas and Newtown shootings as well as the July shooting in Aurora, Colo. Brownells, the world's largest supplier of firearm accessories, sold three years worth of AR-15's in a three-day period following the Dec. 14 tragedy.

Four days after the Newtown shooting, President Obama said through his spokesman that he would support a ban on assault weapons. He would also back proposals that would keep people from being able to buy assault weapons without background checks.

The U.S. has the most guns in the world, an estimated 270 million, according to the Small Arms Survey. India ranks second at 46 million. For the U.S., that total is 88.9 per 100 people; for India, it is four per 100 people. — Nick Poust



HAPPENING PEOPLE BY PAUL NEEVEL

FRAN CALCIANO

"Middle-school kids are an exciting age-group to work with," says Fran Calciano of Roosevelt Middle School. She was named Oregon School Counselor of the Year for 2012-13 by the Oregon School Counselor Association. "They come in looking and acting like children. They leave looking like young adults." Calciano grew up on Long Island, N.Y., studied at Boston University, then moved to Eugene for her final two undergrad years. She graduated in 1979 and taught at Spring Creek, Bailey Hill and Roosevelt schools, while enrolled in a UO counseling psychology masters program. She married Frank Calciano in 1983, got her degree in 1987, and worked part-time at counseling in several Bethel, Crow and Eugene schools while their three sons were small. She got back to full-time work at Roosevelt in 1999, when Dennis, the youngest, started kindergarten. She teaches a 12-week class called "Healthy Choices" that reaches every sixth-grader during the school year. "We deal with stress management, communication skills, career interests, alcohol and drug prevention, bullying, male and female anatomy, HIV and sexuality," she says. Calciano also launched a lunchtime mentorship program for kids who could benefit from another adult in their lives, and a support group for kids living in shelters. "This is my 34th year," she says, "and I'm not burned out at all. Working with young people keeps you young."