

# Claire Syrett

## REPRESENTING THE WHITEAKER

It's a long way from the conservative Republican enclave of Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif., to the Whiteaker. And that's what City Councilor Claire Syrett, who represents Eugene's Ward 7, likes about living there. "It's very alive, and it's very connected with humanity that's both good and bad," she says.

Still, Syrett says she's had to stifle a laugh when she's heard others describe it as Eugene's "dangerous" neighborhood. "Compared to some neighborhoods we'd seen and avoided in LA, it had a lot of charm," she says of seeing it for the first time. "Maybe it was more dangerous in the past in terms of actual person-to-person crime, but I have to say that I've never felt unsafe in my neighborhood."

Before moving to Eugene about 20 years ago, Syrett says most of her political thinking was on the national level, but in Eugene, a much more personal relationship with the community and its politics got her thinking local.

After talking with friends about a potential run for office, Syrett asked Mayor Kitty Piercy for advice, and Piercy suggested connecting with EMERGE, a group that prepares Democrat women for elections. "At the time she recommended that I do that, I was actually a Green Party member," Syrett says, "so I chose to change my party affiliation to Democrat so I could join that, but I've never been a strong partisan one way or the other."

Now that she's in office, Syrett serves on the Police Commission, Human Services Committee and Lane Regional Air Protection Agency, but her long-term goal, which she is just beginning to research, is to find ways to increase the average wage in Lane County. "We are consistently below Oregon, and Oregon is consistently below the rest of the U.S., in terms of our average income, yet our housing costs are not that much lower than Portland's," she says. "So we find ourselves in this bind, with people who have full-time jobs and are struggling to meet their basic housing costs."

Syrett says that she is a feminist, although she struggled with the label when she heard it framed as women needing special treatment. "I don't really see it that way so much as we have been treated differently by society," she says. "I think feminism means acknowledging that women deserve and should have a place at the table equal to men."

Buffy (of vampire slayer fame) is a feminist hero to Syrett because of "that idea of embracing female power and taking control of one's own destiny," she says. "More locally, one of my heroes was a local SEIU organizer Lucy Lahr, who was, unfortunately, killed in a traffic accident. She was the person who helped me become an organizer and gave me lots of support."

In Eugene, Syrett has, among other things, worked at Jerry's, been an organizer (and later the regional field director) for the ACLU and is now executive director of Lane Coalition for Healthy Active Youth, working to prevent childhood obesity. With the ACLU, she worked against Eugene's downtown exclusion zone, prepared for reproductive rights fights that didn't materialize and got started on some anti-death penalty work.

Syrett and her husband, Davey Wendt (the chocolatier at Rye), enjoy birding and hanging out with their two dogs in the Whiteaker. "Moving here was kind of a leap of faith," she says, but it paid off. "I think we both really found community here that we love and enjoy." — Shannon Finnell



**barre3** where ballet barre meets yoga and pilates\*



Are you ready to shed some pounds, shape your body, and get energized?

**Barre3 Eugene Offers New Clients:**

- 3 Classes for \$30
- Unlimited Month for \$99

(Students, teachers, & seniors receive 10% off class packages- excluding new client specials.)

barre3 Eugene • barre3.com  
224 West Broadway • 541-485-9643

*Country Dancing*  
as seen in Jane Austen movies

**English & Scottish**

No Partner Necessary (all ages)  
Ten Week Course: \$40  
*(ask about rate for families with children)*  
April 4 - June 6  
Thursdays 6:30-9:30PM

**FREE INTRODUCTION NIGHT**  
THURSDAY, MARCH 28, 6:30-9:30PM

Social Dance with Live Music on June 6  
Summer 2013 Session: June 13 - August 29  
Fall 2013 Session: September 5 - November 14



**Eugene Country Dancers**  
*(Eugene Chapter: The Heather and the Rose Country Dancers)*  
Location: Veterans' Memorial Ballroom  
1626 Willamette Street, Eugene, Oregon  
For more information, call: (541) 485-3503 or  
email: dancing@s2graphis.com

**\$2<sup>00</sup>** OFF ORDER

**Munchbox**  
kesey square, downtown

**weekly gluten free and vegan specials**  
**local meats from Sweet Briar Farms**  
**killer vegetarian from GARIBANZO GRILL**

**TEXT YOUR ORDER FOR QUICK PICK-UP! 541-852-8944**

**PRO HEALTH**  
FAMILY MEDICINE



**Office visits starting at \$99**  
**Same Day Appointments**

**Justin Montoya, MD**  
1410 Oak St, Ste 102 in the Keiper Spine building  
541-228-3270 • www.prohealthfamilymedicine.com