

ACTIVIST ALERT

• ODOT is holding a series of open houses about **intercity passenger rail service** between the Eugene-Springfield area and Portland-Vancouver, Wash., and providing input on the evaluation results. The next meeting will be from 5 to 7 pm Thursday, Nov. 7, at the Linn-Benton Community College Calapooia Center, 6500 Pacific Blvd. SW in Albany. See OregonPassengerRail.org or contact Jill Pearson, (503) 986-3313 or info@oregonpassengerail.org.

• “**GMOs: State or Local Control**” is the topic at City Club of Eugene at noon Friday, Nov. 8, at the Hilton lobby level. Guest speakers will include George Grier, treasurer of the Lane County Farm Bureau, and Ann Kneeland of Support Local Food Rights. \$5 for non-members.

• The **Lane County Budget Committee's** South Eugene citizen position will be vacant at the end of the year. Commissioner Pete Sorenson says he expects he will be evaluating applicants for this position and making a recommendation on who the board will appoint. It's a three-year appointment, starting no earlier than Jan. 1. No formal application process is yet in place but those interested can check the county website or email pete.sorenson@co.lane.or.us.

• About **three dozen local activists** in Eugene, Springfield and Corvallis have been trained to participate in civil disobedience as part of the national 350.org campaign. The final training will be from 11:30 am to 6:30 pm Saturday, Nov. 16, at First United Methodist Church, 1376 Olive St. in Eugene. Actions are being planned in case President Obama takes steps toward approving the Keystone XL Pipeline. The White House is under extreme pressure from industry and conservatives in Congress to facilitate a pipeline that environmentalists say would exacerbate climate change. Local action leaders are Deb McGee and Patty Hine and they can be contacted by email at stopkeystonelnw@gmail.com or sign the “Pledge of Resistance” and learn more at 350.org.

CORRECTIONS/CLARIFICATIONS

In our story Oct. 24, “Lighting Plan Aims to Enliven Dark Downtown,” we incorrectly identified Light Beam Industries as a Springfield firm. The company is actually located across from Costco on Chad Drive in Eugene. See lightbeamindustries.com or call 228-3650.

NEWS

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Basom says that PNWRCC doesn't have any plans to file a lawsuit and hopes that state agencies and the IRS will sort out financial problems. OSHA fined three subcontractors of the 13th and Olive development \$12,130 in August for various safety violations. — *Shannon Finnell*

URSULA K. LE GUIN TO SPEAK FOR CSWS ANNIVERSARY

She writes about politics, religion, sexuality and gender — all in unreal worlds through the controversial genre of science fiction — and contests the conventional rules of grammar. Ursula K. Le Guin's distinct style has been recognized and awarded for decades, and she will speak 6:30 to 9 pm Friday, Nov. 8, at UO's EMU Ballroom for the 40th Anniversary Celebration of the Center for the Study of Women in Society, the organization that has funded and supported feminist scholarship at UO. The CSWS celebration kicks off Thursday, Nov. 7, with a screening of *Agents of Change*, a documentary about the center, and continues Friday with the “Women's Stories, Women's Lives” symposium and Saturday with the “Worlds Beyond World” symposium (more details at wkly.ws/1lg).

CSWS was born out of an endowment from *Fortune* magazine editor William Harris in 1983 in memory of his wife, Jane Grant, a feminist and co-founder of *The New Yorker*, and has flourished over the years, providing grants and scholarships to faculty and graduate students and promoting the study of women, girls and their communities. For its 40th anniversary, the center will found the Le Guin Feminist Science Fiction Fellowship. *EW* caught up with Le Guin to ask about writing and reading.

With all the debate over which authors are truly writing science fiction and which aren't, how would you personally define this genre? Why do you think some authors deny their work follows this style?

Defining science fiction is a quicksand in which many brave cowboys have perished along with their horses. I

ain't going there. The reason some people write fiction that does things science fiction does — mutants, time travel, other planets, post-holocaust Earth, etc. — and then deny that it's science fiction is that they want to be reviewed by critics and given prizes by judges. A lot of critics and judges still insist that Realism is the only kind of fiction that should be called literature — usually because they have never read anything else, poor things.

In an interview with Wired last year, you talked about the use of “they” as the gender-neutral pronoun. What do you think about introducing “ze” or “zhe” as the gender-neutral pronoun in writing these days?

Just what I thought about it 40 years ago when I was writing about genderless people in *The Left Hand of Darkness*. Invented pronouns don't work. They can work in an experiment or a lesson, but not in a novel. Pronouns go too deep in the structure of the language. “They” as a singular is much older than the “rules” forbidding us to use “they” as a singular, and has always been used in spoken English. It sounds perfectly natural to anybody who hasn't had their brain washed by a pedant.

You've said you get a lot of moral guidance from reading novels and expect to offer some as well. What kind of guidance would you hope that is? What kind of messages would you like for your readers to take away from your works?

Did I say I hoped to offer moral guidance? I did? What was I thinking!? I never hoped anything of the sort that I know of. I have no messages. I tell stories. Of course I've gotten moral guidance from novels, everybody who reads good novels does. (I have to say “good novels,” meaning fiction that doesn't merely cater to the author's or the reader's immediate wish-fulfillment.) I worry about people who don't read novels. Where do they find out about how good people act, or what it feels like to try to do right? Not from history, or politics, or the stock market report, that's for sure.

A longer version of this interview is available at eugeneweekly.com. — Carolina Reid

SLANT

• Welcome to our annual **Best of Eugene issue**, sometimes affectionately called the “Beast of Eugene” since it is our biggest honking issue of the year and demands brain-numbing weeks of labor by our writers and photogs, and thousands of ballots submitted by our readers. This is our fattest Beast issue ever at 76 pages with near-record ad revenue, so we have to thank our loyal advertisers as well. They recognize that *EW* print ads provide the most bang for the buck. You simply have to be in *EW* to build a crowd for your business or event.

We often hear, “Wow, you have a lot of ads; you must be making a big profit,” but the truth is we break even most years. The cost of producing, printing and distributing up to 40,000 free papers 52 times a year is about \$1.4 million. On good years we match that, 2013 is turning out to be one of those years and we're grateful. To borrow from Woody Allen, *love* is too weak a word for how we feel about our readers and advertisers. We *lurve* you as we charge ahead in our 31st year.

• We came away from the **City Club of Eugene debate** on Nov. 1 unpersuaded that this city should continue MUPTE, the multiple-unit property tax exemption that is disliked by citizens who care where our taxes go. Even if you do want to extend MUPTE, ostensibly to increase downtown density, the central questions should be, “Would the project be built *without* tax breaks?” and, “If not, would it matter?” Add to that the issue of design standards: Eugene has none and MUPTE hasn't helped.

• The **Duck men basketballers** play their first game against Georgetown this Friday. Georgetown has a strong team and it should be a great game, but why are they playing at Camp Humphreys, a U.S. military base outside Seoul, South Korea? Even in the wacky world of big-time college sports, it seems odd to fly college students to Korea to play a basketball game. It may be good for the soldiers on the base, but what about school? The Ducks reportedly left town on Tuesday to travel to Seoul, which is roughly 5,000 miles from here. What about the carbon footprint? One person flying round trip from Eugene to Seoul pumps

about 4,600 pounds of CO2 into the atmosphere, more than the average American car generates in six months! If we're ever going to get serious about protecting our climate, we might start by asking if we really need to send college students halfway around the globe to play a basketball game.

• Rep. Peter DeFazio's **O&C Trust, Conservation, and Jobs Act** has made it through the House, and timber companies and enviros alike are waiting to see what Sen. Ron Wyden will do in the Senate. Actually, they are not waiting: Facebook ads have popped up, along with a sign at the Eugene airport and now a billboard in Glenwood, all in opposition to plans to split the O&C lands into a timber trust and a conservation trust and increase logging on the federal lands. According to Shannon Wilson of Eco Advocates NW who put up the billboard: “We need bold vision and leadership from Oregon's senators and congressmen that will not only protect threatened species but in doing so quickly transition Oregon's economy away from destructive and irreversible extraction processes towards a recreation and ecosystem sustaining based economic system.”



SLANT INCLUDES SHORT OPINION PIECES, OBSERVATIONS AND RUMOR-CHASING NOTES COMPILED BY THE EW STAFF.
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