

NEWS

SAME OLD CHRISTMAS STORY PLAYING OUT

After staying at a small, makeshift camp at Franklin Park for more than eight months, one group of homeless people's luck ran out two days before Christmas. City workers picked up the people's belongings to take to storage, and in the process two tents were destroyed.

Homeless advocate Alley Valkyrie spoke with the people whose tents were destroyed and wrote in a public Facebook post, "This is your tax dollars at work, kids. We can't afford to shelter them, but they're somehow able to find the time and money to confiscate and destroy the worldly possessions of people who have almost nothing, two days before the vast majority of the country celebrates the birth of a man who commanded his followers to reject wealth and give to the poor." Valkyrie says the people told her

that 24-hour notice was given on Dec. 9 or 10, and when no one came to ask them to leave by Dec. 23, they thought they were safe.

"As far as I know, the tents were dismantled, but nothing was intentionally destroyed," says Richard Zucker, a Parks and Open Space supervisor who was not directly involved with confiscating the tents. "We followed the direction of the ruling of the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals about what to do with possessions that are left unattended on public property. In the case of campsites, we do post 24 hours in advance, and we inform the people that they're camping illegally and they need to pick up their possessions and move."

"Even with notice, confiscating people's belongings two days before Christmas is inhumane," Valkyrie says. "It's near freezing out and a tent is the only shelter a homeless person has. Everyone knows that there's no legal place to go. If they were so worried about court rulings, they would stop criminalizing sleep when there is no shelter."

— Shannon Finnell



VAN ORNUM TASER CASE CAN NOW GO TO APPEAL

In May 2008 Ian Van Ornum was Tasered by a Eugene police officer while prostrate on the ground. On Dec. 27, 2013, the Oregon Supreme Court ruled that he could continue to pursue his appeal of his conviction for resisting arrest. The appeals court can either not take action, which would leave Van Ornum's conviction standing, or decide to send the case back to trial court.

Laura Fine Moro, who was Van Ornum's trial attorney, says the anti-pesticide rally that Van Ornum had helped organize and where he was participating in street theater "was a peaceful rally held in appreciation of the County Commission's decision to limit the spraying of pesticides." She adds that Van Ornum was part of a UO student group that "wanted to educate citizens about the good work of the commission and the dangers of pesticides."

Van Ornum was dressed in a fake hazmat suit and spraying water out of a bottle on which someone had drawn a skull and crossbones. Moro says that police were called to the scene by Homeland Security, who had been monitoring local activist Day Owen and mistakenly believed that Owen's rural anti-pesticide group the Pitchfork Rebellion was some sort of eco-terrorist group.

The state Supreme Court ruling centered on the judge having proposed instructions to the jury that said a police officer should determine the appropriate use of force. Van Ornum's attorney proposed that the jury should consider unreasonable force from the point of view of the person being arrested. Van Ornum was convicted but as he began his appeals process there was another case of a person resisting arrest after being pepper sprayed and punched by police. In that case, the Oregon Supreme Court instructed judges to tell juries to consider the issue from the point of view of the person being arrested, and that affects Van Ornum's case.

Moro says that previously in the Oregon Court of Appeals, soon-to-be-retiring Judge David Schuman "wrote a searing dissent to the majority opinion" that had denied the appeal in the Van Ornum case and "the opinion of the Supreme Court clearly vindicates him."

She says Van Ornum now lives in Southern Oregon with his partner and child and has become a bluegrass recording artist with his band Patchy Sanders. — Camilla Mortensen



We hear **Gray's Garden Centers** in both Eugene and Springfield closed over the holidays due to Chapter 7 bankruptcy. The locally owned business has been part of the community since 1940. Gray's has reportedly been in Chapter 11 reorganization for the past year. The store has a prime location on busy 6th Avenue in Eugene and a second high-traffic location at 4441 Main St. in Springfield. We hear it's possible the stores and their inventory will be sold and the business will continue under new ownership. Owner James Kline did not respond by press time to our query for more information. Reed & Cross Floral has been operating as part of Gray's in Eugene, and we have not heard what will happen with that business. Independent nurseries and garden-related businesses are facing growing competition from cut-rate big box stores.

Holiday shopping picked up locally this year, according to anecdotal reports. We hear from Mike Wooley, owner of **Long's Meat Market** in the Southtowne Shoppes at 28th and Oak, that his store had record sales the Monday before Christmas with some 800 customers. And several **Holiday Market** vendors we talked to said they had their best markets yet, nearly selling out their inventories. One vendor had sales of \$10,000, which will carry him over to the spring and summer art fairs.

Sponsors Inc. made the top three nonprofits in *Oregon Business* magazine's list of the "Best Nonprofits to Work for in Oregon." That's the second year in a row that Sponsors has won third place out of 100 Oregon medium-size nonprofits. Sponsors, founded in 1973, provides re-entry services and transitional housing to people released from Oregon prisons and jails. Emerald People's Utility District was third in the large nonprofits and Oregon Community Credit Union was fourth.

A **free legal clinic for veterans**, the first of its kind in Oregon, will be held at 5 pm on the last Wednesday of the month. The next will be Jan. 29 (*not Jan. 22 as we wrote last week in this column*). The Eugene clinic is a partnership of the VA Roseburg Healthcare System and Access the Law (ATL), a nonprofit organization that provides a variety of legal services on a sliding-scale basis. "ATL attorneys and other volunteer attorneys have years of criminal defense and civil litigation experience to support justice-involved veterans," says Marc Friedman, executive director of ATL. Email access@accesslaw.org or call 242-0445 for an appointment or leave a message after hours at 729-9349.

BRING's free calendar, which features artwork by local school children, is now available and 10,000 copies have been printed. The RecycleArt calendars are a joint project of BRING Recycling and Lane County. This is the 26th year the free calendar has been made available to county residents. Find the calendars at BRING at 4446 Franklin Blvd., Springfield and Eugene libraries and at garbage transfer stations around the county. See bringrecycling.org or call 746-3023.

Looking to **start a pot dispensary**? The Oregon Health Authority will begin accepting applications for legal medical marijuana dispensaries on March 1. A conference on this topic is being planned Jan. 30-31 at the Ashland Springs Hotel in Ashland. Lots of prominent speakers and an exhibit hall are planned. Visit ommhc.com or email alex@ashlandalthealth.com for more information.

Dates have been set for the **Evergreen Tattoo Invitational**, which promises up to 250 of the "best artists in the world," according to organizer Erin Smith. The first and hopefully annual three-day event will be Feb. 21-23 at the Willamalane Center on South 32nd Street in Springfield. See evergreentattoo.com or call 743-3357.