

night, Eugene is visible from outer space. We're at war against the ecosystem, and in wartime it is customary to black out the cities at night, for their preservation. Let's disappear from those images, and feast on the beauty of starry nights.

Beyond focusing on tar sands and pipelines, let's bring the issue home and become America's first car-free city. Inevitably, the kids are going to see the extinction of lights and cars anyway. Whacking the waste now would be a mature choice for a progressive community with legendary big brains.

Richard Adrian Reese
(author of *Sustainable or Bust*)
Eugene

SHELTER REJECTS

So-called "no-kill" policies [cover story, 1/2] may make euthanasia numbers look good, but they put animals in grave danger when needy dogs and cats for whom there is no room are turned away, condemning them to unknown and often-terrible fates.

Animals who are rejected from shelters that are already a last resort for people faced with re-homing their companions are often dumped on the streets where they starve, contract diseases and are hit by cars; remain with people who don't want them and keep them chained or locked in cages; or worse. And animals who are accepted into "no-kill" shelters may be caged indefinitely, becoming depressed, withdrawn or aggressive and even less adoptable.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) routinely receives heartbreaking complaints about massive warehouses filled with unadoptable animals who sit hopelessly for years on end, in cages and runs meant to house them for just a few transitional days.

Slamming the door in animals' faces when there is no more room is not the solution to the overpopulation crisis. Spaying and neutering are. Please, help reach the day when there is a loving home for every animal by boycotting breeders and pet stores, adopting animals from shelters and always spaying and neutering. To learn more, visit PETASaves.com.

Curtis Taylor
Eugene

GEARS GRATITUDE

I want to extend my appreciation to *EW* for your excellent article [4/18/13] on the GEARs Education bicycle safety classes taught by Paul Adkins and Richard Hughes. Both are outstanding cyclists and committed instructors. It is nice to see them recognized.

I also want to thank you so much for including GEARs Education in your Give Guide [12/19]. GEARs Education supports a number of projects in addition to the bicycle safety education classes, including the Eugene School District's Safe Routes to Schools program and the city of Eugene's Sunday Streets. The bulk of our funding comes from the annual GEARs Blackberry bRamble but we do

accept donations, tax deductible, and they are very much appreciated. And, as you included in your guide, they serve an important community purpose.

Ray Hull
President, GEARs Education

BRUTAL SPORT

"Beaver Trap Catches Man, Irks Humane Society" [12/26] highlights the immense risks associated with trapping, but fails to illustrate the brutality that is inherent to this "sport." Target animals suffer as much as ones who are accidentally ensnared — and this cruelty should be addressed in Oregon law.

Animals caught in barbaric leghold traps and snares suffer immensely from their injuries, long periods of distress and ultimately a sad death. Archaic killing methods such as suffocation, drowning and chest crushing are widely used today. As demonstrated in the article, traps are indiscriminate so many non-targeted animals die as "collateral damage," including endangered species and family pets. Born Free USA maintains a database of trapping incidents that details hundreds of tragic instances of pets and people severely injured or killed in traps, which is accessible through bornfreeusa.org.

Oregon has among the worst trapping regulations in the Western U.S. — for example, some traps must only be checked every 30 days, allowing animals to slowly suffer and die. Such woefully inadequate laws must be reevaluated. A ballot initiative

to ban commercial and recreational trapping in Oregon was unfortunately postponed until 2016, but advocacy for the magnificent wildlife of the state is still urgently needed.

Kate Dylewsky
Program Assistant, Born Free USA
Washington, D.C.

DODGING TURDS

Has anyone else noticed that Eugene has literally become a shitty city? I can't even walk two blocks with out dodging poop in the middle of the sidewalks. Often times the feces is so large and repulsive smelling that it might have come from a human, or at least very large dogs. It's such a nuisance to try and avoid these landmines while walking, skating or biking.

Even worse is the smell. I'm used to smelling lovely trees, flowers and hippies, since it is Eugene and all. Recently though, all I can smell is poop. I'm sure I'm not the only one who might even be swayed from going downtown to avoid the terrible smells and dirty shoes.

There are many options to try and solve this problem. The city could put out posts for bags to pick up dog poop. Signs could be put up to clean up after yourself and your animals. We could even find a way to pay people, or find volunteers to clean up the city. Or people could maybe not let their dogs shit in the middle of the sidewalks, too.

Caitlin Joy
Eugene

VIEWPOINT

BY PETER BAUER

Unrecognizable Schools

THE PUBLIC EDUCATION EXPERIENCE HAS CHANGED

I am a product of Oregon's school funding crisis.

I was in first grade when Oregon voters approved Measure 5, the constitutional amendment that shifted the financing of public education from local communities to the state by capping property taxes in Oregon. For the next 12 years I saw my education opportunities diminish as teachers and school programs were continuously cut because of inadequate funding from the state.

As a teacher in the Bethel School District for the past seven years, I am struggling on the other end of the crisis to provide an adequate education to a new generation of Oregonians with even less educational opportunity than was provided to me.

It wasn't supposed to be this way.

When this controversial ballot initiative was passed in 1990, it was intended to relieve Oregonians of high property taxes while promising adequate replacement money from the state. I was in first grade at Yolanda Elementary School in Springfield when Measure 5 passed. The pinch wasn't felt initially, but was more like slowly boiling a cauldron of crabs. Class sizes slowly began to increase. Field trips were reduced.

By the time I entered sixth grade at Briggs Middle School, the week-long Outdoor School had been eliminated. The next year, all after-school athletics were slashed throughout the district for middle school students.

When I entered Thurston High School it was not uncommon to have more than 30 students in a class, a seemingly low number by today's standards. As a result, I began to feel resentful of a generation of people who got to have a public school experience that was no longer an option for me.

As a college student I watched the cost of higher education increase at a ridiculous rate as universities hiked tuition to make up for reduced state funding. If a college education is a ticket into the middle class, it comes at such a cost that those who go into debt to finance it feel like they are paying back a modern form of indentured servitude. You trade your time and money for access and privilege.

While I might have enjoyed the dying embers of what was once a cornerstone of the so-called American Dream, public education today is likely unrecognizable to anyone who graduated before Measure 5 passed in 1990.

I have taught at Cascade Middle School in the Bethel School District for seven years. In 2011, I had 37 seventh graders in my reading class every morning at 8 am. It was tremendously challenging to get to know each student because of the sheer volume of people. All of the classes I taught that year had more than 30 students, and I started to question whether remaining in the teaching profession was a viable career option. Was I making a difference, or was I spread too thin?

Last year, one of my colleagues came in on the first day of school in tears. She had just dropped off her daughter in a classroom of 38 first graders at Irving Elementary. The classroom across the hall was vacant because of budget cuts and had been converted into a coat closet for the obscene amount of students who now occupied a room built for 20 learners.

This year, my friend at Meadow View has 39 fourth graders in her classroom. Can you imagine inviting 39 fourth graders to your house for a birthday party? It's absurd! And yet stories like this are not uncommon in Oregon.

It all comes down to dollars. If Oregon wants to return to its pre-Measure 5 level of funding, we would have to invest an additional \$2 billion just to get back to where we were. It's not that the dollars aren't out there. But we Oregonians will need to make some tough choices if we want to improve the quality of education that we provide to our citizens.

Will we stay the course like we have been for the past two decades? Or will we return to an adequate level of funding that we haven't seen for decades? If the concept of generational equity makes any sense, the choice is clear.

Peter Bauer teaches sixth and seventh graders at Cascade Middle School in the Bethel School District. This column is the first in an occasional series looking at the challenges facing our local K-12 public education system today.