

WHO BENEFITS?

I first noticed it several years ago at a community forum on health care. "It" came in the form of a union representative arguing against an inclusive single-payer health care model that would benefit us all. I wondered why unions would not support such progressive policy. Others in attendance educated me: Health insurance is a bargaining issue. Unions include it in contracts and appreciative members pay their union dues.

More recently, I witnessed a similar behavior at another community meeting. Here a union representative argued for permitting coal trains to transport their dirty fuel through Eugene. Why would unions want to risk the health of our fair city for export coal? Union jobs. I was beginning to get it.

Now I see 4J School Board members arguing that Civic Stadium, a treasured and historic property given to the district decades ago by our community to be used as a recreation area for the district *and the municipality*, should be sold to the highest bidder. Why? To generate revenues for the exclusive benefit of 4J children.

What I have learned is that, regardless of appearance, institutions mostly take care of their own and themselves. What a different vision it would be if their leaders could see the forest as well as the trees. The lesson still to be learned is: In the big picture, if you take care of the larger community your parochial interests will be served as well. Call it a civics lesson.

Benton Elliott
Eugene

THE VERGE OF EVICTION

This past week [1/23 cover story] I was very pleased to see excellent coverage about homelessness and mental health. Rick Levin's sensitive and compassionate article about the convergence of mental health difficulties, homelessness and substance abuse is one of the best pieces I've ever read on the subject. In particular I appreciated the opinion column by Alley Valkyrie. Those are some excellent suggestions for our community.

Please keep it up *EW* and Alley Valkyrie. I also wish to express gratitude to the numerous known and unknown people in the community who are trying to create and support humane alternatives to criminalization, abuse and abandonment. The efforts of Whoville, the SLEEPS campaign, Civil Liberties Defense Center, Occupy Medical, White Bird and many others are truly admirable and impressive.

However, I must conclude with anger and dismay that Whoville is on the verge of eviction, that the SLEEPS campaign has been continually harassed by the county and city and that so many people are still suffering on the streets.

Ariel Howland
Eugene

DEMANDING WORK

As volunteers at 1st Avenue Shelter, we welcomed your coverage of the concerns relating to animal sheltering in Lane County "(Out of) Animal Control" [cover story] Jan. 2.

What did not appear in the article is the "face" of 1st Avenue. Our animal care manager and staff do an amazing job with their feet in the trenches every day, handling unpredictable daily intakes, caring for the physical well-being of animals and helping animals adjust to shelter life. Staff work diligently with other rescue organizations to transfer animals who are thought will have a better chance in a different environment. They are supported by dedicated, hard-working and tenacious volunteers at the shelter and in home fostering.

The goal is always to do the best we can for every animal, and the 1st Avenue staff and volunteers work tirelessly towards that end. It is physically and emotionally demanding work with both sadness and great rewards. What is apparent to all of us who show up for the animals at 1st every day is the love and compassion of the people with whom we work. You just feel it.

If you love animals and would like to help, come join us at 1st.

Julie Walker
Molly Craig
Lindsay Calicott

A CIVIC LESSON

With the issue of Civic Stadium on our minds, why not ask the students, faculty and staff of 4J School District their opinion or their ideas? Make it a civics lesson in asking the users.

My wife, Gwyneth, suddenly passed

away last year after teaching over 20 years in the 4J School District. She loved Eugene and the voices of her students and their opinions on these issues.

Maybe a simple straw ballot in *EW* for all area residents to vote on or voice some options for future use of Civic Stadium.

Ken O'Connell
Eugene

DO HER OWN SHELTER

Usually letters to the editor disparaging the job that Greenhill Humane Society has been doing since it took over operations at the 1st Avenue Shelter don't elicit much response from me. I give money on a regular basis to Greenhill and gave supplies I no longer needed after one of my cherished pets died. However, after reading Debi McNamara's (of No Kill Lane County) letter Jan. 30, I felt I had to put in my two cents worth.

If McNamara thinks she can do a better job of running an animal shelter than Cary Lieberman can, then she should apply for his job; I'm sure that it's a pretty hard job, given the uncertainty of funding, and the fact that animals can't raise the funds on their own.

Better yet, maybe McNamara should put her money where her mouth is and start her own animal shelter, like others have done, and run it her way. Otherwise, I call bullshit on her letter, and I will continue to give my money to Greenhill.

Steven J. Gard
Springfield



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