

“We don’t ever want sick people serving food. We want our staff as healthy as possible.” Cohen says that his business will have its own paid sick leave within the next couple weeks regardless of the citywide debate.

“It’s good for public health,” Frack says. “It’s good for the workers because they can take care of their health without risking their financial security, and it’s good for businesses because they will have a healthier, more productive work force.”

These discussions are a direct result of the Portland law that took effect Jan. 1. Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce President David Hauser says that it is too soon to decide if Eugene should follow suit, though cities like San Francisco have had paid sick leave for seven years.

“I think it’s safe to say we have some concerns,” Hauser says. “The Portland law has been in effect for a little over 90 days, so it’s hard to say if it works or not.”

According to a 2010 study in San Francisco by the Drum Major Institute for Public Policy, “In the three years since San Francisco became the first city in the country to implement a paid sick leave law, job growth there has consistently been higher than in neighboring counties without such a law.”

The Eugene City Council will meet again in late April to continue discussing the ordinance. — *Kevin Sullivan*

KIDNAPPING IN LAOS AFFECTS CIVIL SOCIETY

Sombath Somphone is “one of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic’s most respected civil society figures,” according to a December 2013 press statement from Secretary of State John Kerry on the one year anniversary of Sombath’s disappearance. Sombath was kidnapped from a police checkpoint in Laos and has not been heard from since. Sombath’s wife, Ng Shui-Meng, will be speaking about her husband’s disappearance and the challenges to free speech

and human rights in Laos and in the rest of Southeast Asia while in Eugene on Monday, April 21.

“Laos has taken steps in recent years to become a responsible partner in the community of nations,” Kerry writes. “Sombath’s abduction threatens to undermine those efforts.”

Ng Shui-Meng says that while some have called Sombath the “Nelson Mandela of Laos,” her husband was never involved in politics. He worked in nonviolence and consensus building, she says, and always worked with the approval of government officials. Sombath established the Participatory Development Training Center in Laos, which works to train young people and local government officials in community-based development.

She says one link to Sombath’s disappearance could be his involvement in the Asia Europe People’s Forum (AEPF9) that took place from Oct. 16 to 19, 2012, in Vientiane, Laos, as part of his civil society work. Civil society groups are non-governmental organizations and other groups working on issues including health, education and living standards in both developed and developing nations.

The forum sought to promote universal social protection and access to essential services, food sovereignty and sustainable land and natural resource management, sustainable energy production and use, and just work and sustainable livelihoods, according to the AEPF9 website.

Ng Shui-Meng, who is also involved in civil society work, is in the U.S. to promote awareness of Sombath’s disappearance in hopes of his safe return, she says. She says she will talk about who her husband is and the type of work he has been doing the last 30 years, what happened the day of his abduction as well as the aftermath and impact on the civil society movement. “In Laos there is not much media freedom, freedom of organization or freedom of assembly,” she says.

Ng Shui-Meng speaks at 6 pm at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 1685 W. 13th Ave. — *Camilla Mortensen*

>>> ACTIVIST ALERT CONTINUED

- **Health Care for All Oregon** is organizing several local events this spring in support of single-payer health insurance. Singer/songwriter George Mann will perform at 6 pm Wednesday, April 23, at Reality Kitchen, 645 River Road, a DUH event (Drive for Universal Healthcare) and a showing of *The Healthcare Movie* will be at 6:30 pm April 28 at the Bijou on 13th Avenue, and noted economist Gerald Friedman of the University of Massachusetts will speak May 14 at VLT. For event details or to get on the mailing list for HCAO events, visit hcao.org or email sinninger@efn.org or call 484-6145.

- A Lane County Commission **candidates forum** will be from 7 to 9 pm Wednesday, April 23, at Prince Lucien Campbell Hall, Room 180 on the UO campus. The following candidates have confirmed attendance so far: East Lane’s Faye Stewart, Kevin Matthews and Jack Schoolcraft; West Lane’s Jay Bozievich and Dawn Lesley; and Springfield District’s Sid Leiken and Sheri Moore. All candidates, including Joann Ernst, Charmaine Rehge and Jose Ortal, were invited. Emerald Media Group will moderate.

- A free program on “**Virtual Justice: Democratized Video as Evidence**” will be at 5 pm Thursday, April 24, in 110 Knight Law Center on the UO campus. The event features UO Law School alumna Kelly Matheson, who is serving as a distinguished speaker in the UO Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics’ 2013-15 Theme of Inquiry: “Media and Democracy.”

CORRECTIONS/CLARIFICATIONS

- Regarding David Wagner’s “It’s About Time” feature April 3, we erroneously ran the previous month’s illustration of scouring rush instead of Wagner’s sketch of Douglas fir pollen.

- In our spring Chow issue, we printed incorrect hours for The Green Plow Juicery. The juicery is open 8 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday and 10 am to 5 pm Saturday.



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