

PAID SICK TIME HEALTHY FOR EUGENE WORKERS

All workers in the city of Eugene might be eligible for paid sick leave in 2015 if the City Council moves forward with a proposed ordinance.

Seventy-eight percent of low-wage workers and 51 percent of private-sector workers in Eugene don't receive paid sick time, according to a study the Institute for Women's Policy Research did for Everybody Benefits Eugene, a coalition of local organizations and businesses that support a paid sick leave ordinance.

Workers often can't afford to stay home and lose out on pay, says Laurie Trieger, campaign manager for Everybody Benefits Eugene. "Even one day, at 20 percent of your wages, that's the week's groceries or that's the gas in your car to get to that job for the month," she says.

Eugene's City Council decided during its June 18 work session to move forward with crafting an ordinance requiring employers to provide paid time off to their workers.

City Councilor Claire Syrett, who introduced the topic for council discussion along with Councilor Alan Zelenka, says the law will be modeled largely after Portland's ordinance, which took effect Jan. 1. Portland and Seattle are among six other cities, as well as the state of Connecticut, that require employers to provide paid sick time.

Syrett says she expects Eugene's policy to apply to all businesses, unlike the Portland ordinance, which requires only businesses with six or more employees to provide paid sick leave.

Full- and part-time workers would be able to take time off for the diagnosis, care or treatment of mental or physical illnesses, injuries for themselves or family members without losing pay, if the ordinance retains that aspect of the Portland ordinance. In Portland's code, employees earn their paid sick leave — one hour for every 30 hours worked, with a maximum of 40 hours per year. Time accrued can be used for part of a shift or a full shift.

Organizations supporting the ordinance include the Eugene-Springfield NAACP, Community Alliance of Lane County and nearly 50 small businesses, Trieger says.

Those opposed, including unnamed businesses that recently met with the Healthy Communities Initiative, claim the benefit will be abused by employees and will burden employers' time and bank accounts.

There are costs associated with setting up the benefit, Syrett says, but all employers already track employee hours to report to the IRS and Oregon's Bureau of Labor and Industries, and it won't cost anything additional to maintain.

Trieger says policies such as the paid sick leave ordinance engender more workplace loyalty and better morale, decreasing turnover.

Four Eugene youths spoke at the May 27 City Council meeting in support of paid sick leave, saying they sometimes have to take care of their younger siblings because their parents do not have access to paid sick time. "When my parents have to go to work sick because they can't afford to take one day off," a North Eugene High School student says, "it really affects our family because ... I have to stay home and not go to school. Sometimes I have to stay after school because I missed a day."

The Eugene City Council will host a public hearing about the paid sick leave ordinance 7:30 pm Monday, July 21, in Harris Hall at 125 E. 8th Ave. — Missy Corr

KESEY SQUARE INCIDENT RAISES QUESTIONS

A dispute over a Bloomsday reading of James Joyce's *Ulysses* in Kesey Square has moved literature — and performing it — out of the classroom and into the legal quagmire of Eugene's downtown.

Downtown Eugene has a mission statement that tries to bring together the arts and social values with its economic goals. The city code states: "Eugene's downtown activity zone has been developed to renew, preserve and enhance the economic and aesthetic value of the city's central business district and to provide facilities conducive to a harmonious blend of civic, social, cultural, residential and economic pursuits."

Lately, those hoping to make money in the downtown area have butted heads with those performing and seeking social pursuits, particularly in downtown's distinctive Kesey Square.

The latest dispute in Kesey Square came Tuesday, June 17, when Occupy Library was holding a public reading of *Ulysses* in honor of Bloomsday, a literary holiday, usually observed June 16, that features readings and reenactments across the world.

Scott Perey of Occupy Library tells *EW* via email that a food cart vendor from Taylor's Chuck Wagon claimed that members of Occupy Library were trespassing on his rented space in the square.

Occupy Library member Art Bownan says that eventually a police sergeant arrived, threatening to cite them for trespassing. "It seems bizarre that the city wants to simultaneously privatize Kesey Square while declaring it a public park," Bownan says.

Beth Little, general manager of Saturday Market, says that the market "operates under contract with the city of

Eugene to manage private commerce in public spaces in the downtown activity zone." Food carts, Little says, do not have an area measured by feet or inches, but rather enough space that they feel comfortable doing business.

There have also been concerns about public space being threatened or impeded with tables being set up in the downtown area, but Little says because food carts have paid for their spaces, they are within their rights to have tables. City Code 4.872 states that prohibitions of tables do not apply to those approved as "authorized activities."

Homeless advocate Alley Valkyrie says she has been following the legality of food carts in the downtown area for three years, and she alleges that the food carts are in violation of state law for having seating available without providing accessible bathrooms.

She points to Oregon Administrative Rules under Division 162: Mobile Food Units, Commissaries and Warehouses, section four, which states, "Mobile food unit operators may provide seating for customers if a readily accessible restroom is provided. The restroom must have a hand washing facility that provides hot and cold running water and meets the requirements of OAR 3330150-0000 sections 6-301.11, 6-301.12, 6-301.20 and 6-3-2.11."

Little says that food carts are inspected multiple times a year and that the restroom in the Overpark parking garage was deemed close enough.

The private commerce in Kesey Square and the rest of the downtown area is part of the vision for renewing the downtown atmosphere. Little says, "We're going through a revitalization and it's an exciting time."

On the city of Eugene website, the features of Kesey Square are listed as "performance space" and "public art." — Kevin Sullivan



GLEN JOHNSON

The son of a natural science museum director, Glen Johnson taught natural science, archery and riflery at a summer camp while in high school in Angleton, Texas. "They loaned me out to other camps," says Johnson, who became a traveling summer camp counselor while attending six colleges in eight years. He completed a science teaching degree at OSU in 1987, then spent 11 years in Eugene as a substitute teacher and a River House recreation guide. A photographer since age 6, he launched a new career in destination-wedding photography after his son Jade was born in 2000. "One summer, I had 23 weddings in other countries," he notes. "I spent only one week at home." His

book *Digital Wedding Photography — Capturing Beautiful Memories*, published in 2006, has sold 50,000 copies. In 2010, moving into a newly rented house, he found a marijuana grow-room in the garage. "I turned it into a man-cave," says Johnson, but he later obtained an OMMP card and decided to give growing a try. "The scientist in me was intrigued." He studied, experimented, killed a few plants and eventually found patients by way of his doctor. He started a nonprofit, Nature's Meds, and relocated to a warehouse space. "We're growing plants with less THC and more CBD," he says. "It's perfect for kids with autism or seizures. They don't get high." Learn more at naturesmeds.us.