



Big turnout for the **Womenspace** fifth annual “End the Silence” community breakfast Feb. 4. An estimated 320 to 350 people, including many local dignitaries and business owners, showed up on a cold, dark, wet morning for the 7 am free buffet at Valley River Inn. A “survivor panel” of women told their personal stories about intimate partner violence and how Womenspace services helped and continues to help them through the challenges. Their stories document the many ways relationships turn abusive and the complex emotional, physical, legal and economic challenges that arise. Additional speakers included Womenspace Board President Thea McCown and Executive Director Peggy Whalen.

The event will raise at least \$8,000 after expenses for food and room rent are paid and “lots of people signed up to volunteer,” Whalen says. “Womenspace was thrilled to see a record number of community members come out to help us ‘End the Silence’ around domestic violence. We met or exceeded all of our goals and it was an amazing success. We thank the community for their support in helping survivors in our community.” Call 485-8232 or visit womenspaceinc.org to help out.

The **Westside Warehouse District** is a new collaboration of wineries, brewers and distillers in west Eugene loosely organized for mutual support and to put on events. The next event will likely be a scavenger hunt April 4. Participating in the district are Noble Estate Urban Winery, J. Scott Cellars, Claim 52 Brewing, Viking Braggot Company and Crescendo Organic Spirits. All are within a 2-mile radius.

Oregon Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley are co-sponsoring a bill that would reduce the excise tax on each barrel of **beer brewed by small brewers**. Senate Bill 375 is called the Small Brewer Reinvestment and Expanding Workforce Act, or Small BREW Act, and would change the threshold definition of a small brewer to better reflect modern production. A reduced excise tax and a more accurate definition of a small brewer could have a “huge impact in Oregon, which ranks number one in breweries per capita with 221 small and independent breweries directly employing more than 6,600 people and contributing more than \$2.8 billion to Oregon’s economy,” reads a statement from Wyden and Merkley. We’ll drink a pint to that.

Salsa Garcia is coming up on its second anniversary in Eugene. Owner Patricia Garcia Rogers makes and sells salsa and tamales at Market of Choice, Capella Market, Saturday Market, Picc-A-Dilly and the Oregon Country Fair. She tells us she’s doing something different, a tamale-making workshop at 1 pm Saturday, Feb. 28, at FOOD for Lane County’s kitchen at 770 Bailey Hill Road. \$50 includes all supplies and you end up with a dozen tasty tamales. Call 321-3929 to reserve a spot.

The third **Oregon Medical Marijuana Business Conference** is scheduled for March 15-16 at the Hilton downtown. The event is likely to be well attended since pending legalization of recreational marijuana has become a source of confusion and conflicting information. The nuts and bolts (or seeds and stems) of how this new legal industry will function are being worked out at the Oregon Legislature this session, and also at the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, the agency that will oversee the recreational pot program and its three levels of licensing. The conference will provide opportunities for networking and also hearing from experts in the field, such as former New Mexico Gov. Gary Johnson and OLCC’s Tom Burns, who is overseeing implementation of Measure 91. One big unresolved issue is how legal and medical marijuana will coexist in Oregon. Find the conference and registration information at ommbc.com.

NEWS

RIGHT TO REST ACT FOR UNHOUSED TO BE INTRODUCED IN LEGISLATURE

The Oregon “Right to Rest Act” will be introduced in the Legislature this week, according to the office of Sen. Chip Shields, a Democrat from Portland who is sponsoring the bill. The Right to Rest Act, which is also sometimes referred to as a “Homeless Bill of Rights” by some supporters, would decriminalize the everyday and necessary acts of sleeping, sitting, standing, eating or sharing food, according to Paul Boden of WRAP, the Western Regional Advocacy Project, which is pushing for bills in Oregon, California and Colorado.

Boden says WRAP did about 1,400 outreaches to people on the street and discovered, “We are all getting criminalized for this chump-change shit — sitting, sleeping, laying down, eating. We all do these things,” he points out. “How can it be illegal for some of us when we do it?”

He says the legislation would combat local laws in cities and counties that create modern “sundown towns” — racist laws that used to force people of color to leave town at sunset. He says there is an “uptick in these laws being created, passed and enforced” and points to Eugene’s enforcement of a downtown sidewalk commerce permit program, which homeless advocates say is being used more to disperse the unhoused rather than promote commerce.

“That pattern is going on everywhere,” Boden says.

Ken Neubeck, a member of Eugene’s Human Rights Commission, recently traveled to Salem as a private citizen to lobby for the Right to Rest Act. He says, “What this bill would do, as I see it, is take criminalization and law enforcement off the table as a tool to address homelessness and force to address actual reasons people are homeless.”

Neubeck says, “It is three times more expensive to use a law enforcement approach than actually provide a person with an apartment and a case manager.”

He says, “Criminalization makes it harder for people to get jobs and achieve fair housing” because unhoused people trying to get back on their feet are followed by a criminal record for merely trying to sleep. “There has to be better way to treat the

homeless than turn them into villains.”

According to Neubeck, Eugene has “good models here for things that could happen” such as car camping, rest stops, etc. They are “drops in the bucket — but when you get enough drops in the bucket, ultimately the bucket starts to fill.”

Boden says if passed the Right to Rest Act would ensure that “the act of sitting, standing, sleeping, sharing or eating food or sleeping in a legally parked vehicle can no longer be criminalized so long as it’s non-malicious.” He adds, “If you are laying on the sidewalk saying ‘Go to hell,’ the cops can cite you.”

The Right to Rest Act is “model legislation,” a term more commonly associated with the right-wing ALEC, the American Legislative Exchange Council. But Boden says, “If ALEC can do it, we can sure as hell do it.”

WRAP is a coalition of groups working “to expose and eliminate the root causes of civil and human rights abuses of people experiencing poverty and homelessness in our communities.”

Sen. Shields was unavailable for comment before press time but issued a statement saying that the bill is “about making sure everyone is treated equally and humanely under the law.” — *Camilla Mortensen*

CITY OF EUGENE ENLISTS AGENCY TO TRACK DOWN 10-YEAR-OLD PARKING FINES

When Lisa Gillis received a collections notice in the mail on Jan. 30 for a parking ticket nearly 10 years old, she says she was surprised. The date of the infraction, she explains, was in 2006, but she did not own the vehicle even then. “I sold that car in 2004,” she says. “I was so irritated.” Since she was not the legal owner, Gillis says she is trying to obtain documentation to prove she does not need to pay the fine of \$24.01.

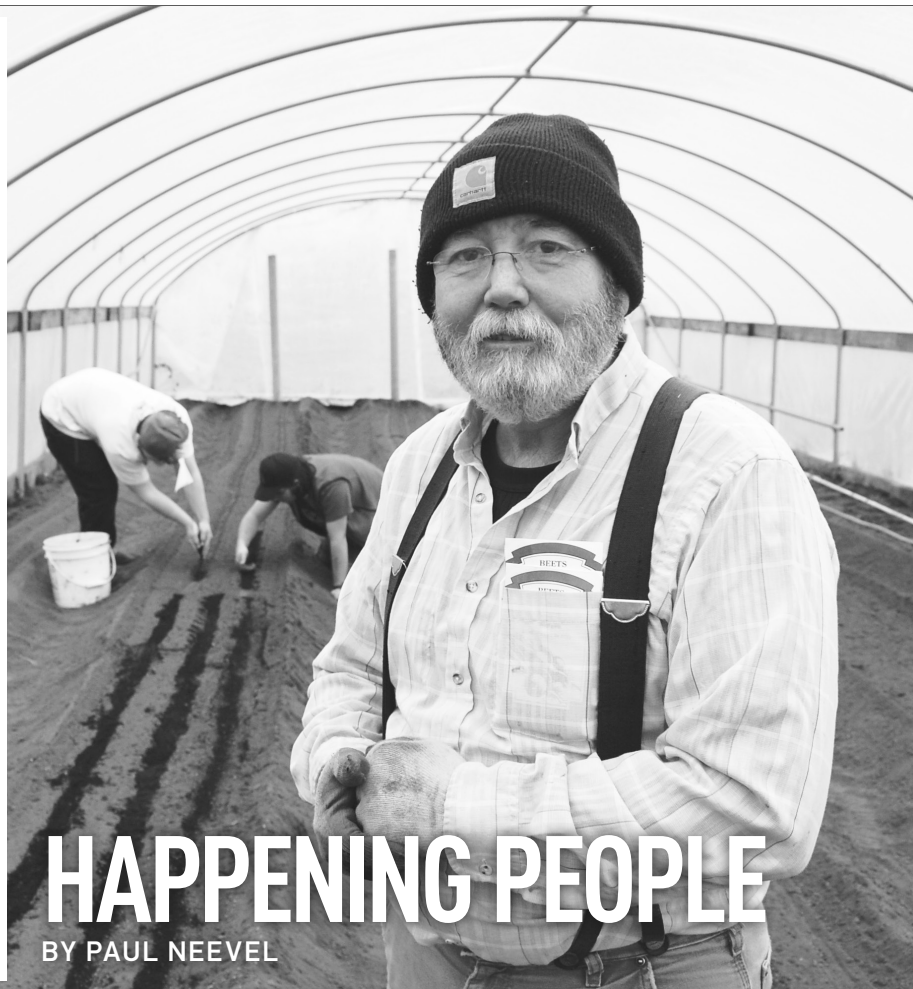
Recently the city of Eugene stepped up efforts to collect past due fines and enlisted the help of a collections agency — law firm Linebarger Goggan Blair & Sampson, based in Austin, Texas, with offices across the country — which means more people may be receiving similar notices.

“Linebarger is the one we’re using for parking tickets,” says Cheryl Stone, court administrator at the Eugene municipal court, about the city’s collection efforts. “It’s the first we’ve used this firm.”

Gillis says that since she sold the car so long ago, it is difficult to prove that she actually sold the car. She contacted the dealership that bought the car from her, but with no luck. “As it turns out, they only hold bills of sale for 10 years,” she says,

KEVIN HILLMAN

“I’ve had a garden every year since I’ve been an adult,” Kevin Hillman says. “My largest garden at home was 1,000 square feet.” After high school in Fremont, California, Hillman worked in steel fabrication for 24 years. He came to Oregon in 1978, found work at a machine shop in Springfield and lived in Cottage Grove. In 1985, he moved to rural Lane County outside Marcola. He left the machine shop in 1996 to work for the Springfield School District. He drove a school bus for a year then became a vocational assistant in the metal shop at Thurston High School. He got into special education three years later, doing vocational consulting and referrals with social service agencies. In 2009, with help from area farmers and nurserymen, Hillman opened the Transition Garden Project (TGP) on a 5-acre parcel in north Springfield, also home to FOOD for Lane County’s Youth Farm. “We have 2,400 square feet in two greenhouses and one acre of in-ground production,” he says. “We serve about 35 students. Most are special ed kids.” A wide variety of veggies is grown at the TGP, and they’re sold at the year-round farmers market Sprout!, held from 3 to 7 pm every Friday at 418 A St. in Springfield. Proceeds provide paid summer jobs at the garden for 13 students. “This farm teaches skills for employment,” Hillman says. “Students learn to show up on time, follow directions and work in a team. I work my ass off, but it’s all fun. The kids benefit from real life experiences.” Learn the latest on the TGP Facebook page.



HAPPENING PEOPLE

BY PAUL NEEVEL