

SLANT

• The May 19 **4J School Board election** got hotter last week as several new candidates squeaked in on the filing deadline. Incumbent Jim Torrey is facing off against two opponents: Oregon Democratic Party Regional Director Kevin Cronin (also *EW*'s "Best Local Hellraiser") and Whiteaker Community Council member David Nickles. Torrey has served on the board since 2007 and is currently chair. While he said last year that he'd like to take 4J into an era of greater transparency, it's hard to take seriously when 4J sued the *R-G* early this year over a public records dispute involving outgoing Superintendent Sheldon Berman. Not exactly a dazzling show of transparency. Cronin and Nickles, running on platforms of funding and school choice, respectively, could bring fresh perspectives to a board that seems distant from its community. But is the community ready for such a big change?

4J will see a few more school board races this year: Incumbent Mary Walston is up against substitute teacher Colin Farnsworth, who is also a coordinator for activist group People Against the National Defense Authorization Act. Board Position 4, to be abdicated by Craig Smith this year, involves a race between social worker Eileen Nittler, retiree Scott Landgreen and John A. Baumann, executive director of the currently closed Eugene Hearing and Speech Center. "It is nice to see democracy in action, and now I'll have to work harder, which is probably a good thing, right?" Nittler tells *EW* regarding the sudden influx of candidates.

• Should we **bury the train tracks through Eugene**? Creating a railroad quiet zone with improved track crossings is gaining traction, but the idea of putting our trains in a ditch is always dismissed as "too expensive," even though it would solve multiple problems associated with the tracks and make Eugene much more livable. Other cities such as San Diego and Reno have done it successfully with a combination of federal grants and local taxes. Let's face it: Eugene will need to do it someday, and if we wait another 20, 30 or 50 years, the project will be even more difficult and expensive. The benefits include sound reduction, greenspace opportunities, increased real estate values along the tracks, unimpeded car, bike and foot traffic — and better connection of our downtown and campus with the riverfront.

One factor that could kickstart this process is the UO Foundation's winning proposal to buy and redevelop the excess EWEB riverfront property. The foundation wants a railroad quiet zone established for the property, and trenching the tracks would be ideal. How can we muster the political will to pursue this ambitious project sooner rather than later? Local landscape design and natural history instructor Whitey Lueck has been talking about this for years. See his website, wkly.ws/1z5.

• Will the Oregon **Legislature dilute Measure 91** to undo the will of the voters? We hear Anthony Johnson of New Approach Oregon, the leading voice on the legalization of marijuana for adults, is worried. He says proposed legislation, if passed, would allow cities and counties to either ban all marijuana sales or levy local sales taxes on pot. The criminal black market would continue to thrive under such amendments. These bills might not make it far, but Johnson says, "the fight to protect Measure 91 has just begun."

• We've predicted in years past that **climate refugees** would be flocking to the relatively rainy Northwest from Southern California, Nevada, Arizona and New Mexico, but where are they? We've met a few, but also talked to some Cali transplants who couldn't handle our dreary winters and moved back to rejoin family and friends in the sunny land of cactus and white gravel landscaping. Turns out it's not easy pulling up roots, even if those roots are dry and shriveled. The climate refugees will come eventually, not with a flood but with a trickle. Meanwhile, we can't dismiss the shocking state of California agriculture under worsening drought conditions. Oregon's agricultural land must be protected — every acre. We will need it.

• **Magnolias** can be spectacular this time of the year, making their exuberant but brief showing on bare branches before most rhodies and azaleas wake up. We hear the bloom is well under way at Ruff Park north of Thurston Road at 66th Street in Springfield. The park is considered the largest magnolia arboretum west of the Mississippi.

STOPPING SEXUAL ASSAULT

Bystander intervention gains attention in preventing sexual violence on campus

You're at a party; you see a guy who is all over a drunk young woman — giving her even more drinks, perhaps in hopes of having sex with her later. What do you do?

Too often, bystanders do nothing.

According to Abigail Leeder, director of Sexual Violence Prevention and Education at the UO, there is no right or single way for a bystander to intervene in a potential sexual assault — though she says, "We encourage people not to put themselves in harm's way."

"Calling the police is an intervention," Leeder says.

She suggests asking people directly if they are OK with what's going on. Ask, "Do you want me to walk you home?" Or, talk to the person who's trying to get her drunk. Ask, "Are you sure she wants this?"

The UO, like other universities across the country, has been rocked by sexual assault allegations on its campus — the most recent contretemps over the school's decision to counter-sue a rape survivor and access the student's mental health records made headlines across the country. The UO has since returned the records and dropped the suit. The school said it was within its legal rights, but critics accused the UO of victim blaming.

In a 2014 *New York Times* article on "Stepping Up to Stop Sexual Assault," Jean Stapleton, a University of New Hampshire researcher who runs bystander intervention programs at colleges around the U.S. and Europe, cites her favorite example of intervention — a "young woman who approached her drunken girlfriend and said, loudly, 'Here's the tampon you asked for.'"

Bystander intervention is one component of a healthy consent culture on campus, according to Leeder. A consent culture is one in which asking for consent before sexual interaction is normalized. On the other hand, a rape culture, something the UO has been accused of fostering, is one in which raping or surviving rape is a cultural norm.

Leeder says bystander intervention is "based on the premise that sexual assault is everyone's problem and a community issue." She adds, "The majority of people are not survivors or perpetrators [of sexual assault], but all of us can play a role in which it's not tolerated."

Leeder and Jenny Russell, youth advocacy coordinator for Planned Parenthood of Southwestern Oregon (PPSO), say that bystander intervention is not just useful in preventing sexual assault, but also in intervening in other oppressive situations such as racism, bullying, homophobia or transphobia.

"These oppressive scenarios can happen spontaneously," Russell says. She says calling out a rape joke or questioning someone using oppressive language can stop those situations from becoming normalized.

Russell, who leads PPSO's REV(olution) youth programs, says Leeder and her Sexual Wellness Advocacy Team (SWAT) have presented to the Youth Action Council. And as part of peer education, REV members weave in bystander scenarios for students to act out in middle and high schools.

"Research shows practice means you have better tools in the moment," Russell says.

She gives the example of a person who says of a rape victim or survivor, "Look at what she was wearing," to another student who is neutral or unsure. Students practice asking questions such as "What did you just say? Are you saying because of what she was wearing, she wanted it? No one wants rape."

Russell says there are a lot of creative ways a bystander can respond. Rather than address the oppressor, a bystander might say to a third party, "Do you believe what she is saying?" Or make light of it and say, "It's 2015 and you still believe that?"

Russell says, "As long as someone keeps physical and emotional safety in mind," any interruption can alter a situation or affect the people watching and change their minds.

At the UO, Leeder says SWAT has done training for groups across campus, from fraternities to incoming students. In the summer the group performs a play, and during the school year it puts on interactive workshops that create scenarios and invite audience members to come up and practice intervention.

Leeder says, "We often don't have a chance to practice saying hard things and standing up for things that are true and right." She adds, "There is a lot of pressure to go along with the group's norms."

She says that bystander intervention is "a promising practice and a lot of schools are talking about it," in addition to other efforts to curb sexual violence on campus such as the UO's online education module and its video campaign, "Ducks Do Something." ■



WTF?

Local author and KLCC music, arts and culture host Eric Alan captured this image of the Hult Center electronic billboard on the Fritz a week or so ago. Or maybe it was a really cold morning.