



The Tronson Gallery of Contemporary Art will open its doors for the first time from 5 to 8 pm Friday, May 8, as part of the Second Friday Art Walk in Springfield. The gallery is located at 740 Main St. downtown and focuses on contemporary paintings, drawings and prints with “an intent to provide an environment to experience the visual arts,” says owner Jim Tronson, who was a licensed architect for 40 years. “Painting and architecture, for me, have evolved as two parallel endeavors both sharing many determinates; the essence of both being the structuring of space,” Tronson says. He has installed a retrospective of his paintings spanning five decades. Beginning May 11, the gallery will be open Tuesday through Thursday from 1 to 5 pm and by appointment. The gallery will host four to six shows every year featuring various local and regional artists. Call 600-5417 or email jimtronson@yahoo.com.

Voting continues through May 6 for **The People's Choice Awards** in the Lane County Children's Photo Contest at Valley River Center. Winners in all categories will be announced at 11 am Saturday, May 9, in the center hall at VRC. The annual contest is a benefit for Parenting Now!, formerly Birth to Three. See details at parentingnow.org.

Springfield/Eugene **Habitat for Humanity** raised a record-breaking \$105,000 at the 2015 Benefit Breakfast in late April. This year's theme was “Rise to the Challenge: Build a House in an Hour!” and a sell-out crowd of 380 people raised enough money to build one and a half houses. Businesses involved in a “Challenge Team” included Murphy Co., Papé Group, Quantum Health, Windemere Real Estate, Ninkasi Brewing, GloryBee Foods and Timber Products.

**Ocean Robbins**, founder of the Food Revolution Network, will appear via video on the topic “Food 3.0” at the meeting of GreenLane Sustainable Business Network at 11:30 am Wednesday, May 6, at the Eugene Hilton. Panel participants at the meeting will include representatives from SoDelicious Dairy Free, Glory Bee Foods, Willamette Farm and Food Coalition, Winter Green Farms and Do Good Investing.

# lighten up

BY RAFAEL ALDAVE

What's up with the Eugene 4J School Board? It has turned a routine performance review of the superintendent into a circus. Its members have broken laws, wasted taxpayer dollars, set a depressing example for students and made residents from New Jersey have second thoughts about moving here. What are they doing? Are they in training for jobs to help run the University of Oregon?

## POLLUTION UPDATE

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) issued a civil penalty in the amount of \$7,634 to the **Coos County Solid Waste Department** on April 30 for repeated discharges of turbid water to Storey Creek and Joe Ney Slough from the construction and demolition landfill it operates near Charleston. DEQ issued an enforcement action of some kind back in January to **Arclin U.S.A.** concerning its Springfield facility that Oregon Clean Water Action Project requested a copy of from DEQ on April 17. DEQ has failed to respond to our request so far; we're not sure what the holdup is, but we'll provide the details here as soon as DEQ gets around to responding. Arclin's discharges of pollution to waters of the state are authorized by a Clean Water Act permit that was issued by DEQ in 1994 and expired in 1999.

— Doug Quirke/Oregon Clean Water Action Project

# NEWS

## 'HOBBIT HOUSES' PROPOSED TO KEEP RIVERFRONT CLEANER

An unusual idea for dealing with trash left along the Willamette River by homeless campers is raising eyebrows and tempers, but the details are still being discussed and hashed out.

The concept is to recruit and train homeless individuals and provide them with little huts, or “Hobbit houses,” as Terry McDonald, executive director of St. Vincent de Paul, calls them. Four to seven of these river stations would be placed along each side of the Willamette River between I-5 and the area north of Owosso Bridge, areas frequented by homeless campers as well as river walkers, cyclists and young people who tend to party in secluded areas.

In related news, the city announced a river “ambassadors” pilot program this week, using paid bicyclists to patrol the riverfront and report problems to the Eugene Police Department. It is not clear if the two proposals are related.

The Hobbit house “guardians” would be provided with portable toilets, garbage service, cell phones and a stipend paid through private fundraising. Their duties could include patrolling the riverfront, “asking illegal campers to vacate, enlisting volunteer help with cleaning up debris as needed, maintaining a log of daily findings and actions” and reporting to a supervisor or committee, according to a draft project description by the Rev. Wayne Martin, one of the founders of the Nightingale Health Sanctuary.

The proposal was first aired publicly at a Eugene City Council meeting April 27 by John Brown, a longtime river advocate and EWEB commissioner.

“I think the general idea has a lot of merit,” says Richie

Weinman, a member of the Eugene Human Rights Commission that will be discussing the idea this week. “There is some controversy about it (this is Eugene) if the crew is asked to report/rat-out illegal campers. I'd like to think that there is common ground that can be found.”

Local email listservs dealing with homelessness are blasting the proposal. Critics worry that the project will further criminalize the homeless and create an adversarial relationship between the guardians and other homeless people. Concern has also been voiced about the plan not addressing the fundamental reason people are camping by the river: They have nowhere else to go, particularly if they are using alcohol or drugs.

“Safety and violence is a huge issue here,” says Alley Valkerie, longtime Eugene homeless advocate now living

**River guardian duties would include 'asking illegal campers to vacate, enlisting volunteer help with cleaning up debris as needed, maintaining a log of daily findings and actions' and reporting to a supervisor or committee.**

— REV. WAYNE MARTIN

in Portland. “Anyone living in a hut on the riverbank whose job it is to rat out other homeless folks will be a target, plain and simple. Most homeless folks know that, which is why I think that most would never agree to such a proposal, but anyone foolish enough to agree will run into trouble very fast.”

Brown defends the draft proposal, saying: “Every plan has potential

faults. I'd like to invite all of those who have these ideas to come along on a cleanup to see firsthand what the environmental damage is. Almost every camp I have encountered has needles and items that appear to have been stolen.”

Regarding the potential for adversity, Brown says, “All we are asking is for our riverkeepers to inform them of our preference to have them camp at least 100 feet from the river. So far all of the unhoused people we have engaged like the idea and want to help.”

The Portland-based Willamette Riverkeeper organizes and participates in cleanup projects along the Willamette but is not involved in the local proposal.

See a longer version of this story and a photo on our website. — Ted Taylor

## HAPPENING PEOPLE

BY PAUL NEEVEL

