

NEWS

OREGON SCHOOLS STILL AT RISK OF COLLAPSE IN MEGA QUAKE

If you hadn't heard about the Cascadia Subduction Zone mega earthquake before now, the recent *New Yorker* article titled "The Really Big One" has probably popped up on your social media feed enough times to draw your attention.

Some people have known for decades about the predicted 9.0-magnitude earthquake and subsequent tsunami threatening to devastate the Oregon Coast and beyond.

Oregon Senate President Peter Courtney is one of those people. He's worked for years in the Oregon Legislature to fund seismic retrofitting for public school buildings to make them able to withstand large-scale quakes. Now it's up to school districts, including those in Lane County, to apply for money and ensure that school buildings don't collapse on top of students and teachers when the earthquake hits, he says.

Courtney says Oregon is "way, way behind" in retrofitting old school buildings, and only 37 schools have received grant money for seismic upgrades. Last year, state agency Business Oregon received 46 applications for grant money but could only afford to award \$15 million to 13 school buildings across the state.

This legislative session, lawmakers set aside \$175 million to retrofit old school buildings in Oregon so that they are prepared to withstand a high-magnitude earthquake. This money is disbursed through the Seismic Rehabilitation Grant Program, which started in 2009 but has only provided \$15 million for schools per session until this year.

"We're finally getting the Legislature to pay attention," Courtney says. "If the school districts will react to this, we can make these buildings safe for kids. I just can't believe it's taken this long."

In 2005, the Oregon Legislature commissioned the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries to survey Oregon public school buildings to determine their risk of collapse in a high-magnitude earthquake.

The study found that of the 2,018 K-12 buildings sur-

veyed, 12 percent had a very high risk of collapse, while 35 percent had a greater than 10-percent likelihood of collapsing.

Courtney says he's frustrated about the lack of response he's witnessed over making school buildings safe for children, and he hopes this recent uptick in funding indicates a greater public interest in preparing for a large-scale quake.

"I can't believe parents are not out in droves saying, 'We are not going to permit our kids to go to these schools anymore until they are safe,'" he says.

In 2013, the Springfield School District applied for and received a \$255,549 grant from the Seismic Rehabilitation Grant Program for Walterville Elementary School, which was considered at very high risk of collapse.

According to Springfield Superintendent Sue Rieke-Smith, other schools in Springfield were deemed at low risk of collapse. However, she says, "knowing that we have these additional dollars available, we will of course be looking at opportunities for other improvements to our

schools to make them even safer."

Kerry Delf of Eugene School District 4J says that because 4J made seismic adjustments to school buildings in the 1990s, the district is not planning to pursue grants and will continue to make seismic improvements when other maintenance occurs.

Pat McGillivray, spokesperson for the Bethel School District, says Bethel has not previously applied for seismic rehabilitation grants, but the district recently replaced its

two oldest elementary schools with new structures that are built to current seismic codes.

McGillivray says that parts of Willamette High School, Shasta Middle School and Irving Elementary School were rated at high risk of collapse, while Bethel's eight other schools fell into a range of low to moderate risk. He adds that Bethel will consider applying for grants, depending on the eligibility requirements and method of application.

"This is going to be the greatest natural disaster to hit our state, and the children are probably more vulnerable to this than anything else imaginable," Sen. Courtney says. "Kids rely on us to make decisions for them. Today, the children of Oregon are totally vulnerable because of what the adults are not doing." — Amy Schneider



Many Eugene downtown businesses will be open for the first **Sunday Streets celebration** from noon to 4 pm July 26. Streets will be blocked off from car traffic from the Park Blocks to Kesey Square and all the way down Broadway to Monroe Park. Participants can enjoy a relaxing bike ride, skate or stroll through a cornucopia of food, music, fitness classes and bike demos. New activities this year include "Art on a Box" offering 20-minute open mic sets from local artists, a dunk tank at Monroe Park and an up-cycle T-shirt decorating competition sponsored by MECCA and featuring Ariana Schultz, fashion designer and instructor at LCC. To volunteer, call 501-0390 or email sundaystreets@ci.eugene.or.us.

The **Fertilab Thinkubator**, which currently operates a business incubator and co-working space in Eugene's Fermentation District, has opened the Start Up Center in downtown Springfield. A grand opening was held July 10 at the new business at 138 Main Street. The 1,800-square-foot center will "foster an innovative entrepreneurial economy by offering a place for people to learn about entrepreneurship and connect with peers and mentors," say organizers. Jeff Sather is operations manager and board member Jason Boone spoke at the opening gathering.

A unique feature at the Lane County Fair this weekend is the **Repair2ReUse Café**, located on the fairway next to the water tent. The booth encourages and offers tips on how to repair items rather than discard them in order to reduce waste and help people save the cost of replacing items that can be repaired. Free advice, estimates and instructions will focus on bicycles Friday, July 24, sewing machines Saturday and hand tools Sunday. Repair2ReUse is a waste prevention initiative of the Lane County Master Recycler Program in partnership with local repair professionals and community volunteers.

A group of Eugene-Springfield area manufacturing companies are offering **recent high-school graduates** an opportunity to launch a career. Currently there are more than 90 unfilled entry-level positions across various sectors of the local manufacturing industry, according to Leigh Anne Hogue, who oversees Focus On Manufacturing, a program of the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce. "Creating a pipeline of skilled labor is one of the biggest challenges to growth for local manufacturers," she says. Hogue is the director of economic development for the Eugene Chamber. "We are working to build that pipeline by connecting employers with skilled workers." Download an application at wkly.ws/1tg or stop by the Chamber offices at 1401 Willamette Street.

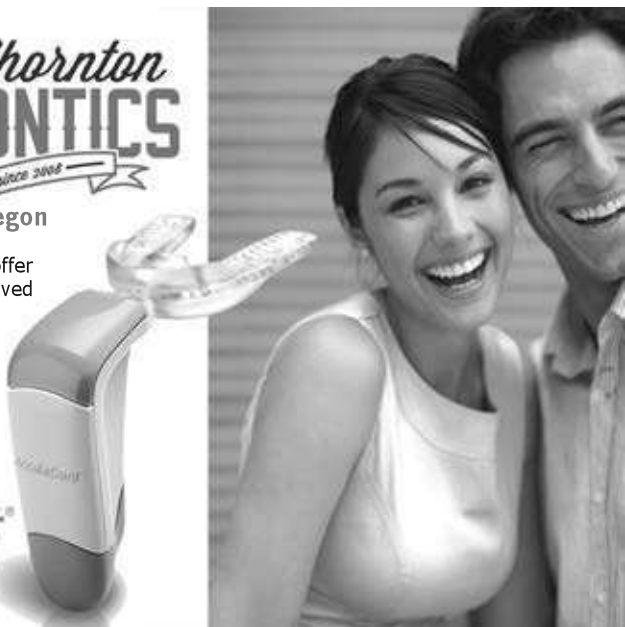
Encircle Films of Eugene is trying to raise money to continue offering its documentary series. The group creates "daring documentaries, expert speakers, engaging discussions, inspiring local action on global issues." Information about Encircle and a link to the fundraising site can be found at wkly.ws/21t. The documentaries are hosted on first Thursdays by the Bijou Art Cinemas at 492 E. 13th Ave. The next screening will be at 6 pm, Sept. 17, featuring *Alive Inside*.

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