

INTERFAITH EARTHKEEPERS AND INVESTING IN ACTION

Jane Smith, a member of Eugene Interfaith Earthkeepers Alliance (EIEA) through the First United Methodist Church, is taking action against climate change.

The EIEA is made up of different congregations across Eugene coming together to educate the community and respond to environmental issues. Smith says the Interfaith Alliance holds events and invites performers and speakers to help raise awareness to climate change and issues such as pollution and ocean warming.

“We all practice our faith in different ways,” Smith says. “We’re trying to make climate change more visible to help educate people on the crisis of climate change.”

Smith, 83, has been a member of the alliance for the past five years. She completed a graduate degree in social work, but later went into banking and retired as the CEO of the Hawaii Community Foundation, where she lived before moving to Eugene. She says it was in Hawaii, while reviewing various climate rehabilitation proposals, where she became aware of the consequences of climate change.

“Hawaii is so far from any other land,” she says. “We were very concerned with the ocean and the environment.” Interfaith Earthkeepers focuses on that concern with the environment and “activating communities of conscience to serve and keep our sacred planet,” according to the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection.

“We meet once a month with other church representatives to try to reduce pollution with certain activities,” Smith says.

Now that she’s retired, Smith is getting more creative with her investment portfolio and is urging others to consider the same. “It doesn’t make sense to hold our investment portfolio,” Smith says. “We’re investing our capital in better opportunities.”

Smith says she’s helped create jobs for women in developing countries and other environmental initiatives through her investments.

“We feel especially mandated to be good stewards of this Earth,” Smith says. “God gave us Earth to take care of and we haven’t done a good job. We need to clean up our act.”

The Earthkeepers meet on the second Wednesday of every month at the United Lutheran Church on Washington Street. They last met March 9. — *Mohammed Alkhadher*



ACTING FOR A HEALTHY CLIMATE

Zach Mulholland first started hearing about climate change in middle school, he says. He knew it was important, but like many, he didn’t know what to do about it. Years later, Mulholland, now 31, says, “global warming is the biggest issue we are facing right now” from extreme environmental conditions such as habitat loss to plastic pollution.

Climate change exacerbates problems we are trying to deal with in society, Mulholland says, like feeding, sheltering and providing water to future generations.

Mulholland went to community college in Bend, interned with Oregon Rep. Phil Barnhart and went to the UO, where he worked with OSPIRG and was a founder of Divest UO, he says. He brings that background and experience to coordinating the Healthy Climate Coalition, made up of 35 groups trying to bring about climate change legislation in Oregon.

The Healthy Climate Act (see EW 1/28) didn’t make it out of the short legislative session, despite a rally in Salem Feb. 3 that brought 400 people to the capitol calling for greenhouse gas legislation. “It’s frustrating as a young person that the best humanity seems to be hoping for is terrible,” he says of his work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

“The science is very clear,” Mulholland says, “drought, salmon die-offs. We need to substantively reduce greenhouse gases. And for those who really recognize the sci-

ence, I think we not only want to keep global temperatures from above 2 degrees Celsius, ideally we need to bring greenhouse gases back down over the long term.” We need to get back to a zero-degree increase rise, he says.

As for the Healthy Climate Act itself, it “didn’t get the level of attention to be a priority and get through a short session given the short time frame,” he says. And now the climate community will come to together and figure out the best strategy for a “comprehensive climate policy that we can” get through.

In one ray of hope, Mulholland says that in the Legislature’s budget bill there was to be \$230,000 allocated “so that the DEQ [Department of Environmental Quality] could hire someone to look at market-based mechanisms for carbon reduction and how they are implemented elsewhere and could be implemented in Oregon.”

Mulholland says this would let the DEQ get its “feet wet” if the Healthy Climate Act is passed in next year’s session, which “hopefully we can still get it implemented in 2020.” Back in 2007, the Legislature voted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 10 percent below 1990 levels by 2020 and 75 percent below 1990 levels by 2050, but these goals were merely aspirational.

We need bigger institutional change, Mulholland says. He says young people who see the problem and want to get involved should join. He names Divest UO, Earth Guardians, Our Children’s Trust, 350.org and the fight against liquefied natural gas as examples. And if you see a means to make a change exists elsewhere but not here, “know you can make those changes where you are.” — *Camilla Mortensen*

BIKING FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET

Shane MacRhodes says he wants to see more kids on bikes. It’s good for the environment, he says, but more tangibly, it’s good for kids.

As program manager for Eugene Springfield Safe Routes to School, MacRhodes oversees a fleet of bikes that moves from school to school, giving kids an opportunity to learn biking and practice safe riding.

MacRhodes says the program serves more than 1,000 kids in the Eugene-Springfield area by offering a nine-hour class on the rules of the road. Fifth and sixth graders learn how to signal, make turns and handle intersections, among other skills.

“For me, it’s about rediscovering childhood and independence,” he says. “Many people who rode as kids remember that freedom they had, and we’re not giving that freedom to kids now.”

A culture of fear has fostered a reluctance to allow children to play and explore on their own, MacRhodes says, even though crime has trended downward over time.

“We’re protecting our kids to death,” he says, adding that the most recent generation is the first to have a lower life expectancy than the previous generation. “It all has to do with inactivity and obesity — the diseases killing our kids are about inactivity and poor food.”

That’s why it’s important to foster an interest in biking early, he says, and make Eugene’s infrastructure friendlier to bikes.

MacRhodes’ own passion for biking started when he was a child growing up in Eugene, exploring the river path system. As a teenager, he moved to Alaska, where he rode his bike to his first job. He returned to Eugene to pursue his higher education, attending Lane Community College and the University of Oregon, and that’s when a bike became his main form of transportation.

After graduating, MacRhodes took a job with the Center for Appropriate Transport (CAT) where he “realized what bikes could do to transform cities,” he says. “I like the vision of what a city could be if built around people walking and biking rather than people in cars.”

MacRhodes traveled to Europe and attended a worldwide bike conference, where he heard about cities like Copenhagen that chose to build infrastructure with pedestrians and bicyclists in mind. For the first time, he imagined the possibility of cities free of spaces devoted to the parking and storage of vehicles.

“It really blew my mind,” MacRhodes says. “We have good walking and decent biking, but nothing on the scale of cities that planned for better walking and biking.”

Current infrastructure isn’t equitable, he says, and it’s largely tipped in favor of vehicles. But, he asks, “what if we built our cities so that it’s easy for kids to walk and bike to school?”

And that’s part of MacRhodes’ mission — to see the Eugene-Springfield area become more bike-friendly. Eugene is a better place to bike than Portland, he argues, but Eugene still has some missing links. Connectivity plays an important role in making communities more accessible by foot or by bike.

MacRhodes says he’d like to see a connection between the Amazon bike path near Roosevelt Middle School and Eugene’s river path system, something separate from the main roads to create a “stress-free environment” for biking. “If the city built more of that infrastructure, it could be revolutionary,” he says, but “it will require a change in people’s perspective that cars need all the space.”

Part of that perspective is thinking globally and reducing emissions through choosing not to drive. “I think it’s an important piece to this,” MacRhodes says. “I value people who are working on that piece and really making that connection, and it’s always something that’s at the back of my mind.”

But, he says, the impact biking can have on kids is always front and center.

“As a bike advocate and now as a dad, it’s clear to me that the health of our communities is dependent on our