

'LISTEN TO HER' TOUR TO VISIT EUGENE

On April 16, the Portland-based Women's Foundation of Oregon will arrive in Eugene to listen to local women and girls as part of a statewide tour. The "Listen to Her" tour gives women all around Oregon a chance to share their concerns about pressing issues that affect their lives, including pay equity and living wage jobs, childcare and domestic violence.

The stories shared on April 16 will be recorded, with permission from participants, and outlined in a Women's Foundation of Oregon report that will name issues important to female Oregonians.

"We've heard a lot that community leaders and folks throughout Oregon don't think that gender inequity is a problem in Oregon," says Emily Evans, executive director of Women's Foundation of Oregon. "They think that women and girls in Oregon have it pretty good. And what we are learning from the data is that Oregon women and girls are experiencing some of the biggest inequities in the nation," Evans says. "So we are trying to help convince folks that gender inequality is still a big issue for Oregon."

Jennifer Sparks, a 42-year-old resident of Eugene, says she plans to attend and participate in "Listen to Her." Sparks found out about the event via Facebook, where she expressed interest in speaking about aspects of divorce, child support laws and processes that create poverty traps for women and stay-at-home parents.

"We have been sold a load of BS that as women we now have equality. We do not," Sparks says. "There are lots of studies that show being a parent is a big barrier in employment for women, but not for men, because the cultural expectation is men with children show up to work. Women with children stay home when their children are sick."

At Eugene's "Listen to Her" session, participants ages 12 years and older will have the opportunity to share their stories in multiple ways. Participants can identify three issues that are most pressing to them by placing sticky dots on a board of issues. Other options include working in 30-minute breakout groups, answering poll questions via text message, writing or drawing personal stories or entering a storytelling booth, where stories will be recorded on video.

Dinner will be provided at Eugene's "Listen to Her," along with childcare, loaner cell phones and Spanish translation. Organizers say that the event is welcoming of trans, cis and gender nonconforming women.

"Listen to Her" begins at 10 am Saturday, April 16, at South Eugene High School, 400 E. 19th Ave. Admission is free. The Women's Foundation of Oregon is also looking for Eugene volunteers. Find more info at womensfoundationoforegon.org. ■

ACMON BLUE
(PLEBEJUS ACMON)

IT'S ABOUT TIME

BY DAVID WAGNER

April is one of the two busiest months of spring in the Willamette Valley. The native wildflowers are blooming in greater and greater profusion, the peak burst extending into May. With the abundance of flowers, butterflies and other pollinators become increasingly visible.

The bigleaf maple flower clusters will be shifting gears. The trees, which began with male flowers in early March, are ready to open up their female flowers. The matching mating type switches from female to male flowers. Cross pollination is as successful as the cottonwoods with separate male and female trees. But cottonwood strategy means only the female half of the population produces seeds while in bigleaf maple every tree produces abundant, vigorous seeds.

Leafing out is burgeoning, too, along with flowering. Cottonwood spreads out individual tree leafing longer than any tree in our area. At the beginning of April half of the cottonwoods are still bare while half are covered with leaves. Within three weeks all the cottonwoods have a full canopy of bright green, shiny leaves. Why do our local great blue herons nest in late leafing trees? They seem exposed to predation much longer than if they used early leafing trees.

The Oregon white oak (Garry oak outside of Oregon) is simply slow to leaf out, the last of the native trees to fill out its canopy. This late leafing means that the herbaceous flowering plants under the oaks have a chance to flourish with plenty of sunlight nearly to the end of April.

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