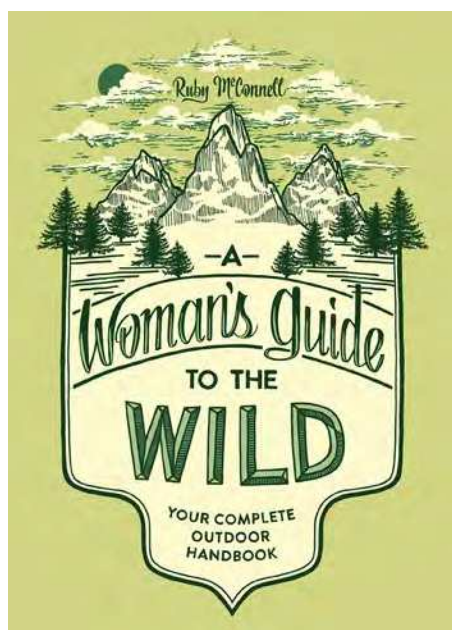




THE BROAD OUTDOORS

LOCAL WRITER RUBY MCCONNELL PENS
A HANDY OUTDOOR GUIDE FOR WOMEN,
BUT MEN SHOULD TAKE A LOOK, TOO

BY ALEX V. CIPOLLE

If Cheryl Strayed had access to *A Woman's Guide to the Wild: Your Complete Outdoor Handbook*, she probably wouldn't have had so many hardships on the Pacific Coast Trail to write about in her bestseller *Wild*.

Instead of teetering under its weight, Strayed would have learned how to pack a backpack efficiently, specifically for a women's body, which has a lower center of gravity than a man's. She could have read up on the proper footwear for long-distance hiking, instead of wearing crappy boots that left her tootsies a bloody pulp.

Those are just a few of the practical things addressed in local writer (and dancer) Ruby McConnell's fantastic new women-centric guide to the outdoors.

A Woman's Guide, which was published by Sasquatch Books earlier this year, is pithy, playful and frank. The illustrations and diagrams of Teresa Grasseschi, which

are at once charming and useful, accompany McConnell's approachable prose. And while the book offers universally valuable advice on everything from starting a campfire to reading cloud formations, it also covers challenges that only women face in the wild, but that are rarely written about.

For example — and this is a shocker — women get their period while camping. Not like, all the time, or every time, but sometimes the stars align just so.

"There is a stigma around it — most guides treat menstruation as an illness or an inconvenient source of messes and smells," McConnell writes. "While it does come with a couple of added complications ... it shouldn't be a source of embarrassment or prevent you from getting outside."

McConnell tackles the "Bear Myth," debunking the oft-banded-about falsehood that menstruating in the outdoors will attract bears, sharks, vampires, cyclops or what have you.

"Why this is considered a bigger problem than any other bathroom waste you might be carrying, I have no idea," McConnell points out. "I think it says more about a pervasive lack of understanding and continued squeamishness of our male counterparts than anything else."

McConnell even includes a nifty little guide for a "DIY Menstruation Disposal Kit."

The "How to Pee in the Woods" section is also quite useful, advising on squat techniques and how to use urinary flow directors, aka funnel tubes, so women can stand tall and pee proud.

But let's be clear: This is a handy guide for everyone, not just the ladies. Men — camp guides, dads, spouses, friends, etc. — who go into the great outdoors, with or without female companions, could learn a great deal here as well.

HOUSE ON THE RIVER

EUGENE'S RIVER HOUSE CELEBRATES
50 YEARS BY KELSEY ANNE RANKIN

Ah, Eugene, "a great city for the arts and outdoors," especially if you have the right gear, training and financial means to actually get down and dirty in the area's natural wonders.

One factor for enjoying the outdoors is having access in the first place. The Eugene Rec Outdoor Program provides just that for Eugeneans, and the organization's 50th anniversary is right around the corner.

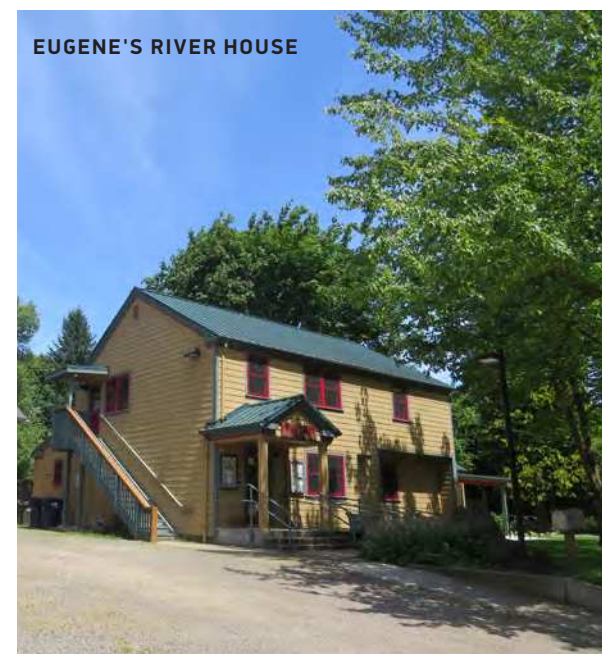
Originally established by clean-water advocate Mel Jackson and the city of Eugene in the late 1960s, the outdoor program later was expanded by the Eugene Parks and Rec department. The group eventually acquired the nickname River House, seeing as the building is smack dab on the river. Canoeing, rock-climbing, white-water rafting and other activities have been added to the program's activity list over time, and accessibility for the

courses is a consistent factor for the River House team.

"We have a goal of making our program inclusive and accessible to anyone wanting to participate," says program supervisor Roger Bailey, who's been with River House for nearly 30 years. Bailey says he's seen the positive community influence that accessible outdoor programs offer. "That is our mission," Bailey says, "to help people grow and to help make this community a better place to live."

For Bailey, this means approaching courses with "cultural respect, accountability, honesty and integrity." He says more energy is going towards focusing on financial accessibility, and a youth sailing course provided by the outdoor program was recently able to share scholarships for low-income children.

"Every walk of life comes here to take our programs," Bailey explains. River House programs provide people with, as he puts it, skills that need to be learned outside



of school or work. Whether you're feeling like honing your outdoorsy side in town or want to put some spur-of-the-moment REI purchase to the test out in the forest, the program has activities for all levels, and few exceed a \$40 price tag — not to mention the handful of courses that are free to the public.

The River House's 50th-anniversary celebration will be 4 to 7 pm Saturday, July 23, at 301 N. Adams Street, with food, circus arts, cake, kayaks and paddle boards provided at the event; more info at eugene-or.gov.