

• David Oaks, founder of Mind Freedom International, tells us there will be a “family-friendly gathering and unscripted show at Kesey Square” 4 to 7 pm Saturday, Sept. 17, to celebrate **Ken Kesey’s birthday** and 5th anniversary of the start of Occupy. Bring drums. Open mic. Sponsored by the International Association for the Advancement of Creative Maladjustment. FREE.

• **Rabbi Ruhi Sophia Motzkin Rubenstein of Temple Beth Israel** in Eugene will speak on the topic “Living Gracefully in a Burning World” at the 12th Annual Interfaith Community Breakfast 7:30 am Wednesday, Sept. 12, at the Downtown Athletic Club, corner of 10th and Willamette. Sponsored by Lane Institute of Faith & Education (LIFE). \$20-\$30 sliding scale. Deadline for purchasing breakfast tickets is Friday, Sept. 16, at First Christian Church, 1166 Oak Street or laneinstitute.org. Or \$5 at the door for coffee/tea. More info at 541-344-1425.

• Commemorating the **International Day of Peace**, the film *Paying the Price for Peace: The Story of S. Brian Willson* will be shown 6 pm Wednesday, Sept. 21, at the Campbell Center, 155 High Street. The film will be followed by Q&A with Willson. Organizers say that “horrified by his experiences during the Vietnam War, Brian became an activist during Reagan’s proxy wars in Central America, and while attempting to block U.S. arms shipments to the Contras from the Concord Naval Weapons Station in California in 1987 his lower legs were severed by a munitions train that refused to stop.” The feature-length documentary is narrated by Peter Coyote and includes archival footage. Sponsored by Al-Nakba Awareness Project, Women’s Action for New Directions (WAND) and Veterans for Peace. Copies of the DVD and Willson’s book, *Blood on the Tracks*, will be available. Find the event, *Paying the Price for Peace*, on Facebook and see a viewpoint on the topic by Jack Dresser of Al-Nakba at eugeneweekly.com. FREE.

• Lane Community College says it is “working to ensure that there is **good access to gender non-specific restrooms on all of our campuses**.” During the weeks of Sept. 12 and 19, LCC will be removing “Men’s” and “Women’s” signage from all single-use restrooms and replacing those signs with a sign that says, “Single-Use Restroom. This restroom is for everyone.” One multi-stall restroom will be converted into a gender non-specific restroom. A list of Lane’s single-stall and multi-stall gender non-specific restrooms is available at lanecc.edu/facilities.

NEWS

BY AMY KLARUP

OPT-OUT MOVEMENT CONTINUES IN LANE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Numbers published by the Oregon Department of Education last week show that across Lane County, some parents and students continue to choose “opting out” of the Smarter Balanced Assessment, a standardized test introduced to Oregon public schools last year.

In Eugene School District 4J, 12.3 percent, or 1,121 students, did not participate in the math portion of the test. The number of opt-outs has remained relatively steady from last year.

Smarter Balanced is intended to measure how well Oregon K-12 schools are teaching in alignment with the Common Core State Standards, and Oregon has administered the test for two years.

Proponents of the test cite the importance of rigorous Common Core tests that capture student achievement data from year to year. Kerry Delf with 4J points to the tests’ role as a way for juniors to meet their graduation requirements.

“While there are multiple pathways to meet these requirements, other methods have either a financial cost for students” or take more time away from students and schools, Delf says.

Detractors of Smarter Balanced, like Lane County’s Community Alliance for Public Education (CAPE), call the tests “excessive” and “high-stakes,” arguing that the time, money and energy spent on the tests could be better used to help students learn on a more individualized level.

In June, the Springfield School Board published a unanimous statement on the Smarter Balanced test, calling it “too long” at eight-and-a-half hours, “expensive” at \$27.5 million statewide and “not timely,” given that test results are received long after the test is taken, making it unhelpful in influencing student growth.

In Springfield this year, 334 students opted out of the math portion of the test, while 250 students did not participate in the English language arts (ELA) portion, representing a 5.8 percent non-participation rate, less than a percentage point more

than last year.

The Bethel School District reported 123 students turning in opt-out forms. State data shows a sizeable decline in Bethel juniors taking the test. In 2015, 95.7 percent of juniors took the math portion of the test, but in 2016 that percentage fell to 78.7 percent. The overall number of students participating in the test dropped a few percentage points, from 97.8 percent of students taking the math portion last year to 95.6 percent in 2016.

In Eugene 4J, opt-out rates remained comparable to last year’s numbers, although the number of juniors taking the test grew from 60.5 percent in 2015 to 72.6 percent this year.

The U.S. Department of Education requires that all states test at least 95 percent of their students, and it says the consequences for not meeting those targets could include lowering school ratings or withholding federal funds, though no punitive action has been taken in Oregon. This year, state participation fell to 94.7 percent for the math portion of the test.

The Bethel and 4J school boards have not taken a position similar to that of Springfield on Smarter Balanced.

“I have school-age kids,” says Springfield School Board member Sandra Boyst, “and when I used to volunteer at my kids’ school, I saw the stress it brings to students and teachers. They have to teach to this test, and the results aren’t even ones that you can use to make sure that children are in the appropriate class the following school year.”

Boyst says the test isn’t there to help students, but rather because the state mandates it, and she’s interested in seeing alternative assessment that provides quick feedback teachers can use in the classroom.

For Roscoe Caron, a retired 4J teacher and member of CAPE, the opt-out numbers are all about fostering a dialogue around standardized testing and its place in public schools.

“The resistance movement is what has created the space for much more accurate and authentic assessments to begin to gain traction,” Caron says. “The change will come from local schools and some districts, not from Salem.” ■

HAPPENING PEOPLE

BY PAUL NEEVEL



AMY VAN DER LINDE

“My parents both taught piano,” says Amy van der Linde, whose father also taught math at Bennington College in Vermont. “When I was 6, they opened a summer piano camp in our house. I started teaching at age 9.” The camp, called Summer Sonatina, became so popular that the family moved, seven years later, into a 42-room mansion, previously a convent. “We had 26 pianos for 50 students,” she says. “Everyone practiced for one hour, three times a day.” Management of the camp and of the family household followed the Positive Discipline model of parenting, based on research by Alfred Adler and Rudolf Dreikurs. “Children need encouragement like a plant needs water,” van der Linde expounds. She shared teaching duties with her four siblings and their parents at the camp through her college years at the University of Vermont.

Afterwards, she served two years in the Peace Corps in Morocco, then worked 13 years managing a homeless shelter in Boston. She returned to teaching after a 17-year absence in 1996, when she opened a piano studio in Manhattan. “I devised games to help students learn,” she says. Van der Linde got married, and three months after the birth of daughter Darwin in 2006, the family moved to Eugene. “New York kids are stressed out,” she explains. She currently gives piano lessons in her home studio. Also a certified Positive Discipline Parenting Educator since 2009, she will offer a free introductory parenting class this fall. Find details at amyvanderlinde.com. Her own kids Darwin and Tycho are in fifth and first grade at Camas Ridge Elementary. Back in Bennington, Summer Sonatina has spawned Winter Sonata, a piano camp for adults.