

# SLANT

• Question of the day: **Donald Trump or Mike Pence as the next president of the U.S.?** If Trump is either impeached or resigns within the next two years, as some writers predict, would Pence be an improvement? Probably. After serving in Congress and as governor of Indiana, he understands our system of government and, presumably, respects it. His political positions are the opposite of ours, but we can vote him out. As one friend pointed out, Pence at least went to *Hamilton* on Broadway, unlike the president-elect who lives down the street and tweets criticisms about it from his penthouse. And Pence had a civil response, calling it free speech when the multi-racial cast spoke to him from the stage after the show, unlike the president-elect who clearly doesn't understand the concept of free speech.



• Is your social media feed full of stories about fake news, or just **full of fake news**? Major media outlets have been delving into the phenomenon of spurious “news stories” that get shared more than actual journalism. As *The New York Times* points out, shortly after the presidential election, the *Oxford English Dictionary* crowned its international word of the year — post-truth: “relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.” NPR found that the completely false story, “FBI Agent Suspected In Hillary Email Leaks Found Dead In Apparent Murder-Suicide,” was shared on Facebook over half a million times. It seems many readers would rather share a story that reinforces their beliefs and call it news than read a piece that challenges their worldview. While NPR’s sources said liberals were harder to fool than Trump supporters, we also see our progressive friends hollering “media blackout” on topics the media is covering in depth — just not with the angle they would have wanted. Good journalism looks at multiple angles of an issue, even if that media outlet has a bias. *EW* has a progressive slant, but we strive to include viewpoints that challenge our beliefs.

• We wonder how downtown businesses feel about moving Eugene’s mythical **City Hall to the EWEB** building on the Willamette River. Would that make a downtown still struggling to revive itself into “old town” and push new development to the riverbank? After *Register-Guard* reporter Christian Hill’s fine investigative piece on City Hall Nov. 27, the *R-G* has editorialized in favor of using the EWEB building, a proposal Councilor Mike Clark has long championed. We favor looking more closely at the relationships around the building, keeping our City Hall in the center of the city and using the handsome EWEB building for something else. We support reusing an old building, but also need to consider in this age of climate change and the “big one” earthquake ahead whether we should be building hospitals and city halls on the banks of rivers?

• Bravo to the **Civil Liberties Defense Center**, the little legal nonprofit that could. In the Trumpian age, we more than ever need brave souls who will stand up, fight and legally defend the right to protest. CLDC has travelled to Standing Rock, and rather than complain about the treatment of protesters there, has filed suit. See our story this issue and support their work.

• We couldn’t help but think momentarily of the smallness and impotence of President-elect Donald Trump as friendly volunteers heaped generous servings of turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy on our plate at the Nov. 24 **Whiteaker Community Dinner**. The 28-year-old all-inclusive Thanksgiving tradition restored much of our shattered faith in humanity and the future. Hundreds of volunteers pitched in to serve 1,500 pounds of turkey to more than 2,000 guests, KVAL reported. The soon-to-begin Trump years might be a frightening and mysterious prospect for many, but uplifting gestures of kindness and solidarity surround us nonetheless. The sight of hundreds of strangers dining elbow-to-elbow at long tables that spanned the Whiteaker Community Center cafeteria served as a powerful reminder that we’re all in this together.

## COMPASSION FATIGUE HITS THE WHIT

**O**n a borrowed plot only a stone’s throw from the Eugene Mission, the Nightingale Health Sanctuary is tidy and obliging, even as biting autumn winds tug at the loose corners of its makeshift huts.

“We’re here to help people stabilize and move on,” Nightingale manager Nathan Showers says.

After hunkering down for more than a year behind a county building near Autzen Stadium, the Nightingale rest stop moved to its current location this past summer when the Eugene Mission offered it a temporary place to stay in the Whiteaker, a neighborhood which many say has reached its saturation point with homeless facilities and services.

Nightingale is expected to relocate again by February.

Last year, Nightingale, along with five other city-approved homeless rest stops, took in more than 260 people, nearly half of whom reported being disabled or having special needs. The vast majority of rest stop residents reported being from Eugene or Springfield.

Eugene approved the Rest Stop Pilot Program more than three years ago to alleviate homelessness by working with Community Supported Shelters and the people at Nightingale to give the unhoused a place to stay while they find their way off the streets. The city reports that 55 rest-stoppers found stable places to live last year.

Encouraged by the numbers, Eugene City Council recently agreed to help establish similar Rest Stops across the city in every ward.

Days prior to that, however, Whiteaker Community Council (WCC) Chair Sam Hahn testified at a City Council meeting, saying: “The Whiteaker Community Council is very much in support of the Rest Stop Program. We are, however, no longer in support of them existing in Ward 7.”

Nearly all the city’s rest stops are clustered together on the edge of the Whiteaker and Trainsong neighborhoods.

Hahn went on to say the Eugene Mission alone sleeps as many as 400 a night and provides meals for hundreds more every day. Add to that untold numbers of illegal campers in parks and along the riverfront and the Whiteaker is maxed-out before it even starts counting rest-stoppers, he says.

Hahn tells *EW* he thinks it’s unlikely the city will remove all rest stops from Ward 7 any time soon, but he says paring them down sounds realistic.

“Long-term,” he says, “we want them all gone.”

Showers gets it. Homeless for the last seven years, he and fellow manager Tracy Joscelyn see it everywhere they turn, from WCC and City Council meetings to the comments that pile up under online news stories and op-eds that pertain to Eugene’s unhoused: People are fed up with the homeless.

“The people in rest stops and the Mission aren’t the problem,” Showers says, though they often get lumped together with transients and troublemakers.

It’s hard for people to discern the difference, he adds, but those staying at Nightingale and other city-appointed camps agree to abide by a strict set of rules: Everyone’s up and out by 9 am, those with disabilities notwithstanding. Additionally, there’s no loitering, no drinking, no drugs, no resting on the curb or dumpster diving in the vicinity.

The semi-permanent homeless rest stop on First Avenue is really a boon to its neighbors, Showers argues: “We help the neighborhood. We police the neighborhood. We do a lot more than just give people a place to stay and keep their stuff safe.”

According to the city, rest-stoppers logged more than 550 volunteer hours in 2015, sprucing up and maintaining city parks and facilities.

Rest stops build community and reduce illegal camping, Joscelyn adds.

Hahn, who owns Blairally Vintage Arcade on Blair, doesn’t dispute any of that.

The folks involved are “genuine, pure, awesome people, and tough,” he says. There are simply too many of them in the Whit.

“The Whit is an extraordinary neighborhood and we’re proud to be a compassionate, welcoming community,” Hahn explains. “We want to help get that vibe going in other neighborhoods.”

In recent years the city stacked nearly all its homeless camps along the Whiteaker-Trainsong border, creating an oversaturation problem that is bad for the surrounding neighborhoods and the homeless alike, Hahn says.

At a Nov. 14 City Council meeting, Whiteaker resident Brad Foster argued that the superabundance of homeless people and facilities concentrated in the Whit attracts drug dealers and, with them, violence, pointing to more than a dozen shootings in the Whit since September.

“If we can move [the rest stops] to throughout the city,” Foster said. “Lowering the concentration will lower the impact, will elevate the people who are homeless into a better situation. They’re being preyed on more than we are.”

Frankly, Hahn admits, the Whit’s got “compassion fatigue” and rest stops don’t work without neighborhood compassion. “Let’s mellow it out a little.” ■

INSTA TWEETING THE GRAMS TO YOUR FACE IN CYBERSPACE

