



CITY EMPLOYEES ON FOOD STAMPS

- Paul and Lisa Tostberg, owners of Corvallis' Coffee Culture, have launched their roasting business as a standalone retail-wholesale brand in the greater Pacific Northwest, **Holderness Coffee Roasters**. The Tostbergs have been in the industry since 1993, according to a press release, when they had a drive-thru coffee kiosk that also developed film. The Tostbergs say, "We had no way of knowing that coffee would be a successful enterprise, so we developed film as well! As specialty coffee grew up, so did we — we dropped the film developing and focused on coffee, and eventually started roasting." Go to holdernesscoffee.com for more info.

- Downtown Eugene Merchants are hosting "a fun shopping event for Saturday, Dec. 10, called **Sugar Cookies and Shop Local**," according to Susan Costa of Mosaic Fair Trade Collection. She says participating stores will have holiday cookies for all shoppers, and "we hope people will have fun supporting local businesses and enjoying holiday cookies for our event." Find out more at facebook.com/downtowneug.

- **The Artisan Mercantile**, located at 88267 Territorial Highway in Veneta, featuring handcrafted merchandise produced by Oregon artists, is having its grand opening 10 am to 5 pm Saturday, Dec. 10. The Mercantile says its premise "is to bring local area artists and crafters out of their homes with an opportunity to sell their crafts year-round." There will also be artist-led classes. Items include everything from soy candles and greeting cards to mermaid sacks and "one-of-a-kind repurposed furniture and antiques." For more info, go to facebook.com/ArtisanMercantileVenetaOR.

- **The GeekoSystem** is an online collector and pop-culture community that will allow fans to buy/sale/trade collectibles and interact with each other as well as with pop-culture notables, according to Jessica Dwyer, director of communications for The GeekoSystem. She says: "It's a worldwide community that sees fandom as family." Dwyer says the site goes live in mid-December, and "as a local company we're very excited to have many local pop-culture fans already on board as well as local businesses wanting to be vendors on the system." Go to thegeekosystem.com for more information.

A 700-strong pool of part-time city employees are earning wages that barely pass federal poverty line standards. A Jan. 18 city work session has been called to address this ongoing issue.

Eugene City Council member Claire Syrett and former EWEB commissioner Bob Cassidy have been pushing the City Council for most of 2016 to hold a work session on raising the city's minimum wage for these temporary workers.

Cassidy says he met a woman at a Bernie Sanders rally last year who told him she made \$12 an hour after working part-time for the city of Eugene for the past 22 years.

"I tried to find out how many of them are on food stamps," Cassidy says. "They get food stamps by the federal government because that's poverty line. We are paying poverty wages when we pay this kind of thing."

Food stamps are also known as SNAP, the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program.

After researching this particular category of city employees (non-union, typically classified as "temporary" workers), Cassidy says he discovered the majority make between \$11.50 and \$13.50 an hour, working part-time hours.

Mayor-elect Lucy Vinis, who will be sworn in Jan. 4, says she is in favor of raising the wage.

"I'll be interested to hear the data — how many employees need to get a raise and what the implications are for the city budget," Vinis says. She points out that there are different types of "part-time" employees, such as a college student working as a lifeguard versus someone trying to support a family.

Long-time City Council member Betty Taylor also said she is in favor of increasing the minimum wage for temporary city workers.

"A lot of us have been pushing for it for a long time. I just think it's the right thing to do. Some years ago we tried to get a living-wage ordinance passed. [There was] not enough support," Taylor says.

Examples of temporary city employees include some of the staff at the Eugene Public Library or the Eugene parks department.

Oregon's minimum wage already jumped 50 cents this year in July, going from \$9.25 to the present \$9.75 an hour. The Oregon House Committee pushed this increase as the first in a series of minimum wage increases over the next six years; by 2020, Oregon's standard minimum wage will be \$12 an hour.

With the most recent 50-cent increase, Oregon now has the fourth highest minimum wage of all 50 states (D.C. has the highest at \$10.50 an hour and Georgia and Wyoming have the lowest at \$5.15), according to InsideGov, a government research organization.

Janet Bauer, policy analyst with Oregon Center for Public Policy, said the recent change to Oregon's minimum wage was a victory for Oregon's working class population.

"It provides real support to workers, especially those who are lower paid. It helps them take care of their families by helping them meet their basic needs. Those families spend in the economy and so it helps local economies throughout the state," Bauer says.

Oregon continues to struggle with a widening income gap between higher and lower income classes because Oregon's economy is growing more quickly in recent years, she adds. The new minimum wage increases may help curb that problem, even just a little, for low-income households.

Cassidy, in the meantime, says he's been inviting people to come speak at the upcoming Eugene City Council work session (which was recently moved from Dec. 12 to Jan. 18). Cassidy ran for Eugene mayor in this past election season and advocated for a wage increase for city workers as part of his platform.

"We are paying people to service us and they are on the verge of financial collapse. They have no savings," he added. Cassidy said he got the number of 700-some temporary employees from an email with a city staff person earlier this year.



HAPPENING PEOPLE

BY PAUL NEEVEL

SAMANTHA (SAM) KROP

A native of Clearwater, Florida, Sam Krop got her start in social and environmental activism as a student at the University of Central Florida in Orlando. "I was working with Food Not Bombs," she says. "The city had made it illegal to share food with more than 25 people. They were trying to suppress the homeless population. Lots of people got arrested, but in the end, the law was overturned. It was an early lesson for me." She studied the intersection of environmental and social justice, working to help low-income people who lived close to Superfund sites and farm workers subjected to aerial spraying of pesticides. After graduating with degrees in literature and philosophy, Krop came to Eugene in the summer of 2012 to work with forest defenders, helping to organize climate justice events. A year later, she launched Warrior Sisters, a non-profit aimed at sexual assault prevention, offering free self-defense classes to women in the community. Warrior Sisters now has seven local trainers and new chapters in other cities. She also began teaching humanities, philosophy and creative writing at the A3 Public Charter School (Academy of Arts and Academics) in downtown Springfield. "In 2014, I created a class called Writing for Change," she says. "My focus is teaching students to be change-makers, and to empower student voice." Krop took evening classes in the University of Oregon's UOTeach program to earn a master's degree in education in 2015. She will return to UOTeach in winter term 2017 with her own course, called EcoJustice, examining options for bringing students to an understanding of the natural world.