

SPREADING KINDNESS

It's easier to share with Lane County neighbors in need of food thanks to Capella Market's new cashier station signage. Capella staffers Reisa and Rhonda worked with FOOD for Lane County to put eye-catching signage next to the cashiers, so that customers can donate in \$1, \$5 or \$10 increments when they check out.

Thank you, Capella Market, for spreading daily kindness in our community! One in five Oregon children lives in poverty, so when you are buying food, spread your kindness by shopping local and swiping a donation. Food for Lane County turns each dollar we donate into three meals.

Look for the easy check out donation signs at Kiva and Market of Choice, too.

Alice Louise Warner
Eugene

COMMODITY PLANET

I am the adult child of a chemical engineer. My father was complicit in the poisoning of our nation as well as other nations. I think he needed to keep food on the table and shelter for our family. I guess he

took a wrong path when he didn't consider the harms he was involved in.

As an adult in this overpopulated, heated and poisonous world with denigrated soils, it is clear to me that we must stop this affront. Our breadbasket is polluted; our water is polluted; our air, though not so bad where I live, is unbreathable in many places. The fossil fuel industry and its by-products are harming the creative soul we all possess.

If this paternalistic view were to give way to nature and nature-inspired love and respect, it would go far to help peace in this world. We are in an evolutionary process. Our children's futures aren't looking very bright and the dispossessed are all crying out.

Feeling hurt and invalid is what they initially feel. After that come anger and/or soul searching. We are in a time when so much suffering is happening that we must become humane towards the whole planet, because our Mother Earth has taken about as much abuse as she can and is dying.

Many people have good answers to these problems but have been shut down from creative solutions. The time to go on

a better path is now or the elitists will exploit us a little longer so they can create for themselves new homes on other planets. So much for Mother Earth. She's just a commodity.

Cindy Kay Biles
Eugene

DEEP GREEN ANTI-TRANS?

Paul Neevel's "Happening People" subject last week was Samantha Krop. He cited her climate activism, women's self-defense work, and commitment to children.

But he was unaware of her role as organizer for Deep Green Resistance, a cult-like authoritarian group perhaps best known for its vehemently anti-trans-gender politics. An outlook so actively hateful toward trans folks that the *Daily Kos* called it "transgender exterminism."

After I contacted him, Neevel at first agreed to look into this side of Ms. Krop but, "on second thought," decided to leave his puff piece alone. Not a credible level of journalism, I'd say.

John Zerzan
Eugene

PUSH BACK

On Jan. 20, 2017, a fascist will become president of the United States. This is not a sudden event, but a moment that has been building for decades. Even as great progress has been made by the people in establishing and protecting our civil rights, authoritarian elements have achieved their own power through lies and abuse of government institutions.

However, for every advance authoritarians have made, citizens stand together to push them back. Eugene Resistance Training is a series of free classes being offered to the community to teach methods of non-violent resistance that have been tested and refined in conflicts against repressive governments around the world.

Our goal is to channel the anxiety, anger and fear from the terrifying recent developments into energy towards planning campaigns, learning how to manage group dynamics and structure, and other critical tools for effective nonviolent organizing.

The introductory first class will be at 3 pm on Saturday, Dec. 17, in the Growers Market upstairs space, 454 Willamette Street. For more information on the curricu-

DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION

BY JERRY ROSIEK AND DEANNA CHAPPELL BELCHER

The War on Local Control of Schools Continues

Local democratic control over education has been under assault for three decades. Sometimes this takes the form of federal mandates to use "Common Core" curriculum and high stakes standardized tests. These have been implemented largely without regard for local feedback and by using empty threats to school funding to silence parent and teacher objections to these policies.

At other times the assault takes the form of market-style reform that seeks to run schools "like a business" using charter schools or voucher programs. On the surface both of these seem to offer more parent control in the form of school choice. And occasionally, when charter schools are developed locally as nonprofits — as with 4J's Village School or Springfield's A3 school — parent influence can be enhanced.

However, an increasing number of charter schools in this country are corporate owned, one-size fits all, rigid testing-oriented academies imposed on "low performing" schools. Diane Ravitch has estimated that 95 percent of charter schools operate outside of union contracts, pay teachers less, require longer work hours and end up relying on recent college graduates for staffing.

This inexperience and high turnover result in less responsiveness to parents and communities. Private schools with full enrollment are able to exclude students and ignore parents at their leisure.

The bipartisan support for local disempowerment is hard to understand, but harder to deny. President Barack Obama's secretary of education, Arne Duncan, spent six years threatening states and districts if they did not use the national high-stakes standardized tests that he asserted would make a difference.

And now President-elect Donald Trump and his choice for secretary of education, billionaire GOP me-

ga-donor Betsy DeVos, are poised to push an agenda emphasizing voucher programs and for-profit charter schools. Her programs in Michigan have already proven to be both economic and academic disasters with expensive duplication of programs, increased segregation and the replacement of elected school officials with corporate heads.

The sad fact is that parents and ordinary citizens interested in public school education have had few friends in the federal government since George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act with bipartisan support in 2001.

And the problem isn't just federal. In Oregon, former Democratic Gov. John Kitzhaber engineered the replacement of a democratically elected state superintendent of schools with one appointed by the governor's office. Deputy Superintendent of Education Salam Noor has made every effort to discourage parents from exercising their opt-out rights by complicating the bureaucratic process. Incomprehensibly, he has recently responded to parent, teacher and legislative objections to the excessive amount of time spent on Smarter Balanced standardized testing by proposing more time be spent on tests.

What has all this centralized control over public schools achieved? Have schools vastly improved? No, they have not. Drop out rates in Oregon are embarrassingly high. Achievement gaps remain unmoved. Scarce funds have been diverted to the profitable testing industry. That is what deferring to Department of Education "experts" has gotten us.

So what can we do? We can reassert local control of schools. They are our schools, and they are our children. Here are some concrete steps we can take:

- Push back against the recent wave of standardized testing that seems to be winning the day. If we parents

keep the pressure on by opting our kids out, those tests are unlikely to be re-funded once the current contract expires next year. Opting out empowers parents and students.

- Elect local school board members who will speak back to the Oregon Department of Education, not try to cajole parents into conforming to problematic state and federal policies. The Springfield School Board has been better at this than the 4J School Board.

- Insist that our legislators and governor push back against federal overreach into our schools, not roll over for every authoritarian federal mandate.

- Make the Oregon Department of Education focus on common sense improvements like smaller class sizes, more time on instruction and less on testing, and more professional development for teachers.

- Be prepared to continue fighting for better funding of our schools.

- Urge our senators to block the nomination of Betsy DeVos — a known advocate for school privatization — for U.S. secretary of education.

If we want better schools, we will have to make it happen ourselves, from the grassroots up. This can be done. There are few forces in a democracy more powerful than people defending the wellbeing of the children in their communities. Put the public back into our public schools.

Jerry Rosiek is a professor in the College of Education at the University of Oregon and a parent of a 4J elementary student; Deanna Chappell Belcher is a teacher, learner, parent and member of CAPE. The Community Alliance for Public Education is a coalition of parents, teachers, professors, students and community members who challenge the many assaults on public education and who believe in a strong public education as the foundation for American democracy. We meet most Mondays at 4:30pm at Perugino in downtown Eugene. For legislative contact information to oppose the Trump nomination for U.S. secretary of education, visit CAPE's Web site at oregoncape.org.