

SLANT

- Take this little quiz for us. Can you locate Broadway Plaza? Can you locate **Kesey Square**? End of quiz. The obvious answers make us wonder why the city staff and Eugene City Council are so slow in officially designating the storied square in the center of Eugene as Kesey Square. The council will consider this in the fall, and it has opened a comment period on the name change. Write mayorcouncilandcitymanager@ci.eugene.or.us or tell them in person Monday, July 10 and July 24, at Harris Hall in the Lane County Public Service Building, 125 E. 8th. It really is time to make Kesey Square Kesey Square, catch the momentum of the activities planned there and wipe out any glimmers of the old misguided plan to fill the public square with a building.

- Kudos to the **Eugene City Council** for appointing **Jennifer Yeh** to the Ward 4 position recently vacated by George Poling.

- A remarkable collection of juried art will be shown and sold July 2-4 at **Art and the Vineyard in Alton Baker Park**. Ninety-six artists from eight states will be selling from their booths along the river. More than a third of the artists are new to Art and the Vineyard this year. It all opens at 10 am, July 2, and closes with fireworks July 4.

- **"Public records law** is the foundation for informing Oregonians about their government and the world around them." That's how a recent email from the Oregon Territory Society of Professional Journalists kicks off. SPJ is pushing to make Oregon government more transparent, and House Bill 2101-A would give the public more notice of bills that would increase secrecy and set up a 15-member Oregon Sunshine committee to update and simplify Oregon's confusing array of more than 550 records-law exemptions. For the first time there would be a public process for review — and potential repeal — of some of those exemptions. But the bill has not been scheduled for a hearing by the Joint Ways and Means Committee in the Oregon Legislature. Call your state rep and push for more sunshine in Oregon government. [Full disclosure, *EW's* editor is on the Oregon Territory SPJ board and *EW* has had to fight for public records.]

- If you want your **president elected by popular vote** instead of by the electoral college, you should call or email Senate President Peter Courtney and Sen. Ginny Burdick right away. That's the advice the City Club of Eugene heard June 23 from Elizabeth Donley and Eileen Reavey, two leaders of Oregon's grassroots efforts to get the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact passed this year in the state Legislature. Courtney seems to be the biggest obstacle to getting HB 2927 considered by the full Senate. So far, he won't allow Burdick to hold public hearings and move the bill out of the Senate Rules Committee for a vote on the Senate floor.

SEARCHING FOR PHARMACIST-PRESCRIBED BIRTH CONTROL

Law allowing birth control without a prescription rolls out slowly in Eugene

In 2015, the Oregon Legislature passed a bill allowing pharmacists to provide consultation and to dispense birth control to women who do not have a prescription. Sponsored by Rep. Knute Buehler, a Republican physician from Bend, the bill was signed into law by Gov. Kate Brown and took effect Jan. 1, 2016.

Though the law clearly states that pharmacists may "prescribe and dispense" contraceptives to women over the age of 18 after a consultation, *Eugene Weekly* had difficulties finding participating pharmacies in Eugene.

Before pharmacists provide birth control without a prescription, they are required to undergo specialized training through Oregon State University, which takes six to 10 hours. The training is ultimately up to the individual pharmacist at participating pharmacies.

EW made a dozen calls and visited five pharmacies in Eugene. Policies at corporate-owned pharmacies prevented pharmacists from commenting on the law, which has been in place for a year, but off the record, a pharmacist told *EW*, "We don't have time to do those consultations."

When asked if pharmacists provided consultations at a Rite Aid, the pharmacist on call says he only knew of one place in Lane County that provided that service. Visits to other local pharmacies yielded a similar answer.

BiMart, whose corporate headquarters are located in Eugene, does not provide contraception without a prescription. One of its pharmacists suggested *EW* try a local pharmacy "who does little things like that," referring to the birth control consultation. The corporate office did not return calls before press time.

A visit and calls made to three local Rite Aids found that none of the pharmacies provide birth control consultation. However, Ashley Flower, a senior manager in public relations at Rite Aid, writes in an email that Rite Aid is participating. "Most of our pharmacists are trained on this regulation and able to dispense per the regulation (the exception being pharmacists that are just onboarding with Rite Aid and in the process of being trained)."

Flower adds, "We are taking your findings and using this as an opportunity to revisit this topic with our pharmacy teams to ensure they are able to relay the right information to our customers going forward."

Paige Clark, a pharmacist who also leads the OSU certification course, says that Costco, Albertsons/Safeway and Rite Aid are all on board. "They are all almost entirely trained to provide this service," Clark says.

And in contrast to *EW's* findings, she says, "Pharmacists are doing a great job, thousands of pharmacists are certified to do this. The very first prescription was written in Eugene area."

One local pharmacy looking into the possibility of providing birth control consultations is Hiron, according to its owner Steve Hiron. He says the service is beneficial and there is a great need for it — the pharmacy with locations near the University of Oregon campus serves a large college student population.

River Road Health Mart is a local pharmacy is owned and operated by pharmacist Brian Marr. After completing consultation training, he says his business wrote about one prescription a day. Marr says the law was intended to expand access to health care for women, but his pharmacy encountered a problem after it began consultations because the law does not allow consultation appointments to be made. They must be drop-in only.

"We have two pharmacists on staff, and we wanted to make it more convenient because if someone shows up unexpectedly we are required to help them," he says. So the pharmacy began asking when customers needing a consultation may come in. "But we got in trouble for that saying it's too close to an appointment," Marr says.

Rep. Buehler says the Oregon law is being recognized nationally. "It's a model for the nation at this point," he says. Other states are examining similar legislation, he adds.

Buehler says he sponsored this legislation to expand women's access to health care. He tells *EW* that having this kind of access to birth control, which is essentially over-the-counter, "has profound and positive effects on women's health."

According to Buehler, "In other countries, and in limited studies around the United States that have done something similar at least in trials, unintended pregnancy decreased 25 percent."

Women needing birth control services from pharmacies should call to make sure the pharmacy nearest them offers the consultation services.

River Road Health Mart, Albertsons on 30th Avenue and all Fred Meyer pharmacies provide birth control consultation for a fee. CVS pharmacies say they will begin providing the service in the fall. ■

