

WE NEED REAL COOLING CENTERS

The recent spate of hot weather is more than something to complain about. For the very young, the very old, the medically fragile, and the poor and unhoused, heat in the 90s and 100s can cause a medical emergency.

The radio stations and the local daily have put out lists of “cooling centers,” but as a friend points out, a serious cooling center must stay open later than 4 or 6 pm, the hottest part of the day. Some churches are open to 8 pm, as are some libraries on certain days, but these are exceptions.

We need a summer plan to keep people cool the way the Egan Warming Centers keep people warm in winter. Let’s encourage our city and county leaders to work together and create a plan to identify buildings that could be open at least to 9 pm until this hot spell breaks.

We could use the old Lane Community College center, the Atrium or a large building on the Lane County Fairgrounds — maybe the ice rink, which would be cool in a couple of ways.

Let’s keep people alive and out of the hospitals.

Vickie Nelson
Eugene

UNHOUSED TOWN HALL WITH MAYOR VINIS

On Tuesday, Aug. 1, at 7:30 am at the Alton Baker Park pavilions, Eugene Mayor Lucy Vinis met with a group of unhoused people.

A fair number of housed and unhoused people arrived and exchanged ideas and shared stories of their situations. Some of the unhoused people offered ideas about efforts they would like to see made. Sadly, historically, all too much talk and few honest efforts have been forwarded by the city of Eugene.

Tangible solutions brought about by the efforts of the broader community and aided by the city will be needed to address the many issues of the unhoused people living in this city.

City government has not made enough effort in reaching out to the broader community with creative answers that work toward developing low-cost, permanent and effective transitional housing. Incentives and city code changes could open wide doors to placing Conestoga huts and tiny houses throughout the broader community and also aid in the development of small converted living spaces within homes, churches and local businesses.

Finding and utilizing spaces, including yards of private homes, business lots and unused city lots, not only offers a wider selection of potential living spaces for the unhoused but it also works to include many people who can work to find answers for alleged problems associated with the local unhoused.

Opening land space, working to develop micro-housing communities like Square One and utilizing groups like Community Supported Shelters — combined with tax wavers and other incentives for the broader community — are good workable options.

The art and business community could be brought in to aid in creating aesthetic features, hosting fundraisers and for developing programs that help local for-profit and nonprofit businesses.

Many creative ideas can be developed that keep costs down and still have the capacity to grow in effective ways. Please keep in mind that we can talk about all the good things hammers can do, but until those hammers are picked up and put to task, they are just tools with unrealized potential.

Hedin Manus Brugh
Unhoused in Eugene

WRONG MESSAGE

I appreciate so much about your Pets issue. Your articles and promotions about rescue organizations and animal issues help create much needed awareness and hopefully can convert into some financial support for the non-profits doing rescue, rehabilitation and responsible adoption work.

I do have to speak out, however, about the sinking feeling that came over me when I saw your cover of a beautifully shot portrait of a chimpanzee from Chimps Inc. sanctuary with giant word “PETS” across his face.

As someone who makes a living as a photographer and videographer, I am keenly aware of the impact of images, and I think that juxtaposing a word with a powerful image creates a powerful connection in the brain.

And as someone who spent seven months in Cameroon working with chimpanzees orphaned by the illegal bushmeat trade, I now have a heightened sensitivity to issues surrounding great apes.

I try to use my photography and video work to send a clear message about how absolutely wrong it is to keep all primates as pets, and especially highly intelligent great apes like chimpanzees.

VIEWPOINT BY OBLIO STROYMAN

Trans* Locally and Across the U.S.

TRANS*PONDER IN TODAY’S POLITICAL CLIMATE

Oregonians are fond of saying, “If you don’t like the Oregon weather, wait five minutes,” describing the inconsistencies of the climate in the Pacific Northwest. This mirrors the political climate for trans/gender diverse people in 2017.

It is hard to know whether to feel optimistic or sob, to run at the problems head-on screaming or hide. It is certainly daunting when we look at the situation from the top down, when those who seem to hold the most power are repealing protections and rights. It can create the feeling that we are impotent to do anything to change it.

When we look at what is happening on the Oregon state level, and the local Lane County level, the forecast is a bit more optimistic.

On a local level, Lane County’s Trans*Ponder has been hard at work assisting trans/gender diverse people through changing and challenging times. Trans*Ponder offers direct support services in accessible locations free of charge to the trans/gender diverse community and allies; offers spaces for community to gather and support one another; provides education to the larger community through trainings and events; and provides advocacy in a variety of settings to help remove barriers for trans/gender diverse people to get basic needs met.

Trans*Ponder is a labor of love born out of necessity in 2012, founded and led by trans/gender diverse folks. When Trans*Ponder started, there were no community support groups outside of some insulated student groups, and no trans/gender diverse organizations taking on the education, training and advocacy elements needed to create safer public spaces.

Lane County has shown itself to be more ignorant than hostile to trans concerns for the most part, and since 2015 Trans*Ponder has delivered more than 50 trainings and program evaluations to local agencies and businesses. In 2016 Trans*Ponder gained its 501(c)(3) nonprofit status to expand its services and potential reach. This could not have come at a more timely juncture.

With federal and conservative state attacks on trans/gender diverse people, allied states are pushing back and stepping up to create policies, bills and laws to protect the community. In Oregon, bisexual Gov. Kate Brown signed into law HB 2673a, the first stand-alone transgender bill in Oregon’s history. Oregon has also become the first state to offer a third gender marker — “X” — on state-issued identification, indicating gen-

der non-specified. The Oregon state health plan continues to cover transgender-related health needs. Our state healthcare system is definitely clunky; however, it remains in place.

The federal government continues to remove protections put in place during the last administration for transgender/gender diverse citizens, most notably youth, going so far as to ban us from military service. President Donald Trump has tried to break up with the transgender community on the military’s behalf via a series of tweets (who does that?!). This cavalier and nonchalant approach to discrimination has given permission to conservative states to push anti-transgender legislation through, and in this year already we have seen 16 transgender homicides in the U.S. — ALL trans women of color.

There is “No Pride For Some of Us Without Liberation For All of Us,” says Micah Bazant, transgender artist and social justice activist. This message is essential, and cuts deep across race, class, sexuality, gender identity and ability. It is the most pronounced where these factors intersect. These are the areas where the most work needs to be done to stop dismissing this violence, and it is up to all of us to do it.

Trans*Ponder — started as one person, then two, then four, etc. — served the local community effectively for four years while unfunded, fueled by the hard work and dedication of a few people who saw what needed to be done and committed to doing it. This political climate can be daunting, and the change comes from acting locally.

Trans*Ponder finally has a physical space to centralize our work at 541 Willamette Street, Suite 407a, and continues to fundraise as we aspire to create a gender center to house community projects. Trans*Ponder hosts a minimum of three consistent monthly events with many special events throughout the year. It offers name, gender and ID change logistical/financial support and consolidates verified trans/gender diverse supportive resources. It works with Basic Rights Oregon on the state level as a trans voice in shaping legislation, and it is part of a rapid response network for at-risk youth.

The group works with the school districts, offers advocacy for individuals medically and in the workplace, provides training to local agencies, is developing a Trans Active Fitness Program and continues to develop a people of color advisory board to better support trans people of color in the community.

Now that you see what needs to be done, will you help us do it?

*Oblio Stroyman is the executive director of Trans*Ponder. Pronouns: they, them, theirs. You can find Trans*Ponder at the website transponder.community.*