



HAPPENING PEOPLE

BY PAUL NEEVEL

CLAUDIA RIUMALLÓ AND RICARDO CÁRDENAS

When she was five years old, Claudia Riumalló traveled with her family from Chile to Boston for her father's Ph.D. maternal malnutrition research at MIT. "I went to elementary and middle school in the U.S.," says Riumalló, who also spent four years in Houston, where her father did research on longevity. "He was offered U.S. citizenship, but his goal was to work with the poor in Chile." After high school in Chile, then ruled by military dictator Augusto Pinochet, Riumalló earned a degree in dance from the University of Chile in Santiago. Afterwards, she taught English and Spanish language classes for multi-national company employees at the university, and she met Ricardo Cárdenas, who taught classical

guitar. They were married in 1993 and visited Eugene on a tourist visa at the invitation of a friend in 1997. "We met amazing people here," says Riumalló, who entered and won a U.S. Green Card Immigrant Visa Lottery after seeing a newspaper ad in 2001. She flew to Eugene in July of 2002, followed in September by Cárdenas and their children Daniela, Gabriel and Sebastien. Riumalló now serves as a bilingual academic advisor at Lane Community College, while Cárdenas teaches and performs classical, Latin and jazz guitar. Their story and those of other Lane County immigrants from around the world are dramatized in the original play *Now I am Your Neighbor*, assembled by playwright Nancy Hopps and directed by Carol Dennis, with original music by Cárdenas. Staged readings of the play will be produced at the Very Little Theatre's Stage Left, 2350 Hilyard Street, at 7:30 pm Friday, Sept. 14, and Saturday, Sept. 15; at 2 pm Sunday, Sept. 16; and at 7:30 pm Thursday, Sept. 20, at the Wildish Theater, 630 Main Street, Springfield. Proceeds will be donated to the Community Alliance of Lane County (CALC) to fund their immigrant justice work. For ticket information, visit calcline.org and click on *We Are Neighbors*.



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