

NEWS

BY HENRY HOUSTON

OPEN SESAME

A two-day event will celebrate and encourage the 'open movement' in Eugene

There's no such thing as a free lunch. This can apply to open-source technology — programs like the Mozilla Firefox internet browser and website developer WordPress.

Although it's free for users, people invest time in making the technology better or creating it in the first place.

Open Eugene Festival Presented by Emerald Broadband marks the first meeting of the local open-source community, says Mark Davis, co-founder of EugeneTech, a co-op and volunteer-run program.

When a project is open-source, it means that the software, hardware or data are open for users to use, access, change or distribute for free. An open-source project can also make it easier to bring a team together to develop a project, Davis says.

"This is the first one where we're taking projects and making them open at the event," he says.

Open Eugene Festival is a two-day event designed to work toward opening "all the things," he adds. The event will run Friday and Saturday, Dec. 14-15.

It will feature workshops, speakers and entertainment — like a fiber-connected performance from Rio de Janeiro. It will also remind its attendees about the importance of open source in removing barriers to the tech world.

It's an opportunity to not only bring an open source project you're working on but also learn

more about the open source community in Eugene, Davis says.

"Eugene is a haven for open source. Pretty much everybody uses open source," he says. "One of the reasons to have an open festival is to get more people contributing."

Davis says that although many people use open-source software and hardware in the area, the number of people who actually contribute to these projects is low. He says he wants the community to come together to collaborate on some projects and ideas so the world can see the work Eugene is capable of.

Davis says the event will also feature speakers from around Oregon.

Nikole Gipps, one of the presenters, plans to focus her presentation on the role of open source in education and how open-source programs in education can create equitable education.

Gipps has been a developer for more than 20 years. Recently, she's been getting more involved with open source through developing education curriculum that aims to remove the barriers that teachers and students can face when introducing technology in the classroom.

Some barriers include the cost of implementing tech in school curriculum and how familiar teachers are with tech to incorporate it into the classroom.

Tech programs typically focus on high-school-age students, she says. However, many minorities and girls have lost interest in entering the field by that age.

So, a big part of her focus on making tech more equitable in the education is to get kids to involved before fifth grade. That way, they have an interest in tech before they hit middle school and lose interest.

"I grew up when there wasn't this stuff. I want to give the kids something I didn't have," she tells *Eugene Weekly*.

She adds the tech world needs more voices in it, and that applying open source-developed education curriculums can get more kids interested in technology.

"I'm trying to reduce the barrier to entry," she says. "I don't want a school to make a decision between STEM and new textbooks."

So far, Davis says, most of those attending are contributors — those who want to either work on their own open-source project or on projects others are working on.

"On Saturday, you'll see all these projects being opened. People will work on these projects and make them more open," he says. "They'll come in a particular state of openness and leave in a better state of openness."

Attendees will spend some time working on the game King Pong, a giant version of the classic *Pong* video game that gained popularity in downtown Eugene during summer.

He says there has been some demand for the game in Chattanooga, Tennessee, but he didn't want to make the game and ship it. Open Eugene Festival will be an opportunity to get a team together to assemble the game's plans that can then be accessed by anyone.

Davis is a graduate of the Mozilla open leadership initiative. Organizing and planning the Open Eugene Festival was what he worked on when he was in the leadership program. He says he decided to pursue the event to elevate the message of the importance of having an open source community.

And, he says, being a part of the open source community isn't difficult. All you need to know is how to use the internet. ■

The Open Eugene Festival is Friday and Saturday, Dec. 14-15, at Trifolia, 1203 Willamette Street, #100. For more information visit OpenEugene.org or join the conversation at eugslack.com.

Joy Marshall (REVISITED)

NOVEMBER 2004: The daughter of a Unitarian minister in Birmingham, Michigan, Joy Marshall grew up walking picket lines. "By age 6 or 7, I was aware of social issues," she recalls. "Civil rights, women's rights and farm-worker issues." After college at the University of Michigan, Marshall spent three years teaching middle school in Chicago, which she calls "the hardest job in the world!" Only later, when she was waiting tables, did she find her calling. "God sent me a labor organizer, Barbara Lewis," she explains. "I found what I was meant to do: fight for economic justice." Her first paid political work was Mayor Harold Washington's re-election campaign. Marshall spent three years with Citizen Action/Illinois in Chicago, then moved to Eugene in 1990 and worked three years with Oregon Fair Share before taking a break to care for daughters Maggie and Claire. "I still worked part-time on campaigns," she notes. "Raising the

minimum wage in '96 was the proudest moment of my life." Marshall returned to full-time work in 2001, and now serves as director of Oregon Stand for Children (stand.org), credited with successful school-funding campaigns in Eugene and Portland this year.

2018 UPDATE: Marshall is Lane County director of Stand for Children. "The main thing I'm working on is raising high school graduation rates by providing career and technical education," she says. "Kids who take those classes graduate 15 points higher." Stand for Children was the principal sponsor of Oregon Ballot Measure 98 — expanding career technical education, college-level education opportunities and dropout-prevention strategies in schools — that was approved by two-thirds of voters in 2016. "Our guiding principle is always serving the kids," Marshall says, "giving them concrete skills to get a job out of high school, or helping them see possibilities."



HAPPENING
PEOPLE

BY PAUL NEEVEL