

Who Can Feed the Hungry?

HOMELESS OUTREACH GROUP BREAKFAST BRIGADE RESISTS THE CITY'S EFFORTS TO STOP ITS MEMBERS FROM FEEDING THE HUNGRY AT WASHINGTON JEFFERSON PARK

By Emerson Brady

On Friday, June 30, Lisa Levsen spent her morning the same way she always does five days of the week: feeding the hungry at Washington Jefferson Park. Levsen and her crew had tables lining the sidewalk with a buffet-style breakfast. The menu consisted of chili mac and cheese with a corn side dish, coffee, tea, hot chocolate and milk, with packaged peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for later. Levsen greeted her regulars warmly as she scooped a heaping pile of chili mac on their plates.

"No, that's too much," one man said. Levsen ignored his humility and continued to pile on the food. She says she hears that sentiment often.

Formerly known as the Eugene Catholic Worker, the Breakfast Brigade has been serving meals every Wednesday through Saturday morning at Washington Jefferson Park for nearly 10 years. But recently the group's efforts have come under fire from the city with unclear reasons as to why Breakfast Brigade can't feed Eugene's hungry.

As the Breakfast Brigade's usual crowd went through the line, Levsen noticed what she thought was the police

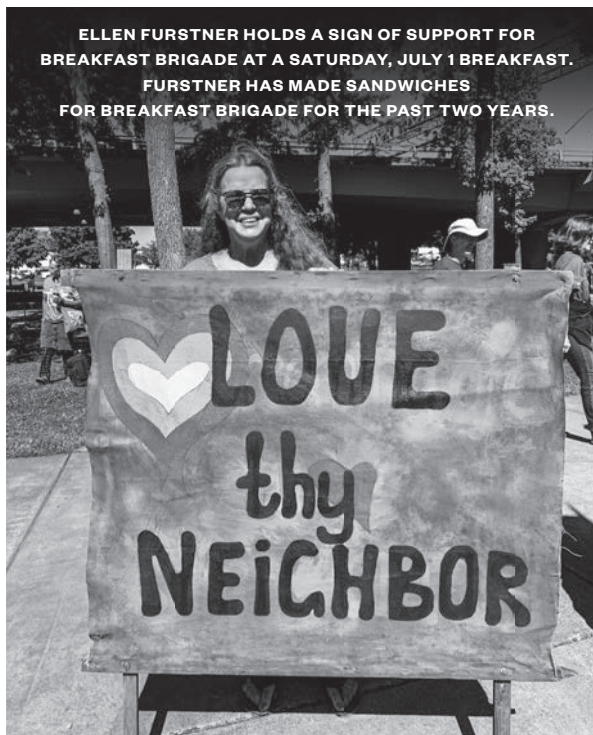


Photo by Emerson Brady

approaching them. The men called themselves Neighborhood Service Officers (NSO). When asked what they do, Levsen said, they declined to comment. "They told us we needed a permit to be here, and that if we come out tomorrow we will be cited and if we come out the next day we will be arrested," Levsen says.

Frightened by the threat but unwilling to back down, Levsen and her crew stood beside their tables in disbelief as to why the police would want to shut them down.

Kelly McIver, communications manager for the city's unhoused response, says that the NSOs are parking enforcement staff who address reported complaints related to vehicles parked longer than regulations allow.

Eugene police spokesperson Melinda McLaughlin says she had never heard of them. In addition to threatening the group with citations and arrest, the NSOs also chalked the group's tires. The city as a rule has generally moved away from chalking tires, instead opting for a digital system that records a photo of the rear license plate.

"We've been serving the homeless for nine years, now all of the sudden we're criminals," fellow Breakfast Brigade member Jan Zoll says.

slant

• Now that national Pride month has wrapped up and Eugene's official Pride celebration is on the horizon for August, **we are pondering where, for the rest of the year, do LGBTQIA+ folks hang out and meet people?** Spectrum? Cowfish? Blairally? If you are young and queer or older or trans or anything else, where are the safe and fun places to meet someone you might love, or at least make out with?

• **Back in February, the Eugene City Council won praise for its stand on climate change** when it voted to restrict the use of natural gas in certain new buildings. However, a ruling by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals would probably have impacted Eugene's authority to regulate our local fossil fuel infrastructure. So on July 10, the council voted unanimously to repeal that ordinance. Mayor Lucy Vinis explains the decision — and why fighting climate change matters — in an online *EW* Extra viewpoint this week. Readers of our Tuesday *EW* Extra Newsletter got jump on the story, and you can too by subscribing to our email newsletters at EugeneWeekly.com/newsletter.

• Some of us were wearing glitter at the Oregon Country Fair, while others were in their running shorts in town. Tracktown USA, also known as Eugene, shined as host of the USA Track and Field Outdoor Championships last week. **But at the real heart of Tracktown are the all-comers meets,**

hosted Wednesday and Thursday evenings over the summer, with almost no fans in the stands at Hayward Field. Anyone from small children to octogenarians can come out to compete against themselves and each other on the world famous track. Learn more at OregonTrackClub.com. The next 12 and under meets are Wednesday, July 19 and August 2, and for 13 and older it's Thursday, July 13, July 20 and August 3.

• **Confronted with a hazing scandal on the football team at Northwestern University, where he is now president, former University of Oregon President Michael Schill fumbled,** giving head coach Pat Fitzgerald a slap on the wrist in the form of a two-week unpaid suspension after a university investigation. Then student journalists at *The Daily Northwestern* stepped up with a story documenting the very sexualized hazing that the football team got away with for years — not to mention a racist culture on the coaching staff — under Fitzgerald's eyes-carefully-averted watch. At that point Schill, embarrassed into doing the right thing, announced he had "erred" and fired the school's winningest coach. Good job, student journalists; bad job, adult administrators. UO watchers have expressed worry that new President John Scholz is a Schill cookie-cutter. We hope not.

• **Laural O'Rourke announced on her Facebook page and via a letter to the Eugene District 4J School Board that she had submitted her resignation** to fellow board members, 4J Superintendent Andy Dey and other 4J administrators on July 8. O'Rourke cited racism and not feeling safe at meetings. Her tenure on the board was

tumultuous, but the board had transparency issues such as using texting and the Signal app to communicate and skirt Oregon public records laws — the latter of which O'Rourke pointed out. The board will now need to start the process of filling that position. If the current board members are pondering Gordon Lafer, who was ousted in the most recent election in what appeared to be voter dissatisfaction with the board's sometimes dysfunctional public meetings, let's just point out that sometimes it's better to get a fresh start and look to foster diverse voices.

• The Oregon Country Fair is over, but summer events go on! GenX can take a trip down memory lane July 13 with ska band The English Beat at the Hult Center. Then, next week, the very, very different from OCF, **Lane County Fair kicks off July 19 with a performance by Lil Jon.** Also at the fair will be Sheila E. and Quiet Riot, to name a few, and community stages will feature the likes of local party band Riffle and Springfield-based outlaw country singer Isaac Barrager. And because it's the fair there will be racing pigs, hula hoopers and all your favorite foods, crafts and rides.

• **What's "in"? Cottage cheese, according to The New York Times.** That's fine with us if we can add tomatoes or blueberries or even cantaloupe, and as long as it's the tangy local goodness of Nancy's. Birding is certainly in, thanks to Cornell University and the Merlin app, which identifies for you the birds you are seeing or hearing. What birds did you hear on your walk today? We recently were told that straight long blonde hair seems to be in, and we wonder where that came from? What else?