

# Keizertimes

SECTION A

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## Food fight escalates

By CRAIG MURPHY  
Of the Keizertimes

An ugly grocery store battle has escalated into an all-out war.

Casualties in the Haggen vs. Albertsons battle include 27 recently rechristened Haggen stores, such as the one on River Road in Keizer.

As mentioned recently in the Keizertimes, Haggen announced in mid-August the Keizer location – rechristened in late April after formerly being an Albertsons – will be closing by mid-October. Store closure and going out of business signs are all over the store, including a large banner on the store front.

Washington-based Haggen purchased 146 Albertsons and Safeway stores last December, the result of a merger between the two large grocery store chains. Prior to the purchase of the new stores, Haggen had just 18 stores in Washington and Oregon.

In July, Albertsons sued Haggen for \$41 million, claiming Haggen failed to pay for inventory that was part of the changeover at 38 of the acquired stores.

Now Haggen is fighting back.

On Tuesday, Haggen attorneys filed a complaint against Albertsons seeking more than \$1 billion in damages. The complaint was filed in the United States District Court for the District of Delaware and makes a number of accusations about Albertsons acting in violation of various federal and state laws, including Federal Trade Commission orders, and attempting to eliminate competition.

Haggen alleges the actions by Albertsons forced the announced store closures.

“This action arises from Albertsons’ coordinated and systematic efforts to eliminate competition and Haggen as a viable competitor in over 130 local grocery markets in five states,” the complaint reads in part. “Albertsons’ illegal campaign includes premeditated acts of unfair and anticompetitive conduct that were calculated to circumvent Albertsons’ obligations under federal antitrust laws, FTC orders, and contractual commitments to Haggen, all of which were intended to prevent and delay the successful entry of Haggen into local grocery markets that Albertsons now dominates.”

“The result of Albertsons’

conduct is the reduction of competition in the affected local markets, thereby reducing consumer choice and decreasing quality while increasing prices for thousands of consumers throughout California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada and Arizona; needless loss of jobs held by innocent workers and infliction of severe brand, reputational and financial harm on Haggen,” the complaint added.

According to the complaint, Haggen paid “in excess of \$300 million” to purchase the stores last year but Albertsons didn’t uphold its part of the deal.

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KEIZERTIMES/Craig Murphy

The Keizer Haggen, which was an Albertsons until late April, is covered with signs about sales and closing. Haggen is suing Albertsons and blaming that company for its struggles.



KEIZERTIMES/Craig Murphy

Kyle Kuhns, a 2011 McNary High School graduate, has gone from trying to be a professional singer to working at Starbucks to now managing artists such as My Brothers and I, whose debut album he is holding.

By CRAIG MURPHY  
Of the Keizertimes

When 2011 McNary High School graduate Kyle Kuhns moved to California four years ago, he had dreams of being a singer.

Now he’s managing singers – and he couldn’t be happier.

Along the way, he’s taking lessons learned in his musical pursuits and using them to help guide new talent and his new company.

When the Keizertimes last caught up with Kuhns, the son of Keizer Police Department deputy chief Jeff Kuhns, he had just come close to making it onto *American Idol* as a singer. He had gone to Willamette University for one year on a music scholarship, following a busy performing schedule while at MHS.

Kuhns ended up on the TV show *X Factor* with the group NYO (Not Your Ordinary) for three seasons, during which time he moved to Los Angeles.

“We were all good, talented musicians,” Kuhns said. “They’re all great people. In December 2013 it wrapped up and I was done performing. I didn’t really love it, so I wanted to go into the other side and make a path on the business side that felt genuine and true to who I am, instead of being an artist and being told to do things and going in a direction I didn’t want to see my career going.”

Even though Kuhns was signed with an agency, he quit at age 19 and wondered what would be next while working at a Starbucks in the LA area.

“I scrambled to find a job in any facet of the entertainment industry I could,” he said.

Kuhns caught a lucky break when one of his regular coffee customers, Jason Vaughn, offered him a job as executive assistant at his company that makes costumes for clients like Disney and Marvel.

“I made a lot of connections through him,” Kuhns said. “He let me have a lot of flexibility to do other jobs like in music, where he knew I wanted to be long-term. He totally understood and supported me. He let me come and go. He was the reason I worked my way in.”

Kuhns then did consulting for a music management company for six months before becoming a digital marketing consultant for Sony Music.

“They work with a lot of digital talent like YouTubers and Vine stars,” Kuhns said. “They have created their own celebrities there and create content for them.”

Kuhns also worked with Iconic Artist Management out of New York. The first client Kuhns worked with for them was Neon Hitch, whom he describes as a “crazy” British artist.

“She was based in LA, so they needed someone to tend to her and be there physically,” Kuhns recalled. “Artists like it when you’re present. She was such a bold personality. I learned a lot from her.”

While still working for Sony, Kuhns now has his own music management company, XX Artists.

“Neon would sign off her messages XX,” Kuhns said. “I wanted to allude to her with my company. It’s my term of affection.”

The first client for Kuhns came from a classmate during the year he attended Willamette, who is part of a sibling group called My Brothers and I.

“We both grew up here, knew of each other and became decent friends,” Kuhns said. “A year after I moved to LA, he sent me this song. He didn’t even know I was working in music, but we had performed together in choirs. He sent me this song, *Nowhere to Run* off a live session and I thought it was phenomenal.”

After several months of discussion, Kuhns decided to start XX Artists and made the Salem-based sibling band his first client. In essence he does the work on the side, as he still works for Sony Mondays through Thursdays.

Kuhns and My Brothers and I have been working together for a year now. The band is signed to Portland-based Expunge Records, has gotten radio play, sold out shows along the West Coast from Los Angeles and Seattle and has its first album, *Don’t Dream Alone*, coming out this month. A release party takes place in Portland on Sept. 17, with a performance at Skype Live Studios in Portland the following day.

“This is now the pinnacle of the first year,” Kuhns said. “Everything we’ve built is off of three songs, which is insane.”

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## Different take on Ol’ Glory



KEIZERTIMES/Craig Murphy

Rick Smith speaks to members of the Keizer Public Arts Commission on Aug. 28 about his plans to make a flag.

By CRAIG MURPHY  
Of the Keizertimes

It may not be a new mural, but it is a new piece of art for River Road in Keizer.

Rick Smith, a Keizer salvage artist with a small custom fabrication shop, came to the Aug. 25 Keizer Public Arts Commission (KPAC) meeting to discuss his idea for an American flag.

“What came to mind was a piece I considered doing but didn’t have a place big enough to display it,” Smith said. “It’s an American flag rendition done with chain and salvage material. I have an example of a small one I’ve done before, Iron Glory. That was a small 24 (inch) by 16 (inch) wall size.”

Smith, who recently did the weather vane at the Big Toy

(shown on the front cover of the Keizertimes last week), referred to a concept of the flag he showed to commissioners.

“The concept I sketched is (a flag) hanging vertically, made from large chain,” Smith said. “The canting would be a raw steel finish. Hopefully it will be very tastefully done. The work would be finished and clearcoated so it has a nice finish.”

KPAC chair Lore Christopher had a concern.

“Would kids be able to run through it?” Christopher asked. “I love everything about it but the idea of kids running through the chains. It would be insured, so the city would pay

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## Now it's for real



KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald

The McNary High School varsity football team had a scrimmage on Blue Day Aug. 22, but now start their 2015 season tonight at North Salem. For preview, see Page. A8.



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