

OPINION

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The Portland Observer
USPS 959-680
Established 1970
4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.,
Portland, OR 97211

STAFF

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Portland Observer PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208
Periodical Postage paid in Portland, OR. Subscriptions are \$60.00 per year
503-288-0033 • FAX 503-288-0015 • EMAIL: news@portlandobserver.com subscription@portlandobserver.com ads@portlandobserver.com

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On The Right Track for Health Crisis Plans

Influenza raises questions about future epidemics

BY DR. GRANT HIGGINSON, KENT BALLANTYNE AND MARILYNN SUTHERLAND

Most of us are too young to recall the terror of the 1918 "Spanish flu" that killed more than 20 million people worldwide, including 550,000 Ameri-

cans. It was a public health emergency of massive proportion.

This year's flu season does not appear, at this point, to be extremely severe. However, its early start, along with publicity about childhood deaths and depleted vaccine supplies, has heightened awareness of the flu's potential threat. Some people are asking if we are ready for a communicable disease epidemic or a bioterrorist attack.

Oregon is more prepared than ever to respond to a public health crisis.

This is primarily due to a

recent infusion of federal bioterrorism and emergency preparedness dollars. These funds added public health staff within counties and at the state level, improved microbiology testing capability at the state public health laboratory in Portland and created a laboratory response network across the state. We have created an electronic communication network that enables rapid information sharing among federal, state and county public health agencies. Hospitals and health clinics have prepared emergency

response plans.

Some have raised the specter of people dying in the streets or being cared for in makeshift facilities. Through careful planning, we can avert such a situation. Hospital medical care "surge capacity" has been assessed throughout Oregon.

Nearly 2,000 additional beds

Across Oregon, hospitals and health systems are constantly re-evaluating emergency plans to ensure that staff are trained to deal with epidemics, that sick patients are sent to the correct facility and that staff and resources are shared appropriately during a crisis.

Critical new relationships have

Are we completely prepared? No, not entirely, and there will always be new diseases that stress or temporarily overwhelm the system. But we are making important strides.

Public health and private health care providers are working and planning together--so that if a "flu pandemic" or other deadly public health emergency arises in this century, we will respond effectively and save lives.

Dr. Grant Higginson is the public health officer in the Oregon Department of Human Services and oversees the state's bioterrorism and public health emergency planning program. Kent Ballantyne is senior president of the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Healthcare Systems. Marilyn Sutherland is administrator of Klamath County Public Health Department and chair of Oregon's Conference of Local Health Officials.

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REACH
Racial & Ethnic Approaches to Community Health
A program of the African American Health Coalition, Inc.
Sponsored by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Wellness Within REACH Activity Calendar

All classes are free of charge!

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Matt Dishman 77 NE Knott		Stretching/Body Sculpting 7-8am Lois		Stretching/Body Sculpting 7-8am Lois		African Dance 10:00-11:00am Addo
Salvation Army 5325 N Williams	Salsa 6:30 - 7:30pm Henry	Water Aerobics CLASSES FULL Waiting List Available	Tai Chi 6:30 - 7:30pm Lyles	Water Aerobics CLASSES FULL Waiting List Available		
Wild Oats Market 3535 NE 15th		Yoga 7:30-8:30pm O'Rourke		Yoga 7:30-8:30pm O'Rourke		Body Conditioning 9:30-10:30am Nickerson
Peninsula Park 700 N Portland						Walking Group 12:30pm Woods
Mallory Avenue Christian Church (Gym) 126 NE Alberta	Aerobics 6:00 - 7:00 AM Pierce	Aerobics 6:00-7:00pm Keller Moves to Humboldt Elementary on 1/6/04	Aerobics 6:00 - 7:00 AM Pierce	Aerobics 6:00-7:00pm Keller Moves to Humboldt Elementary on 1/8/04	Aerobics 6:00 - 7:00 AM Pierce	
	5:30-6:20pm Granville		5:30-6:20pm Granville		5:30 - 6:20pm Granville	
	6:30-7:30pm Nickerson		6:30-7:30pm Nickerson		6:30-7:30pm Nickerson	
Univ of Portland Indoor Track 500 N. Willamette		Wt. Management/ Conditioning 9:00 - 10:00am Hasan		Wt. Management/ Conditioning 9:00 - 10:00am Hasan		
Humboldt Elementary 4915 N. Gantenbein		Aerobics 6:00-7:00pm Keller Begins 1/6/04		Aerobics 6:00-7:00pm Keller Begins 1/8/04		
Daniel's Memorial Church 12th & Killingsworth		Low Impact Aerobics 7:15 - 8:15pm Granville				

**Must be 21 or older to participate. Please check with AAHC before showing up to the first class 503-413-1850. Please receive approval from your doctor before beginning exercise class.



African American Health Coalition, Inc.
2800 N. Vancouver Ave., Suite 100 • Portland, OR 97227 • Phone: 503-413-1850
E-mail: kdempsey@aahc-portland.org • Web: www.aahc-portland.org

are available statewide for "surge capacity" in a health emergency. Planning for how these beds would be used is a decision to be made by local public and private health care providers. The Oregon Department of Human Services has purchased a software program to monitor changes hospital bed status.

been forged. In the past two years public health has become more integrated with emergency responders such as police, fire, emergency management and 911 call centers. The result is a more unified system that can take quick action during a bioterrorist attack or any other public health emergency.

Letters to the Editor:

Needs of People Ignored

Daily, the contradiction between reality and the media myth that we are enjoying a "jobless recovery" is becoming more obvious. Companies are increasing their profits by decreasing the price of labor through lay-offs and using part-time hours to cut back on full time benefits while demanding increased productivity under threat of a pink slip.

I am one of the many in the ever-expanding service sector who deals with the triple burden of keeping a high level of productiv-

ity while working under 40 hours and barely earning enough to live on, let alone think about vacations, healthcare or savings. In addition, I have to work a flexible, i.e. chaotic, work schedule that changes on a weekly basis.

Instead of blaming immigrants in this country and workers in other countries for the disappearance of American jobs and the lowering of wages, I blame the world economy of capitalism that prioritizes profits before people.

Free trade agreements are used to exports jobs to countries where labor and environmental standards are the lowest. The hardest hit by these practices include women and people of color.

All of us need a world economy that prioritizes the needs of people; one that plans production and distribution so that no one goes hungry and everyone can thrive. That economy is international socialism.

Emma Allen
Radical Women

Beef Industry Deception

Current U.S. Department of Agriculture efforts to protect the beef industry from the Mad Cow crisis deceives American consumers.

Mad Cow disease had not been detected earlier because USDA had been testing only a fraction of the millions of cows slaughtered annually. Europe and Japan test thousands every day.

According to a government study, 25 percent of feed plants were out of compliance with a

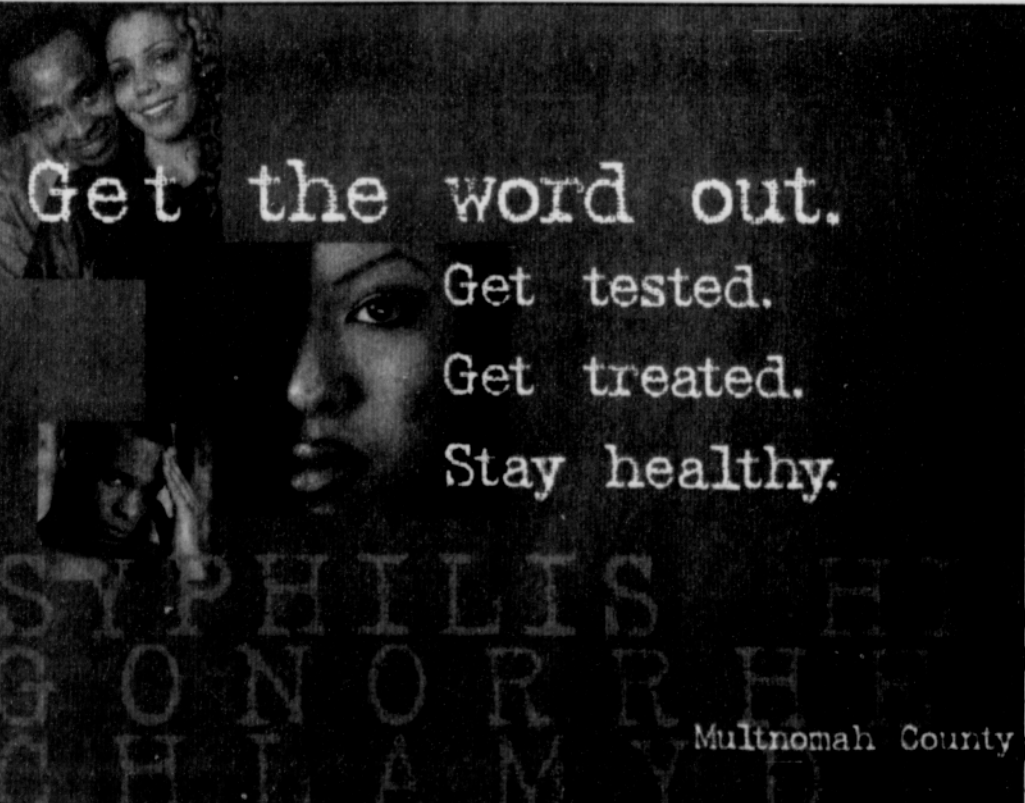
1997 ban on feeding cow slaughterhouse remains to other cows, a known transmission path for the disease.

Americans consume meat products containing spinal column and brain tissue, traditional carriers of the disease. During slaughter, muscle tissues are routinely sprayed with bits of these tissues. T-bone steaks, hamburgers, hot dogs, and beef fillings and toppings contain bits of the spinal column.

Other animals raised for food are also capable of carrying, contracting and, presumably, transmitting the disease, but they don't get to live long enough to manifest symptoms.

Folks in the meat industry should seek a more secure career. The rest of us should make a New Year's resolution to replace meat in our diet with vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.

Julian Staley
Northeast Portland



Get the word out.
Get tested.
Get treated.
Stay healthy.


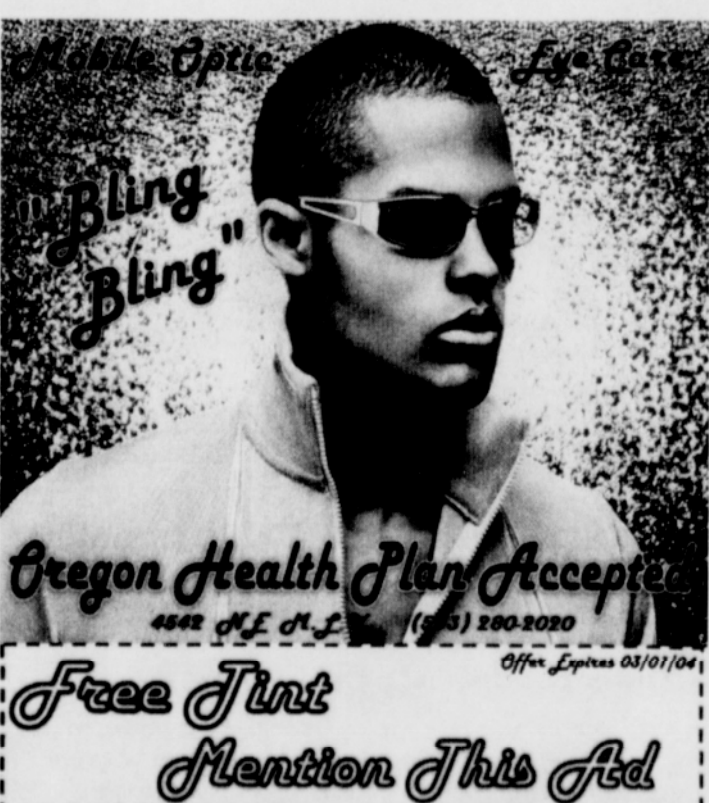
Multnomah County Health Department

STD Clinic
503-988-3700

HIV Community Test Site
503-988-3775

426 SW Stark St., 6th Floor
Downtown Portland

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