The Portland Observer

## The War on Antibiotics

## Get smart on how we use them

BY BEN LILLISTON Would you like some antibiotic-resistant bacteria with your grilled chicken at your backyard barbeque? Of

course not. But that

less the government makes industry change the way most American farm animals are treat sick humans. Now, antibiraised.

production has fed our farm animals a steady diet of antibiotics for decades. Now, the bacteria are fighting back and we're all paying the price.

antibiotics (about 24.6 million pounds a year) consumed in this country are used non-therapeutically to help promote growth in our pigs, chickens, and cattle in proving costly--at least \$4 to \$5 overcrowded pens known as billion a year in health costs alone, "confined animal feeding operations." Without antibiotics added The National Academy of Sci-

idly infect these animals. bacteria are exposed to low levels of antibiotics for long periods of time. That provides ideal conditions for the creation of bacterial resis-

tance. Many of the antibiotlikelihood continues to grow un- ics used to raise factory-farmed animals are the same prescription drugs that doctors use to otic resistance developed for the American industrial animal farm animals are becoming a public health problem for us all.

The medical community has taken strong steps to reduce the over-prescription of antibiotics to humans to slow the develop-An estimated 70 percent of all ment of these superbugs. But we can't win this battle without a similar effort by meat and poultry companies.

Antibiotic resistance is already according to an estimate from to their feed, disease would rap- ences. With few new antibiotics

on the horizon, protecting what mals. The bill, introduced by the to antibiotic-resistant bacteria. we have is essential.

nally taken the first timid steps to address this crisis. The Food and Drug Administration published in June a draft of new guidelines for the meat and poultry industry. The agency outlined a set of antibiotics to be limited to treating animal disease and to include to treat humans. veterinary oversight. FDA officials said these voluntary guidelines laid the groundwork for possible future regulations. Unfortunately, the agency sets no timeline for future regulations, cades, in the making.

Congress must accelerate acthan 80 of the nation's public health organizations, including the American Medical Association and the American Public Health Association, have endorsed a bill that would halt of the overuse of antibiotics in raising food ani-

only microbiologist in Congress, After dragging its feet for Rep. Louise Slaughter, D-N.Y., have to be this way. We can In these factory farms, years, the government has fi- would phase out the non-therapeutic use of seven classes of antibiotics in animals--unless the FDA determines the drugs do not contribute to antibiotic resistance affecting humans. The modest bill would still allow farmprinciples calling for the use of ers to treat sick animals and it only covers antibiotics, also used

> But the big drug and meat companies represent a powerful lobby in Washington, and have thus far blocked the bill these more sustainable practices, and FDA action. Why are they expending such effort to prewhich could be years, even de- vent this major public health initiative? As usual, it has to do To protect America's health, with the bottom line. Banning antibiotics for healthy animals work for us and our children in tion to protect antibiotics. More raised in extremely crowded the future, we have to get smarter conditions would mean that about how we use them. We chicken, cattle and pigs would need to find the political will to require more room. The cost act. of producing beef, pork, and chicken would likely rise--al- the book Genetically Engithough it would be nothing com- neered Foods: A Self-Defense

The good news is that it doesn't raise enough animals for food and still protect the effectiveness of antibiotics. Denmark, the world's largest pork exporter, banned antibiotic feed additives in 1998. Producers improved animal husbandry and hygiene, and the overall use of antibiotics in agriculture dropped by over 50 percent. A similar ban is now in place in the rest of Europe. And of course many American

farmers in the U.S. already use producing pork, chicken and livestock without antibiotics.

Nearly all of us have needed antibiotics at some point in our lives. If we want antibiotics to

Ben Lilliston is co-author of pared to the health costs linked Guide for Consumers.

**College Grads Dwindling** 



## U.S. falls behind other nations

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS For decades, American's young adults obtained more college degrees than those in other countries. Today, the U.S.

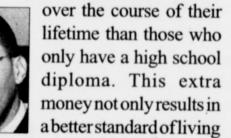
college graduation rate ranks 12th out of 36 developed nations.

The U.S.'s inability to produce more college graduates isn't just a threat to the future of our young people: it could, if not remedied, weaken the country's ability to compete in a global marketplace.

an associate degree, compared to 56 percent of young adults in mented. Canada, the world leader in college graduation rates. For people of color, the college completion

ofblacks and 20 percent of Latinos them every step of the way or higher.

College graduates earn more



for degree holders but also includes a benefit for the American economy. If fewer people finish college, the result will be less revenue generated through property, income and other taxes.

Last year, President Obama announced the College Grad Initiative, which called for five million more college graduates by Only 40 percent of young 2020. Strong in theory, we need to Americans 25 to 34 have at least hear more on how and when this plan will be funded and imple-

> To ensure our young people travel smoothly from pre-school to college to college graduation,

25 to 34 have an associate degree through public, private and community partnerships.

The Bill and Melinda Gates over the course of their Foundation has pledged \$110 million towards improving remedial programs at community colleges diploma. This extra to ensure those students have money not only results in the support they need to complete their education. More philanthropic organizations must step up the way Gates did and work locally and nationally, at the elementary, high school and college levels, to ensure students have the academic and social tools they need to succeed in school. Additionally, the government must fully fund education support programs; an idea without dollars behind it is useless.

> There has been much talk lately about investing in America. The best way to do that is to invest in our young people.

Greg Mathis is a retired Michigan District Court Judge rate is even lower: only 30 percent we need to monitor and assist and syndicated television judge.



Friday August 6th, 2010: Place to be announced Saturday August 7th, 2010: Embassy Suites Portland Airport Hotel (rooms available for only \$109 + tax) Cost for reunion: Classmates \$65 spouse or companion \$45 Please R.S.V.P. as soon as possible to: E-mail to: leilablakely@gmail.com (preferable) Voice mail: Carol Erdmann 503-982-3051 Snail mail: JHS Class of 70 / PO Box 19905 / Portland, Oregon 97280