

From small beginnings
come great things.
—Proverb

Bangladesh fire fuels fight for worker safety

BY VANESSA HOUK

Separated by more than a hundred years and eight thousand miles, the recent clothing factory fire in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and the New York City Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of 1911 are tangled threads that connect across continents and are interwoven into a history of greed and corruption. In the United States, the aftermath of the Triangle fire led to tougher fire code regulations and labor standards that protect workers to this day. Meanwhile, in Bangladesh, factories continue to have dangerous working conditions and US companies still import their goods on a daily basis.

Workers described what happened on November 24 at the Tazreen Fashions LTD plant in Dhaka. Fire alarms blared as the fire broke out on the first-floor warehouse of the nine-floor factory building, but factory workers were told to keep working and were assured that the alarms were just a test. They worked for several minutes until smoke filled the building and the lights went out. In darkness, panicked workers screamed and felt their way around the floor of the building, trying to locate the exits. Many found locked doors in a business that had a history of breaking fire codes.

Within minutes, the fire raged out of control. Reminiscent of the Triangle fire where 146 New York garment workers died, at least 112 people, most of them women, died in the Bangladesh blaze.

Fire investigators say the blaze erupted after stacks of yarn and fabric caught fire. They believe that if the fabric had been stored in an enclosed, fireproof room, as required by law, workers may have been able to escape safely.

On the other side of the globe, American shoppers were recuperating from their frantic Black Friday shopping, where millions of people pushed and shoved one another to get the best deals on cell phones, electronics and other holiday gifts, including many of the labels found on garments in the Tazreen factory. Eyewitnesses say that several major Western clothing brands were among labels found inside the burned factory. Labor rights advocates wonder how major corporations can operate without stronger worker safety guidelines in place.

Mega retailer Walmart released a statement that reads, "The Tazreen factory was no

FACTORY FIRE, PAGE 2

Democracy Now! visits Ashland

Silenced Majority tour benefits public media

BY KRISTI WRIGHT

"We need a strong, independent media, a media that serves the interests of the silenced majority," said Amy Goodman, host of independent news program Democracy Now!, speaking to a sold-out crowd at Ashland High School's Mountain Avenue Theater. Goodman and co-author Denis Moynihan were traveling the country to promote their book, *The Silenced Majority: Stories of Uprisings, Occupations, Resistance, and Hope*, and to raise money for independent television and radio stations.

Along the way, they learned about how people are organizing at the grassroots level, the effects of new voter ID laws, and the consequences of the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* that allowed unlimited campaign contributions. The 100-city Silenced Majority Tour began in late August at the Republican National Convention in Tampa, Florida. Goodman and Moynihan visited more than 70 cities before reaching Ashland. The October 28 event was a benefit for radio station KSKQ and Southern Oregon Public Television (SOPTV).

Democracy Now!, a production of Pacifica Radio, is an independent global news program. Its mission is to provide "access to people and perspectives rarely heard in the US corporate-sponsored media, including independent and international journalists, ordinary people from around the world who are directly affected by US foreign policy, grassroots leaders and peace activists, artists, academics and independent analysts."

In the Rogue Valley, Democracy Now! is broadcast weekdays on SOPTV-World 8.2/Channel 21 at 7:00 AM and 10:00 PM. In Ashland, it airs weekdays on KSKQ 89.5 FM at 12:00 PM. The program is broadcast on the web as well as on more than 1100 television and radio stations across the country. It is financed entirely by contributions from viewers, listeners, and foundations.

When asked what motivates her, Goodman replied, "Public media is a huge kitchen table that stretches across the globe. We all sit around it, debating and discussing the most important issues of the day: war and peace, life and death. Anything less is a disservice to a democratic society." This was Goodman's fourth trip to Ashland in support of public media. She visited in 2005, 2006, and 2009.

The importance of public media was emphasized throughout the event. Goodman criticized the effects of advertising and corporate underwriting on the editorial integrity of media outlets, citing pressure on those outlets to avoid airing substantive debates about issues in which their funders have a financial stake. To illustrate, she noted the lack of discussion on climate change during the presidential debates, despite rising global temperatures and a higher incidence of extreme weather events. The Commission on Presidential Debates, which has run the debates since 1988, is controlled by the Republican and Democratic parties, which receive contributions from oil companies that would likely lose money if legislation to counteract climate change were enacted.

Citing financial connections between corporate media outlets and defense contractors that profit from war, Goodman denounced the lack of critical reporting on the effects of United States military ventures, including civilian deaths from drone strikes as well as high rates of mental illness and unemployment among veterans. "We no longer have a mainstream media," said Goodman. "We have an extreme media beating the drums for war."



Amy Goodman, host of Democracy Now!, signs a copy of her latest book at a fundraiser for community radio. IMAGE VIA KSKQ NEWS SERVICE

Southern Oregon Public Television (SOPTV), which organized the speaking event, is a PBS member station serving southern Oregon and northern California. It is a nonprofit, commercial-free station that produces educational programming on a variety of topics that are of interest to the community. It relies on viewer contributions.

Community radio station KSKQ, which is based in Ashland, is also funded by

contributions from its audience. The station is an affiliate member of Pacifica Radio, which is the network that produces Democracy Now! With more than 50 volunteer producers and staff, KSKQ provides a platform for community voices and offers opportunities for anyone to learn radio and communication skills. The station hosted a meet-and-greet with Goodman to raise money for its WATTS UP! campaign, which will fund equipment upgrades allowing the station to expand its reach from Ashland to most of Jackson County.

At the meet-and-greet, Goodman signed copies of her book and chatted with guests. Although tired from a busy tour schedule, Goodman smiled warmly as each person approached her, taking the time to shake each person's hand and have a conversation about how they are involved in the community. Among the guests was activist Deb Rothschild, who spoke about how Goodman inspires her. "No matter how much you do as an activist, seeing Amy reminds you how much more you can do." Rothschild and her husband Herb spoke with Goodman about their involvement in Peace House, an Ashland nonprofit devoted to education, outreach, and action on social justice issues.

Democracy Now! was founded to cover the 1996 election. Due to the program's popularity, Pacifica Radio decided to continue it after the election. Since then, Democracy Now! has served as a platform for grassroots movements and marginalized voices, including

PUBLIC MEDIA, PAGE 2

Peace champion advocates direct action

BY JASON HOUK

According to Medea Benjamin, her experiences growing up in Long Island, New York in the turbulent 1960s had a powerful impact on her worldview. Racial tensions and the war in Vietnam divided her community as well as the country. "Activism kind of chose me," she said. "Issues around racism, injustice and war were part of my high school years and really affected my thinking about how messed up the world is."

"To this day, I've never had a sip of coffee. When I was young, I thought, this world is really messed up — what is it adults do that makes it so bad? Maybe it's the coffee," she quips.

In October, local nonprofit Peace House honored Benjamin, who co-founded activist groups Global Exchange and

CODEPINK, with the Marjorie Kellogg National Peacemaker Award. The award honored her 30 years of work as an advocate for peace and social justice.

"Sometimes CODEPINK is criticized for standing up at congressional hearings and speaking up, or for sitting in congressional offices and refusing to move. When they say 'that's kind of rude' or it 'hurts your cause,' we just say, 'You know what's rude? Killing innocent people is really rude.'"

Benjamin was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2005 and is the recipient of the 2010 Martin Luther King, Jr. Peace Prize.

Together with her husband Kevin Danaher, Benjamin

co-founded Global Exchange, an international human rights organization dedicated to promoting social, economic, and environmental justice around

the world. Benjamin's efforts with CODEPINK began in 2002. Millions organized and marched against the US invasion of Iraq. "We showed that we had the capacity to mobilize

large numbers," said Benjamin. "During the Obama administration, participation in the peace movement has decreased."

As a community organizer, Benjamin recognizes the challenges of getting the word out. She organizes high-profile publicity stunts to promote her goals. "We write lots of articles that don't get printed. We have lots of meetings with elected officials that don't go anywhere. Sometimes CODEPINK is criticized for standing up at congressional hearings and speaking up, or for sitting in congressional offices and refusing to move. When they say 'that's kind of rude' or it 'hurts your cause,' we just say, 'You know what's rude? Killing innocent people is really rude.'"

While Benjamin agrees that letters to the editor, signing

DIRECT ACTION, PAGE 2

KSKQ audience to expand

Wattage upgrade approved by the FCC

BY JASON HOUK

Ashland's community radio station is about to get much louder. On October 31, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) approved an application to increase the strength of the broadcast signal for KSKQ 89.5 FM. The upgrade to 560 watts will allow KSKQ to reach much of the Rogue Valley, including Medford, Talent, Phoenix, Central Point, White City, and Jacksonville.

KSKQ is based in Ashland. With more than 50 volunteer producers and staff, the station provides a platform for community voices and offers

opportunities for anyone to learn radio and communication skills. It's a project of the Multicultural Association of Southern Oregon.

"Our dream of reaching all of Jackson County is one step closer to realization," said station manager Carson Bench. "We believe that many people are missing out on something of great value. Once they have access to it, they will cherish it greatly."

"In particular, the Multicultural Association of Southern Oregon wants KSKQ to engage with the Latino population and provide a place for programming that is relevant to that part of the community."

The FCC's approval of a

560-watt signal surprised KSKQ volunteers, who applied for an increase to 300 watts. Currently, KSKQ broadcasts at 18 watts and struggles to get their signal beyond Ashland. The broadcast station is on Table Mountain, which is about 20 miles east of Ashland.

"We still need a properly tuned antenna to make our dream a reality," added Bench. "If you want to help, donate to the WATTS UP! campaign. Every dollar helps."

For information on how you can help KSKQ upgrade its antenna and equipment, visit www.kskq.org or call the station at (541) 482-3999.

Direct action

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online petitions, and meeting with congressional representatives are all great tactics, they should be part of a larger strategy that involves direct actions. Benjamin insists that direct action is a tool that must be used. "We are at such a disadvantage when fighting the big powers who have so much money behind them. We have to use every nonviolent tool in the toolshed. It's important that people show that they are willing to go to jail for their beliefs, that they are willing to stand their ground."

Along with direct actions, Benjamin agrees that it is critical to build credibility to be taken seriously. "We have to show that we have a lot of depth to what we do. That it's just not about the caroling or the flash mobs, the fun stuff; it is also that we are up late at night doing our research. We have to show how serious we are in a variety of ways."

Overall, Benjamin says that tactics that work the best are the ones that folks have fun with. "I think about how important it is to use joy and humor in our protests. We want young people to get involved and see that this kind of work can be fun and is not just about being miserable about the state of the world."

To build a successful movement, Benjamin explains that it's important to employ a variety of strategies in a smart and principled fashion. "We have campaigns that have real strategies to them. Who are the people who have the ability to change policy and how are we going to influence them?" She recommends that every action be part the larger plan that moves the campaign forward. "If it's part of a broader campaign that has a lot of facets to it, we can have the fun and the

joy and the seriousness and be taken seriously at the same time."

Benjamin encourages everyone to do what they can, but above all to take action. "For some people, it might be they only have the time or interest in writing that letter to the editor or doing their online support or giving some funds to an organization that is doing good work. People who have more time and feel stronger commitment can take it to the next level. There are a lot of things that people can do. The most important thing is to start somewhere and keep trying to push yourself to do one more thing."

To be more successful, Benjamin points out that organizers must understand how all our actions are part of the larger movement. "I think we have to look at it holistically and recognize how connected all of our issues are, and if you are working on one of them then you are contributing to the whole."

As Benjamin puts it, we need to learn how to buy local, how to build local currencies, how to build up community-supported agriculture, and how to bring our commitments in the broader environmental consciousness to the way we live our lives.

Benjamin reflects on the Occupy movement for its ability to inspire many new activists, but recognizes that movements need structure. "I thought the Occupy movement was fantastic and brought so many new people in. We said that the beauty of it was leaderless and didn't have a particular focus, but in the end you need some focus and you need some leaders. Occupy inspired so many fresh ideas and fresh ways of doing things, but it had so many problems to it that it ended up being dispersed into lots of smaller movements that have a specific focus to them."

When looking to the future, Benjamin has much hope in the

growing efforts of young people around the world in the fights against tyranny and social injustice. "I look around the world and I see tremendous youth movements. I was in Tahrir Square during the uprising in Egypt and it was fantastic to see these young people who stood their ground in the face of snipers and government thugs and they just wouldn't leave. They created a revolution."

Benjamin takes inspiration from the successful student movements in Chile and Quebec where thousands of people took to the streets, forcing their governments to back down on tuition hikes. She believes the student debt crisis is just the spark to inspire a renewed student movement here in the United States. "The storm has been brewing for such a long time and I think the student debt issue has a tremendous impact. Students are going to have to rise up."

Looking to inspire young people to get involved, Benjamin says, "I think what we have to do is keep educating and keep getting new people involved. Reach out to young people and train them. Give them skills they can use to organize."

"We haven't seen the tipping point yet," reflects Benjamin. "Everybody knows that the main issue in this country is jobs. The time is ripe in this economic crisis for us to mobilize around the idea of jobs in the US, drop the outsourcing, and buy local. There are many communities around the country that are doing it on a small scale."

"Its going to happen, we just never know when and how."

Jason Houk is an organizer with Southern Oregon Jobs with Justice. He is news director of KSKQ 89.5 FM, a community radio station based in Ashland, Oregon. He is the recipient of the 2010 Hal Jamison Independent Media Award.

Triangle Shirtwaist Company: Twenty-First Century Edition

BY MICHAEL CERAOLO

A highrise building
No external fire escapes
(Locked doors?)
112 dead workers

Wal-Mart, Sears, and others have offshored the working conditions of the early twentieth century Safety. Always no safety

Michael Ceraolo is a poet and author of Cleveland Haiku and Euclid Creek. He lives in Cleveland, Ohio.

Public media

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peace activists, revolutionaries, environmentalists, labor organizers, academics, artists, independent analysts, and many others. The program and staff have won dozens of awards for their investigative reports.

Public media such as SOPTV, KSKQ, and Pacifica Radio are vital for facilitating the free and open exchange of ideas, which is increasingly important in an environment dominated by for-profit media with financial connections to powerful interest groups. Ongoing support from the community will ensure that public media organizations such as SOPTV, KSKQ, and Pacifica

Factory fire

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

longer authorized to produce merchandise for Walmart. A supplier subcontracted work to this factory without authorization and in direct violation of our policies. Today we have terminated the relationship with that supplier. The fact that this occurred is extremely troubling to us, and we will continue to work across the apparel industry to improve fire safety education and training in Bangladesh." Contrary to Walmart's statement, the International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF), which aims to build a just world for workers by ending child



Bangladeshi labor activist Kalpona Akter holds up the remains of a Walmart garment after the factory fire that killed 120 workers. IMAGE VIA DEMOCRACY NOW!

labor and has spent years tracking garment factory fires, says that documents, brands and logos found inside the factory include Walmart's Faded Glory, Gap, Sears, and Disney. ILRF envisions a world where corporations halt the practice of using the poorest international workforces to increase their fortunes and pushes for fair trade. ILRF is calling for "an independent and transparent investigation into the causes of the fire; full and fair compensation to be paid to injured workers and to

continue to produce quality programming in the public interest.

"The media is absolutely essential to the functioning of a democracy," said Goodman. "It's not our job to cozy up to power. We're supposed to be the check and balance on government."

To support KSKQ, visit kskq.org or call (541) 482-3999. To support SOPTV, visit soptv.org or call (800) 888-1847.

Kristi Wright is a community organizer and advocate for social justice. Oregon Action board member. She helps progressive organizations achieve their goals by utilizing her skills in publicity, graphic design, website development, social media, writing, and editing. Email her at kristi@rvcommunitypress.com.

the families of the deceased; and effective action from all parties involved to prevent future tragedies."

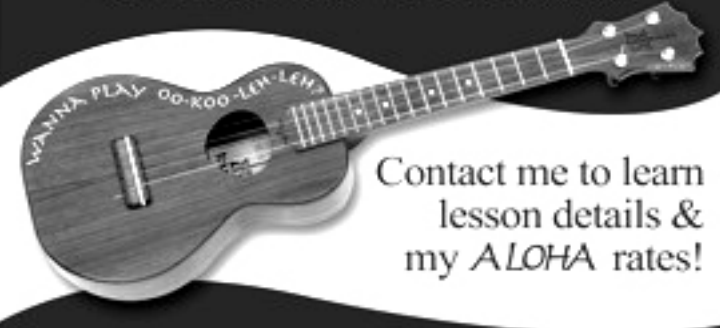
We all benefit from the safety standards put in place after the Triangle fire. Please take a few minutes to do your part to make sure that those 112 Bangladesh workers did not die in vain and that better workforce standards can be achieved across the globe. sweatfree.org wants you to call your senators and ask them to sign Senator Harkin's letter to President Obama. The letter asks him to use all the tools at his disposal to ensure that the federal government does not pursue or continue contracts with prime contractors, subcontractors, or licensees that fail to guarantee basic and fundamental rights for

their workers and throughout their supply chains, including the right to a safe workplace.

You can reach Senator Wyden and Senator Merkley's offices through the capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121.

Passionate about social and economic justice, Vanessa Houk is the author of You Paid What? A Simple Guide to Slashing Grocery Bills and is currently writing a novel. She resides in Ashland.

FUNDAMENTALS OF UKULELE
IN THREE ONE-HOUR LESSONS



Contact me to learn
lesson details &
my ALOHA rates!

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Analysis

Homelessness: a call for compassion

BY KEITH HAXTON

Ashland has a homelessness problem. The magnitude of concern about the problem was demonstrated in Ashland's recent city council elections, as the subject garnered comment from every candidate and almost all civic organizations involved. However, I witnessed a clear and profound lack of understanding amongst most of the people who spoke on the issue. Thus, I think that defining the problem is of some importance.

Ashland has a large transient population. This population is ever-fluctuating and difficult to assess, as it is practically impossible to distinguish from Ashland's much beloved and celebrated tourist population. Transients and tourists behave in exactly the same way and for all but one distinction are the same people. Both come to Ashland of their own accord, tour the sites, spend their money, and leave. The only contrast between transients and tourists are how they look and how much money they possess. This is known as class distinction.

Some transients are buskers. They are people who play musical instruments or perform for money. These people are most

often on a tour of sorts that takes them from place to place. Not to dismiss Ashland's resident busker population, which is notable, but the majority of buskers on the streets do not consider Ashland their permanent home.

There are also transients who travel through Ashland on their way to other places. Some of these people stop in Ashland to panhandle for food or gas mon-

hardships. I would not classify them as a part of Ashland's homeless population any more than I would classify a tourist as a resident. Transients deserve to be treated with with compassion and dignity, but in terms of Ashland's abilities and responsibilities, I define Ashland's homeless population as people who have set up a persistent residence in or around the city.

Combine Ashland's high cost of living, which is far above state and national averages, with the fact that over 80 percent of homes in Ashland have rent or a mortgage, adding in poverty and the ever-increasing cost of utilities, and you have the perfect conditions for a homelessness crisis.

ey, and they sometimes take advantage of the limited free meals and charitable services that are generously provided by organizations and residents of Ashland.

Both buskers and panhandlers stop here more as a result of Ashland's artistically vibrant culture, as well as its kind and tolerant populace, than as a result of their own economic

The differences between transient and homeless people are lost in the eyes of those who don't pay close attention to the issue. Most conflate and confuse the two terms and, sometimes accidentally, misrepresent issues when discussing the homelessness problem. If homeless people and transient people are one in the same, there is no reason to

believe that Ashland has a significant role in creating or solving the homelessness problem. This line of thinking leaves some lacking any sense of ownership of the issue, and all too often leads to the simple solution of "throw the bums out". The importance of a sense of ownership cannot be overstated. Many who are homeless in Ashland did not arrive here in such a condition.

Since the economic recession began in 2007, many residents have found their wages stagnant, reduced, or absent as a result of being laid off. The city of Ashland eliminated more than 20 full-time employee positions in 2008. Many Ashland teachers were laid off in 2009 and the years since, in conjunction with budget shortfalls and school closures. Southern Oregon University has laid off at least a dozen employees in this year alone. In total, Ashland has more than 800 unemployed workers and an unemployment rate of 8.1%.

Ashland has below-average state and national incomes for families and households. It has a high percentage of residents under the poverty line, ranking in the top 20% of all Oregon

HOMELESSNESS, PAGE 4

Pacifica Radio defends free speech in broadcasting

BY KRISTI WRIGHT

Pacifica Radio, operated by the Pacifica Foundation, produces Democracy Now! along with other programs such as Free Speech Radio News. It is a network of independent, listener-funded radio stations with a history of defending freedom of speech in broadcasting. Its programs cover politics, culture, and the performing arts from a grassroots perspective. The Pacifica Radio Archives in Los Angeles chronicle more than fifty years of broadcasting.

The Pacifica Foundation was created in 1946 by journalist Lewis Hill, who filed for conscientious objector status during World War II. Pacifica's first station, KPFA in Berkeley, began broadcasting in 1949. True to its pacifist roots, the station aired interviews with opponents of the Korean War. Since then, Pacifica stations have aired many interviews with peace activists opposed to militarism and war.

In an era of McCarthyism-inspired crackdowns on dissent in the media, KPFA won the 1957 George Foster Peabody Award for programming that was critical of McCarthyism. Beginning in 1960, Pacifica was investigated by the House Un-American Activities Committee and the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee for subversion. In addition to demanding full information on Pacifica's finances and governance, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requested a tape of a 1955 broadcast featuring the work of poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, which they deemed "vulgar, indecent and in bad taste" with "strong implications against religion, government, the president, law enforcement, and racial groups." In 1962, the FCC withheld license renewals for Pacifica stations pending investigation into communist affiliations. Pacifica was never cited and the licenses were renewed after a three-year delay.

Pacifica clashed with the FCC throughout the 1970s and 1980s. As part of a 1973 broadcast discussing verbal taboos and attitudes toward language, station WBAI in New York City aired comedian George Carlin's "Filthy Words" routine, in which Carlin repeatedly recites seven words not permitted on the public airwaves. After receiving a complaint from a listener whose son had heard the program, the FCC issued a letter of reprimand, warning the station not to air the program again. Although there was no fine attached, the letter could have negative consequences when it came time to renew the station's license. Pacifica

Homeownership: old myths, painful realities

BY MICHELLE GLASS

The American dream is being mourned by many. The familiar story of homeownership goes something like this: a person finds a home they love, goes to the bank to get a loan, uses the loan to buy their dream home, and then makes monthly payments to the bank until the loan is paid off. Sound familiar? If this story is assumed to be true, the foreclosure crisis looks like the logical consequence of Americans overreaching and "buying more house than they can afford" while the banks are just enforcing the consequences of non-payment. The reality is much more complex and disturbing. Here's what we all need to know to understand the housing crisis, how it affects all of us, and how to fight back effectively.

Let's say you find a home you love, so you go to the bank for a loan and use that loan to buy the home. There are at least thirteen additional undisclosed entities involved in your loan that you may or may not ever hear about. These entities all have an interest in your loan, but not necessarily the same interest, and they certainly don't share your interests. These shadow entities change many times over the life of the loan, and many of these transactions go unrecorded. This clouds the chain of title, which is the ability to track the changing ownership of the loan and prove legal rights to collect payments on the loan,

and it deprives county budgets of revenues from recording fees. It is estimated that Jackson County loses about \$1 million every year to these unrecorded transfers. That's enough to fund our entire veterans' services program!

The rapid transfer of interest in the loan happens through unregulated, highly profitable Wall Street transactions that tricked the market into thinking there was demand for homes, driving home values up. But the demand

[...] foreclosures are roughly 46% more profitable for mortgage servicing banks than if the homeowner kept making payments. Big banks don't care about the homes; they just want their share of the payout from a complex mortgage and foreclosure system that powerful Wall Street interests have set up.

was manufactured and the bets were on us, with some investors putting their money on homeowners defaulting and some investors betting we'd keep paying. It all came crashing down when too many bets came up to collect at once and there wasn't enough real money to pay them all off. So here we are with an economic collapse resulting in job losses, home values crashing, the foreclosure crisis, and Wall Street banks acting surprised and begging for endless taxpayer bailouts.

With this information, let's revisit foreclosures. Mortgage servicing banks and investors have been paid in full by government-funded investors' insurance, taxpayer-funded bailouts, and now quantitative easing to the tune of \$40 billion a month in taxpayer money. At the same time, the largest mortgage servicing banks—Bank of America, Wells Fargo, Citigroup, JP Morgan Chase, and Ally Financial—have refused to work with homeown-

ers who want to keep making their payments but cannot afford payments on loan values that are based on pre-crash home values, not today's market value. This has left left sixteen million homeowners owing more than their homes are worth, putting these families at greater risk for default and foreclosure in the future.

Why don't the banks do more to help homeowners? Our research shows that foreclosures are roughly 46% more profitable for mortgage servicing banks

than if the homeowner kept making payments. Big banks don't care about the homes; they just want their share of the payout from a complex mortgage and foreclosure system that powerful Wall Street interests have set up.

Things start making more sense when the real economic incentives are revealed. For example, it no longer seems baffling that over four million homeowners have lost their homes since 2007, with another seven million at risk, and that the banks are doing very little to help. Over \$7 trillion in equity has been moved from Main Street to Wall Street through foreclosures, and that number is growing. That was our retirement savings, capital for small businesses, and money to send the next generation to college. Foreclosures have proved to be a powerful mechanism for widening the wealth gap in this country, putting financial stability and the American dream even further out of reach for generations of hard working low-income and middle-income families.

In order to fight back effectively, we must first understand the real story of foreclosures. Then we must fight back on the individual, legal, and cultural levels.

By providing education and resources on housing and foreclosure issues, homeowners and renters understand their rights and options. This

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Homelessness

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cities, with more than 3,500 residents and 400 families in poverty. Additionally, more than 25% of Ashland residents under the age of 18 are in poverty.

Combine Ashland's high cost of living, which is far above state and national averages, with the fact that over 80 percent of homes in Ashland have rent or a mortgage, adding in poverty and the ever-increasing cost of utilities, and you have the perfect conditions for a homelessness crisis. More than 200 Ashland homes have been foreclosed on since 2008 and nearly 100 homes did not pay their rent last year. However, foreclosures have not driven down the cost of living. Instead, some of the houses have been converted into vacation homes, often illegally, and many hundreds of others remain unsold or off the market.

In January 2012, I participated in a survey of homeless people in Ashland, which was commissioned by the Housing

and Urban Development Department (HUD) and organized by local volunteers and activists. According to the report, there are 213 homeless people in and around Ashland, more than 70 of whom are children in grades K-12. The overwhelming majority, more than 150, are white men. 178 live within the city limits. Only 28 claimed to be homeless by choice, while more than 70 stated that their homelessness was a result of unemployment or inability to pay rent, which is also called abject poverty.

What is it like to be homeless in Ashland today? According to city law, it is illegal to be homeless and sleep in Ashland. This ban on sleeping is an affront to basic human rights. By forcing poor people to leave, hide, and live as second-class citizens, the law violates our nation's prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment.

A few compassionate residents are working to provide shelter for those in need, and have provided a no-frills winter shelter for the past few years. This shelter alone cannot

and will not solve Ashland's homelessness problem, as it currently has a maximum capacity of 20 people.

This winter shelter will bring poor and struggling people, including families and children, in from the cold, and it could be the start of something more. Although Ashland residents did not cause all the problems that created our homeless population, we can create the solutions. As a person who has been homeless in Ashland for more than 20 months, I know that solutions don't come easy, but they can be realized if we work together.

To get involved, contact Heidi Parker of the Homelessness Steering Committee at (541) 482-1520 or parker-shames@opendoor.com.

Keith Haxton is a community organizer and advocate for social justice. He is on the board of Options for Homeless Residents of Ashland (OHRA), a nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing, mitigating, and overcoming homelessness and poverty.

Homeownership

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empowers homeowners to effectively fight foreclosure, which results in more families in their homes, stronger communities, and healthier local economies.

In Oregon, courageous homeowners are successfully fighting in court to expose and stop wrongful foreclosures. The court rulings they have won build powerful legal precedent that has had a ripple effect in Oregon, leading to the cancellation of thousands of similar foreclosures for homeowners who never had to fight. The precedent is focusing the attention of national media and elected officials on the fraudulent practices of banks. This has led to strong action by Attorneys General Kroger and Rosenblum, the Oregon legislature, and officials in Multnomah County who voted

unanimously to sue mortgage giant MERS for lost revenues.

On the cultural level, we must tell the real story of foreclosure and economic collapse. The mainstream story of who crashed the economy—the lazy unemployed or deadbeat homeowner—is a myth that masks the role foreclosures play in the movement of wealth from families at the bottom to bankers and CEOs at the top of our economy. The real story highlights the destructive role big banks play in our economy while undoing the shame placed on homeowners, struggling small business owners and the unemployed.

The work outlined above is not the work of any one person or group, but the work of a movement. Foreclosures are a strategic point of intervention for addressing growing inequality in America and the mechanisms driving the growing gap. By tackling the foreclosure crisis on all levels, families remain in their

homes and people come together in empowered understanding and action against a common threat. Together we are building the grassroots pressure on our elected officials to create real solutions to the housing crisis: a temporary foreclosure moratorium, a real investigation of mortgage servicing banks, their foreclosure practices, and mortgage write downs for underwater homeowners. Foreclosures serve the interests of the powerful and wealthy in America. Strategic grassroots action is the most effective form of resistance.

Michelle Glass is the communications director at Project REconomy, Oregon's only homeowner-led nonprofit offering education, grassroots action, affordable mortgage research, and attorney referrals to keep families in their homes. Find out more at www.projectreconomy.org.

Pacifica

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appealed the FCC's decision.

Federal Communications Commission v. Pacifica Foundation, also known as the Carlin case, ultimately went to the Supreme Court. The justices ruled 5-4 in favor of the FCC. According to the majority opinion written by Justice John Paul Stevens, the government has an interest in protecting children from exposure to obscene, indecent or profane material. Citing the highly accessible nature of broadcast media as well as the fact that the program aired in the afternoon, Stevens determined that it was reasonable to assume that children were in the audience. The ruling gave the FCC broad authority to determine what constitutes offensive material and to impose sanctions after the material has aired. In the dissenting opinion, Justice William Brennan disputed the claim that broadcasting is intrusive, contending that people choose to use radios and that they may turn them off if they find a broadcast offensive. According to Brennan, the FCC's ruling infringed upon the constitutional rights of listeners who want to hear broadcasts that others may consider offensive.

In 1986, the FCC received a complaint about a program aired by Pacifica station KPFK in Los Angeles. The program featured excerpts from *The Jerker*, a play about AIDS that contains excretory references and explicit descriptions of homosexual activity. Although the FCC determined that the program did not violate current rules—it aired after 10:00 PM, when children were less likely to be listening, and was preceded by a warning about explicit content—the FCC took the opportunity to define a new policy regarding offensive material. According to the new rules, any content containing sexual or excretory references must be considered in context to

determine whether it is "patently offensive under contemporary community standards applicable to the broadcast medium." The FCC ruled that the content of the program was patently offensive despite its context and would be legally actionable if aired again.

Despite pushback, Pacifica continued to fight for free speech. In a case known as *FCC v. League of Women Voters*, Pacifica partnered with the League of Women Voters of California and Senator Henry Waxman (D-CA) to challenge a law banning editorials by stations that receive public funding. The case went to the Supreme Court. Attorney Samuel Alito, now a Supreme Court justice, argued in favor of the ban, saying that because public broadcasting is entangled with the government and serves a different purpose than private broadcasting, the government has the right to regulate it. Opposing attorney Frederic Woocher contended that the ban was an unconstitutional restriction on broadcasters' right to free speech. In 1984, the court ruled 5-4 against the ban, declaring it unconstitutional. In the majority opinion, Justice William Brennan wrote that the ban violates free speech protections because it "directly prohibits the broadcaster from speaking out on public issues, even in a balanced and fair manner." Shortly after the ruling, Pacifica aired an editorial condemning the pro-apartheid government of South Africa, urging listeners to pressure the United States government to cut ties with the country as a form of protest. Free speech in broadcasting allows media outlets like Pacifica to provide a platform for marginalized voices. By exposing listeners to dissent from mainstream narratives, they provide a valuable check and balance on government and corporate power. This service helps create the well-informed public debate that is vital to a functioning democracy.

Email Kristi Wright at kristi@rvcommunitypress.com.

RVCP needs you!

At the Rogue Valley Community Press (RVCP), we work hard to bring you the hard-hitting news and analysis you depend on. To continue to bring you this coverage, we need financial support from readers like you. Your support for RVCP builds a strong community by supporting a platform for grassroots movements and marginalized voices.

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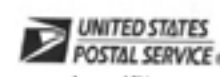
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Life

The grace of forgiveness

BY VANESSA HOUK

This is a tale I hold inside. I try not to let it come to the surface, lest it make other people uncomfortable, but I hope it shows you that through the pain there is heartbreaking beauty.

The beginning is a handful of cold-sounding words. Our only son, Dylan, died at birth after a seemingly healthy pregnancy. Dylan was still-born at 41 weeks gestation.

What stoic facts can't convey is how we watched his little elbow nudge my stomach while he practiced gymnastics in utero, or how many times he got the hiccoughs and the three of us laughed at the earthquake tremors against my taut skin. You can't begin to imagine how many stories we read aloud, including The Complete Works of Winnie the Pooh, and the amount of music we listened to. At 7:30 every evening, I would sit down and watch an episode of Seinfeld while doing kick counts, which now seems like a much sweeter time as captured within the recesses of my memory as I'm sure it seemed to be back then.

"I love you to the moon and back," I whispered to him in those sacred hours we spent before his body was taken away to the

FORGIVENESS, PAGE 6

Collateral Repair Project helps refugees make ends meet

BY IVEND HOLEN

The following is an interview with Mary Madsen, co-founder of the Collateral Repair Project.

IH: Mary, you co-founded a refugee relief organization headquartered in Amman, Jordan named the Collateral Repair Project (CRP). What does that name mean?

MM: Most of us have heard the term collateral damage used to describe unintended damage caused by military action. It's become such a catchphrase that it camouflages the fact that it applies to innocent civilians as well as buildings and infrastructure. We wanted a

name that would make people stop and think about the phrase while putting names and faces to those whose lives had been immeasurably damaged.

IH: I understand that today CRP relies solely on donations

Employers often exploit refugees, knowing that they cannot go to the police because they are working illegally.

from individuals, but can you tell me about how it began? Isn't this the sort of thing that the United Nations or US government are responsible for?

MM: We rely solely on

individual donations. We realized at the start that we would need to have nonprofit status so that donations would be tax deductible, but we didn't have the personal funds to seek our own 501(c)3 certification at

the time. We set up our website and a blog and did several fundraising presentations in Medford and Seattle to get started. We obtained fiscal sponsorship through an umbrella

501(c)3 organization. By 2010, we were secure enough to apply for our own tax-exempt status, and in January 2012 we finally achieved our certification.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) relies on contributions from member nations. Unfortunately, many nations don't or can't afford to pay their share, so there is always a shortfall in funds required. This and the staggering number of refugees in the Middle East and elsewhere puts a huge burden on UNHCR to garner funds sufficient to

REFUGEES, PAGE 6

Abundance Swap offers alternative to holiday shopping

BY JASON HOUK

In the busyness of the holiday season, it's important to remember that the Rogue Valley is rich in the spirit of giving. Nothing demonstrates this more than Ashland's annual Abundance Swap. This community gathering, now in its eleventh year, celebrates bounty and offers an alternative to holiday shopping.

The idea behind the Abundance Swap is simple. People are encouraged to bring in previously loved, gift-worthy items to exchange with others in a spirit of giving. They share what they don't need anymore

so that others may use it.

"People like to give during the holidays," said event host Jeff Golden. "This is a way to celebrate our community and the fact that we have so much. It's an alternative to the massive, almost frantic consumption that takes place. The Abundance Swap offers the opportunity to focus our gift giving, not as an obligation but a practice, and it connects us to people and puts us in touch with our natural generosity."

The event was the idea of local Buy Nothing Day organizers who wanted to challenge the holiday buying frenzy and offer something new for the

community. Golden remembers the first Abundance Swap. "On a gray Sunday afternoon in December, a couple of adventurous friends and I opened the doors of the Oak Street Dance studio, loaded the CD player with holiday music, plugged in a crock pot full of apple cider and cinnamon sticks, and set up the room for the First Annual Ashland Abundance Swap." Since then, the event brought hundreds of Rogue Valley residents together to share in the spirit of giving. Inspired by the event's success, other communities are copying the model.

The Abundance Swap is

on Sunday, December 16 at the Historic Ashland Armory. Doors open at 1:00 PM and the event begins at 1:30 PM. To participate, bring two to five quality items to be given as gifts. Children are encouraged to attend, although children 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult. All items not chosen will be donated to needy families. For more details, visit www.abundanceswap.org.

Email Jason Houk at jason@rvcommunitypress.com.

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www.occupymedfordoregon.org

SUPPORT LOCAL FARMS & MARKETS - KEEP THE ROGUE VALLEY UNIQUE

Refugees

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

meet worldwide needs.

IH: What kinds of services does CRP provide that are not provided by relief agencies or large organizations?

MM: One of the most pressing ongoing needs is providing emergency assistance, especially food, for those who have no other source of income. Many refugees do not receive UNHCR financial assistance. For those who don't, CRP has established a food voucher program that allows people to buy food at a cooperating local supermarket and a local produce vendor. Eligibility is determined after an intake form is completed and a home visit is made. The amount of the voucher is based on the number in the family, and is only good for purchasing food.

In the past, CRP provided items such as winter coats for children, school uniforms and supplies, blankets, mattresses, heaters, tabletop cook stoves and other basic household items. Our donations have plunged since the onset of the global economic crisis and we've been forced to cut back on everything but the food vouchers. We hope to be able to begin providing more types of assistance in the near future.

Our most unique program is our Family Resource and Community Center. I don't believe there is another place or service like this in Amman. We offer a range of classes and social activities for refugees in the community. It's a place where they can not only learn, but socialize, feel safe, and regain the sense of community that was lost when they fled Iraq and became separated from family, friends, and community.

IH: What are some of CRP's most proudest accomplishments?

MM: Our community center

is one of the biggest and most important accomplishments. When donations were better, we provided hundreds of winter coats for kids each year. We're also proud of our food voucher program.

The Women's Hope Workshop is another proud achievement. A group of women have come together to form the co-op which now operates almost independently. They sell their crafts, many made from recycled items, at various craft bazaars in Amman, which enables them to earn money to help support their families. 100% of each sale goes to the woman who made the item.

There is also our emergency assistance program. In addition to providing food, it has rescued many refugees from being evicted or having power shut off and has provided mattresses, warm blankets, and other essential household items.

IH: How many people does CRP assist?

MM: If we combine families receiving emergency assistance and those who participate in classes, which are always full, we normally serve several hundred in the course of a month.

IH: What are some of the major challenges CRP faces in terms of funding and in light of the growing need for relief by the refugees of the civil war in Syria?

MM: Because we have recently begun assisting Syrian refugees, our budget for emergency assistance is seriously impacted. We need to increase our donations so that we can even minimally address their needs. Right now we have a backlog of people, Iraqi and Syrian, waiting for assistance who have no other means of support. I can't emphasize enough how heartbreaking it would be to say no to a mother and child who are going hungry. We don't ever want to be in that situation and yet we are very close to it.

IH: Would you share some of the particularly poignant

stories of the refugees who have sought help from CRP?

MM: One family we visited when in Amman had been through particularly terrible circumstances. One of the militias in Baghdad had demanded that the husband spy on a rival group. When he refused, they kidnapped him and tortured him with electric shocks. They beat his legs and feet so badly that he is unable to walk without assistance and is in constant pain. They told him if he didn't spy on the other group, they would kill him.

Realizing that he'd also likely be killed by the group he would spy on, he had no choice but to flee to Jordan. The family is not receiving UNHCR financial assistance and they were six months behind in both rent and the electric bill. Their apartment was in very poor condition, with a blanket for a front door and several windows missing. The fifteen-year-old son was working long hours every day at a car wash, hauling buckets of water and hand-scrubbing cars to provide the only source of income for the family. We were able to talk his boss into letting him work half days so that he could go to school. But of course this meant he would only be paid half of the already meager amount he was earning. It was required that the boy be in school if they were to receive UNHCR financial assistance.

Employers often exploit refugees, knowing that they cannot go to the police because they are working illegally. As if what they had been dealing with wasn't bad enough, I recently learned that they had been robbed of their last dinar, passports, and their mobile phone. Soon after, the man's wife left him, an all too common consequence of the stress that refugee families endure.

All the stories share similar circumstances. They all live hand to mouth, struggling to pay rent and utilities and feed



The Collateral Repair Project provides assistance to Iraqi refugees who fled to Jordan because of the 2003 war and occupation.

IMAGE VIA SASHA CROW

their families. Everyone, children included, suffer some form or degree of post-traumatic stress disorder. All have had to leave behind everything that is dear — their homes, family members, jobs, and personal possessions — with no hope of ever going back or regaining what they've lost. And, barred from legal employment and without legal residency in Jordan, they have little hope of becoming the productive member of society that they were in Iraq, leaving them without hope that their situation will ever improve.

IH: I understand that the economic situation for many people in Jordan is becoming more desperate and is putting additional pressure on CRP. Can you describe the situation that CRP and refugees in Jordan are facing today?

MM: Jordan has generously taken in over 700,000 Iraqi refugees, and now there's the tremendous influx of Syrians. Since we began, we've seen a steady increase in rents and commodities as a result, but nothing like the recent decision to remove subsidies for fuel and electricity. This comes in exchange for a \$2 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund. The price of a canister of

propane rose by 33% overnight. A family of three or four needs at least one canister per week. Coupled with the increase in electricity, it could be disastrous even for those who receive assistance from UNHCR. Jordan winters are very cold and wet. It's urgent that CRP raise enough funds to help these families stay warm and fed.

IH: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

MM: We badly need donations. For every family we help, there are a dozen more waiting. These are people with no other means of income who are going hungry and are facing winter with the prospect of no heat. We particularly need sustaining donors, which are those who commit to a monthly donation of an amount they can afford. Sustaining donors help ensure that we have funds to keep our doors open next month and the month after. Our website makes it easy to donate one time or monthly. Find out more at www.collateralrepairproject.org.

Ivend Holen is a longtime Medford resident and a retired arborist and forester. He has been active in the social justice community since his retirement five years ago.

Forgiveness

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

funeral home, "and around the world three hundred and sixty-seven times." I can pull up hundreds of second-long memories from that last good summer, from what we came to think of as "before" once we were stuck in "after."

And then, for a very long time, I lived in a fog, fueled by hate and vicious blame. As someone who values calmness and peace, that's tough to admit, but I know there are many people stuck in desperate pain and the best I can offer is hope that there's a way to escape and become yourself again. I want others to know that the brokenness doesn't have to be another ending.

Blame is the pesky little sister of anger and she followed at my heels for more than a decade. On days when I wasn't silently berating myself, I blamed the doctor who watched Dylan's heart rate drop for almost an hour before beginning a cesarean section. She quit practicing medicine shortly after his death, a move I saw as confirmation of her guilt and further proof that my hatred for her was justified.

The problem with forgiveness is that it comes with a hefty portion of guilt. Sometimes I would cast sideways glances at my husband, wondering how much he was still holding on to. We were both sensitive to the fact that we dealt with Dylan's death very differently. One of the cruelest tests came when we realized that, at least for a time, we couldn't talk about what happened. I hurt for him and he hurt

for me. Regardless of how strong our relationship was, that was a lot of pain for one room, and we learned to respect that, but each of us lost our favorite listener in the process. How could I reach a place of forgiveness when there was a risk that I might be leaving him behind, stuck in that mucky stage of grief?

Yet somehow, quietly and tenaciously, forgiveness still sidled up to me. Over the last year I would check my feelings against it, expecting the old hatred to creep in, but amazingly, thankfully, it's gone. I can't begin to explain why, other than it happened in its own due time and that the grace of it comes from the love I have for Dylan, that his memory lives on in kind and generous ways.

Email Vanessa Houk at vanessa@rvcommunitypress.com.

Local nonprofit says farewell

VIA PRESS RELEASE

Mobility Unlimited, a nonprofit charity based in Medford, will be wrapping up its final year over the coming weeks. In light of the impending retirement of its founders and major corporate sponsors, Bruce and Nancy Hough of Jacksonville, the Board of Directors has voted unanimously to dissolve the organization.

Mobility Unlimited is a nonprofit dedicated to helping working adults obtain mobility equipment in order to live independently and maintain employment. Since its inception in 2001, the organization has served several hundred individuals throughout the state of Oregon, providing equipment such as wheelchairs, motorized vehicle lifts, and ramps. This program has made a profound difference in the lives of many, including Tom Alexander of Portland, who received funding assistance in order to replace his failing vehicle lift.

"I can't thank you enough for everything that Mobility Unlimited has done for me," he says. "No more crossing my fingers as I lift into the van. I will never forget this and am forever grateful."

The last several years have been among the most successful in the organization's history, with the highest grossing fundraising events and record numbers of clients served. While the decision to dissolve wasn't an easy one to make, Board President and Founder, Bruce Hough stated, "It's been a great run; we're proud of how many lives we've touched and the service we've provided to the community."

Individuals requiring assistance should contact their local Vocational Rehabilitation branch, which operates a similar program, or HASL Independent Abilities Center in Grants Pass for information about other resources.

Your voice is our voice.
—Rogue Valley Community Press

Opinion

Rogue Valley Community Press seeks to educate, motivate, mobilize

FROM THE EDITORS

For more than a year, the Ashland Free Press has helped people who care about social justice share ideas, publicize events, and learn about what's happening in our community. Born out of the Occupy movement, the paper chronicled the efforts of grassroots and working-class movements in Ashland and the Rogue Valley. It also featured reporting and commentary on national issues and events.

Thanks to support from readers, advertisers, and volunteers, the Ashland Free Press

gained a devoted following in Ashland and the Rogue Valley. In particular, the hard work and dedication of founders Jason and Vanessa Houk played a critical role in its success. To help expand the audience and report on a wider variety of topics, we are making some changes to the paper. To reflect this growth, we are changing the name to the Rogue Valley Community Press.

With the Rogue Valley Community Press, we seek to educate, motivate, and mobilize people to create lasting social change not just in our community, but in the world at large.

The publication will highlight local issues, movements, and events. It will feature in-depth analysis of the larger issues that shape the environment in which we organize, including policy, history, and economic systems, as well as ideas for how we can build stronger communities.

One of our goals is to provide economic opportunities for homeless and low-income people. We are working with local governments, social service providers, churches, and members of our homeless community to create a vendor program that will offer an

alternative to panhandling and provide job skills and support.

To nourish our local economy, we are offering cost-effective advertising opportunities for small businesses and community organizations.

We value your input and appreciate your support. Please send any feedback to editor@rvcommunitypress.com or to 258 A St #1, Ashland, Oregon 97520. Please send advertising inquiries to advertising@rvcommunitypress.com. Together, we can make the world and our community, a better place.

Help stop media consolidation

FROM THE EDITORS

Senator Bernie Sanders (I-VT) is leading the fight against a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) proposal that would allow corporate conglomerates to control more media outlets. According to Sanders, media concentration limits the public's access to unbiased information about important issues, drowns out independent voices, hurts local news and community affairs coverage, eliminates competition, and discourages diversity in ownership.

Senator Sanders is urging the FCC to keep rules in place against corporate conglomerates owning television stations, radio stations and newspapers in the same major broadcast market. "We're going to do everything we can to prevent it from happening," said Sanders to Bill Moyers in a recent interview.

The FCC could issue an order on the rule change as early as January. You can help support media diversity by signing Sanders' petition at <http://alturl.com/kxcxc>.

Call for reader submissions

FROM THE EDITORS

Everyone has a story to tell. What's yours? The Rogue Valley Community Press seeks to be a platform for marginalized voices in our community. We welcome submissions from readers, including letters to the editor (up to 400 words), articles (up to 1000 words), and short poems. Submissions will be considered for publication in an upcoming issue. Please include your contact information, including name, email address, and phone number, with your submission.

Please send submissions to editor@rvcommunitypress.com or to the following address:

Rogue Valley Community Press
258 A Street #1
Ashland, OR 97520

Cut medication costs, not Medicaid

BY BEVERLY DELEONARDIS

We are confronted with a national budget crisis. Programs that are important to Americans, including Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, are being targeted. We all agree that the deficit has to be reduced, but we must explore all revenue options in preserving these programs so that the most disadvantaged and disenfranchised in our society have a safety net. Wealthy Americans and corporations including Big Pharma have to pay their fair share. If members of Congress are serious about cutting healthcare costs, we must bring Big Pharma to the table to negotiate lower drug prices.

Americans pay more for prescriptions than any other nation. Medicaid and Medicare beneficiaries pay more than

our veterans and clients of the National Indian Health Service. Why do these differences exist? The Department of Veterans Affairs and negotiates the prices for prescriptions. Medicare and Medicaid are not allowed to negotiate. This is a poor business practice that is not cost-effective and must be changed.

Tremendous cost savings can be achieved by leveraging mass purchasing power to drive down prices. The federal government could save \$261 million per year by negotiating Medicaid drug prices. Over ten years, we would save \$2.6 billion.

In 2011, the pharmaceutical companies raked in over \$43 billion in profits. They can afford to negotiate the prices of drugs, but instead they are spending hundreds of million of dollars buying influence in Washington.

It is time for Congress to do the right thing. We must end the Bush tax cuts for the top 2%, raise the income tax rates back to what they were under Clinton, close many loopholes that big businesses use to move jobs offshore, create a transactional tax on stocks and bonds, and bring Big Pharma to the table to negotiate drug prices.

These are not just decisions about dollars and cents, but also about who matters in our country. We need the majority of the people, the 98%, to matter to Congress as much or more than the super-rich and corporations.

Beverly DeLeonardis is on the board of Oregon Action, a multi-racial community organization dedicated to economic justice. She lives in Medford, Oregon.

Ashland residents encouraged to take citizen survey

FROM THE EDITORS

The City of Ashland is conducting a citizen survey to identify the strengths and weaknesses of community services and to collect information for planning, resource allocation, performance measurements, and program and policy evaluation.

In October, 1200 randomly

selected Ashland households were asked to participate in a scientific citizen survey. The National Research Center and the International City Managers Association developed the survey to collect statistically valid assessments of residents' opinions about their communities and the services provided by local governments.

Ashland households not selected to complete the citizen survey are invited to take the same survey posted on the City of Ashland website or at <http://alturl.com/o4ah9>. The responses to the online survey, while not statistically valid, will be tabulated and reviewed by city officials.

Results of the survey will be available in late January 2013.

Thank you to volunteers

RVCP depends on the hard work of dedicated volunteers.

If you are interested in helping with the paper, please email editor@rvcommunitypress.com or call (541) 622-9483.

Special thanks to:

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...and to readers like you. We appreciate your support.

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Vending opportunities for homeless and low-income residents

The Rogue Valley Community Press strives to create a vending program in early 2013. If you are interested in selling the paper as a vendor, please email vendor@rvcommunitypress.com or call (541) 622-9483.

Events

How can you support RVCP?

At the Rogue Valley Community Press (RVCP), we work hard to bring you the hard-hitting news and analysis you depend on. To continue to bring you this coverage, we need financial support from readers like you.

Your support for RVCP builds a strong community by supporting a platform for grassroots movements and marginalized voices.

You can support RVCP through subscriptions and cash contributions. Subscriptions are \$40 and include twelve issues mailed to the address of your choice.

Please send subscription requests and contributions to:

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We appreciate your support.

Find us online at
rvcommunitypress.com

Rogue Valley Community Press writers' workshop

The Rogue Valley Community Press is a volunteer-powered newspaper and we need your help to create a quality publication. We invite you to be in on the ground floor of this brand-new media resource as we develop submission guidelines

and editorial standards.

We will be offering writers' workshops beginning Thursday, January 3rd, 2013 at 4:00 PM at the Southern Oregon Jobs with Justice office, which is upstairs at 258 A Street in Ashland, Oregon.

This is an opportunity for

you to share ideas, gain insight, and learn to get involved and write for RVCP. The event is free and is open to anyone who wants to learn more about the craft of writing. Future writers' workshops will be announced in upcoming issues of RVCP.

Southern Oregon Climate Action Network meeting

The Southern Oregon Climate Action Network (SOCAN) invites people interested in fighting the effects of climate change to attend their next meeting. It will be held on January 29th from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM at the Medford Public Library at 205 South Central Avenue.

For more information, visit soclimate.org.



Free Christmas potluck

There will be a free community potluck on Sunday, December 23 from 2:00 PM to 6:00 PM at Pioneer Hall near Lithia Park in Ashland.

For more information, call Greg Mann at (541) 621-3579.

Winter farmers market

The Rogue Valley Winter Farmers Market is held every Tuesday from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM. The market showcases local farmers and crafts as well as live music from local artists

The market is located in the enclosed and heated Casbah Pavilion of the Jackson Wellsprings, which is located just north of Ashland off Highway 99.

Occupy Medford general assembly

The Occupy Medford general assembly is held from 12:00 PM to 3:00 PM every Saturday. Every is invited to participate. It is located in the Medford Public Library at 205 South Central Avenue.

For more information, visit occupymedfordoregon.org.

Uncle Food's Diner needs you!

Uncle Food's Diner needs volunteers. The community meal takes place every Tuesday at 4:30 PM. It is located at the First United Methodist Church, which is in Ashland at 175 North Main Street.

For more information, call (541) 482-9625.



Save the Date!

February 4, 2013
Rally for Health Care
as a Human Right

11:30 AM
Capitol Steps
Salem, Oregon

RSVP for your space in local carpools at www.sojwj.org

For more information visit Health Care for ALL Oregon at www.hcao.org

Promote your event

Please send news, announcements and information about community events to editor@rvcommunitypress.com or call RVCP at (541) 622-9483.

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16TH 3-5 PM @ PEACE HOUSE

JOIN US FOR FOOD, NETWORKING, AND HOLIDAY FUN!

Peace House Programs: Ending War...Non-Violence Training...Uncle Foods Diner...Peace Community Calendar...Civil Disobedience Training and Clear Actions Newsletter...Happy Hour Peace Talks...Alternatives to Military...Federal Budget Education Program...Move to Amend...

Peace is not the absence of conflict, but, the presence of justice" - MLK Jr.

Join Us!

MISSION POSSIBLE: Peace House serves as a center for education, outreach, and action. We educate residents of Ashland and the Rogue Valley on issues and organize for public advocacy and civic action. We help individuals acquire the skills of nonviolent living. We foster cooperation among organizations that share our values and extend to them our resources as needed.

Sturgeon Advertising

Resource Unlimited

The advertisement is a festive holiday-themed flyer for a 'Holiday Open House' at Peace House on Sunday, December 16th, from 3-5 PM. It features a central image of a sleigh filled with various items representing different programs and organizations. The items include: a globe with 'Peace on Earth', a box for 'Citizens for Peace & Justice', a box for 'Project REconomy', a box for 'Oregon Action', a box for 'Code Pink: Women for Peace', a box for 'Rural Organizing Project', a box for 'Uncle Foods Diner' (serving Ashland's hungry for 20 years Tuesdays, 4:30pm), a box for 'Happy Hour Peace Talks' (critical conversations 3rd Tuesday each month at Tabu Restaurant, Ashland 5 pm), a box for 'Veterans For Peace 156', a box for 'SO Pride', a box for 'New Day Network', a box for 'Immense Possibilities', a box for 'Ashland Food Project', a box for 'Jackson County Fuel Committee', a box for 'Southern Oregon Jobs With Justice', a box for 'Collateral Repair Project', and a box for 'DONATIONS' (peacehouse.net/donations). The background is decorated with various holiday-themed icons like a gingerbread man, a Christmas tree, and a bowl of cookies. The text is arranged in a clear, readable layout with a mix of bold and regular fonts. At the bottom, there is a mission statement and contact information for Peace House (543 S. Mountain Ave, Ashland, Oregon 97520, 541-482-9625, www.peacehouse.net).