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Portland, Oregon

Complimentary

January 2014

Multnomah parents fed up with navigating busy Capitol Highway

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

It's been in the works for almost two decades. The Capitol Highway Plan, which was implemented in 1996, was a blueprint to improve pedestrian and bicyclist access and safety the entire length of Capitol Highway.

Originally the road to the state capitol in Salem, present day Capitol Highway extends from Southwest Barbur Boulevard (north), through Hillsdale, Multnomah Village and the Barbur Crossroads (south) all the way to the Sylvania campus of Portland Community College.

More than half of the improvements along Capitol Highway have been completed. But the "Garden Home" section from Southwest Garden Home Road south to Taylors Ferry Road is still unfunded.

Besides getting more dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists, there has been an increase in traffic, speeding, and estimated costs: the project has skyrocketed to over \$19 million. A

two-phased project comes in at approximately \$23 million.

Due to changes in city of Portland environmental codes since the mid-1990s, the price for such projects has gone up dramatically. No longer can just sidewalks and bike lanes ("streetscapes") be installed; stormwater facilities, like the recent green street project in Multnomah Village, must be factored in.

Approximately \$6 million, which had been earmarked for the Garden Home segment, has been redistributed to fund other sidewalk and bike lane projects in Southwest.

Multnomah residents Jessica Wade and Rob Gardner have been documenting their difficulties navigating Capitol Highway as pedestrians since becoming parents two years ago. Their options for walking along the two-lane road are mud, weeds, rocks, or other dangerous obstacles.

"Last summer, we had to maneuver around parked cars blocking the public right of way," explained Wade. "We were forced to push our daughter in

(Continued on Page 6)



Rob Gardner attempts to navigate Southwest Capitol Highway with his 18-month-old daughter. Along with vehicles parked on the side of the road, he encounters mud, weeds, and uneven gravel. (Photo courtesy of Jessica Wade)



Courtney Kreutz is coordinating the development of a new playground to replace the old structures at Hayhurst Elementary School. Courtney's son, Calan, is a kindergartner and hopes the project is completed before he leaves Hayhurst. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

Hayhurst PTA seeks to raise \$100,000 for natural play structures

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

Elizabeth Hayhurst Elementary School has a playground that has seen better days. The wooden climbing structure, built in 1984, is rotting, the slide is cracked and dirty, and the monkey bars are oxidized.

The whole area leaves little for the imagination or active play. But that is all about to change.

Courtney Kreutz is on a mission: she's a parent of three young children, one who attends Hayhurst, and two who soon will be.

Kreutz is coordinating the effort to raise funds and awareness for a new playground. The Dream Big Project is a collaborative effort of Hayhurst School children, parents, teachers, and the surrounding communities, working together to design, raise funds, and build an innovative, imaginative, and durable playground that will replace the existing structures.

According to Kreutz, the school will be welcoming approximately 90 additional students when the Stephens Creek Crossing housing development in Multnomah is completed this year.

Under the guidance of Principal Deanne Froehlich, teachers, and staff, the students of Hayhurst have thrived academically.

"A playground that engages and strengthens students' imagination, physical well-being, and social skills," Froehlich articulated, "will be a benefit to the entire community."

Many parents and children wanted a

castle or pirate ship to materialize but according to one of the teachers, this would limit the imagination. Having a natural play area will spawn pirates and princesses as well as explorers and much more.

"The principal has already secured a \$5,000 matching donation for the project," Kreutz exclaimed. "That means we need to raise an additional \$5,000 in direct donations to receive the matching donation."

Kreutz guesstimates the entire project could cost over \$100,000. With new city codes and Portland Public School requirements, the tan bark chips must be replaced with rubber tiling.

"The rubber mats and chips nearly eat up half of that budget," Kreutz explained as she opened a folder with drawings, play equipment catalogs, and notes.

A raffle will run the last week of January. A wide assortment of community businesses including Old Market Pub, Lucky Lab, Baker & Spice, Anastasia Salon, and numerous others, have donated items for the raffle. (See the website for the entire list and where tickets will be sold.)

Tickets are \$10 per ticket, 6 for \$50, and 13 tickets for \$100.

"We are working on setting up a PayPal account so that people can donate online," Kreutz said. "Portland Public Schools doesn't have money to replace old play structures, add new ones or even maintain them."

Kreutz, who recently moved from the NE Alameda neighborhood, didn't realize how much work this would

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COMMUNITY LIFE

By Don Snedecor
The Southwest Portland Post

6 Multnomah Historical Association will hold their monthly board meeting on Monday, Jan. 6 at 7:00 p.m. at the Village Offices, first floor conference room, 2929 SW Multnomah Blvd. Open to the public. More information is available at www.multnomahhistorical.com.

8 Hillsdale Neighborhood Association will hold their monthly meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 8, at the Watershed Building, community room, 6388 SW Capitol Hwy (at Bertha Court in Hillsdale). Visit www.swni.org or call 503-823-4592 for more information.

15 William Stafford Centennial Celebration: The Oregon Poet Laureate's works will be read and birthday cake will be served. Wednesday, Jan. 15, 7:00-9:00 p.m., at Annie Bloom's Books, 7834 SW Capitol Hwy.

Hosted by Susan McKee Reese, Friends of William Stafford board member. Feel free to bring a favorite William Stafford poem to share. For more information visit www.annieblooms.com. Note: this is just one of a number of events throughout the year celebrating the 100th birthday of Stafford.

25 Researching your house history: Have you ever wondered about the history of your house, apartment, church or other building? Whether you're looking for documentation for historic status or are just plain inquisitive, tracing a property's history and learning about the people who have lived there can be a fascinating and fulfilling project.

Join the Multnomah Historical Association and the Multnomah County Library to learn how to research the architectural and historical facts about your home. Saturday, Jan. 25, 3:00-4:00 p.m. at the Hillsdale Library, 1525 SW Sunset Blvd, 503-988-5388.



Neighbors deal with water tower property, energy efficiency, traffic calming

The January meeting of the Multnomah Neighborhood Association will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 14 at 7:00 p.m. at the Multnomah Arts Center, Room 30. Our December meeting was held on Tuesday, Dec. 10 and the highlights of that meeting are below.

Freeman Water Tower property

A report was given by members of the MNA sub-committee working on the Freeman Water Tower property sale. They report that neighbors working to stop the pending sale of the Freeman Water Tank are gathering at the property located at 8625 SW 42nd Ave on Sundays at 9:30 a.m. until the issue is resolved.

Everyone is invited and encouraged to attend. They also report that the sub-committee has successfully completed the fiscal sponsorship application pro-

cess with SW Neighbors, Inc. (SWNI), which means that they are able to accept donations toward their legal fees and that those donations are tax-deductible.

The SWNI fiscal sponsorship account is very specific for their potential legal fees and required contingencies for the use of the money in the case the legal fees are met or no longer needed.

The application was reviewed and approved by the SWNI board and is managed by the MNA chair and SWNI. As of Dec. 15, there was over \$5000 in donations and a retainer of \$5000 was sent to the designated lawyer, Kristian Roggendorf.

Clean Energy Works Oregon

A non-profit group, Clean Energy Works Oregon made a presentation to discuss how their group helps local homeowners with home energy efficiency. The group works with homeowners to assess the energy efficiency of their homes and then works with them through local contractors to make the necessary improvements to resolve those issues.

In addition, they have graciously made to members of the Multnomah Neighborhood Association a special offer: for anyone who applies with code CENPMU, and completes a project in 2014, Clean Energy Works will donate \$50 back to the neighborhood association. So we encourage interested Multnomah homeowners to visit their website at www.cewo.org to learn more and to determine eligibility.

Traffic calming along Capitol Highway

The issue of traffic calming along Capitol Highway continued to be discussed. The chair presented draft versions of the letter to be sent to the Portland Bureau of Transportation and

to City Commissioner Steve Novick, to express our concerns with the speed of traffic at two points.

The first area is the downhill straight section as you drive south into the Village near Southwest Texas Street. The West Hills Preschool located along this strip has reported many near-accidents (and one actual accident) involving parents picking up children.

The second area is the downhill section of Capitol Highway as you drive north into the Village at the intersection of Southwest 40th Avenue. There is a fork in the road to allow traffic to turn onto 40th Avenue and due to inadequate warning signage, there have been numerous accidents reported.

Wording changes were suggested and applied and the letters will be sent by the end of the year. In addition, members suggested that these letters be sent for review to the SWNI Transportation Committee and to ask for their assistance and advocacy with these problem areas.

Omanski elected Vice Chair

Many thanks to Beth Omanski, who was appointed via acclamation as the Vice Chair of the Multnomah Neighborhood Association. We now have three of the four MNA board positions filled (chair, vice-chair and secretary). The treasurer's position is still vacant and any local resident interested in the position should contact your chair prior to our January meeting.

Moses Ross, Chair -
Multnomah Neighborhood Association
MNACHair@gmail.com

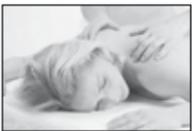
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Do you remember a store in Multnomah called The Sewing Basket?

OLD MULTNOMAH

By Don Snedecor
The Southwest Portland Post

The Post received an interesting phone call, followed by email correspondence last month from Susan (Miller) Christensen of Quincy, Calif. According to Christensen, her mother, Marion Miller Bentz had her sewing store in Multnomah from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s.

"It was on the north side of Capitol Highway in the main block and more or less across from what is now O'Connor's," wrote Christensen.

"If you stood in front of O'Connor's and looked across the street, the storefront I'm talking about would be the second one from the corner of what I think is 36th Avenue."

"For quite a few years there was a gift shop there, the name of which I don't recall, but there's something else there now, and although I was in Multnomah just last month for a reunion with grade school friends, I failed to note the name of it."

"If you could help me with this, I'd appreciate it. I'm writing a remembrance of my experiences working in my mom's shop, which was actually in three different loca-

tions during the approximately 12 years that she owned it."

The Post contacted Tim Lyman and Patti Waitman-Ingebretsen, board members of the Multnomah Historical Association.

According to Lyman, one location of The Sewing Basket (circa 1961-1965) is now a vacant lot. It's between Neighborhood House and Multnomah Antiques. The street address at the time was 7776 SW Capitol Hwy.

Christensen said after corresponding with Lyman and Waitman-Ingebretsen that one location of her mother's sewing store (circa 1970s) is the building that currently houses the Nectar Lounge frozen yogurt shop, 7847 SW Capitol Hwy.

Over the past 25 years the stores that The Post remembers at this location include most recently Birdie's and before that Time & Again—both were gift shops. Perhaps dear readers you can help fill in the blanks?

"As for pictures, I'm amazed at how few I have of Multnomah or any of the locations where The Sewing Basket was situated," wrote Christensen.

"I do have a couple [of photos] of my mom dressed as a Native American while participating in the Chief Multnomah Days' parades, and I believe I have one of my sister and I taken in front of that third location."



Winter scene in Multnomah, circa 1952. Weatherly's Market and Multnomah Drug Company (currently Thinker Toys). (Photo courtesy of Multnomah Historical Association)

Christensen said she would try to find the box the photos were stored in and "email them to you, along with the article."

While Waitman-Ingebretsen (who grew up in Maplewood) didn't recognize her name, Christensen said she went to Multnomah School (now the Multnomah Arts Center)

from the third to eighth grades, roughly from age 8 to 14.

Do you have memories, stories or photos you would like to share of Old Multnomah? Phone Don Snedecor at 503-244-6933 or email don@multnomahpost.com. You can also mail us a card or letter at 4207 SE Woodstock Blvd, Box #509, Portland, OR 97206.

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The Post is seeking a freelance writer/photographer to cover Southwest neighborhood meetings, happenings, etc. E-mail cover letter, up to three clips, and current resume to: Don Snedecor, Publisher, The Southwest Portland Post, don@multnomahpost.com. Snail mail or fax OK. No phone calls, please.

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Guild of Oregon Woodworkers relocates to Multnomah Village

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

Ian Wilson, a local resident, owns a just a few woodworking tools and wants to build raised garden beds for a non-profit agency that focuses on sustainable gardening.

He is the first student to arrive this cold December morning at the Guild of Oregon Woodworkers "Green Card" class. It's called that because after passing the course, it allows you to work safely and correctly in the woodshop with many of tools.

Whether you're a beginner or an expert, the guild can help you improve your skills. There is an extensive and free library; monthly meetings, classes, and seminars; and volunteers work together side-by-side sharing their knowledge and camaraderie with each other.

Founded in 1978, many of the projects have helped other non-profit groups

with collaborative labor. In 2011, the guild donated 1,800 volunteer hours creating shelving units for the new Clackamas County Library.

Currently, students are finishing solid beech chest drawers for a 32-studio apartment unit in Vancouver which helps individuals get off the street and into homes and job skill classes.

When one first meets Gig Lewis, the president of the guild, one gets the impression that he means business and knows what he is talking about. He exudes a presence that makes anyone sit up and pay attention.

Lewis stresses safety and cleanliness: eye shields, ear plugs, and a mask to filter out wood dust particles. There is absolutely no food or drink allowed in the workshop.

A former Marine, Lewis is over six feet tall, with straight posture, crisped pressed shirt and slacks, and a clear, distinct and commanding voice. He makes sure everyone understands his

instructions and philosophy.

"All students in the Green Card class must first take an exam," Lewis instructed.

"Approximately 80 percent pass and you can take it over and over again until you pass."

The guild received a state-of-the-art Saw Stop™, donated by Roy Underhill of Tualatin, the inventor of the latest technology in table saws. These saws stop in 1/1000 of a second if coming into contact with a finger.

"Since 1978, we have had not one serious accident," Lewis said. "Sure, there have been a few sanded knuckles and minor scrapes that a Band-Aid couldn't take care

of, but not one emergency room visit."

This morning the beginning class has approximately 25 students, 10 percent are women; the rest mostly older men, except Wilson. Membership is approximately 450 with 30 percent professionals, and 70 percent amateurs and hobbyists of various skill levels.

Membership starts at \$45 per year and grants students with a green card a set amount of hours to utilize the shop outside of class during the year.

Guild members have a variety of woodworking interests, including furniture design and construction, cabinet making, antique furniture restoration, turning, carving, and sculpture. This year there will be over 100 classes offered.

High school students under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

The woodshop space is donated by Greenline: a fine woodworking



Gig Lewis instructs new students on the safety and proper use of a table saw at the Guild of Oregon Woodworkers' new shop in Multnomah Village. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

business. Located at 7634 SW 34th Ave behind the Starbucks in Multnomah Village, the shop is immaculate with routers, jointers, table saws, sawdust vents, and sanders.

Wilson said he was nervous on test day and therefore didn't pass. "I plan on retaking it and become a member so I can help fulfill my goal in helping develop raised beds for those in need," he said.

"I have full confidence Mr. Wilson will pass the next time," Lewis responded. "We're here to help and learn from each other."

More information on the Guild can be found by contacting Gig Lewis at giglewis42@gmail.com, 503-646-7056, and www.guildoforegonwoodworkers.org.



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(Continued from Page 8)

The most successful year to date in the history of the program was 2012, with 400+ registered cleanups, 92,500 volunteers nationwide, 3.5 million pounds of trash removed from American waterways, and 39,000 miles of waterway cleaned. The group is hoping 2013 will turn out to be another record year for the program.

CONTACTS: NRDC's "How to Clean Up Our Water," www.nrdc.org/water/pollution/gsteps.asp; American Rivers' National River Cleanup, www.americanrivers.org/take-action/cleanup.

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Despite construction, Multnomah Village ends year on high note

THE COUNTRY STORE

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

Despite extensive construction projects in Multnomah Village throughout the year which caused confusion, park-



Wilson High School carolers brave the bitter cold Dec. 6 to sing in front of Village Beads and the annual Christmas tree in Multnomah Village. The tree was donated by Hager Farms.
(Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

ing problems, and inconveniences for business owners and shoppers alike, all has ended well.

The much anticipated trees were finally planted, all lighted by merchants; the recently completed lower parking lot at the Multnomah Arts Center welcomes shoppers and visitors, and the bioswales along Capitol Highway are filtering storm water.

"Currently, we are getting ready to place new benches, along with additional trash receptacles and recycling containers," explained Randy Bonella of the Multnomah Village Business Association.

The Golden Ticket program was a success; the Holiday Gala, despite the arctic weather, brought Santa, a carriage, and a train for youngsters; and merchants offered sales and goodies as people strolled throughout the area.

What's in store for 2014?
"Hopefully some empty buildings will be re-occupied, the Riversgate Church completed, and [we hope to] see some new sidewalks along Multnomah [Boulevard]," Bonella predicted. "Just sit and enjoy the village walk by."

The Multnomah Village Business Association meets on the last Thursday of each month, 8:30 a.m., at O'Connors' Annex.

Wilson High School seeks donations for book and rummage sale

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

Wilson High School seniors would like you to consider donating any gently-used items or books to the Wilson Book & Rummage Sale to benefit this year's senior graduation night party.

Wilson volunteers will be collecting items on Jan. 5, 11, and 18 in the Wilson High School east parking lot from 10 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (Place to be determined. At time of printing, it may be at the football field instead. Look for the storage pod.)

"Grad Night" is a traditional celebration immediately following high school graduation which helps support a drug, tobacco, and alcohol-free safe, entertaining venue for all newly graduated seniors.

The school is looking for household items, small appliances, children's clothing, sporting equipment, and knick-knacks that are still very usable (in working order) and in good shape.

The school is also collecting books, DVDs, CDs, tapes, and records for all ages through Jan. 20. Collections can be placed in the barrel in the main office marked "Book Donations for Grad Night Party".

If you would like a tax-donation receipt, leave a self-addressed stamped envelope with your books or look for

a blank receipt in the night mail box in the school office.

Then mark your calendar for the Book & Rummage Sale which will be held on Jan. 25 in the Wilson High School cafeteria from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Questions? Contact Kevan Anderson at kevan11@comcast.net or 503-452-9191. Note: the sale is not accepting large exercise equipment, old TVs, or computers.

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Sydney Rounds, 8, works on her wire pig at Bellamy Studios.
(Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

Local art gallery moves from Maplewood to Hillsdale

Bellamy Studios, which was located along Multnomah Boulevard (technically in Maplewood) on the way to the Old Market Pub, recently moved into the former Korkage space in Hillsdale.

It is a working art studio and gallery that teaches sculpture, drawing, painting, glass fusing, and linoleum printing.

Instruction covers the artistic process from beginning to end and includes composition, perspective, and color theory. Classes meet once a week for two hours.

Heather Bellamy, a local professional, has been teaching art for over 18 years. She also works on commission.

"The students are from age 4 - 74," Bellamy said. "Each student can create whatever they want."

"Gallery space is available so stu-

dents can experience having their art displayed in a professional setting complete with a formal opening."

Five-year-old Brynne, painting a clay Yorkshire terrier, came all the way from Hillsboro with her sister, Sydney, 8, and her dad, Jim Rounds, to enroll.

"I'm going to paint her bow red," announced Brynne. Sydney waited patiently for her dad to help her lift her finished tall, ceramic giraffe into their car.

Students should expect to participate for a few months in order to complete a project. Enrollment is limited.

For more information on classes or the gallery, please contact Heather at info@bellamyartstudios.com, (503)789-1820, or drop by the studio.

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Busy Capitol Highway

(Continued from Page 1)

the stroller onto the road."

"With the flow of traffic and high speeds, it was no easy task," said Gardner.

The couple recently made a video of impassable areas due to mud. Wade, Gardener and their two-year-old daughter live off of Southwest Capitol Highway and Alice Street.

Wade, who is a civic educator and organizer, and past vice chair and secretary of the Multnomah Neighborhood Association, agreed to be interviewed by *The Post* for this story. What follows are excerpts from that interview.

Q: What is the one thing you'd like the city to know about your dilemma?

A: Capitol Highway is devoid of so many of the street improvements that other Portlanders take for granted. No sidewalks, bike lanes, curbs, or crosswalks mixed with high speeds and often distracted and unyielding drivers make this section of Capitol extremely unfriendly and unsafe for pedestrians.

This is my neighborhood. This is where I walk with my daughter nearly every day, yet some days, I feel like I'm being an irresponsible parent who is putting my little one in harm's way. I shouldn't have to feel that way.

Q: Are you planning on taking additional action?

A: My family plans to continue to document our struggles with walking along and across Capitol Highway and to share these with staff and commissioners for Portland's Bureau of Transportation as well as Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services.

I will remain active in my neighborhood and appreciate the (Multnomah Neighborhood Association) organizing around these issues. I have had opportunities to speak with city representatives and highly encourage other people with these concerns to (engage).

Q: What would your dream be for this



An artist's conception of Capitol Highway, complete with sidewalks, facing north toward Southwest Lobellia Street. (Graphic courtesy of Portland Bureau of Transportation)

situation?

A: Capitol has the potential for my family and Multnomah to realize a "20-minute neighborhood" - to safely access a store, a library, a school, a park on foot.

It's unfortunate to know that Capitol has been a priority project for street improvements since the '90s, yet this one mile stretch remains unimproved.

My dream would be to see that 20 minute neighborhood realized, to have a safe and navigable sidewalk from Taylor's Ferry into the Village, to add crosswalks along the way, to have the city's bureaus work together and be flexible with codes to make that happen.

In my dream, Capitol would be a conduit for community where people stroll and bike with their families and visit with their neighbors and not just another way for speeding cars to get from point A to point B.

Q: Are there any stories of neighbors or parents who share your concerns?

A: When you're walking along Capitol you don't pause long to have

conversation. You see people like dog walkers, bus riders, caregivers with kids challenged by the exact same things that you are.

That muddy patch around a bend that you can't push your stroller through. Parked cars in the right of way forcing you into the street. That stream of cars that just won't stop to allow you to cross the street.

Wade said she plans to keep fighting and won't stop until the issue is resolved. The city has been promising funds and redevelopment for this stretch of Capitol Highway but other priorities and budget cuts have become barriers to progress.

According to Moses Ross, chair of the Multnomah Neighborhood Association, this issue will remain on the neighborhood's agenda for years to come.

"We've invited (City Commissioner) Steve Novick," Ross said, "to a future meeting."

Novick is the commissioner in charge of the Bureau of Transportation and a Multnomah resident.

"All we ask for is an equitable process," Wade concluded. "Fairness must be addressed when budgeting is allocated."

"What might cost \$3 million on the east side (of the Willamette River) may cost \$20 million on the west side due to topographical/environmental challenges."

Don Snedecor contributed to this story. To read the Capitol Highway Plan Refinement Report 2011 (which focuses on future construction of the Garden Home segment) please go to <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/49304>. The Multnomah Neighborhood Association meets every second Tuesday, 7:00 p.m., at the Multnomah Arts Center, Room 30, 7688 SW Capitol Hwy.

Hayhurst Playground

(Continued from Page 1)

entail. She has formed a committee which is researching various grants to jumpstart the project. Then they hope to connect with a variety of companies with deep pockets to help fulfill this dream.

"Hayhurst is quite a unique school," Kreutz explained as her six-year old swung on the bars. "One side of the school encompasses the Odyssey program which enrolls by lottery; the other half is called the 'Neighborhood'."

It was evident by the compost bins, raised beds, and dormant gardens that this school aims high and encourages creativity and a sense of the way people used to play in the day.

"We have years to go," Kreutz ended. "We'll get there with the community's support."

Tax deductible donations can be mailed to: Hayhurst Elementary School, Attn: Dream Big Project, 5037 SW Iowa St., Portland, 97221, or go to the website, <http://hayhurstdreambigproject.weebly.com> and click on the 'donate now' button. Please make your check or money order payable to Hayhurst PTA and include the Dream Big Project on the memo line.

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Calendar says winter but the garden she stirs

GARDEN MIND

By Rebecca Hart

It's the New Year but already we've been beaten by ice and snow and buried in seasonal obligations; January gives us time to pause.

As humans we like to gather the natural world around us: We place cut flowers and green potted plants along a window sill or a bright corner, or plant outside to frame the view from a favorite chair.

Maybe your spot of green is on a patio or small yard, festooned with busy feeders for the birds. Or maybe you call all the wide beauty that Portland offers your own private landscape, and honor



Hellborus niger 'Maestro' (Post photo by Rebecca Hart)

it on walks or drives.

Once we slow down, it's clear that winter is far from a time of "nothing going on."

Years ago I heard a tale about how the Native Americans who lived near the Breitenbush River learned to anticipate what we call the solstice season.

The sign: when the Red Alder buds swelled and the catkins formed, the alder outlines developed a distinctive red-brown cast; this change heralded the change in day length. Still holds true today.

And, beneath us, on the ground covered with wet leaves, you might find the sign of early bulbs, or some other fresh green emergent life stirring. But only if you stoop to look.

Botanical gardens and nurseries are good places to find plants to enhance whatever "window" your garden has.

When the Christmas trees and poinsettias go out the benches must fill with something after inventory, and all of a sudden we find rows of shelves filled with early potted and forced bulbs.

Look for the best selection on varieties of "bare root stock" with all their edibles and ornamental teasers: berries, asparagus roots, even fruit and flowering and shade trees and herbaceous perennials. January isn't always pretty at a nursery, but it is full of promise.

We are host to a banana belt region here. Your particular garden spot may have a more or less benign microclimate, meaning the varieties that you can successfully grow will depend on exposure, light, and moisture.

With that in mind, here are some things stirring in my garden at the first of the New Year.

I've got three species of primroses and they all begin to show precocious color and new foliage now, if I was



Ribes sanguineum 'Alba' (Post photo by Rebecca Hart)

successful in keeping the snails and slugs at bay.

I have a pale double mauve, and frilly double yellow, causing me to suspect the doubles are somehow more hardy. My hellebores, which freely flower and self-sow and mix up without any help from me, are also beginning to bloom.

Also in bud is the white form of the native flowering currant *Ribes sanguineum* "Alba," which normally won't pop until mid to late February, according to prior garden journal entries; but bud swells are fun to monitor anytime.

Early bulbs are beginning to show greenery: *Galanthus*, *Muscaria* (grape hyacinth), Daffodils (narcissus), early Tulips, and the vast Crocus family.

However, if you want to duplicate a planting or combination of bulbs (unless you can find some for sale, at a premium, already potted) the time to purchase most spring-flowering bulbs is late summer and fall, from mid-August through October, or when stock sells out.

For fragrance, the Viburnums are a class of shrubs that sport several spe-

cies with highly spicy flowers, many which bloom on bare stems: the *V. burkwoodii* cultivars, also the unforgettable pink Korean Spice Bush (*V. carlessii*).

My favorite is *V. bodnantense*, with its delicious clove-smelling pink flowers. A few more favorite early winter performers are the Oregon Grape (*Mahonia aquifolia*) which is the state flower; those brilliant early yellow flowers have a scent that will knock you over!

This is a tiny short list of some action going on in my garden now. And now is the season to pause and look and see.

On the computer? Look for links and tutorials for "off-grid" projects and all types of gardening and homestead care. For more ideas, do a Google search for "Winter Garden Color." Here's a link for non-GMO [genetically modified organisms] seeds and more for your garden: <http://www.off-grid.info/food-independence/heirloom-seed-suppliers.html>.

Collect books and articles. Don't be afraid to ask, if you admire a particular landscape; gardeners love to visit about plants. Consider becoming a master gardener. Make friends at your local nursery.

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Dear EarthTalk: Is there a way to get local communities involved in cleaning up waterways, like rivers, lakes, streams and creeks?

— Rebecca, via e-mail

Indeed, many of our local waterways have seen better days, thanks to de-

cadecades of pollution. And cleaning them up and preventing further damage can be challenging, since much of the contamination has accumulated over time and results from what is known as “non-point source” pollution, which accounts for as much as 60 percent of the water pollution in the U.S.

“When it rains, fertilizer from lawns, oil from driveways, paint and solvent residues from walls and decks and even pet waste are all washed into storm sewers or nearby lakes, rivers and streams—the same lakes, rivers and streams we rely on for drinking water supply, boating, swimming and fishing,” reports the non-profit Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). “Also, improper handling of materials

around the house can lead to pollution.”

According to NRDC, each of us can do our part to reduce this runoff pollution and thus help protect local waterways. For one, we can replace concrete and other hard surfaces around our homes with porous materials, so that rainwater drains naturally into the ground and not into pathways that lead it into waterways.

We can landscape with native plants and natural fertilizers, and refrain from over-watering our lawns and gardens. And we can properly dispose of hazardous products (that is, not right down the drain), wash our cars at professional carwashes (where there are proper wastewater treatment procedures), recycle used motor oil, and use non-toxic alternatives for household chemicals whenever possible.

Of course, there is only so much that individuals can do on their own. While preventing pollution at the source is important, many waterways have so much legacy pollution in them already that they need to be cleaned up directly—no small job and typically way beyond the scope of a few individuals.

Some municipal, county or state governments might be inclined to help, but getting friends and neighbors involved first is a good way to demonstrate community support. Also, local businesses,



Local community volunteers clean up the Des Moines River. (Photo by Rastoney, courtesy Flickr)

non-profit groups, youth centers and schools are often looking for ways to get people involved in community service projects, so asking around town might be the best way to enlist dozens or more volunteers.

Another way to get the ball rolling is to sign up with American Rivers’ National River Cleanup program. Individuals, organizations and anyone interested in conducting a cleanup on their local river can register with the program and get free trash bags as well as assistance with media coverage, volunteer promotion and technical support.

The program has helped more than a million volunteers participate in thousands of cleanups covering more than 244,500 miles of waterways across the U.S. since it began in 1991.

“These cleanups have removed more than 16.5 million pounds of litter and debris from America’s rivers and streams,” reports American Rivers.

(Continued on Page 4)

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