



Kaleidoscope

A REFLECTION OF DIVERSITY IN PUBLIC WORKS

SUMMER 2012

Book Review 1

RWC Letter to Rosy 2

Summer Festivals 3

Diversity Workshop 4

Affirmative Action 5

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* Term ended July 1, 2012

** Term starting July 1, 2012

How to Travel Without Going Anywhere

by Neil Bjorklund

As a child, when I wanted to convey something being really exotic and far away, I would say “like in Botswana.” It had a nice ring to it, and being in southeast Africa, it is nearly on the opposite side of the globe. A novel by Alexander McCall Smith recently gave me my first taste of that faraway place and its culture: *The Kalahari Typing School For Men*.

Right away, the title gives you a clue that gender roles might be a focus of this story, and that bears out as we hear about Precious Ramotswe and the challenges she faces as a female private investigator in modern day Gaborone, Botswana.

A key subplot concerns a male private investigator who moves to town after working and being trained in America, and becomes a competitor to Precious and her firm. This fellow, Cephas Buthelezi, eventually learns that his big-city American attitudes don’t get him very far in Botswana, where courtesy and respect are highly valued. Another subplot involves Mr. Molefelo, a man who has been a victim of ostrich rustlers, who is inspired by that experience to reexamine a wrong he committed as a youth. He engages Precious Ramotswe’s services to help him make amends.

This is not a blockbuster crime novel, or a fast-paced page-turner. Rather, it is a novel of quiet grace, humor and wisdom. I was repeatedly struck by the formality of the way the characters speak to each other, and the respect they constantly convey when discussing any topic, whether it be the weather or concerns of great moral importance. For me, the book is a story about culture and how people are taught to treat each other. It made me reflect on the contrast of the brash, informal style of communication in our culture, compared to the gentle way of speech in Botswana.



Diversity in Public Works

Kaleidoscope is published by the City of Eugene Public Works Diversity Committee for the employees of Public Works

Time to speak up?

PW Employees at Roosevelt Yard are probably familiar with the Respectful Workplace Committee (RWC). RWC is a group that brings represented and non-represented employees together to discuss and respond to questions and concerns about workplace policies and practices. Many of the topics are brought to the table for discussion through anonymous comment cards that are collected on site.

In the PWDC, we often see the RWC discussing topics related to our goals for increased understanding, communication, and respect within our diverse department areas. Since RWC does such a great job of addressing these sometimes touchy issues, we asked for permission to reprint some of their responses. The first reprint is at right.

Welcome New PWDC Members

Tim Call, Bob Edmiston, Matt Rodrigues, and Ryan Turner rotated off the committee at the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 2012). New members are Julie Schafer (PWM), Chad Mickelson (PWM), Litahni Harlow (PWE), and Emily Aune (POS). We will miss those rotating off, and look forward to working with our new representatives in the coming years.

Dear Rosy,

No matter how hard I try, I can't seem to be on time for work. I'm never more than a few minutes late, but I can tell my coworkers notice and are becoming annoyed with me and with having to wait. I understand that our schedule is set back a bit, but is this really a big deal?

Sincerely,
What Time Is It?

Dear WTII?

Punctuality is a big deal and one of those attributes which can be undervalued, thus giving it the appearance of being unimportant. Sometimes people are late to work — that's an unavoidable fact of life. These excuses don't often stand up to a great deal of scrutiny but are accepted as occasional occurrences. Heavy traffic is an old favorite, for example, but the fact is that heavy traffic is a daily feature of most large towns during rush hour — no sensible adult should be surprised by busy roads.

The problem is when one person is consistently and habitually late. A habitually tardy colleague can have a profound impact on the entire workgroup. When you are late, you are telling your co-workers that they are not important enough to be on time for. No one really enjoys getting up early and bolting down their breakfast to be on time for work. When a coworker is habitually late, others may start to wonder why they should bother to be on time. Co-workers tend to become resentful, and ultimately the whole crew's work satisfaction and productivity can become affected. (If you are the resentful co-worker, please consider having a crucial conversation with your co-worker, and/or make sure your supervisor is aware of the problem. And remember, there may be a personal situation — which you are not aware of — which is officially excusing the person being late.)

So WTII, we recommend using a second alarm clock, and we assure you that your efforts will be noticed and appreciated.

Rosy

"I have noticed that the people who are late are often so much jollier than the people who have to wait for them"

E.V. Lucas, English writer and publisher (1868-1938)

If you have a question or concern regarding diversity and human rights in the workplace that you'd like to see addressed by the PWDC, please contact your division's committee member (see page 1 for our member list).

Summer Festivals

We've waited long enough for summer to arrive! Don't let it pass you by without some fun outdoor events that showcase our community's many interests and talents. Here are just a few...

Bite of Eugene July 20, Friday, 3 - 10 p.m. Free, donations suggested. Alton Baker Park, 632 Day Island Road, Eugene. More info: 541.968.5228

A celebration of our local food and dessert scene with a focus on sustainability. Entertainment includes local music, cooking classes, family/children's area and a live local "Iron Chef" competition. A great way to try something new in the culinary world!

Live Music: Mutswi Marimba July 26, Thursday, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. Free. Awbrey Park, Spring Creek Dr, off River Rd. This event is one of many in the Summer in the City calendar. For a full listing of fun, free events, go to eugene-or.gov/SummerintheCity

Mutswi Wambuya means rainbow in the Shona language of Zimbabwe, and reflects the diversity and enthusiasm of its members. Mutswi has been playing together for three years, at Kutsinhira Cultural Arts Center in Eugene. Come enjoy the fantastic melodies and complex rhythms of Mutswi Marimba's infectious dance music.

Obon Festival July 28, Saturday, 5 - 9 p.m. Free. Alton Baker Park. **More info:** 541.687.9600

Enjoy a summer evening of Japanese folk dances, drumming by Eugene Taiko and Waka Daiko, Asian arts and crafts, and Asian food.

Fiesta Latina July 28-29, Saturday and Sunday. 11:30 a.m.-11 p.m. \$5 day pass. Day Island Park in Springfield. www.FiestaLatinaOregon.com

Lane County's largest celebration of Latin American culture with music, dancing, food and art.

Eugene/Springfield Pride Day August 11, Saturday, noon - 7 pm. \$5 suggested donation. Alton Baker Park. More info: 541.513.1711

A celebration of Eugene/Springfield diversity, this event that features local merchants, food vendors, entertainment, and provides a safe space for the remembrance of Stonewall.

Eugene Celebration August 24- 26, Friday, 5 p.m. - midnight; Saturday, 11 a.m. - midnight; Sunday, 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Admission:\$8 - \$15. Downtown Eugene. More info: 541.681.4108

This is the southern Willamette Valley's largest and most celebrated civic event. Good times include music, family fun, food, a parade and more.

Finally, for those out-of-town guests who have heard that Eugene is a little on the wacky side, here's a fun way to prove them right! The **Weird and Wonderful Exhibit** at the Lane Co. Historical Museum (740 West 13th Ave., next to the fair grounds) runs through September 15. Learn about the unusual people, places and activities that make our area so interesting. Details at lanecountyhistoricalsociety.org



Looking for more ways to explore the arts and culture scene in our area? Check out Eugeneagogo.com for local music, visual arts and more.

Connect/Connecting Workshops are Active Success

While annual diversity training is something that all City employees are encouraged to attend, the PWDC recognizes that many of us have different learning styles, and so our goal was to develop a more active diversity learning event. With leadership from recreation services staff, we tested and decided to present the Learning To Connect, Connecting to Learn workshop as a way to encourage public works employees to experience diversity concepts in a fresh way, and also mix employees from all divisions and job types in an informal learning environment.

The City of Eugene's Diversity and Equity Strategic Plan (DESP) sets guidelines to support a broad range of City efforts to meet the needs of our organization and community. One of the six goals in the Public Works' Action Plan is dedicated to Workforce and Work Environment, to "achieve and maintain a workforce that reflects our community, and create a work environment that supports all employees." One specific Action Item defines a goal to "Develop initiatives for encouraging communication, team building and information sharing between workgroups to increase knowledge of resources, share ideas and innovations, and reduce isolation." The PWDC, with the assistance of the Recreation Division, offered the "Learning to Connect/Connecting to Learn" workshop to all Public Works employees specifically to encourage development in this area.

Two 'Learning to Connect/Connecting to Learn' workshops were held on May 24, 2012 and June 6, 2012.



Thoughtful communication and coordination are required to accomplish this complex challenge involving strings and a tennis ball.



How do others see me? Randomly assigned playing cards identify different types of people in this exercise.

Feedback from Attendees

After the workshops, we sent out a survey to all attendees. We requested specific feedback about the length of the workshops, the structure of breaks, the instructors, and the value of the time spent.

Participants were asked, "What is one 'take away' you have from the workshop?" There were a number of insightful comments received. Key words and phrases included: 'positive working relationships', 'collaboration', 'teamwork', 'listening', 'every person can contribute', 'learning', and 'clear communication'.

When asked, "What portion of the workshop they would like to see changed?" most comments recommended a shorter duration of the workshop, more opportunity to sit down during the discussions, and suggestions for improving break time.

Participants were asked if they had any additional information or comments they would like to add. Overall, comments suggest it was a 'great training'. The Recreation Division staff (lead by Robert Brack) 'really rock'. The PWDC was given kudos for the 'great tangible outcome of planning and hard work to pull this off' and for 'thinking about a way to bring people together that is different and engaged a variety of people'.

With so many positive comments and good constructive criticism from our participants, look for an even better version of the workshop in the next fiscal year!

Affirmative Action Review

Employees sometimes ask about the City's policy on Affirmative Action. The City of Eugene strives to hire, develop, and retain an excellent workforce so that we can deliver exemplary service to our community. Having a diverse workforce enhances teamwork, innovation, and productivity and is the City is committed to creating an environment that is inclusive to all employees. Therefore, the City has developed specific policies around Affirmative Action in order to continue this important work.

Policy Statement from City Manager

The City of Eugene is committed to having its work force reflect the diversity of the population we serve. In addition, the City strives to have participation by all groups, including women, racial and ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities, in all job categories, and provides for veteran's preference in accordance with State and federal law.

The purpose of the City's Affirmative Action program is to help us reach these goals and sustain an employment environment that provides equal opportunities to all applicants and employees.

Where there is under-representation on the City's work force of any population group for which the law requires Affirmative Action, the City is committed to taking affirmative steps to correct the problem. In order to achieve a balanced applicant pool from which to make hiring decisions, the City may recruit beyond the metropolitan service area.

The City extends all terms, conditions, benefits, and privileges of employment to all employees regardless of ethnicity, race, sex, sexual orientation, color, national origin, age, religion, disability, marital status, familial status or source of income.

If you would like to learn more about the City's Affirmative Action Plan (last updated in 2011) visit the human resources web site at eugene-or.gov/hr and click on the Affirmative Action Plan in the Quick Links.

PWDC MISSION STATEMENT

The City of Eugene Public Works Department is committed to fostering understanding, communication and respect among all members in the department.

We believe in a department that is accepting of everyone so that we capitalize on the strengths emanating from our differences.

By drawing on our individual strengths, we believe we can create an optimum and respectful workplace, one that can attract and retain a diverse workforce, allowing us to serve the community from which we come more effectively.

We believe that an inclusive diversity program is pivotal to reaching our professional potential, both individually and collectively.

GOALS

The goal of the PW Diversity Committee is to promote a workplace free of harassment and discrimination. We recognize and respect diverse viewpoints, cultures, and life experiences.