

Switchboard: 'heart-pacer for alternative community'

Switchboard is the heart-pacer for the alternative community.

Operating out of a big, old salmon-colored house at 416 Jefferson, the referral service monitors the sometimes spasmodic beat of Eugene's counter-culture.

A self-described "awareness center," Switchboard provides both direct services and referrals. Directly, the outfit offers a series of bulletin boards for rides, jobs, housing, sales, etc., serves as a counseling and drop-in center and acts as a sort

of clearing house for donations.

The majority of time is spent acting as a local chamber of commerce and information agency on a personal basis. Terry Potash, director, says over 200 calls are received daily between 10 a.m. and 12 p.m. from people who are in need of assistance.

Switchboard maintains an "alpha" file on community services, both "straight and alternative, their addresses and phone numbers." People are referred to White Bird, Legal Aid, welfare programs and cooperatives.

An important service newcomers don't find anywhere else in Eugene is the crash referral. When someone comes to town and can't find a place to stay, he is inevitably told to "call Switchboard." The number is 344-7133.

A crash file of such places as communes, private homes, the Youth Hostel and Family Shelter House is maintained.

Runaways are referred to Looking-Glass, a Springfield group that specializes in helping them. If the runaway won't go

there, Switchboard will find a place for the person to stay. To avoid legal trouble, Switchboard will tell the people at whose place the runaway is staying what the situation is.

"We want to work with everyone," says Potash. "And we have good relations with the police and the city, which helps a lot to keep functioning."

Switchboard is staffed with up to 30 volunteers who mainly man the phones. Potash said the University's SEARCH program provides operators during the winter but acknowledged,

"Summer is a problem" in getting people to help out.

The operating budget is supported solely by the coordinators and by donations. The ASUO donates \$35 monthly—an amount that just covers expenses for the agency's two business phones.

Every four hours Potash, a former electronic journalism student, broadcasts a five minute bulletin from the office that goes out over FM radio station KZEL's air ways. The bulletin provides up to date information on lost and found animals and rides needed and offered out of the area.

Young travelers can stay overnight as Hostel readies for July opening

In the entire state of Oregon, there is only one Youth Hostel—a place for traveling young people to stay overnight.

A standard feature in Europe and other parts of the world, the hostel idea has just been developed in Eugene. In fact, the idea is about all that has been developed, as yet. The rest is struggling to take shape inside a large house at 416 Jefferson.

Coordinator Joe Smith, originally from Nova Scotia, is pouring his and others' energies into readying the hostel for its official opening July 5.

So far, 18 beds have been found, 6 of which were donated from Sacred Heart Hospital. And two large rooms upstairs and a loft below are in a semi-state of readiness.

The workers aren't whistling in the wind, on a night last week—almost a month before the opening—the hostel was filled to capacity with premature travelers crashing overnight.

Smith says he doesn't see how it will be any different the rest of the summer. "We're not going to have enough space to put everyone," he laments.

A \$1 fee is asked of people who use the facilities. This amount allows the guest to a bed, bath and to check his pack for the night. Breakfast and dinner will be provided for a quarter each.

"We'll try and give preference to people that pay—others will have to earn their keep," says Sally Bishop, who will be chief cook for the hostel. "If we didn't have to pay money, we couldn't charge."

Smith has asked the city for a \$5,200 subsidy but said he hasn't had any response yet. "Unfortunately, I'm taking that negatively," he said.

The hostel has a 13-member Board of directors consisting of community members, university faculty and other service

directors. They are meeting to determine how public donations can be obtained.

Food, blankets and sheets are of highest priority, emphasized the cook. "And if anyone wants to donate an automatic washer, it would sure be used," she suggested.

Despite the technicalities, the

hostel is developing as a friendly, relaxed and very homey environment in which to stay.

"We look at it as a cultural energy exchange," explains Terry Potash, director of the annexed Switchboard that occupies the same building. "It's an experience to rap with the people that come through town."

Shelter House provides lodging for families

The worn and warped door looks like it might be shut tight, but a fresh sign on its surface shows that people still pass this way. The sign reads, "This is a family shelter house, not a crash pad."

The roomy old building referred to is Shelter House, a former fraternity where low income families are put up and fed until the staff can find permanent quarters for them. Three hundred men, women and children took advantage of these services last month according to a volunteer worker there, and many more are expected as spring moves into summer.

Shelter House hopes to be ready for the summer influx this year with the opening of a new and larger center at 2308 Willamette. Reverend Donald Gall, minister of education for the Central Presbyterian Church and one of the founders of the service back in 1970, says the move to upper Willamette will be made "any day."

He explains that the non-profit organization sponsoring Shelter House, the Eugene Emergency Housing Corporation, has been contemplating the move for some time, but just obtained the necessary permit from the city council last week.

Despite the new and better quarters, Gall thinks the house

"is at a very precarious point." He notes that the city provided the bulk of operating funds last year with \$4,500, but such support has not yet been secured for fiscal 1972-73.

Gall doesn't blame city planners who have budgeted a generous \$7,500 for Shelter House, but the voters who may force this financing to be cut if they reject the city budget in the upcoming June 20 election. "It's a very real danger," Gall insists.

If Shelter House should die for lack of funding, Gall thinks it would be a great loss to the Eugene community. "We work very closely with the social agencies, welfare and so forth. There are lots of low income families that don't meet the regulations necessary for government aid through these agencies. These people are sent to us, their last hope for help."

If present problems can be overcome, Gall sees an increase in the type of help that will be available during the busy summer ahead and into the fall. "We have not really sought student input in the past," says Gall, "but we will be in the future. We hope to attract some volunteer aid either from students who need field practice in social work or those that just feel the concern we feel for the low income families trying to make it in Eugene."

Bikes . . .

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A common cause of bike thefts is the bike left unattended, even for a few seconds. A bike can be locked, but stolen, if it is not locked to some immovable object. Tim McCarthy believes people get a false sense of security by chaining a bike to a parking meter, where it is easily lifted off and stolen.

Buying a one dollar bike license can also help recover a stolen bike. McCarthy says the license numbers are part of a computerized system, and bikes recovered anywhere in the U.S. can be traced back to the owner through the computer. Bike licenses purchased now are good through the end of 1973.

Oregon Daily Emerald

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