

Youth group elects Chalmers

By CLARK WALWORTH
Of the Emerald

Don Chalmers is a person who jumps in and takes over — and he's done it again.

The 26-year-old director of the Office of Student Advocacy entered ASUO politics as a freshman and stayed with it through his graduation from the University's law school in 1975. He has run for ASUO president, was president of Gresham High School's student body and served on the Youth Advisory Council for the Portland Metropolitan Youth Commission.

So when the Eugene City Council needed volunteers to serve on the new Eugene Youth Commission, an agency concerned with problems of people 13 to 17 years old, it was only natural for Chalmers to get himself appointed.

And at the commission's organizational meeting last week, it followed that Chalmers would get himself elected president.

Even though he didn't particularly want the job.

Chalmers had wanted to be one of the commission's two representatives to the Eugene Human Rights Council (HRC), the body that oversees the Youth Commission and four similar commissions.

"I went in there with the intention of being on the HRC," Chalmers said in an interview Thursday. "But I didn't see that the leadership was going to be taken on. You've got to have somebody to maintain the momentum. Obviously there was nobody inclined to take the initiative."

Now that Chalmers has the job, what will he do with it?

"The first thing I want to do is make a needs assessment," he said. "I didn't come to the commission with a feeling that I have all the answers."

In the meeting, Chalmers called for an omnibus public hearing soon after the first of the year to determine what programs the community needs.

He sees a need for a strong youth outreach program. "I'd like to see an aggressive program to get ideas from people 13 to 17," he said.

"I see a high-school visitation program, with commissioners going to classes and assemblies. I don't see us sitting in a government building saying, 'Come talk to us.' That ain't going to make it," he said.

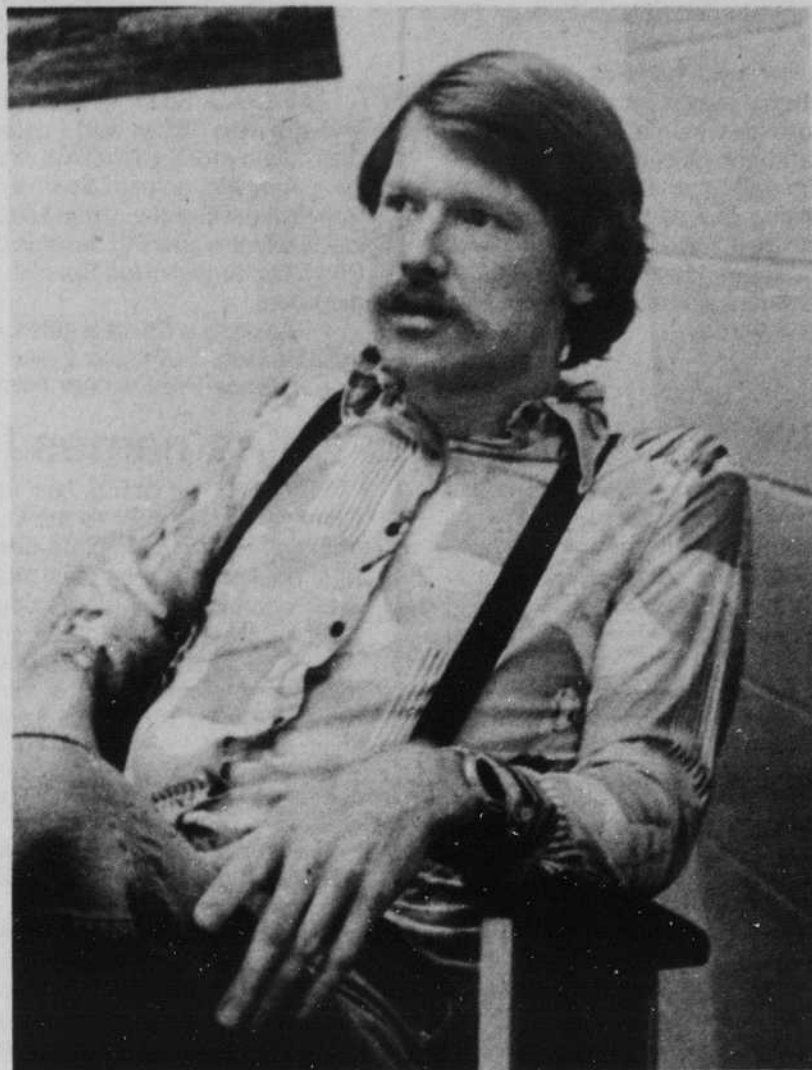


Photo by Ken Shin

Don Chalmers, director of the ASUO Office of Student Advocacy, now wears another hat. As president of the City of Eugene's Youth Commission, Chalmers will be exploring the needs of the city's 13 to 17-year-olds, and helping to formulate policies to meet those needs.

One of Chalmers' immediate plans for the commission is to discuss two Oregon legislative proposals. One is a new juvenile code, to be introduced by Sen. Betty Browne of Oakridge in the 1977 session.

Chalmers has given each commissioner a summary of the bill and hopes they can make some recommendation to the Legislature.

"This is the most important piece of juvenile legislation since the 1973 session," he said.

Chalmers also wants to discuss the Emancipation Bill, which, if passed by the Legislature, will establish procedure allowing minors to become independent of their parents. He wants to develop commission consensus, perhaps after a public hearing, and testify in Salem before whichever committee handles the bill, he said.

Other projects Chalmers would like to develop include a youth-police liaison committee and a senior-youth program.

Chalmers is pleased that the Eugene commission, unlike its Portland counterpart, actually includes youth (four of the nine members are 18 or younger), and that both commission delegates to the HRC are youths.

"The youth on this commission are very realistic. They seem experienced enough to recognize their limitations," he said.

"When a question comes down to a hard choice and the young people feel a certain way on it, I'm going to go with what the young people say. They are the focus of the commission," he said.

The commission meets in City Hall the third Tuesday of each month at 3:30 p.m. The next meeting will be Dec. 21.

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