

The warning's out

By NANCY MARSHALL
Of the Emerald

Students wishing to live off-campus next year should start looking for housing now, according to staff members from the Off-Campus Housing Office (OCH) in a workshop offered this week.

The object of the workshop, said Claudia Hohnstein, was to "pre-warn" students of what they're getting into when finding housing. OCH provides free rent referrals and helps students with tenant-landlord problems.

Hohnstein and Sue Swegar, also from OCH, explained to some 40 interested students important things they need to know both before and after finding a place to live.

They said it was important to consider the time to look for apartments, studios, quads or townhouses and at what price each goes for. Students should decide how far away from campus they would want to be and what to look at in an apartment, including whether it's a month-to-month or three, six, nine or 12-month lease.

Deposits and fees are other obligations to note, they said.

Before anything else, "you have to know yourself in deciding if the

move to an apartment, and also isolation, is right for you," Hohnstein said.

After deciding it's right, students should start looking for housing by June, because many people arrive in September and have difficulty finding something good, said Hohnstein. Most landlords take reservations now.

Prices for apartments and townhouses tend to run about the same, Swegar said. Rent for a one-bedroom is about \$165 a month and about \$210 for a two-bedroom place. Quads — four bedrooms centered around one kitchen — are about \$100 a month per tenant. Studios — one bed-

room situated in the living room area — are about \$110 to \$140 a month. But because rents are going up all the time, students should add another \$10 to \$20 a month, Swegar estimated.

When students start looking at apartments, there are several specific questions to keep in mind, Hohnstein said, such as "Is it furnished? Is it clean? Is it noisy? What utilities are included?"

She advised students to knock on other tenants' doors and ask them how they feel about the apartment and the landlord.

"Let them know you're really interested in renting next year, and not just knocking on doors. Be aggressive — check the conditions inside the apartment."

Hohnstein added, "Eugene is notorious for being damp and moldy and having bugs. Look behind the cupboards, check the plumbing, floors and rugs. Be sure to look beyond the present tenant's dirty clothes."

Swegar explained that in looking for an apartment, students should know of any lease arrangements. In month-to-month renting, the tenant can give the landlord a 30-day notice and

Leases, fees,
deposits . . .
off-campus
living woes
discussed
in workshop



Graphic by Jim Payne

leave. But the landlord can do the same to the tenant, can raise the rent or change the rules at any time.

Renting by a lease (usually for nine months), the tenant cannot be evicted or have his rent raised, but he is required to stay in the apartment until the lease runs out, according to Swegar.

An important thing the OCH members advised students to understand was the difference between deposits and fees. Deposits are refundable — fees are not.

A deposit is required for security or cleaning and must be returned by the landlord if the specified conditions of the contract are met. A fee is a payment for some kind of service.

"Just ask 'is it refundable?'" Hohnstein said, "but be sure to ask what it's for. Don't just settle for a \$100 deposit."

After both the tenant and the landlord understand the contract agreement, Hohnstein said, "give the landlord a deposit to hold the apartment and get a receipt specifically stating that the money is to hold the place for you. Get it written down."

"The first month's rent or deposit will not absolutely guarantee that the landlord won't rent the unit to someone else in the meantime."

She said, "Most landlords are good, but a few are no good at all." She added that it is beneficial to have a good relationship with the landlord, and to know the law and tenant's rights.

The Renter's Handbook, a booklet on legal rights, is available in the OCH office along with additional housing information.

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