

With unique emergency unit

County jail to institute mental help

Second in a series on the Lane County jail system.

By KEN HASWELL
Of the Emerald

In 1975 there was no 24-hour emergency mental health community service. Today, the Lane County facility boasts such a program, for those committed involuntarily.

The Mental Health Emergency Unit, unique to the state, is expected to open in the new county jail in mid-March.

The unit is unique because it is built in the jail and will not be staffed by corrections personnel but by Lane County Mental Health personnel. The unit will provide emergency treatment for both voluntary and involuntary commitments as well as for alcohol detoxification.

The unit was first suggested in 1975 when county corrections requested Lane County Mental Health to find some way to care for individuals who were jailed for their own protection.

Program Manager Lester Gagnon says some police officers arrested people for non-criminal offenses, such as emotional disturbances that threatened the individual and possibly others. He says the police knew the facilities were unable to handle individuals with alcoholic or emotional problems, but felt a responsibility to protect the individual. An 8-by-10-foot cell was not the place for these people Gagnon says.

Corrections, stuck with the non-criminal offenders, approached mental health asking for counselors who could also help jail inmates and who could conduct psychological evaluations for the county court system.

Gagnon says the unit will provide services the present jail cannot, such as mental health treatment to inmates suffering from the duress of incarceration (being jailed).

Also, he says, the unit will save transportation costs to the Oregon State Hospital in Salem for court ordered psychological evalua-

tions. He adds that people have to wait in jail until the OSH has room for them to undergo a 30-day evaluation before trial.

The unit will allow immediate evaluations thus relieving the county court system of its backlog.

The unit's alcohol detoxification center will provide treatment rather than providing a night in the drunk tank as was done in the past.

After a person's initial crisis (in non-criminal cases) the person will be referred to a physician or to some community organization such as Whitebird for further treatment.

Gagnon says community

oriented programs seem to help people more than does sending them to larger institutions.

The unit housed on the ground floor of the new jail, consists of 16 patient rooms and four isolation rooms, two of which will be padded.

The unit will also have a room for group interviews and a day-room for the inmates. Gagnon says inmates with mental disturbances will recover faster if they are not confined to a cell all day. Upon showing stability, the inmate will be allowed to use the day-room, which will have TV and cardtables.

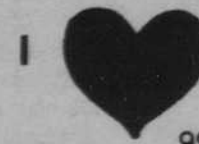
The unit was built for about

\$700,000 and will cost approximately \$500,000 a year to operate. Gagnon says the unit will be required by law to charge inmates for its services, which will help pay for the support needs (heat, laundry and food from the jail) received from the county.

He says that in the case of inmates who cannot afford to pay,

the county will pay half of the bill and the state will pay the other half.

"By law we (the county) are required to provide service, and we will make every attempt possible to recover — to bring in to the county — as many dollars as possible to cover those costs," Gagnon says.



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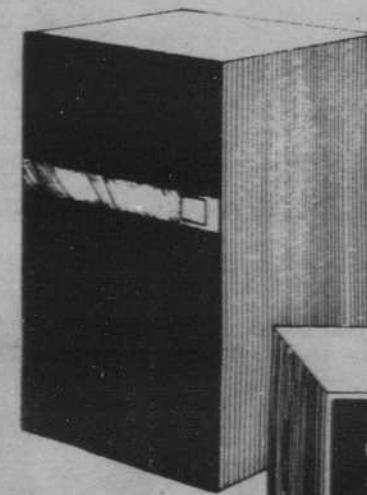
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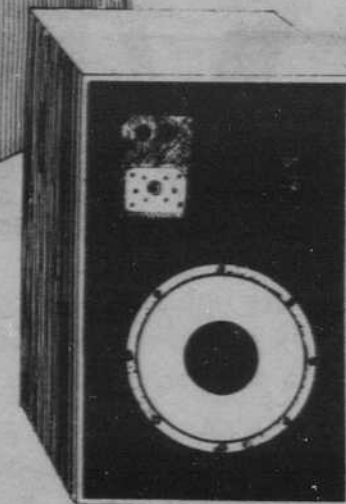
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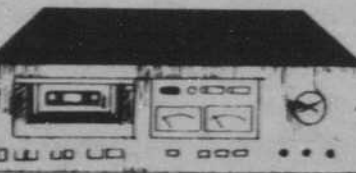
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Arab students to demonstrate

Members of the Organization of Arab Students in the U.S. and Canada will travel to Portland this morning to demonstrate against what they call "the Zionist Israeli ideology that advocates and practices racial discrimination against non-Jewish people and forcefully evicted Palestinians from their homes."

The group will show the film Revolution Until Victory at noon Thursday and co-sponsor a discussion-forum with the Iranian student union Thursday at 7 p.m. in the EMU, room to be posted.

Forum representatives will discuss the historical background on Zionism and the Camp David agreement between Pres. Carter, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian Pres. Anwar Sadat.

Sharif Muhammad of the Arab student organization says the forum is part of a week of activities that will call attention to "policies of the expansionist colonial state of Israel and the Camp David agreement, which denies the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people for total liberation and the establishment of a Democratic secular state in Palestine for all religions."