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Tenant's alternative to renting: manage an apartment complex

By JOAN HERMAN

Managing an apartment complex is a job some students take to help survive the high costs of a college education.

Nick Maddalena, a graduate student in special education, manages a 20-unit complex close to campus. For Maddalena, as well as for most students, the main reason he took the job was free rent (worth \$260.) But as he points out, there are other benefits, too.

"As an apartment manager I can somewhat choose who will live in the building," Maddalena says. "For example, when someone comes to inquire about an apartment I ask them if they like to play their stereo loud or have wild parties. If they do, I discourage them from renting an apartment from me. I want to keep the building quiet."

"Another advantage to apartment management is that the experience looks impressive on a job resume, especially if someone wants to go into business management," Maddalena says.

Unlike most jobs, there are no rigid hours when one must be working, although most managers do keep regular office hours when tenants can discuss any problems they may be having.

Managers must also be available at odd hours for small emergencies, such as letting renters into their apartments when they've forgotten their keys, or unclogging sinks, to name just a few of an apartment manager's duties.

As an apartment manager Maddalena says that he's busiest at the beginning and end of each term, when students are

either moving in or out. As part of his duties he must make sure that the apartments are clean when someone moves out. If they are not, he must clean them.

Other duties typically include collecting rent, general maintenance, such as keeping the grounds clean, and various minor repairs.

All things considered, the job averages out to about 20 hours of work a month, Maddalena says. "Some days I may work several hours, but then a few weeks may pass when very little must be done."

For those interested in property management, Eleanor Shantz, who owns and manages apartments in Eugene, suggests that managers be well-balanced, with a strong interest in people. She feels that "one must be able to make decisions and then live with them. Don't make any promises that you can't keep, and don't be partial. Serve all your tenants equally."

"But above all," says Shantz, "be organized."

Kay Nelson, of Gordon Olson Investments, interviews potential apartment managers. "We prefer to hire someone that we already know, usually someone that has rented from us," says Nelson.

For those interested in property management, Nelson suggests that students talk with the manager or owner of their complex.

If that doesn't work, try calling some of the larger companies in town that own apartment complexes, such as Income Property Management (IPM) or Gordon Olson Investments. And don't forget to check the "help wanted" section of the newspaper because many of the jobs are advertised.

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