

# 'Little brothers' are family

By Diana Elliott  
Of the Emerald

When Ibraheem Wabah, a University student, came to the United States from Afghanistan three years ago, he left behind six brothers and three sisters. That's why he enjoys taking time from studying to visit his new "little brothers," Nathan and Peter Prengaman, several times a week.

Wabah met Nathan and Peter last fall through the YMCA's Big Brother/Big Sister Program of Oregon. The Big Brother/Big Sister Program assigns volunteer adults from the community to befriend grade school children who are referred to the program for special attention by their school counselors.

Wabah says Carolyn Higgins, director of the program, matched him with the Prengaman brothers, sensing they would relate well to each other.

Wabah and Nathan Prengaman have more than just the YMCA brotherhood in common.

Both came here three years ago from Eastern countries. But while Wabah left his home by choice, to avoid joining the military and pursue his education in America, Nathan was abandoned by his family in India, and adopted by his American mother, Ann Marie Prengaman.

Nathan and Peter Prengaman have developed a brotherly friendship since Nathan joined the family three years ago.

"They get along so well together that I think it would be awkward to spend time with Nathan without having Peter around," Wabah says. "Peter is learning as much as he can. He's learning about another culture, something most kids his age don't know about. We are all getting something out of

this (relationship)."

Peter is 9 years old and attends a special education program at school because sometimes he has problems paying attention," Wabah says. "Peter is very shy, which is different from Nathan.

"Nathan is very aggressive in the way he plays. He sometimes has problems with the other kids because he is very physical. But that's just because he's used to a culture where it's OK to be physical," he adds.

Nathan is also in a special education program at his school, and Wabah says many of his problems may stem from culture shock.

"Nathan left his entire life and culture behind him. The way he's living now is totally different from anything he knew in India," he says.

Wabah says though he seems to understand Nathan, he doesn't really know that much about him.

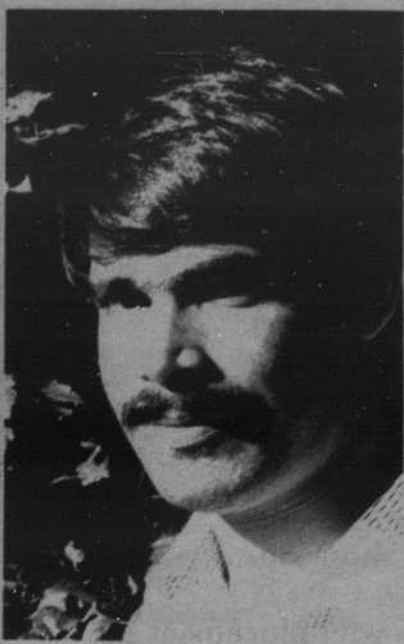
"Because no one knows Nathan's exact age, his mother and he have agreed on the age of 11," Wabah explains. "We don't know much about his previous life because he doesn't like to talk about it."

Wabah readily admits that he benefits from the relationship also. "They give to me what I left behind in Afghanistan — a family," he says.

Wabah sees his little brothers three to four times a week, and says he thinks it's important to see them frequently, even if the visits are sometimes brief.

Though the three are together a lot, Wabah ensures that they never run out of things to do. "We go to the park, bicycle riding, and sometimes swimming at the YMCA," he says. "But most frequently, they just come over for dinner.

"The boys really enjoy talk-



Ibraheem Wabah

ing and listening to my music." Wabah says. "I have a small collection of American music that they really enjoy. Of course, everybody likes Michael Jackson."

And the Prengamans' mother, Ann Marie, gets to enjoy some time to herself when Wabah takes the boys after she has spent a long day, or long week, at work.

Ann Marie Prengaman, a single parent, teaches writing at Lane Community College.

"She has a lot of classes and meetings to attend, so I think it really helps her out that I spend time with the boys," Wabah says. "She really appreciates the help."

And she returns the favor. "She has really helped me out with my writing for school," Wabah says.

"This is one thing that I will never regret doing. It's amazing how much I've grown to care about them. They are more special than any friends."

This will be an attempt to make the Senate both appropriate and credible, she says.

"The Senate is designed to... chew, digest and bring motions back to the Assembly. But as long as the Senate does its job and the Assembly ignores it, why have a Senate?" asks Eaton.

Today, the Assembly will meet for the first time of the year. University Pres. Paul Olum will give his "State of the University" address. The meeting will begin at 3:30 p.m. in Room 150 Geology.

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## Senate Continued from Page 1

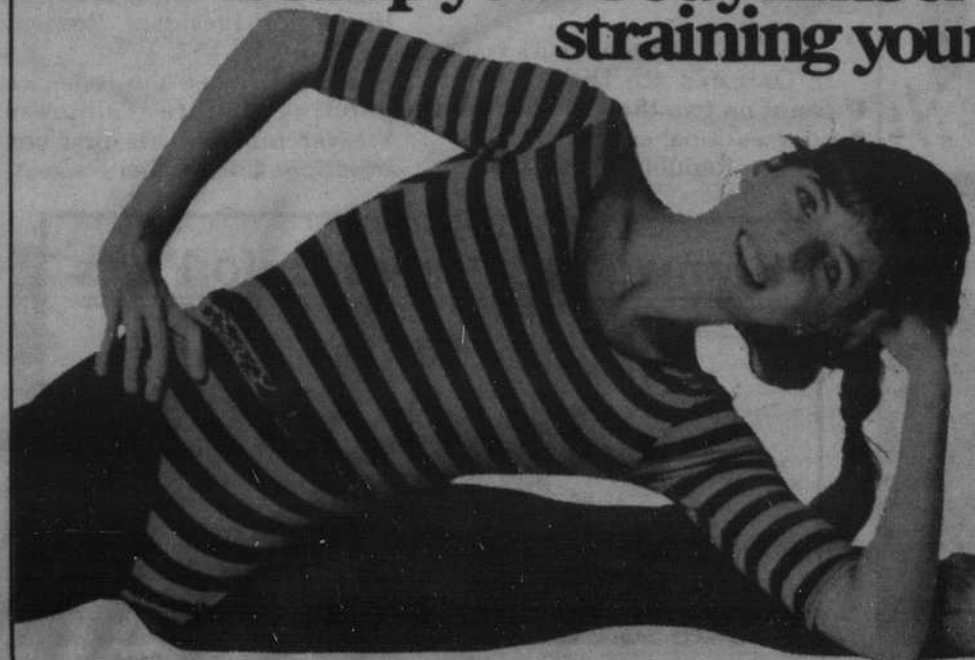
All three major senate pitfalls — the lack of a Senate role, the reluctance by the faculty to give the body decision-making power, and the problem's of SUAB — lead to the crux of the matter, says Eaton.

"The Senate... needs to be given recognition," Eaton says.

Eaton plans to have an open discussion on the role of the Senate at an early Assembly meeting this year to "simply talk about roles."



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