

Local groups help citizens

By Deborah Janes
Of the Emerald

In a city with more than 100,000 residents, it is often difficult for city leaders to keep in touch with the public and its myriad interests. But through Eugene's 20 neighborhood organizations, individuals can more easily express their concerns to local officials.

The group's largest potential for influence is through direct citizen action in decision-making, says Christine Donohue, the city's neighborhood liaison. If a planning commission proposes changes, the neighborhood organization involved has an opportunity to discuss these plans with Donohue or a city councilor, she says.

"Many are willing to make their point heard," Donohue says. "The group is as strong as the people in it."

The issue of the historic trees on Sixth and Seventh avenues, for example, prompted many neighborhood groups to take an active stand, Donohue says.

"We've had ideas on policy and ended up changing it after

we met with the neighborhood groups," says City Councilor Jeff Miller.

One of Eugene's strongest groups is the West University neighborhood, located just west of campus. Wilma Downie, chair of the West University neighborhood group, says that work by the group has had an extremely positive effect.

"Our neighborhood used to be considered one of the poorest," she says.

But through collective efforts, beginning with the creation of a refinement plan in 1974, the neighborhood has become a pleasant area to live in, she says.

With the help of the Eugene Police Department, area residents upgraded the security of their homes by inspecting locks, windows, outdoor lighting and trimming bushes near windows, Downie says. Although demand for this service remains high, police have since terminated the program because of a shortage of officers.

Downie says her group has also asked police to keep an eye on transients along 13th

Avenue and requested that the city provide more garbage cans along the avenue.

The Woonerf Project is probably the West University neighborhood's most successful undertaking. The large cement planters, located in the middle of four intersections, were the brainchild of the West University group that was concerned about heavy traffic.

"We wanted to slow down traffic," Downie says. "This area is heavily used by bicycles."

But with 2,900 houses in the West University neighborhood, only about 15 people usually attend the meetings, she says. "It's hard to get people to volunteer."

This low participation level is dangerous, says City Councilor Dick Hansen, whose ward encompasses the West University neighborhood.

Each group has the option of producing a newsletter 10 times a year that provides updates on neighborhood activities. The newsletters, which range from a one-sheet bulletin to a full-fledged newspaper, provide a large variety of information on such diverse activities as recycling, crime prevention and the Big Brother/Big Sister program.

Also included in the newsletters are city press releases listing city council meetings and presentation times, Downing says.

The city of Eugene provides funds to cover printing costs of newsletter production. The West University neighborhood receives \$1,600, Donohue says.

"We may need to consolidate the communications within the neighborhoods in the future," Hansen says of a continuous city funding cutback threat.

But although the newsletter may not be cost-effective, it is an integral part of representative democracy, Miller says.

"We must have those channels open," he says.

Students question Emerald policies

By Paul Ertelt
Of the Emerald

About 30 University students, including representatives from several minority groups, attended Tuesday night's Oregon Daily Emerald Board of Directors meeting to express "concerns about discrimination reflected in the policies, patterns and practices of the Oregon Daily Emerald."

Nine people read from a statement charging that the Emerald is insensitive to issues of discrimination and questioning Emerald hiring practices.

Among those reading from the statement were Colleen Duncan, director of the Black Student Union; Leah Juniper, director of Women's Referral and Resource Service; and Dianna Kale, of the Council on Minority Education.

The statement mentioned examples of advertisements and editorial cartoons it said have appeared in the Emerald since 1983.

The statement also charged that the Emerald failed to contact minority student unions and organizations about openings and that "qualified journalism students of color and gay or lesbian students have not been interviewed for staff positions."

Kale also read from a letter from D. Misa Joo of Eugene in which she wrote that the Emerald had refused to print her letter to the editor. Joo claimed that an Emerald staff person said that Joo's criticism of the Emerald's "insensitivity toward people of color is a lie. She emphasized that the Emerald does not print lies."

Michelle Brence, Emerald editorial page editor, denied that she used the word "lie" in her conversation with Joo. She said she did not run the letter because it quoted statements by Emerald staff members without identifying them.

Jean Ownbey, Emerald assistant to the publisher, challenged the group's charges of discriminatory hiring practices.

"I would like to know where your accusation on discriminatory hiring practices comes from. Does anyone in this group know what the structure of the staff of the Emerald is?"

Ownbey said the staff of 57 employees included 36 women, four Asian-Americans, two Hispanic Americans, and a Native American who has been employed by the Emerald for nine years.

Lori Edmo, assistant director of the Native American Student Union, said she applied in the spring for an Emerald position but was not granted an interview, although she had several years of experience in reporting and production work on weekly newspapers.

Diana Elliott, Emerald managing editor, said the Emerald received about 60 applications for 13 new staff positions and granted interviews to only 30 people. Elliott said Edmo was not interviewed because she failed to include examples of her work with her application.

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