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Groups take aim at county's hungry

By Sarah Kitchen
Of the Emerald

Hunger in Lane County will be the focus this week of an Oregon Food Share food drive and a University symposium sponsored by the Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group.

OSPIRG became interested in the hunger problem after talk-

ing to volunteers from Food for Lane County, which distributes food to 30 emergency food box centers around the county, said Jack Kapuscinski, OSPIRG campus coordinator. About 22,000 people receive the boxes.

"One in every four people in Lane County does not eat properly, and only 5,000 families receive food stamps, so a lot of people get weeded out," Kapuscinski said.

But "most people don't realize how bad the hunger problem is in Eugene because it's not as obvious here as it is in other big cities," he said.

One reason is malnutrition is one of the largest problems in Lane County. People may be able to afford a place to live but unable to afford a well-balanced diet.

And the number of malnourished in Lane County is growing because of federal cut-backs in food-assistance programs. Between 1982 and 1985, \$12.2 billion was cut from the programs, including \$7 billion

from the food-stamp program and more than \$5 billion from child nutrition programs.

The growing unemployment rate is also a contributor. The unemployed belong to a category called the "new poor," Kapuscinski said.

"People who worked, for example in the timber industry, have been laid off more and more in the past two years," he said.

He added that 40 percent of those who receive food boxes have jobs but don't earn enough to eat properly.

But education may help, said Christina Lay, an OSPIRG volunteer.

"Educating people about nutrition is one way to fight the problem since many people who are on welfare have a limited amount of money for food and may not know how to spend it on foods that would be best for them," she said.

OSPIRG will sponsor a panel discussion tonight at 7 in the EMU Gumwood Room. The panel will include Lane County Commissioner John Ball and a speaker from U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio's office.

In addition, a film titled "World Food Day" will be shown Tuesday at 12:30 p.m. in the EMU Forum Room.

A benefit dinner for Food for Lane County featuring Margaret Nichols, 4-J school district superintendent, as the guest speaker also will be held Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. at the Latin American Cultural Center, 1236 Kincaid St.

Food for Lane County will collect food in bins distributed in the EMU from Monday to Wednesday.

Oregon Food Share also will collect food on Wednesday and Thursday at the following campus sites: reception areas of the various deans, by the Oregon Hall elevators in the lower lobby, at the president's office, at the office of the athletic director's secretary, at the history department office in PLC, at the speech secretary's office in Villard Hall, in the Faculty Club lounge, in the EMU administrative office, at the psychology department office in Straub Hall, and in the physics, biology and neuroscience offices in Science I, II and III, respectively.

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