

Water activities deceptive, deadly for unprepared

By Sarah Mensah
Of the Emerald

With the warm weather, students may want to think twice about water safety before hitting area rivers and lakes.

In the past five years, four University students have drowned in the Willamette River, including University athlete Jesse Nash who drown spring term. An average of 10 to 15 people accidentally drown each year in Lane County.

Many of these drownings occur in open bodies of water such as lakes and rivers, according to Gary Lewis, the Lane County Emergency Services coordinator.

"It averages out to about one University death a year," he said.

The problem is that both high school and college students congregate on the banks of the Willamette River and in the rapids under the Autzen Footbridge on hot days to cool themselves in the icy water.

"That one particular spot can be defined in one word — hazardous," Lewis said. "It's

swift, and it's about 15- to 18-feet deep. The current is just as fast on the bottom of the water as it is on the top."

There are no regulations for water safety on the river, Lewis said. Anyone can swim and play in the river wherever they want, he added.

"The only regulations for river safety pertain to boating. Inner tubes used to be considered boats but they no longer are," he said.

The Lane County Sheriff's Department is responsible for search and rescue on the river, but nobody has responsibility for prevention of accidents.

"Even if we made such a rule it virtually would be impossible to enforce," Lewis said.

Suzannah Johnson is a visual design major at the University. She was born and raised in Eugene and has been floating the Willamette and other rivers in inner tubes since she was 8 years old.

Johnson said she still will float the river even though it's dangerous: "I don't fear the river, I respect it," she said.

Johnson is like many students who take the risk of inner tubing and playing in the river despite the drownings of fellow students.

"Any time you have a major body of water, people are going to drown, whether it's Fern Ridge Reservoir, Fall Creek, Dexter Lake, the McKenzie River or the Willamette. The danger doesn't deter anyone," Johnson said.

Johnson has had close calls on the Willamette River before, but she has learned to be careful when she's in a sticky situation.

But Lewis said that even careful people who know how to swim are at risk.

The temperature of the Willamette River is normally about 45 degrees. At this temperature, a person can easily get hypothermia, which lowers the body's core temperature to a dangerously low level.

"What happens is that the body tries to keep its vital organs warm by constricting the flow of blood from other areas in the body such as the legs and arms. When you lose control of

your legs and arms, the only way to go is down," Lewis said.

The only safe way to enter the Willamette River is to wear a flotation device such as a life jacket, Lewis said.

Bruce Mason, the coordinator of the University's Outdoor Pro-

strong when it comes to wearing a life jacket while swimming. Kids just aren't going to wear one," Mason said.

Johnson said people don't wear life jackets because it simply isn't cool.

Despite drownings in the

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— Gary Lewis

Turn to Hazard, Page 8



Willamette River enthusiasts often brave the rapids and current in pursuit of warm-weather recreation

University museum wins award

By Will Holbert
Of the Emerald

The University Museum of Art has won national recognition for an art book it produced for a photographic art exhibit.

The American Association of Museums gave the museum an award of merit for an art book that commemorated last fall's "Commitment to Vision" exhibit which celebrated the 20-year anniversary of the museum's Photography at Oregon gallery.

Other winners of the same award were the National Museum of Art in Washington D.C., the Smithsonian Institution, and the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco. More than 1,750 museums entered the AAM's publication competition and other competitions. Approximately 300 museums won awards, according to Darlene Carty, an art museum assistant at the Univer-

sity who coordinated efforts behind the art book.

"We entered the competition as a second thought," Carty said, who first thought the letter announcing the award was an "honorable mention type of thing."

But the the award has distinguished the museum among other university and college art museums. Only a handful of college museums entered the contests, according to Melody Ward Leslie, of the University News Bureau.

"It is a very major award," Leslie said.

"If any single message came through during the judging, it was the importance of simplicity," said a letter sent to contestants from the AAM. "Fussiness, trendiness, and trying to do too much were characteristic flaws in the losing entries."

The book contains 96 pages of

glossy full-color and black and white photographs from photographers such as Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, and Imogen Cunningham, along with comments by the artists ranging from their photographic techniques, to their philosophies concerning life. It is available at the University bookstore and the Museum of Art's gift shop for \$15 under the title "Commitment to Vision."

Sales of the prize-winning book have been disappointing though, according to Carty. "Local response has not been good," Carty said. While people in San Francisco think \$15 is a bargain for an art book of this quality, people in Eugene think the price too exorbitant and sales lag, Carty said.

Planning for the book began in 1984, and it was hoped that

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