

Woes of local shelter have officials rattled

Good intentions aside, problems at the Opportunity Shelter bring up a reality about charitable enterprises to which organizers should grant some attention.

Many philanthropists, both political and private, live under the normally erroneous assumption that throwing money at a problem will stop it in its tracks. Problems at the new Eugene shelter for homeless single mothers reflect this truth.

The issue has recently stirred some city and county officials to voice concern about problems that they feel stem from mismanagement, or as one official stated his case, "non-management."

Of course, the staff of the shelter needs to be given more time than the few short weeks since the facility's opening to prove the soundness of its own abilities.

City and county officials should maintain a close eye on the shelter to see it through the rough waters that lie ahead. However, officials should restrain themselves from a premature judgment.

Should Lane County officials see similar conditions at the shelter in the future, perhaps a lesson will have been learned.

No easy solutions exist for heavy duty problems such as the problem of homelessness in Lane County.

Shelters for the homeless demand hard work, and the problem of homelessness cannot be expected to go away as a conveniently resolved issue on a politician's checklist of accomplishments for the next election. As in most physical and intellectual endeavors, a smooth and exacting follow-through is necessary.

Needle exchanges work in spite of moral disputes

Creative and realistic answers to tough problems sometimes require a little bull-doggedness. When the only solution to a problem initially seems immoral, some people will lie down in the path of progress and refuse to budge.

In the case of programs that distribute free hypodermic needles to intravenous drug abusers, more than a few people have raised their hackles.

But the needle giveaway programs have proved successful, not only in stemming the tide of AIDS, but in helping drug abusers gain access to counseling programs which may, in the long run, save them from both demons.

A former drug counselor in Tacoma, Wash. led the way nationally with a needle exchange program that he began last year. Last week, the Tacoma-Pierce County Board of Health granted the program its official stamp by a 4-1 vote and agreed to contribute \$43,000 to the effort in 1989. Since the program's inception, an estimated 11,000 clean needles have been issued in the fight against the spread of AIDS.

Tacoma health officials exhibit broad-mindedness with the decision. Many areas of the country may never move on the issue, and intravenous drug abusers will continue to die.

Officials nationwide continue to denounce needle exchange programs as illegal and immoral. The one dissenting voter among Tacoma health officials claimed, "We don't take and hand a bottle of alcohol to an alcoholic."

Of course not, because nothing would be gained. But intravenous drug abusers who have access to clean needles, instead of the widely shared needles that they now commonly use, have one less strike against them.

In the United States alone, 20 percent of all cases of AIDS have occurred among intravenous drug abusers. As city officials continue to ignore the problem because of moral qualms they feel about needle exchange programs, they contribute to the spread of AIDS throughout the community of drug abusers, and eventually to the rest of the population as well. Needle exchange programs should be encouraged for reasons of self-protection alone.



Letters

Sexual behavior

Jon Wollander must have a standard, computerized file that he prints up and submits as a letter to the Editor whenever he feels the urge. I wish I could count the number of times I have read his tiresome form letter, again reprinted in the ODE, Jan. 11.

Why is Wollander so obsessed with sexual behavior? He continually assigns certain sexual acts specifically to gay men, conveniently ignoring the fact that heterosexual people also engage in these behaviors. This means that heterosexual people also are vulnerable to such "ugly maladies" as "herpes, gonorrhea of the throat, parasitic infections, colitis, rectal lesions, hepatitis and AIDS." (Wollander, ODE, Jan. 11)

Wollander also ignores the outrageous health risks faced by sexually active straight women, including urinary tract infections (promoted by penile-vaginal contact and diaphragms), cancer of the cervix, pelvic inflammatory disease (caused by IUD's and viral/bacterial organisms transmitted through the penis), irritation of the genital area due to use of contraceptive foams, jellies and sponges, and still largely unknown hazards of oral contraceptives. Of course, there is also the risk of unwanted pregnancy. Why is Wollander not crying out against these terrible types of "physical pain and bodily destruction?"

Is it really the sexual behaviors that he is distressed by, or

the fact that men and women can have close, same-sex, emotional, sexual, romantic, intellectual, playful, supportive relationships with each other?

It is the behaviors that can be risky, regardless of the sexual orientation of the participants.

In support of my lesbian sisters and gay brothers,

Cassandra Van Buren
Student

Grassroots

It is a common misconception that state representatives and senators receive large amounts of mail. Actually, this is far from the truth. State representatives and senators receive very small amounts of mail, and can often be influenced by only a handful of letters. It is for this reason that the Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group (OSPIRG) and the Associated Students of the University of Oregon (ASUO) have initiated the Legislative Action Alliance. The LAA is the framework for an effective network of students and faculty that can get involved in informing the Oregon Legislature of student opinions on bills ranging from financial aid to child care to environmental issues. The LAA works by asking that the participant take the time to write letters to representatives and senators all across the state.

The ASUO and OSPIRG are committed to increasing the amount of student and faculty input in state politics. The LAA is an effective and easy way to become involved in the easiest form of grassroots activity: letter writing. We need the help of all concerned citizens in letting state legislators know how you feel on particular issues, whether you are liberal or conservative. The LAA is a great way to show how the individual does make a difference in politics. Make your voice heard in Salem. To become involved, come to the ASUO office in the basement of the EMU and ask for an LAA brochure.

Justin McKenna
Assistant Coordinator,
State Affairs, ASUO

Thorny syllabi

Once again we have inaugurated a new term with the cock-eyed tradition of reading through syllabi with the aid of a professor. I can scarcely imagine a more inappropriate and less satisfying way to challenge a student of higher education than to read him his syllabus.

This term I will be required to study and comprehend three science texts, nine histories, a set of government documents and a book of poetry in an ancient language. Nevertheless, my professors don't believe I'm clever enough to disentangle a page and a half of lecture topics and reading and paper assignments. What motivates the University's instructors to squander a perfectly good lecture hour and at the same time disgrace their students? Spring term, I promise, will be different: My vacation will be extended, and my professors can explain their thorny and profound syllabi to an empty chair.

Daniel Monk-Kowalsky
History

What a gyp!

Mr. and Mrs. Reagan have moved into their \$2.5 million home in the posh Bel Air district of Los Angeles.

Mr. Reagan has just said in a television interview that many of the nation's homeless people "make it their choice" not to seek shelter and claimed that "a large percentage" of the homeless are "retarded" people who have voluntarily left institutions in which they have been placed. "There are shelters in virtually every city ... and these people still prefer out there (sic) on the grates or the lawn (rather than) going into one of these shelters."

Mr. Reagan then proceeded to blame the American Civil Liberties Union for helping to promote this state of affairs.

The above is the essence of Reaganism and: One more for the Gypper!

Edmund F. Soule
Professor Emeritus, Library
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