

Lane shelter provides room for complaints

However frustrating the task of housing the homeless continues to prove, Lane County officials and the people of the community must persevere.

Since the Thanksgiving Day inception of the Opportunity Shelter for homeless mothers and their children, the facility has had a wide variety of problems. For the past several weeks, the staff of the shelter has weathered a barrage of criticism from all sides. County officials have expressed anger at the apparent ineptitude of the staff. Mothers who are the shelter's residents have begun an organized appeal for the help they were originally promised: assistance in finding a permanent home. Operators of the shelter seem engrossed in a struggle to stay afloat. Out of all the hubbub, a workable and worthwhile program must appear.

Least the fracas make the residents of the shelter appear ungrateful, we should point out that they have a right to gripe.

Few people appreciate the ease with which ever-present, yet hidden, factors can drop a family through the economic trap door into homelessness. Everyday, ordinary families across the country lose their homes and begin a slow descent which proves irreversible without outside aid. But in spite of the growing population of the homeless, public opinion continues to hold with a false and insensitive picture of the victims of homelessness.

With his unfortunate and reiterated comments, Ronald Reagan expressed the perception of many Americans: that homeless people by and large are either mentally retarded or choose to live on the streets. The Homeless are not lower forms of life. In order to eliminate homelessness from our community, we must begin by treating our homeless neighbors with respect.

Homelessness needs a cure, not a temporary bandage. Those who envisioned and commissioned the Opportunity Shelter understood that fact, and hoped for an open forum between the residents and the staff so the problem of homelessness could be solved. The organizers understood the homeless needed assistance in finding permanent homes because housing alone would not be enough. The homeless must be assisted in the avoidance of homelessness in the future. But failed communication between the shelter and its residents and the management's defensiveness has resulted in an effort that by all accounts seems practically worthless. Although the original effort appeared laudable, the reality has proved discouraging.

Lane County must not give up on the Opportunity Shelter. As we have urged in the past, we urge following through, better planning and an open line with and respect for the current residents. With this in mind, future residents can walk out of the shelter's doors with something less like discouragement and more like hope.

Legislators examining bill to raise marijuana fines

Marijuana smokers take heed.

Although the action received little attention in the media, last Tuesday, at the request of Governor Neil Goldschmidt, a bill was introduced into the Oregon House to increase the fine for possession of less than one ounce of marijuana.

While we do not condone the use of illegal drugs, we recognize that a great percentage of the student population recklessly considers marijuana an innocent pastime.

Currently, the maximum fine for less than an ounce of marijuana stands at \$100. The proposed law would increase the maximum fine to \$500, with a minimum of \$250.

However, the bill promises to earmark proceeds collected from careless marijuana smokers for the funding of adolescent alcohol and drug abuse rehabilitation programs. Perhaps Goldschmidt sees the increased fine as a means of raising revenue for these worthwhile programs.

But we question the direction of the legislation.

Legislators and law enforcement agencies would be better served by staying off the backs of marijuana smokers who only possess enough marijuana for minimal personal use. Selling or owning large amounts of marijuana, of course, is another matter, as is driving under the influence of the drug. But those are other issues, covered by other laws. Simple possession of less than an ounce cannot be deemed such a threat to society that a steep increase in the fine is warranted.

What constitutes "less than an ounce?" One seed? Dust? In some cases, "less than an ounce" hardly constitutes possession at all. You could scrape "less than an ounce" off your shoes after riding in some students' cars.

At present, possession of less than an ounce is a civil, or non-criminal, offense. What would the new direction Goldschmidt has initiated do to that tradition?



Letters

Financial aid

I am curious to know if the Financial Aid Office has revised upward its 1989-90 housing allowance for University students. I was unpleasantly surprised last July when I moved here to learn of the landlord's market that prevails in Eugene. Actual rental prices, for non-University units, were much higher than University publications (catalogs, student budgets guidelines, etc.) indicated.

The growth in 1988 enrollment, with little or no corresponding growth in local rental units, has been a boon to rental property owners and a hardship for the student on a tight budget. The difference between my projected versus my actual rent payments negatively impacted my annual student budget by a considerable sum. Hopefully the Financial Aid Office will reassess local housing costs and give next year's students a more realistic view of living expenses in Eugene before a decision to move here has been made.

It would be helpful for the Financial Aid Office to publish an article to demystify the financial aid process. Such an article could describe to students exactly how financial aid computations and awards are made and how the financial aid form for Oregon is used in the University's financial aid process. Hopefully more understanding and dialogue between students and University staff on financial aid can improve this yearly chore and eliminate unpleasant surprises in the student's annual budget process.

Lisa J. Rowley
Law student

Friendly animals

I read your letter Heather (Wilcox, ODE, Jan. 24), and I totally disagree with you.

I have taken the University's horseback riding program for several terms, and I have never seen any cases of malnutrition or anything else that remind

me of a "gross injustice to animals."

I have ridden more than half-a-dozen different horses out there and have never seen any that remind me of a milk cow.

I think your letter described more about yourself than the class when you mentioned the bad smell in a dark barn with mushrooms growing in the corners. Heather, I never have been in any stall where the smell was good or the stalls were brightly lit. If that's what you want, you should hang around the food areas in the EMU.

I took the class because I wanted to do something different, have an excuse to get away from my busy, crowded schedule on campus and go out in the country to learn some new skills. But of course nothing out there will be as clean and neat as your little campus apartment, but isn't it interesting to see life from another angle once in a while?

I think this is very valuable. Therefore, I will recommend that more people try the horseback riding class and enjoy a couple of hours a week with some of the friendliest animals we have.

Fred Oyen
Business

Equestrians

In reply to Heather Wilcox's letter "Horseback" (ODE, Jan. 24), I would like to make a few clarifications that may be unclear to anyone not familiar with the P.E. Department's Horseback Riding class versus the Club Sport's Equestrian Team.

Every year, approximately \$1,500 from the IFC goes into the Equestrian Team, a recreational program of Club Sports. The money is spent in administration, equipment, travel, lessons and clinics. We are in no way affiliated with the riding class offered through the University.

The Equestrian Team practices their English riding skills and overall care of the horses at Saramiah Stables located at

30730 Maple Dr. in Junction City. The stables are owned by Kris and Ray Evans who encourage anyone interested in the facilities to visit the barn anytime. The Equestrian Team feels that Saramiah provides the most conscientious care of the horses as well as a bright, clean and professional barn.

Granted, the team cannot service as many students as the University class, but we want the University community to be aware that there is an athletic alternative for participation and competition in the English horseback riding field.

Unfortunately, the University hires a barn to host the riding class based on what stable puts in the lowest dollar bid, not on the level of teaching competence and care of the horses. My suggestion to anyone interested in the P.E. Riding class would be to check out the barn and instructor before you pay the \$92.50 fee toward a program you may not want to support. For those who want to get involved in the Equestrian Team, we are located in the Club Sports office in the basement of the EMU. At this time, the team is full but if you want information for next term or next fall, come see us.

Leslie Probst
Equestrian Team coordinator

Just envious

This letter is in response to David Peirpoint and Joe Worley's letters stating God doesn't let homosexual people into heaven. If the Christian idea of heaven excludes people for loving another human being then perhaps it's time to try a different religion or no religion at all.

Gay people like myself date, fall in love and, yes, we even have sex sometimes. We are just normal average people who enjoy companionship like everyone else. I don't think being in love with someone is a sin. People who think otherwise are probably just envious.

Travis Ochs
3rd year class representative
School of Law