

# Oregon Daily Emerald

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## Happy New Year

The University's Chinese Student Association rings in the new lunar year with a dancing fortune lion. The association's annual China Night marked the Year of the Horse Sunday.

Photo by Sean Poston

## Citizens' group protesting Eugene's renewal methods

By Catherine Hawley  
Emerald Reporter

Downtown is the heart of any city; it has to be healthy for the city to survive.

Most people in Eugene agree with that sentiment, and most agree that the city's ailing downtown core needs to be revitalized somehow.

But opinions differ over whether updating the city's current urban renewal plan is the way to spark new life downtown. And at least a dozen of Eugene's citizens believe voters should have more influence in deciding whether to keep the plan.

"We would like to see more consideration given to public input," said Paul Nicholson, a member of the Coalition for Fair Allocation of City Taxes, a group of about 12 Eugene citizens who want to see all matters regarding urban renewal plans referred to a public vote.

"The public has to have some say in the business the city conducts," Nicholson said. "They have no right to impose a plan on us." In December, members of CO-FACT filed an initiative that will let Eugene voters decide in May whether the city should update the urban plan. A few weeks earlier the city council had voted to approve the update.

CO-FACT members are not opposed to development, Nicholson said. They are more concerned about the lack of public influence in the planning process and leery of an updated urban renewal plan's chance of succeeding.

"It has a record of failure," Nicholson said, citing past urban renewal projects that have been unsuccessful, such as the Eugene Hilton and the Atrium Building

on 10th Avenue.

CO-FACT members are also wary of the tax increment method of financing urban renewal projects. Tax increment financing is based on the principle that the city can pay for urban improvement by taxing the property values that increase as a result of making those improvements.

CO-FACT members contend property values downtown have actually decreased since the renewal district was created in 1968, Nicholson said.

On the other hand, Eugene needs a comprehensive, flexible development plan to lead downtown out of its current slump. The updated urban renewal plan fits the bill, said Larry Douglas, executive vice president of the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce.

"What we need to do is select a vision, set our sights on it and solve any problems as they come up along the way," Douglas said.

Douglas said businesses interested in locating in Eugene are sometimes put off by the amount of public activism in the city because those businesses are not sure what to expect.

"Businesses look for a dependable atmosphere," Douglas said. That stability comes from laws that spell out what is expected of businesses, he added.

Often times a small number of vocal activists end up as "de facto policy makers" who circumvent the established city leadership, Douglas said.

"I would like to see those people put themselves in the traditional process of decision-making," such as running for elected city offices, Douglas said. "A

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## Disabled students stride with user-friendly technology

By Joe Kidd  
Emerald Reporter

At the flip of a switch she is reunited with a crowd of electronic friends — friends she has come to know and appreciate.

One by one they seem to step up to the mike.

"Hi, I'm Perfect Paul," a pointed, exacting voice says.

"Hi, I'm Huge Harry," says the next one in a deep, rolling tone.

Next it's Frail Frank, then Daring Dennis. From the chorus of nine voices — four men, four women and Kit the Kid — she picks Beautiful Betty's coo and continues.

Marianne Miller, a University graduate student who lost much of her sight when she was 10 years old, and Beautiful Betty are doing what most other students do alone.

They are reading.

The electronic personalities Miller can choose from are not only products of a \$12,000 computer in the Knight Library that reads aloud to students with disabilities; Huge Harry and his friends are the crest of a technology tidal wave rushing toward disabled people that is said to have only just begun.

Turn to Technology, Page 11

*There's a new wave of technological educational devices coming in. Students with disabilities — and society as a whole — stand to benefit.*



Photo by Joe Kidd

Marianne Miller, a student who is visually impaired, uses the University's new Kurzweil Personal Reader computer system to work on her thesis.

## SEA works for funds, awareness

By Denise Clifton  
Emerald Associate Editor

Increased funding and awareness for disability concerns are the immediate goals for a fledgling student group on campus.

Students for Equal Access, an organization created early in fall term, began as a forum for disabled students to get involved in the issues that relate to their daily lives as University students.

"Disabled students need to have a place where they can come and be heard and feel like they have a voice in whatever's happening," said Suzie Cavendor, acting director for the Disabled Student Services Office and initiator of

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