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## University

# Speaker opens celebration week

By Jolie Andrade  
Emerald Reporter

A speech by Delores Huerta, vice president and co-founder of United Farm Workers, kicked off a week-long celebration of Hispanic and Latino culture sponsored by MEChA and Lane Community College.

Huerta discussed problems of immigrant workers, including labor rights, education and pesticide use, which she said was the worst problem facing workers.

Studies showing more than 300,000 field workers affected by pesticides do not reflect the true size of the problem because many workers do not file reports, Huerta said.

Moreover, workers, not growers, are often blamed for pesticide-related illnesses, she said.

For example, Huerta told of an autopsy recently performed on a 25-year old field worker that showed enormous amounts of a poisonous pesticide in the man's body.

"But if you call the coroner he will say that the cause of death was undetermined," Huerta said, adding that officials treated the case as though it were a suicide.

The UFW has helped farm workers achieve some rights, but not all, Huerta said wages

were increased from 50 cents in the late 1950s when UFW was founded to \$8.50 in the 1980s. However, wages have been frozen for several years and some are still under the minimum wage.

Workers' living conditions are another big problem, Huerta said. Many workers still do not have clean drinking water or toilet facilities available to them while they're working.

Moreover, Huerta said education for workers and their children is overlooked.

"When we talk about the environment and caring for the workers we really have to demand that they be given quality education," she said.

The grape boycott has been the most efficient way for the workers to obtain basic rights, Huerta said.

"We have to put economic pressure on the grape growers because this is the only thing they understand," she said, adding that since the boycott started, domestic consumption has dropped and growers are being forced to sell their grapes elsewhere.

"We can stop the vicious cycle by working and organizing together," Huerta said.

Immediately following her speech, Huerta dedicated a mural donated by MEChA to the EMU. The mural, located above the staircase leading to the EMU second floor, was created by Marta Ramirez in 1989 and given to the University last term, said Eddie Beanes, MEChA president.

"The mural represents our culture and the diversity of this campus that should be emulated to the community," Beanes said.

In addition to the dedication and unveiling of the mural, Huertas led a rally encouraging the University to continue its grape boycott.



Delores Huertas

Other events during Cinco de Mayo week include speakers, films, and dances.

- Cypriano Ferrel, vice president of an Oregon field workers union will discuss many of the same issues presented by Huertas Thursday at 8:30 p.m. in the EMU Fir Room.

- A multicultural display will be featured in the Fir Room Tuesday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and another exhibit sponsored by the Native American Student Union, Asian Pacific Student Union, the Black Student Union and MEChA will be displayed Wednesday in the EMU Courtyard.

- Sandunga and other folk dance groups will give a free performance in the EMU Ballroom Friday night at 7. Slides will be shown and there will be pinatas for children, Beanes said.

- The climax of the celebration comes Saturday, on Cinco de Mayo, with an authentic Mexican dinner, a raffle and dancing to Poli Chavez, a Latin band from Portland. Tickets are \$5 and can be purchased from the EMU main desk, MEChA and other community outlets.

## Did you take a crash course in neck pain?

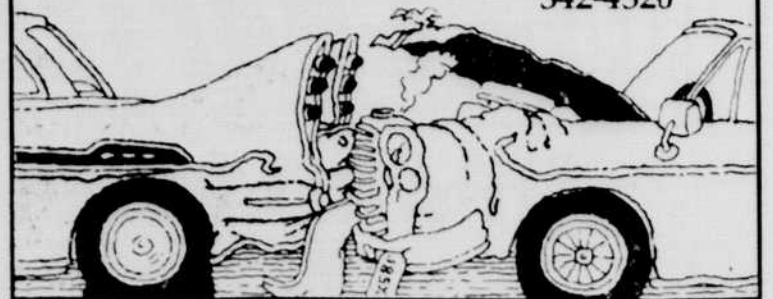
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