Community



Dave Oatman, director of Lane Community College's Mobile Classroom, is ready to bring computer education on wheels to more students.

Classroom travels to students

By Marina Swain

On the road again.

The 40-foot trailer winds its way through lush forests and clogged cities. But don't expect it to be headed toward a favorite vacation spot. This vehicle houses eight computers and is better known as Lane Community College's Mobile Classroom.

"Everything's battened down for travel." said Dave Oatman, director of Customized Training and Development at LCC.

In operation for about two years, the portable classroom has helped update computer skills at businesses throughout Lane County

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"This kind of gets them started, instead of just having a computer on their desk and being intimidated by it," said assistant director Jessica

Unlike a traditional school, the mobile classroom travels to its students, a key advantage for its business clientele. "They say it's the most costeffective way to do training." Overturf said of the many businesses that have used its ser-

Overturf said past participants have included Fred Meyer Inc., the Department of Public Safety and Springfield Middle School. Demand is growing, she said, with the mobile classroom already scheduling part of its fall itinerary.

Businesses cited lack of traveling time, low cost and direct application of computer programs to their particular needs as their primary benefits from the mobile classroom, Overturf said.

For Nate Bales, a purchasing agent at Springfield Forest Products, computer training was unfamiliar territory.

"I really didn't have any computer background at all." Bales said. "I got a lot of oneon-one with the instructor."

Because the company started up in the fall, finding time for computer training was difficult, he said. At first the company's employees make the trek to LCC's central campus.

"We had a hard time getting everyone out of here," Bales said of the after-hours race to the college.

The mobile classroom left none of the traveling hassle and permitted a more productive workday, Bales said.

Programs tailored to the needs of a particular business were also rated highly.

"(Employees) brought applications to the classroom and said I want to do this and the instructor helped them set it up."said Ann Kennedy, training coordinator for the Willamette National Forest.

Kennedy is enthusiastic when it comes to computer training. 'I like to use the right tool so we can be more efficient, and when we can be more efficient we can do our jobs better.'

As for the mobile classroom, Kennedy said, "It's like the future has come - and it's coming on wheels."

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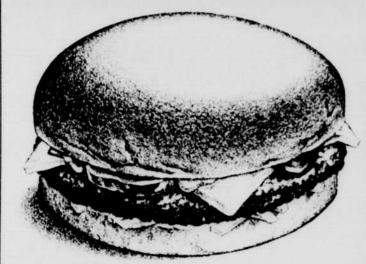






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