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Photo by Vince Ramirez

The W.O.W. Hall, located at the Community Center for the Performing Arts, provides all-ages musical entertainment from reggae to metal and gives up-and-coming bands a chance to expose their sounds.

WOW Hall survives through years

By Cathy Peterson
Emerald Reporter

After 15 years of teetering on financial stability, the Eugene

Community Center for the Performing Arts has found solid ground.

The center, based in the the Woodmen of the World Hall at

Eighth Avenue and Lincoln Street, provides music and theatrical acts several times a week during the fall and winter, as well as a place for dance and instrument classes

"Our motto is 'Hassle-Free Environment,'" booking and production manager Margo Schaefer said.

"We're just interested in people enjoying themselves and having a quality experience."

With bands ranging from Rabbit Choir, a vocal and guitar group from San Francisco, to punk band Vomit Launch, there are groups for every audience, Schaefer said. Reggae, salsa, metal, folk and rock 'n' roll round out the bill.

The hall also lets in all ages. Beer and refreshments are served downstairs, and the hall adopted a smoke-free policy several years ago.

And the community is responding, Schaefer said many bands draw 200 to 300 people.

"This is the only place some fans feel comfortable. We take all ages, we're wheelchair accessible, there's no smoking in the hall and you can only drink downstairs," Schaefer said.

"This is the best place in town for people who want to get out and do something," Schaefer said.

For more than 100 years, people have been doing just that at the corner of Eighth Avenue and Lincoln Street.

According to a history of the hall written by Jon Pincus, the Seventh Day Adventist congregation built a small church on the site in 1867. In 1883, the Presbyterian church bought the site and built a new church, considered one of Eugene's finest structures at the time.

In 1890, a fraternal organization, the Woodmen of the World, started in the midwest. A chapter opened in Eugene, and members included some of the most prominent members of the community: Pliney Snodgrass, mayor William Kuykandall and Eugene Register newspaper owner W.C. Yoran. Women belonged to a sister organization, the Women of Woodcraft.

In 1906, the Woodmen bought the hall at Eighth and Lincoln. True to the nature of the organization, the hall was loaned to other groups for meetings and events. The Woodmen held dancing lessons and dances, and in 1932 rebuilt the church for \$8,000, the most expensive building constructed that year.

The hall was built in art deco style, with much of the labor

Turn to **WOW**, Page 22
Monday, September 17, 1990

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