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Photo by Eric Evans

Kenneth Lewis (left) and Jeff Hood, two of the Eugene Mall's new guides, patrol the mall area, offering directions and security to local shoppers.

Downtown guides offer help, security to shoppers

By June Russell
Emerald Reporter

The 10 newest additions to the Eugene Mall population aren't shoppers, business executives or even security guards.

The women and men that started patrolling the downtown mall Saturday in their red jackets, gray trousers and ties are something else — Eugene's new downtown guides.

Entrusted with the mission of rescuing shoppers in distress, the guides are expected to make the downtown area a friendlier place to visit.

"They are not police officers, but they are also not private security," said Russ Brink, Downtown Eugene Inc.'s executive director. "The thing that has made them so effective in Portland is their street ambassador role — assistance is really their prime mission. They an-

swer questions, give directions, and help people when they have a problem.

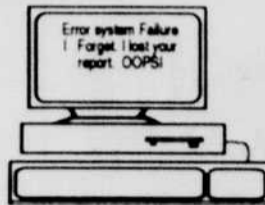
"As a byproduct of that, they also provide a security function," Brink said. "Our goal is to enhance people's concept of comfort in the downtown area. Their main function will be to observe and report situations that might require a police presence, not to become involved in those situations."

The guides work the downtown area Monday through Saturday 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., and Sundays 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Working in pairs, they carry radios for use as telephones to call 911 or the appropriate agencies as situations arise. The radios can also be used to communicate between two patrolling guide teams.

Downtown Eugene Inc. began researching and putting the guide program together a year ago, modelling it after the successful guide program in Portland. The results have been impressive, Brink said.

Not only has the community's perception on downtown Portland become more comfortable, but the crime rate in the areas the guides patrol has also dropped significantly in proportion with the rest of the city.

Turn to SECURITY, Page 8



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