



Participants in this life-skills class at the Emerald Job Center are working to obtain the confidence and skills necessary to get back into the workplace. Photo by Mark Yien

Emerald Job Center seeks to be refunded

By Lisa Millegan
Emerald Reporter

Not too long ago, Gary Baszler was a discouraged, displaced logger facing welfare assistance for the fourth time in 12 years.

Today, he has confidence, new skills and ambitions of becoming a cable television installer. Even better, Baszler finally thinks he'll be able to leave the welfare system for good.

Baszler said he owes his newfound optimism to the Emerald Job Center, a federally-funded program designed to help welfare recipients regain self-sufficiency.

Since October, the \$1.5 million pilot project has offered classes in life skills, job-search strategies and General Education Diploma completion to over 900 welfare recipients.

The center, a joint venture of public and private agencies, is located in the former Merritt Davis Business College building at 78 Centennial Loop.

Job center directors are currently working to secure continued funding for the project from the Oregon Legislature after the current funding ends in July. Co-director Eileen Marcroft-George said Gov. Barbara Roberts and other state legislators have led her to believe that the program will continue at least until December.

The Southern Willamette Private Industry Council administers the program in conjunction with the Adult and Family Services Division, the state employment division, the Lane County Mental Health Division, Lane Community College and Catholic Community Services.

George said she hopes to have a precise dollar figure of support for the center from the Legislature by June.

Continued financial support for the Emerald Job Center is critical because of the beneficial services the program offers, she said.

Rather than just focusing on education or job placement, the center tries to do a mix of both. "We try to give people the tools they need to take that first step toward self-sufficiency," George said.

The center's life skills classes focus on such topics as stress management, self-esteem and parenting skills.

"We try to give (clients) a good support system as well as job skills," said Kate Stahl, a life skills instructor for the center's teen program. "We talk about why they're in this situation and how they can get out of it."

Terri Frencois, who is enrolled in the teen program, said the life skills classes have been particularly useful to her.

"I learned about being assertive and how to deal with my mother," she said. "The classes help you learn how to deal with people in general."

Participants can also take vocational classes and get help for preparing for the GED. Counseling is also available.

The center helps clients with start-up costs associated with job-searching. For example, participants can receive gas money to get to interviews in addition to stamps and envelopes for mailing out resumes.

Clients can use the center's phone and answering machine to contact prospective employers. Participants can also use center funds to buy clothing for interviews.

"People think since we're on welfare (and) we want a hand-out, but we really don't have what it takes to get a good job," said center client Sandy Devereaux. George said the center gives clients the push they need to get their lives back on track.

"You meet very few people here who want to be where there at," she said. "Most people here have a real desire to improve but they don't know how."

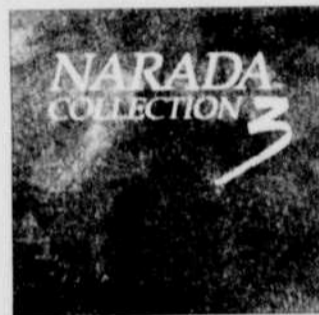
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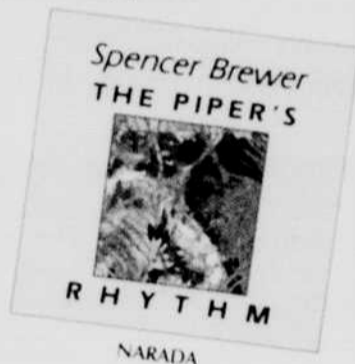
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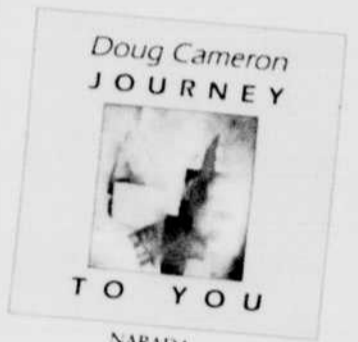
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Students occupy office

By Carrie Dennett
Emerald Reporter

About 45 students crowded into the office of University President Myles Brand in a sit-in protest Thursday against military recruitment on campus.

Students filled up available seating, as well as space on windowsills, desk tops and the floor, waiting to speak with Provost Norman Wessells.

Wessells is serving as acting University president until Brand returns Wednesday from receiving an honorary doctorate from his alma mater, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

When Wessells arrived to talk to students, he initially agreed to only talk to them in the Johnson Hall foyer, not in Brand's office.

However, by that point access was restricted to Brand's outer office, and if students left the office to talk to Wessells, they were not allowed back in.

During that time, protesters hung out the windows to talk to Television crews, who were also barred from Brand's offices.

Protesters issued a series of demands — that the University abide by the anti-discrimination policies in the Oregon Administrative Rules; that the University upholds recommendations made by the gay and lesbian task force; that the University follow a five-year phase out of the ROTC; that Department of Defense involvement on campus, including research, end; and that military recruitment on campus end.

Students left the office after they had an opportunity to talk with Wessells.



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