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Photo by Jeff Paslay

Eugene has an abundance of apartment complexes and property management companies. Finding the right one for you takes patience and a little legwork.

**Hotline keeps renters out of hot water**

By Jen Ellison  
Emerald Contributor

Shortly after her husband died, Barbara and her 9-year-old son, Derrick, came to Eugene from California in November 1991 to be near her family and to look for a place to live. She found a great apartment and a landlord who seemed like a dream come true.

"Everything I needed she offered me," Barbara said about her landlord. "She promised to add a washer and a dryer, put in new curtains, wash the carpet and fix the wall in the bathroom."

Because Barbara would be out of town and couldn't move until December, the landlord promised to give the key to the apartment to Barbara's brother on Dec. 1.

"She said she wouldn't charge me for the two weeks rent from the time I signed the lease to the day

my brother got the key," Barbara said.

On Dec. 1, Barbara's brother was refused the key, Barbara was charged for the two weeks rent for November, and none of the repairs or cleaning had been done.

Barbara is among those who are victims of bad business practices in renting property. Many renters are unfamiliar with the Landlord-Tenant Act and the rights of renters and landlords. As a result, some renters, and even landlords, can be taken advantage of in rental situations.

The University's Oregon Student Interest Research Group set up the Renter's Hotline for the state of Oregon to give information on renters' options when they are in situations like Barbara's.

"You have to get everything in writing," said Amy Clements, director of the Renter's Hotline. "Even

though verbal promises are valid in court, it doesn't promise that you'll win. You need written documentation."

Barbara called the Renter's Hotline for help. She was advised to write to her landlord and make her requests. Barbara wrote to the woman and put into writing all of the promises the landlord had made to her. She demanded that these be met.

Barbara's apartment is a part of an association of townhouses. When she went to the association with her problems, a man from the association said the landlord had never discussed the promises or made any commitments to do any work on the apartment.

"My landlady wrote me two letters and called me twice saying I was the irresponsible one," Barbara said. "She said I signed a lease saying everything was OK. If I didn't like it

**'Even though verbal promises are valid in court, it doesn't promise that you'll win.'**

— Amy Clements,  
director of the Renter's  
Hotline.

she'd give me 30 days notice."

Barbara cleaned the carpets herself and deducted the cost from the rent, a recommendation from the Renter's Hotline.

Most problems in the Eugene-Springfield area relate to habitability and unfair reductions of deposits, said Renter's Hotline Consumer Affairs Coordinator Ruby Brenne.

The Landlord-Tenant Act states that the landlord

Turn to **HOTLINE**, Page 4B

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