

CAHOOTS van keeps the peace

By Demian McLean
Emerald Reporter

Dial 911 in Eugene, and who will come to the rescue? Police, fire, ambulance — or maybe CAHOOTS.

Many people don't know there's a fourth organization linked to the city's emergency dispatch system.

It's called CAHOOTS, or Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets, and in a white, ambulance-style van it roams the streets of Eugene, waiting for calls.

Started three years ago by the city of Eugene and the Whitebird Clinic, CAHOOTS is the city's answer to mentally ill or intoxicated people who cause problems in the community but are not criminals.

The CAHOOTS van operates from 1 p.m. to 1 a.m. Tuesday through Thursday.

In 1989, city managers met to discuss an increase in uncivil behavior on streets and city parks, said Lt. Jim Hill of the Eugene police department.

This behavior included aggressive panhandling around the University, drinking and harassment in the parks, and illegal camping.

"These people are not necessarily dangerous," Hill said, "but the perception is that where they are, it's not safe to be."

Hill said a typical scenario would involve a citizen complaint, a police officer being dispatched, and the offender arrested and taken to jail.

The problem with this process, said Hill, was that these people needed treatment for their problems, whether drug addiction or mental illness, instead of going to jail.

It was for this purpose that the CAHOOTS program was started. Staffed by mental crisis workers and emergency medical technicians, CAHOOTS can assist people on the street who are drunk or emotionally ill and then direct them to the proper social service.

CAHOOTS director David Zeiss describes this process as one requiring patience.

"We deal with crises that are often time consuming, for example someone who's had a psychotic break," Zeiss said.

Treatment might involve sitting down with a

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— Davis Zeiss,
CAHOOTS director

suicidal person on the sidewalk and simply talking about his or her problem, he said.

"We're not a lights and sirens program dashing around," Zeiss said. "We've usually got time to think about what we're doing."

Empathizing with troubled people is not uncommon among CAHOOTS workers.

"People who staff these programs are often recovering themselves from emotional crises or drug addictions," Zeiss said.

Whether to accept CAHOOTS' help is entirely up to the client.

"CAHOOTS doesn't do anything against the client's will," said Zeiss. "And if there's the threat of violence, we call the police."

Al Neubauer, director of the local Buckley House drug abuse program, has worked closely with CAHOOTS in the past three years.

"They do exceptionally well with drug abusers and intoxicated people," said Neubauer, noting that CAHOOTS delivers about two people a night to the Buckley House.

At the Buckley House intoxicated people sober up and are then encouraged to enter a drug abuse program.

Some enroll in a program, said Neubauer, but there is a core group of people that refuse. Some return to the Buckley House via the CAHOOTS van eight to 10 times a month, he said.

Nevertheless, CAHOOTS provides the community with an important service, Neubauer said.

"It takes the cops out of the drunk-tank business, and it's the first step in evaluating people with drug problems," Neubauer said.

CAHOOTS can be reached through 911, but Whitebird Clinic suggests calling 687-5111 for direct service.

Native Americans speak out against oppression

By Matt Bender
Emerald Reporter

The anniversary of Christopher Columbus' voyage to the Americas should be a time of reflection on 500 years of oppression, local Native American leaders said Monday after a showing of *Incident at Oglala*.

The documentary, shown in a packed Room 180 PLC, was sponsored by the EMU Cultural Forum and the Native American Student Union in conjunction with Columbus Day.

The film is about a shootout between FBI agents and Native Americans that took place on June 26, 1975. Leonard Peltier, a Lakota Sioux, was convicted for the murder of two FBI agents killed in the gunfight.

Many people, including NASU members, don't believe that Peltier is guilty. The movie presented evidence that suggests Peltier may be innocent.

After the film, local Native American leaders spoke and answered questions from the crowd.

Native American leaders used the film as an example of the oppression they face in the United States.

"This is one example of the oppression of our people in America," said Josh Norris, co-director of NASU.

Most of the leaders who spoke at the event made references to Christopher Columbus and his voyage 500 years ago.

"We are not showing this film to disregard the man who got lost and found us," said Geo Ann Baker, co-director of NASU.

Vaughn Baker, who said he knows Peltier personally, said it has been a long 500 years, but now was the time to eliminate ignorance.

"Native Americans: It is time to speak and eliminate ignorance and the exploitation of our image," Baker said. "Things have to change. America has to live up to its image."

University associate professor Rob Proudfoot, a member of the Seneca Nation, warned people not to pity the Native Americans.

"Get out and learn about our history," Proudfoot said. "but don't pity us. We are strong people."

Armando Morales, a Latino instructor at the University, joined the panel and discussed similar oppression of people in Latin America. He also voiced his opposition to celebrating Columbus Day.

"I can't celebrate atrocities that happened 500 years ago," he said.

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