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Tree of Joy welcomes holiday spirit of giving

Gifts: The program helps needy families during Christmas

Ben Moebius
Oregon Daily Emerald

Eight years ago, on a cold winter afternoon, Craig Merkel was delivering gifts to a low-income family as part of the Tree of Joy program.

He found the residence, an apartment in Springfield, and rang the door bell. He was greeted by a middle-aged woman and her three little girls.

Merkel wore a red plaid Pendleton coat and had a beard that was just beginning to turn gray. As he put the box of gifts on a shelf for the mother, he heard the girls whisper in the background, "Is that Santa Claus?"

Merkel's wife, Vicky, a volunteer coordinator for the Central Lane Department of Human Resources, recounted this story as just one instance of the effectiveness of the Tree of Joy program.

"The Tree of Joy has been bringing Christmas to low income families for 15 years now," she said.

Vicky helped create the program in 1979 and handed over its operation to the St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County last year.

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HIDEKI TOMEOKA/Emerald

The University's Tree of Joy, made possible by the Druids Honor Society, is located near the EMU Main Desk. Gift wishes may be picked up through the end of the week. Megan Campbell (left) and Tee Raskin take a closer look at some of the wishes local children have made.

Cougar seen by man near west Eugene neighborhood

Wildlife: Loss of habitat may be pushing the big cats into urban areas for food and shelter

Marcelene Edwards
Oregon Daily Emerald

A west Eugene resident reported a cougar sighting at 2290 Minnesota Ave. on Monday morning.

The resident heard something out on his deck, went out to look and found a cougar there. The cat took a swipe at the man and then ran off, said Jan Power, public information officer at the Eugene police department.

The cat was tracked to a blackberry bramble and then ran outside of the city limits. The resident said the cougar had been hit by an arrow but didn't appear to be hindered by the injury. The cougar was at large somewhere in Lane County, Power said.

The state Fish and Wildlife Department gave the city permission to put the cat down if it was found.

After the animal left the city, a group from the local office of the

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Rebel without a sleigh



GARY GRASS/Emerald

Saint Nick (a.k.a. Scott Smith) was spotted going out for a ride Monday on his Harley-Davidson motorcycle in east Eugene.

Three students fight for resident status

Appeal: Filing a lawsuit against the state board may be the next step

Tiffany Smith
Oregon Daily Emerald

Three University students are facing harsh criticism for their decision to challenge the Oregon State Board of Higher Education's residency classification.

"I was verbally accosted at the EMU," Jaimee Dawson said Monday. "I was called a whining Californian and told to go the (expletive) home."

Dawson, who moved to Eugene with her two children in April 1993, is moving to the next step in the appeal process of her

request for residency status, along with Linda Hancock and Audrey Harris. The next step, they have been told, is to file a lawsuit, which Dawson said shouldn't have to be done.

"We were hoping to deal with them in a reasonable manner," she said. "They are saying, 'you have to sue us.' I don't want to sue you."

All three women are from California. They applied for residency after following what they thought was the correct procedure. They were all denied resident status by the University residency office, by the Interinstitutional Residency Committee

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■ GOOD MORNING

► The EMU Microcomputer Lab will extend its hours during Dead Week and Finals Week to accommodate students working on large final papers and projects.

Monday through Thursday during both weeks, the lab will remain open until 2 a.m., but will continue to open at the regular time (8:30 a.m.) on those days. On Friday, Dec. 2, the lab will operate from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., and on Saturday, Dec. 3, it will

be open from 1 to 5 p.m.

On Sunday, Dec. 4, the lab's computers will be available from 10 a.m. to midnight.

Students wishing to take advantage of the extended hours will still have to be in the lab before the EMU itself closes, which will be around 1 a.m. during these last two weeks of the term. Students who arrive after the building closes will not be allowed inside, even while the lab remains open.