

METERS

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—although Roberts said that was the first time anyone had been so abusive to him in the two weeks he's been working for the Office of Public Safety.

Other officers agreed that the abuse comes and goes in spurts.

"Some days, there's not any confrontations whatsoever," said senior psychology major Kathryn Bates, another OPS officer on the parking detail. Sometimes, she said, a whole week or more will go by.

But at other times, the arguments come one after another.

Bates, who has been enforcing parking rules for the last four months, said she has been on the detail longer than most anyone at OPS. In that time, she's had quite a few incidents with unhappy parkers.

One time, she was citing four men whose vans were parked in the EMU visitors' lot. "They became very verbally abusive when I was by myself in this lot, and I had to call the Eugene city police" for backup, she said.

Although such incidents are rare, she said she still doesn't understand why people get so nasty, especially when they're asking an officer to forget about a ticket. "If you want someone to do you a favor, you don't get abusive," she said.

Heidi Walcutt, another part-time OPS employee who enforces the parking rules, said that it isn't just harsh words that meter readers have to look out for.

"I was nearly run over one time by somebody trying to avoid a ticket," she said. The man she was ticketing sped out of the parking lot before she could give him a ticket, apparently believing that if he didn't take the citation, it didn't count.

But as any parking officer will explain, that's not the way it works.

Once a citation is entered into the handheld computer that each officer carries, it cannot be repealed by the officer, no matter how hard the violator begs and pleads.

If a person runs up to feed the meter or to drive away before the ticket is finished, however, officers can decide to issue a warning instead of a citation. But that decision depends in part on whether the officer thinks a warning will keep the violator from repeating the offense.

"I'm out there to educate them, and if I can give them a warning and they won't do again, I'd rather do that," Bates said.

Even though some violators escape without a ticket, there are still 30,000 to 40,000 tickets handed out each year, according to Rand Stamm, parking program coordinator for OPS.

With that many tickets being issued, many people think that parking officers are "out to get them."

But that's not the way it is, the parking officers say.

"One of the main reasons we issue citations, especially for improper parking, is to inform people of safety hazards," Walcutt said, "not to go out to meet some kind of quota."

Even when safety issues aren't directly involved, such as when a parking meter expires, the officers still think it's important to enforce the regulations.

Bates said the money that is raised through parking meters and fines goes to support other services that students benefit from, including bike registration that allows a stolen bicycle to be returned to its rightful owner.

Besides, Bates said, it isn't fair

for a person to park in a metered space without paying because that means another person can't park there. With 20,000 people working or attending classes at the University, the rules must be enforced to make room for everyone.

Unfortunately, knowing that doesn't always make it easy for officers to issue tickets. "I'm an easy-going person," Roberts said. "I don't like to be the enemy."

Still, he said, "I found out early that you can't give everybody a break. They'll just take advantage of you."

Although an officer cannot "undo" a ticket after it is issued, violators do have some recourse.

Stamm, the parking coordinator, said that people who think they were cited unfairly can appeal the ticket to an independent traffic petition officer — a person who doesn't work for OPS. He can either cancel, reduce, or affirm the citation.

If the officer determines that the ticket should remain, that decision can then be brought before an appeals board for a final hearing. If the ticket is again upheld, the violator has no choice but to pay the fine.

However, in one three-month period, around 70 percent of all petitions were either canceled or reduced.

Statistics like that don't always do much to calm down someone who's irate about being ticketed, however. "At that point, they're not interested in listening," Bates said.

To keep a person from getting madder, officers try to refrain from arguing, instead employing tactics designed to "de-escalate" a confrontation.

Said Roberts: "Basically, you just gotta agree with them and say you're sorry."

CARDS

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paper inserts, 10 full-page ads, eight half-page ads and six three-quarter page ads in the *Emerald* soliciting students to sign up for credit cards, according to the *Emerald's* advertising department records.

Dixon said on-campus promotions are more effective than direct mail campaigns "since most college students move around a lot."

With credit being so easy to access, it's important for students to know it's their responsibility to know what they're getting into, Leupold said.

"You really have to shop," she said. "You really need to do research."

Lauren Anderson, a senior Fine Arts major, said she thought she could get away with just paying her minimum balance each month until she realized she wasn't getting ahead.

"It's better to pay your bill off at the end of the month," she said.

Anderson has one credit card and Leupold said that's all a student really needs while they're in school.

Anderson, 21, said the responsibility lies in the individual card holder to know about credit, but said the advertising can be deceiving.

"You have to read the fine print," she said.

John P. White, a senior Spanish major, said sometimes the temptation to charge is too great.

"What happens when someone is really hard up for

cash?" he said. "It's a real temptation."

White, 27, said he believes the credit card companies see students as "easy targets" — especially younger students who may not be as responsible or have a lot of experience managing their finances.

However, Dixon said, "We [Citibank] have found out that college students handle their credit as well or better than our other card holders."

Dixon also pointed out that Citibank won't hand out "huge lines of credit."

"The average credit line is \$900 to \$1,000," he said. "The minimum we approve is \$500."

Dixon said he was 20-years-old when he first got a credit card.

"I was pretty conscientious in paying on my balance, keeping it fairly low," White said. He now has four credit cards.

Leupold said the average age of the CCCS client is between 28 and 35-years-old. She said one of the most common reasons people come to them for help is because people work on such tight budgets. When emergencies come up, it's hard to cope financially.

She said the best way for students to avoid those situations is to do their research in advance and to be good money managers.

Leupold talks to students from high schools and universities about the importance of good money management. She spoke at a money management discussion at the ASUO Women's Center last week.



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