

EDITORIAL

Williamson, Kelton choice for ASUO

Students will be faced with a number of choices for ASUO Executive. But while the number of tickets running might be high, the choice for students is clear.

Jennifer Williamson and Zach Kelton are the best qualified and most experienced candidates for ASUO president and vice president.

Williamson and Kelton demonstrate the professionalism and commitment necessary to effectively run student government at the University.

Both candidates have experience in a number of ASUO offices and boards. However, their commitment to the students does not end with official titles in Suite 4. Williamson has worked with Project Saferide and the Women's Center, while Kelton has served as a Psychology peer advisor. The candidates have experience in the community and University that extends beyond student government.

Williamson and Kelton articulate reasonable and realistic solutions to University issues. While very able to discuss their own positions on issues, the two also know how to listen. Williamson and Kelton have each visited a number of constituencies not normally canvassed by those running for ASUO, including Family Housing complexes and the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology. Talking to small groups, they explained, is one way of involving the vast majority of students who don't otherwise involve themselves in campus politics.

The two candidates have made communication a central point of their platform. Williamson and Kelton have pledged to make themselves available to the public. From ensuring that the ASUO continues to publish their newsletter *Reflections* to promising to hold coffee and doughnut meetings with students, it is clear that Williamson and Kelton will be representatives of the students — not just of ASUO.

Williamson and Kelton pledge to fight raises in tuition and cuts in financial aid — both timely issues for which effective student lobbying on the University, state and federal level could make the difference between continuing in college or not.

The candidates are also dedicated to ensuring that the education that students do pay for is a quality one.

Williamson and Kelton are looking into ways to analyze the current tenure process, to ensure that students have the opportunity to comment on professor performance — and for the remarks to mean something.

Williamson and Kelton also understand that part of education is learned from those outside of the classroom and will work to recruit and retain students of color, as well as gay, lesbian and bisexual students. Along that line, they pledge to work closely with student-funded programs and work with the heads of such organizations, knowing that these groups also contribute to the growth of students.

Vote for Jennifer Williamson and Zach Kelton for ASUO Executive April 19-20. Their experience and plans for the University will give students an effective team that is ready to stand up for and represent students at the University.



COMMENTARY

Education crucial to water safety

Seth Walker

Spring and summer days normally incite notions of exciting white-water adventures in the minds of many University students. A cold beer, inner-tube or small raft and an accessible river are often all that is needed to properly waste a warm, lazy afternoon. However, for thousands of people annually, these elements combine to create a deadly formula.

Eugene's Willamette and McKenzie rivers, not to mention numerous swift-water tributaries, are some of Lane County's most inviting yet dangerous warm-water playgrounds. Though free and unrestricted, white-water danger zones such as the rapids under the Autzen footbridge have claimed the lives of numerous people ranging from white-water experts to former University basketball player Jesse Nash.

"Most casual users of rivers and swift streams are unaware of the extreme danger associated with their use," said Tim Birr, public safety information director for the city.

"We normally don't hear from the white-water experts who take the time to know the rules and ways of the river," he said. "Our usual victims are the people who take an inner-tube and a six-pack and make their way down to the banks of the Willamette.

"Rivers are very inviting to be on, but very deadly to be in."

According to facts compiled by the City of Eugene and Rescue 3 International, a worldwide organization dedicated to educating and training white-water rescuers, nearly 7,000 drownings and 70,000 near-drownings occur each year in the United States. In the Eugene-Springfield area, five to 10 drownings occur each year. In 1994 alone, the city's water-rescue team responded to 14 emergency calls. Unfortunately, alcohol plays a major role in more than one-third of annual drownings nationwide.

OK, we've all heard that alcohol and water don't mix (the exception being a gin and tonic

water), and rivers are extremely dangerous, yet people continue to drown or be injured in or on local waterways each year. What can be done? What will prevent University students and local residents from drowning or being injured in the local area? The answer is education and prevention.

When venturing toward a swift-water area, always:

- Tell someone where you are going.
- Learn about cubic feet per second (cfs), how rating systems are designed and what they indicate about moving water. Look daily in the front section of *The Register-Guard* for current cfs levels.
- Have a Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (pfd) if you are on or within 10 feet of moving water. Remember, 90 percent of river accidents occur on or from the shore.
- Know your area! Foot entrapment can be caused by natural obstructions or by debris in a river. One man drowned under the Autzen footbridge when his leg caught on an abandoned bicycle on the river bottom.
- Avoid low head dams such as the one located just east of the Interstate 5 Willamette overpass. A man-made hydraulic "keeper" hole is created by backwash just downstream from all low head dams; the best waterway users avoid these obstacles. These "keepers" are consistent, hold nearly everything that enters them and make rescue extremely difficult.

Remember that rivers are made of laminar layers, the fastest of which are near the surface. This quick water is the most dangerous on a river and the easiest to enter.

If you are heading toward the river, it is just as important to remember what never to do.

- Never go into the water alone.
- Never enter moving water without scouting upstream and downstream for boaters and obstacles.
- Never use alcohol before going into the water. Alcohol

significantly lowers the body's ability to ward off hypothermia, and with local rivers fueled by glacial runoff, water temperatures stay at or about 50 degrees. Body temperature is quickly lowered in 50-degree water, making swimming very difficult.

• Never swim under river objects. Fallen trees or debris — known as strainers — work as magnets for floating objects. If you can't avoid a strainer, get on top of it.

• Never tie on to anything. A common example is a riverboard secured to an Autzen footbridge pylon. Ropes work as nooses in moving water.

• Never stand in swift water deeper than knee-deep.

Finally, if you are in trouble in moving water, remember that pushing the "panic button" insures loss of clear thinking and increases the chances of fatality.

The following times are the most common and easy to remember "what to do" suggestions if you find yourself in swift water:

• Stay in the down-river position (on your back, feet pointed downstream) to defend yourself against obstacles while allowing you to swim with your hands.

• Be aware of helical currents. These currents are subtle, move diagonally and push objects toward the center of the river where the current is strongest. Helicals make reaching the bank—and rescuing a victim—very difficult.

• When possible, swim at a 45-degree angle against the current until you reach the shore.

This article certainly is not the "do all; be all" of white-water safety, but with increasing numbers of local drownings each year, these tips are some of the most helpful and easy to remember when promoting water safety. If you would like more information about local white-water safety, call the Water Rescue Team at the City of Eugene, or Rescue 3 International at (800)-45-RESCUE. Remember: expect the best, prepare for the worst.

Seth Walker is a commercial river guide, certified swift-water rescue technician and student at the University.

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