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still i rise
— maya angelou

■ COMMUNITY

Mall Rats speak up for downtown fountain

Ben Moebius

Oregon Daily Emerald

The large fountain that sits in the center of the downtown mall on Willamette Street is more than a neglected piece of concrete to the kids who have lived on and around it for years.

"That fountain is one of us — it's a Mall Rat," said Duck, a homeless man who identifies himself with the group.

The Mall Rats are a homeless family who look out for each other as a support system, according to Richard Walker, another member of the group.

Duck and Walker said the proposed measure to reopen Willamette Street, which runs through the Eugene Mall between 8th and 10th avenues, reveals the city's attitude toward homelessness. "We are more than being ignored on this issue," Duck said. "We are being swept under the carpet."

"That fountain has been neglected for years," Duck said, gesturing to the nonfunctional monolith that has become a point of controversy in the reopening debate. "We also have been neglected for years."

"The city thinks it can just tear down that fountain and all the mall's problems will go away, including us," Duck said. "That's not going to happen."

The fate of Willamette Street will be decided on May 16 in a vote-by-mail election. The proposed cost of the measure is \$1.3 million, including \$200,000 to demolish the cen-

tral fountain and restore the plaza.

Walker said the homeless youth are upset about the measure because they have been denied a voice in the debate and have been cast in a negative light.

"We are being told that we are as disposable as the fountain," Walker said. "We are not criminals and drug dealers. The majority of the people out here have bad family situations. That's why they're here."

"Nine out of ten of these kids are missing something very important in their lives — love," said E.J., another Mall Rat. "They try to find it out here."

"This city will eventually have to wake up to the homeless problem," Duck said, "because it can't be torn down."

Proponents of the measure claim that the fountain area is a haven for vagrants and drug dealers because they are largely out of public view. They say reopening the street will make those criminal activities more visible.

The Willamette design calls for a two-way, two-lane street; 17 short term parking stalls; raised crosswalks; wide sidewalks with brick overlay and about 20 planted trees. The street would have no designated bicycle lanes, but bicycle signs and parking spaces are planned.

City officials estimate that 5,000 to 6,500 vehicles would use the street each day.

Eugene's Saturday Market celebrates 25th anniversary

Tony Lystra

For the Oregon Daily Emerald

Eugene's Saturday Market celebrated its 25th anniversary Saturday with vendors, artisans and musicians rounding out the crowd that gathered to mark the occasion.

Palm reader June Popelka sat in a wooden booth, watching a troupe of colorful musicians wind their way through the market.

"The atmosphere is so wonderful here," she said. "It's warm and all the people are friendly. We have a gallery back in Illinois. I'd sure love to sell some of this stuff back there."

Popelka flew in from Bloomington Normal, Ill., to visit her daughter, Ambriel Leilani, who reads Tarot cards at the market. She's visited the market more than a dozen times since her daughter set up a booth here seven years ago.

Since Saturday Market began in 1970, hundreds of artisans selling jewelry, ceramics, wood-working, stained glass, candles and countless other goods have set up shop in Eugene — and stayed.

Barbara Irvine has been selling her porcelain pottery and fabric wall hangings here since 1983. "It's been fun to see the growth of Saturday Market. I see it as a mini-community of different kinds of people who can make things work," she said.

"There are so many extremes of people. It's really like the

world. And they all get along. Wouldn't it be great if the rest of the world could do that?"

Promoters claim the market is the oldest in the nation to bear the "Saturday Market" name.

The marketplace opened on a rainy May morning in 1970, with 29 vendors. Today, the market has grown to 800 members. Three hundred of those vendors sell their goods each weekend in the marketplace at Eighth and Oak streets in downtown Eugene.

Vendors pay \$7 plus 10 percent of their sales for each day they sell in the market place. All goods must be crafted by the vendor.

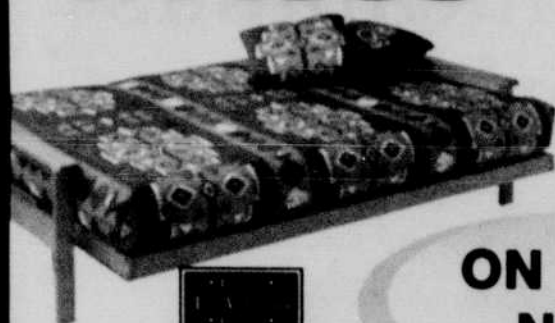
Lawrence Pagen has been a member of the Market for five years. He crafts stained glass kaleidoscopes and sculpture.

Pagen said he got his start in stained glass back in college after he followed a girl he didn't know into a stained glass class. The relationship with the young woman never worked out — he never went to the class and he found himself stuck with a bunch of stained glass tools.

Rather than sell the tools he "sat around and figured it out." Pagen discovered the market on his way through town and decided to stay.

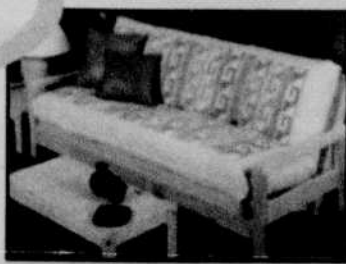
"It's a real homey, laid-back atmosphere," he said. "It's one big happy family. Everybody takes care of each other and watches each other's back. It doesn't hurt that it's cheap to sell here, either."

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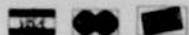
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