

## Disabled's challenge is others' ignorance

**OUR OPINION:** We can all learn something from this week of awareness

Something unfortunate happened at a recent *Oregon Daily Emerald* freelance open house meeting.

A man in a wheelchair was fully 30 minutes late for his appointment because a handful of University people and *Emerald* staffers couldn't quite figure out how to operate the wheelchair lift mechanism that would have carried him down five steps for a distance of about six feet.

Only being six feet away from even ground (and the entrance to the newsroom) delayed the man half an hour.

While we don't fault the individuals who did their best to get the wheelchair lift operating (which they eventually did), the situation does provide a small example of a larger problem: The lack of disability awareness on campus.

As the University celebrates Earth Week and Professional Secretaries Week, the first Disability Awareness Days makes its debut to help the University community become aware of the kinds of issues disabled people have to deal with every day.

Disability Awareness Days events included the humor of a nationally known stand-up comedian with cerebral palsy Wednesday night and a Technology Fair and discussion panel today in the Erb Memorial Union.

Five hundred members of the University community have some sort of physical disability and the group is

becoming increasingly active and visible on campus.

But despite the group's size and recent activities, there is still a lot of ignorance and lack of understanding toward disabled people, according to Hilary Gerdes, coordinator of services for students with disabilities.

Thanks to the efforts of Gerdes, the Disability Project Committee and the involvement of many others, the campus community has the opportunity this week to learn to be more sensitive and more aware of the issues people with disabilities face.

Nationally, as well as here on campus, life became measurably less complicated for people with disabilities after Congress passed the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the American with Disabilities Act in 1990.

While the University has made the necessary changes to fulfill the requirements of those laws, a decrease in funding has allowed problems to persist.

But the biggest problem is still ignorance.

Donna Sower, a student who serves on the Disability Project Committee and is visually impaired, said it best in Wednesday's *Emerald*:

"People are afraid to approach people with physical challenges, and they don't need to be. The less ignorant we become, the less fear we will have."

This leaves people untouched by a disability with perhaps the biggest challenge of all — to look fear in the face and overcome it.



### LETTERS

#### Hayward's Fault

The opinion piece that discussed the beating death of the Dari Mart employee by Michael Hayward was incredibly illogical, unsophisticated and boring (ODE, April 24). Instead of informing us of the real issues behind this heinous crime, we are assaulted by a lame diatribe against death metal music. Obviously because Hayward and his cohorts listen to this "crap" and "ear-rupturing trash" they were transformed into heartless murderers. I can't believe this "written trash" myself. Hayward was a little messed up before he started listening to death metal. One must be not only a dirt bag, but a heartless idiot to have the propensity to commit the hideous acts, such as murder. The music has very little to do with it. Furthermore, I would think that the LSD had something to do with the crime as well, rather than merely inducing a "drug twisted" state that allows "violent music [to] fill a mind with violent thoughts."

Overall, the opinion piece misses the boat. Why not comment on the cult violence that pervades every iota of American culture and not just on some form of music, one that I can't stomach myself, that opinion writers obviously don't care for? One could easily talk about racist country music or the misogynist tendencies of the majority of the male rap artists and the social consequences that result. Why not criticize the stupidly violent and grotesque death metal lyrics, as opposed to attacking the "grinding, crashing assault of instruments"? You've failed to address the failure of many musicians to display any semblance of social awareness and responsibility. You should lose the boring side comments and grapple with some more important issues that could reveal the fundamental cause of the crime.

Ultimately, this issue boils down to the question of who is responsible: Michael Hayward or death metal bands. Unequivocally, the responsibility lies within the twisted brain of

Michael Hayward, regardless of the type of music he listened to before the murder. I can't see either of the two bands mentioned as having lyrics that instruct the listener to go to the nearest convenience store and commit a horrible crime. The uninteresting and oddly contrived statements in the opinion piece are a lame attempt at expressing an informed opinion.

Mike Goodman  
Graduate, Geography

#### Clarification

The drawing entitled "Conceptual Plan of the New Law School," published with the article on the proposed new Law School, is one of a series of drawings being used as tools to study the potential layout of open space on the block the Law School will occupy. This drawing is a designer's concept of one of two possible ways the block might look in 50 years. The buildings themselves are speculative diagrams intended to illustrate how the open spaces of the block might be developed.

The arrangement and shape of the buildings shown in the drawing in no way reflect any decisions about their ultimate disposition. Such decisions require weeks of hard work by the users of the buildings and their architects and ultimately must be reviewed by the Campus Planning Committee for consistency with the long range campus plan before being accepted by the President.

Your publishing this drawing without clarifying its intended use implies a certainty that does not yet exist. This in turn causes many readers to anguish needlessly over future developments that are, at this point, merely one person's speculations about the future.

Chris Ramey  
Director and Architect  
University Planning

#### Homeless Housing

The Homeless Action Coalition contends that the City of Eugene violates the Constitutional Rights of homeless peo-

ple by criminalizing camping, when many have no other choice but to camp.

The Eugene Human Rights Commission and the ACLU have notified the City Council that they are in agreement with us. The council has been given details of several other instances where similar camping bans in other cities have been declared unconstitutional.

We demand that the council focuses its discussion on the accusations of illegal and unconstitutional behavior by the city.

Our position is that if people are placed in circumstances where they have no choice but to commit an act that would otherwise be illegal, then their actions are not illegal.

The City has always relied on the myth that the "Eugene Mission turns away no one" (City Agenda Item Summary of Nov. 8, 1995). But the Mission refuses services to some people because of their status as youth, single fathers, single mothers with male children and handicapped women. Their is no other shelter available. If the City Council believes that they are acting lawfully, then they must tell us why. What other options besides camping do these people have?

We are also putting the individual counselors on notice that, if they knowingly act in an illegal manner, they lose the legal shield of protection from individual lawsuits.

Wayne Ford  
Co-Chair  
Homeless Action Coalition

#### LETTERS POLICY

The *Oregon Daily Emerald* will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.

## Oregon Daily Emerald

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