

Firemed members get inexpensive ambulance service

■ **CARE:** Those who pay a yearly fee are not charged for ambulance use

By Jean Bond
Community Reporter

The high cost of ambulance service can keep some people from getting proper medical care, said Springfield Fire Chief Dennis Murphy.

"People do a 'wallet biopsy,'" Murphy said. "They look at the cost of service and decide to just take care of [the problem] themselves."

To stop "wallet biopsies" and make ambulance service available to everyone who might need it, Murphy helped found Firemed in 1986.

Firemed is an ambulance mem-

bership program. Members pay a fee of \$39 a year. In return, members who call an ambulance face no ambulance fees, said John Garitz, Firemed director.

Firemed bills the member's insurance company for ambulance service, but there is usually a gap between what the insurance company pays and what the ambulance service costs. Non-members have to pay that difference, but Firemed members do not.

Members who have no insurance pay only their membership fee; members are simply not charged for any ambulance service used during the year.

The program is based in and administered by the city of Springfield but services the whole Eugene-Springfield area.

Eugene and Springfield ambulance service is owned and operated by the city, but receives no tax support. Ambulance service is self-supporting through user fees and Firemed membership fees, Garitz said.

Ambulance fees can be quite expensive, he said. The base fee for city ambulance service in the Eugene-Springfield area is \$575. During patient transport, a per mile fee of \$13.50 is added to the base charge.

Firemed also has a reciprocal agreement with 50 other ambulance membership programs in Oregon. That gives Oregon the largest ambulance membership network in the nation, Murphy said.

If a Firemed member needs am-

bulance service in an area outside the Eugene-Springfield area and an ambulance membership program is available in that area, the member still receives ambulance service at no charge.

"It basically says, 'You take care of my member, I'll take care of yours,'" Murphy said.

Eugene and Springfield were covered by a private ambulance service until 1981, when the company, Medical Services Incorporated, folded.

"The city was pressed into the ambulance business very quickly," Garitz said.

Fortunately, the city adapted well and quickly. In 1983, the ambulance service won an award for being the best emergency medical system in the state, and in 1985, it

won an award for being the best EMS in the nation, Murphy said.

"But there were still a large number of patients still coming to emergency rooms in cars when they should have been in an ambulance," he said.

Murphy started Firemed after conducting a survey to find out why people weren't calling an ambulance when they needed one.

One of the two major reasons was the cost of ambulance service, he said. Another reason was that people tend to underestimate the severity of their condition.

"Due to the removal of financial barriers, we have people calling the ambulance sooner," Garitz said. "That way, they get appropriate care sooner."

Pagan Student Union offers religious forum

■ **ISSUES:** Group is open to all people who want to learn about Paganism

By Tom Potter
Student Activities Reporter

All over the world there are many different religions, encompassing a wide scope of beliefs.

Paganism is a religion that covers a variety of faiths. The ASUO Pagan Student Union is a forum for all people that follow pre-Christian European religions, including Celtic beliefs.

"[It gives Pagans] some kind of environment to talk about issues relevant to us," said Jencina Butler, a member of the group.

The group meets every Thursday to participate in various activities. These include discussing topics like ethics and spirituality. Some meetings include watching films that portray Pagans in a negative light and discussing the repercussions. The group also invites speakers to discuss various religions.

"I wanted to find a group of like-minded individuals, like me," said Mike Saltz, a religious studies major.

The group gives those who feel religiously alienated an opportunity to learn and grow from others similar to them, said Saltz.

"[We're] providing a sense of community for those people so they don't feel left out in the cold," Butler said.

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— Jencina Butler
ASUO Pagan Student Union member

The group in its current form is actually very new to the University. The Pagan Student Union was established in February of 1995 under a new charter. Participation in the group varies from week to week but meetings usually draw about 10 people, Butler said.

Butler, who helped in founding the group, said she has been a Pagan for ten years and when she came to campus there wasn't an equivalent to Chi Alpha [a Christian fellowship group] for all the Pagans on campus. For that reason, she helped create the new charter for the group.

"It's a great opportunity to learn from other people about Paganism," Saltz said.

The group doesn't receive funding from the University. Instead, members of the group pitch in whenever the group needs something, Butler said.

Pagan Student Union meetings are open to anyone interested in learning more about Paganism.

Congress: Candidates agree on major issues

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To do this, Newkirk suggested returning government to the people and restoring the economy to small businesses.

"Small business and free enterprise was and is the economic backbone," he said.

Newkirk also attacked DeFazio for governing by his own interests and not the interests of the district.

"He's done everything to us and nothing for us," he said. "And it's time to bring him home."

William "Bill" Bonville represented the Reform Party. Like Newkirk, he argued against greater governmental control. For example, he said he opposed universal health care because each individual should bear the responsibility.

"What we find in all of government is a misdirection of activity and funds," he said. "Everything the family used to be responsible for is in the hands of the government."

Allan Opus, the Pacific Green Party candidate, differed the greatest from the other three candi-

dates. He said he supported environmental protection and more representation for minor parties in government.

"It's very easy to attack the government," he said. "It's very popular. But the government is us. We have an alternative. We have to make the choice."

Opus also said he was against governmental control of the forests, although many of the candidates voiced their support for such legislation.

"If it's left to the state, the state has been clear cutting," he said. "And not one more toothpick should be removed from an old growth forest."

However, the candidates generally agreed on many of the major issues. They mostly disagreed on smaller issues, but had the same basic ideas, Newkirk said.

"They're talking basically about government out of control," Bonville said. "We all want government. We just don't want this monster it's become."

Ballot: Start-up fees for the measure are too high

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"This would make available to the citizens of Eugene information from the largest users of toxics," he said.

Chartier said the measure would be difficult to implement and would not make more information available.

"I have a firm belief in the community right to know," he said. "My opposition is because of the way it's written, the cost it's going to be and the little information you're going to get."

Although companies would bear the year-to-year cost of implementing the measure, start-up fees of up to \$250,000 would be paid by the city, Chartier said.

Johnson pointed to the materials balance reporting requirement as one of the benefits of the measure.

Businesses would be required to not only report what hazardous chemicals they use, but also to account for all the hazardous chemicals taken in by the business, said Johnson.

"If they take in 10,000 pounds of chlorine, they would report how much went into manufacturing, how much was waste, and so on," he said.

Chartier said that insufficient technology exists for businesses to be able to give accurate material balance reports.

He added that businesses that use hazardous chemicals are al-

ready covered by the Oregon Community Right to Know and Protection Act, which was enacted in 1989. That law requires businesses to report their hazardous materials to the State Fire Marshall's Hazardous Material Department.

"About 30-40 businesses are targeted by this [Measure 20-75]," Chartier said. "There are now 300 businesses reporting. Most of this information is already available."

Johnson admitted that some of the businesses that would be affected by the initiative already have to report hazardous material use under state and federal laws, but added that the measure would institute stiffer reporting requirements.

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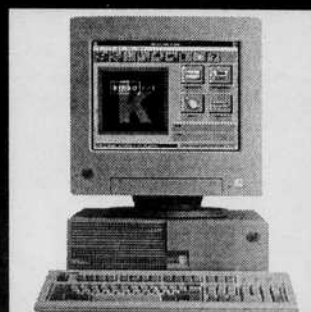
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