

Saferide raises money to install wheelchair lift

■ **CONCERT:** A benefit show this Saturday will help the group better serve its disabled passengers

By Laura Cadiz
Higher Education Editor

If Saferide raises enough money to get a wheelchair lift for one of its vans, Bonni Pettitt won't feel afraid going home at night anymore.

"I've been out late at night, and it can be scary," said Pettitt, who uses a wheelchair. "If I ride the bus sometimes it's not safe to cross the street, and it's easier if I can get dropped off at the door."

To raise money for the lift, Saferide is putting on its first annual benefit show this weekend at the WOW Hall. Jibliminis, Hummingfish and Doris Daze will be the bands performing, and a beer garden and raffle will also be part of the event. All the proceeds will go to buy a new wheelchair lift for Saferide.

"It's the first time we've done anything like this; we're hoping because it's at the WOW Hall, a popular and well-known lo-

cation, that we'll have a good size crowd," said Damiana Merryweather, volunteer coordinator for Saferide. "The bands are donating their time; we've been really fortunate with that."

Saferide has needed a wheelchair lift since its service began in the 1985-86 school year, Merryweather said. Currently, Saferide has collected \$3,000 from fund raising and \$2,000 from a grant from the Oregon Foundation. The goal is to raise a total of \$10,000 for the new wheelchair lift.

"This event will hopefully push us over the edge to get enough money to put a lift in the van," said Liese Alsen, fund-raising and publicity coordinator for Saferide.

The wheelchair lift is necessary to accommodate all of Saferide's customers, Merryweather said.

"We're really looking at what the needs of women with disabilities are ... making the service more usable for women with disabilities," she said.

Depending on the amount of money that is raised, Saferide will either purchase a new van with a wheelchair lift or install a

lift into an old van.

"We will have a lift available by the beginning of the 1997-98 school year," said Alsen.

Currently, Saferide is working with Wheelchair Disabilities Taxi to provide service for its disabled clients. But Merryweather said it would be much more efficient if Saferide could provide the service.

Because the taxi service doesn't work the same hours as Saferide, Merryweather said wheelchair users have to notify Saferide 24 hours in advance on week nights and 72 hours in advance on weekend nights if they want a ride. Saferide also has to pay the taxi service for its use.

"We feel we will be able to serve the needs of women with disabilities with one single lift," Merryweather said.

Saferide acts as a rape prevention service for University faculty and students, as it allows women to travel at night without the risk of being assaulted. But Saferide needs to make itself more well known to women with disabilities said Hilary Gerdes, counselor for students with disabilities.

"The first thing to look at is communication ... it's not known very well how a wheelchair person accesses Saferide," she said.

Merryweather agrees and said a new wheelchair lift would help solve that problem.

"We want to provide service to all women and accommodate the needs of women with disabilities," she said.

In the future, Saferide is looking to put a request for a new vehicle on the ballot for the student elections in the spring. Currently, Saferide provides an average of 100 rides a night, and on busy nights it has turned away up to 25 people, Alsen said.

"We don't have the capacity with three vehicles," Merryweather said. "We want to get another mini van."

The concert takes place Saturday at the WOW Hall, located at 8th Avenue and Lincoln Street. Doors open at 8 p.m., and tickets are available at the door for a minimum of \$5 or a maximum of \$10. All ages are welcome, and the concert is wheelchair accessible.

Peers assist international students

■ **WORKSHOPS:** Upcoming seminars are among several events which are led by the International Peer Assistants

By Laura Baker
Student Activities Reporter

For those at the University from another country, comprehending classes in English and understanding American culture doesn't have to be difficult. The International Peer Assistants are at the University to help international students with questions and concerns while acting as a support group to help with students' assimilation into the culture.

The peer assistants plan events each term, including workshops and getaways, to aid international students with questions they may have about the United States or the University. The group also provides a setting for the students to meet others who need of support.

Peer assistant Amita Malakar

said there are about 1,700 international students from 90 countries on campus this year, which makes this program invaluable to making a smooth transition for international students. "The main purpose of this group is to help international students — especially new ones — get adjusted and help them with issues they may have," she said.

The peer assistants are conducting a workshop today at 3 p.m. in the EMU Cedar room C, entitled "The World in a Classroom: Problems and Difficulties." The workshop is designed to bring international students and professors together to "clear up problems or miscommunication each may face," Malakar said.

She said most faculty on campus are not trained to deal with the cultural and educational differences international students present. This is an opportunity for faculty to learn some of the basic problems common to internation-

al students in the classroom.

The group is presenting another workshop Feb. 24 at 3 p.m. in EMU Cedar room C. The workshop, "Tongue Tied: Communication Beyond Our Language," is designed to teach students about symbols and gestures in certain cultures and how they may be translated in other cultures.

"In one culture what may be considered polite can be rude to someone of another culture," Malakar said. "This gives the students an opportunity to share common ways and learn about non-verbal communication in other cultures."

The peer assistants are also planning a spring break getaway to the Grand Canyon. This trip provides an opportunity for exchange students to make friends and have fun, Malakar said.

Those interested in the spring break trip can contact the International Student Association at 346-4387.

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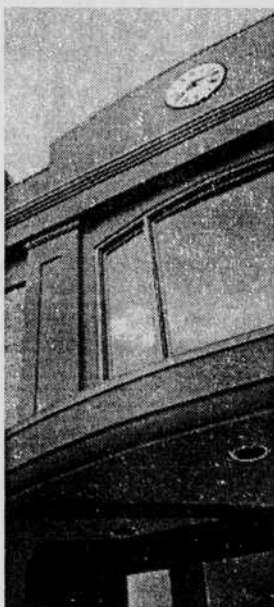
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