

Disabled students benefit from campus Life Skills program

The program teaches basic job skills that can be used later in life

By Amy Jennaro
Oregon Daily Emerald

Seth Ford sits and ticks off on his fingers the different tasks he does on the job.

"I wash dishes and chop vegetables and I do the hot dogs," he said, bursting with pride.

This might sound like a typical summer job in the food industry, but for Ford it is different.

Ford is one of 17 students who works at the University as part of the Life Skills school program.

The program was set up to give students with developmental disabilities such as mental retardation, autism, visual and hearing impairments and a variety of behavioral and physical disorders a chance to receive an education and gain real-world experience.

"We wanted to give these students an opportunity to be responsible for their lives, instead of us just enabling them," said

David Abramowitz, head teacher at the Life Skills program.

Erica Voss, a Life Skills student employed at the library, said she enjoys the responsibilities she has been given.

"I like picking up books and making sure they go in the right place," she said. "It's fun."

Abramowitz said the Life Skills program has been involved with the University for 18 years and that his students have worked in such places as University Mail Services, custodial positions, University Admissions and at Student Health Services.

Life Skills students are currently employed at the library and the EMU food court.

Ford, who has been with the Life Skills program for two years, is happy with the work he does at the Buzz Cafe and at Grateful Bread, both in the EMU.

"It's a lot of fun," he said. "I like to talk to the people I work with."

Abramowitz said the students, who range in age from 16 to 21, usually work in shifts of two to three hours throughout the day.

The students learn the basic skills of the job with the assistance of an on-site coordinator from the Life Skills program.

Although the students don't get paid, the program is geared toward providing the students the basic job skills they need to develop.

"It's never about what we need to get done," said Theresa Coleman-Kaiser, food service director of the EMU. Instead, she said, the EMU focuses on what the Life Skills students need to achieve.

David Helfand, who provides job training to Life Skills students in the library, said the students usually complete a preliminary job program based at Sheldon High School before starting their new jobs.

"The Sheldon program is a way that students can get out into the community and be tested and assessed by the teachers in the program," he said.

After the students complete the Sheldon program, they are able to start looking for jobs in the community, including at the University. Abramowitz focuses on giv-

ing the students a variety of job possibilities.

"We start by having the students visit all the different job sites and see whether they would like it," he said.

Rebecca Rasmussen has taken on a variety of jobs. She is currently working at both the library and the EMU food court.

"I have to run back and forth between these two places," she said. "It is stressful."

The program only provides services to students until they are 21. After that point, they are placed in vocational rehabilitation.

Abramowitz said that the state stops funding disabled students' educations after their 21st birthday, when they are put on a long waiting list to receive grants.

In the time it takes to receive those funds, the disabled students often lose the skills they learned while they were in school, he said.

The Life Skills program works to provide resources for the students after they leave the program.

"I didn't want to think that somebody's life would be over once they turned 21," Abramowitz said.

Heri Lugo, job trainer for the program, said the program had been successful in finding the students local resources.

"Some of our students have gone on to jobs in the food service community," Lugo said.

Shelia Stigall, a supervisor at Knight Library, said she has been impressed with the students' work ethic.

"The students come in and do the same jobs that any other student would do," said Stigall.

"They contribute positively to our organization."

Some students see the program as a stepping stone to other jobs that interest them.

"I want to do something else besides food service," Rasmussen said. "Maybe animal care."

But for student Josh Reiter, just helping out in the library is a reward.

"Any job is good," he said. "I like to work."

New Orleans' Mardi Gras crowd may top 2 million

By Mary Foster
The Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Merry makers danced in the streets, bartered for beads and cheered the gaudy parades as angels, cowboys and clowns marched the streets from dawn to dusk in the city's Mardi Gras celebration.

The bash is the final fling before Lent, which many Christians observe from Ash Wednesday to Easter by fasting or by giving up something, such as meat or sweets.

More than a dozen parades — not counting the small marching societies like clarinetist Pete Fountain's Half-Fast Marching Club — rolled from early morning until dark.

"We've got everybody here from Grandma on down," said Mike Broud, one of 32 family members dressed as white rabbits along the parade route for Zulu and Rex, two of the largest parades.

"We're here every year. It's a combination family reunion and party. There's nothing else like it in the world."

With sunshine and temperature in the 70s, crowds quickly grew. Police believed the combination of good weather and a four-day weekend, thanks to President's Day on Monday, would boost the throng to a record size.

"They're huge crowds, much

bigger than last year," said police spokesman Marlon Defilo. "We had 1.5 million people then. We'll have over 2 million this year."

Arrests were up slightly in the French Quarter, Defilo said, but they were all misdemeanors — nudity, urinating in public, trespassing.

"No problems at all, really," he said.

Satin-clad angels rubbed elbows with clowns and cowboys along St. Charles Avenue, the mansion-lined parade route where floats rolled for over eight hours.

Children and adults staked out spots before dawn, then clamored for trinkets tossed by costumed riders.

"I spend about \$2,000 on beads, and I throw every single one of them before the end of the day," said Stacie Honore, 32, a rider on the Zulu parade. "You can't believe how much fun it is to throw your money away."

People on balconies in the French Quarter tossed beads to the celebrants below. Although it is illegal, many flashed flesh in exchange for the long strings of plastic beads.

"It's just good clean fun. Why would they arrest you for that?" asked Judy Hudson, 26, of Los Angeles.

Dragon

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the fortune messages for them.

"You are about to embark on a difficult journey — that means you will have to do something hard, but I'm sure you will do it well," she said.

"You are going to inherit a large sum of money. The architect of destiny is yourself — that means you decide what you are going to do."

This New Year's Day is the beginning of the Year of the Rabbit.

Beudert said they spent the morning figuring out which animal sign each child was born under. Each year is associated with

an animal such as the snake or the monkey.

"They were very excited," Beudert said. "A lot of people came in this morning to see what the dragon looked like."

The Chinese New Year brings families together and is symbolic of a new beginning. People often reflect on the past and wish for a blessed new year.

Family traditions are an important part of the celebration. People often share poetic couplets, good luck money and traditional foods such as the New Year's cake or dumplings.

Call for Nominations for Faculty Awards for Distinguished Teaching

Deadline for Nominations: **MARCH 1, 1999**

Faculty, staff, students, and alumni are invited to submit nominations for the following awards, presented annually at Spring Commencement to University of Oregon faculty for distinguished teaching. Each award will be accompanied by a monetary reward. [Please note that Graduate teaching fellows have their own competition and are ineligible for these awards.]

Eligibility for Awards

Ersted Award for Distinguished Teaching

The late Mr. A. J. Ersted established the *Ersted Award for Distinguished Teaching* so the University of Oregon could annually honor faculty members "who have taught comparatively short periods and have demonstrated exceptional abilities to induce students to reason and not merely memorize." The Ersted Award can go only to faculty who are early in their teaching careers. This teaching may occur at the undergraduate or graduate level.

Thomas F. Herman Faculty Achievement Awards for Distinguished Teaching

This award honors senior faculty members who have achieved outstanding records as teachers. The *Thomas F. Herman Award* can go only to faculty members who have held academic rank at the University of Oregon for at least seven years, and who have demonstrated excellence in teaching at the undergraduate or graduate level. The criteria for this award are similar to that used in the past for the Burlington Northern Awards.

Nominations will be accepted either through submission of the following form or by e-mail. If your nomination is by e-mail, please make sure that you include all information contained on this form.

Send your nomination form to:

Lorraine G. Davis
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
207 Johnson Hall, University of Oregon

E-mail your nomination to:

Carmen Hall
Academic Affairs
e-mail address: carmenh@oregon

I nominate _____ for the

(Please check one)

Ersted Award

Thomas F. Herman Award

My reason(s) for nomination are: (You may attach a separate sheet if necessary.)

Signature of nominator: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ E-mail: _____

Please check your status: Faculty Student Alumni Staff