

# Building Blocks helps children

*The program shows at-risk students the benefits of continuing education*

By Erin Snelgrove  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Soft serve ice cream and higher education may not be the most likely pair, but for participants in the Building Blocks Program it can be what makes the sale.

The program pairs University students with fifth-graders who have been identified as at-risk for dropping out of the education process. The University students work with children from three local elementary schools to encourage continuing education beyond high school.

The climax of the program is when the children go on a field trip to the University. The kids tour campus to see what college life is like.

"We find that the kids love eating in the dorms, they think it's the coolest thing in the whole wide world," said Clair Clark, a GTF and coordinator for the course. "They get as many ice cream cones as they can. Regularly, we have one or two of them who puke, but that's par for the course."

The seven-week program is offered each spring and students can earn two credits for participating.

Students taking the course attend meetings and give presentations at local elementary schools. By using games and skits, the students inform fifth-graders about financial aid, student life, housing and various forms of post-high school education.

The three-year-old program was previously named College Bound but underwent a name change and format adaptations for this spring term.

"Hopefully, with some of the information we're providing, the kids won't make some of the mistakes that will get them into trouble," Clark said.

Primarily, education majors participate in the program; however, many people who enjoy working with kids register as well.

Erika Guiney, a University student, has been involved with the program since its inception. Guiney said she joined Building Blocks because of the importance it has had in children's lives.

"We're helping the kids make thoughtful decisions about their future," Guiney said. "They're learning college is an option for them."

Jill McCarthy, another participant in the program, became involved to improve her instructional ability.

"The experience with the children is great," McCarthy said. "If you want to be a teacher, this pro-

gram is for you. It helps you realize if teaching is what you want to do for the rest of your life."

The effects of the course on kids is felt by students and instructors alike. Anita Gray, a teacher at Howard Elementary, is grateful for the hard work and determination the volunteers are demonstrating.

"The college students are wonderful," Gray said. "They really take their job seriously, and the kids look up to them. I look forward to having the program offered to my students in the spring."

Students interested in participating in Building Blocks must stop by the CIP office to preregister for the course. Only six of the 18 openings have been filled.

"I believe Building Blocks is serving the community," Clark said. "We're planting a seed, allowing the children to get their first impression of college. I've found that with the kids, if you've planted in their minds that they can go to college, they start to think about that. They look forward to succeeding instead of dropping out."

*Erin Snelgrove covers multicultural student groups and student activities for the Emerald. She can be reached via e-mail at esnelgro@gladstone.uoregon.edu.*

# Speakers encourage environmental activism

*Annual law conference attracts activists from all over the world*

By Mark Freed  
for the Emerald

A collective effort is needed to raise environmental awareness, said Lee Lew-Lee, a human-right's filmmaker and one of three keynote speakers Friday night in the EMU Ballroom at the Public Interest Environmental Law Conference.

"We all have to work together," Lew-Lee said. "None of the parts of this movement will work without the other."

The conference, which has received international attention, was sponsored by Land Air Water and Friends of Land Air Water.

Unity was the message of the evening and theme of the 17th annual conference. Environmental leaders, activists, politicians, lawyers, students and concerned citizens from all over the world came together over the weekend to share ideas.

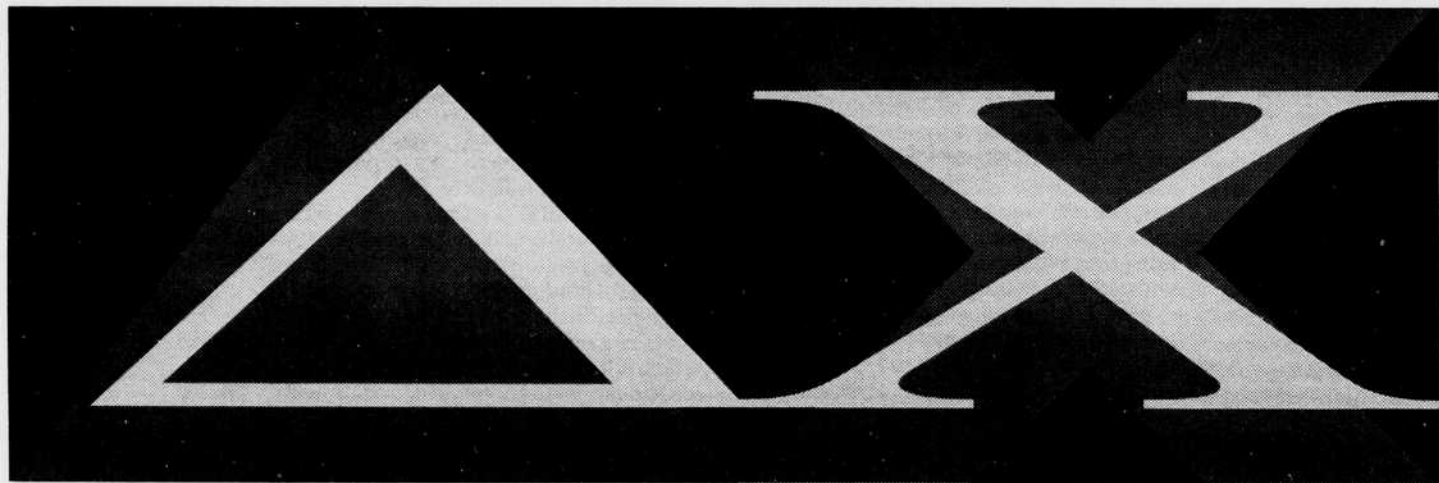
The conference combined environmental, social justice and labor advocates from more than 40 countries. It attracted more than 3,000 participants this year, and is considered the biggest gathering for environmentalists.

Lew-Lee reminded the audience about the current momentum toward "biocide," an environmental crisis that is killing all life. He said people can promote and make change.

Julia Butterfly Hill, an activist protesting the destruction of old-growth forests, has been living on a platform in an ancient redwood tree for almost 15 months in Stafford, Calif. Hill, speaking via telephone from the tree, said environmental goals must focus not on what society must take, but what it should leave behind.

Friday's final speaker, John Trudell, a Santee Sioux poet and musician, suggested that life is not only about freedom but responsibility. Trudell said society must take responsibility for its actions.

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