



Mikel Donner and Ryan Atteberry answer questions from reporters Tuesday evening.

Amanda Cowan/Emerald

Thurston

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Greek furies driving him to understand what happened," Mastro Simone said. "I did this as a parent not as a playwright."

Mastro Simone said his son came home from school talking about a message a classmate had scrawled on the chalk board.

The message said, "I'm going to kill everyone in this class."

It turned out to be a prank, but Mastro Simone said, "It had robbed this little town, that I lived in, of its peace of mind."

"I was really disturbed, like most parents, when this seemed like a plague among our house," the father of four said.

The play has not been published because Mastro Simone chose to post it on the Internet instead.

He said he wanted to by-pass any prejudgments that adults might make and let kids make the decision for themselves.

"The play is focused on the potential killer in the audience," Mastro Simone said. "I

think after the events in the past two years, you have to assume there's a killer in every school."

Mastro Simone believes the play will allow potential killers to release their bad feelings.

"Hopefully, the play will bring that kid to a catharsis—a purging of those feelings," he said. "It's what's in a kid's heart that makes them do it. It's what's in a kid's soul."

Betina Lynn, a survivor of the Thurston shootings, attended a press conference to promote the new play and show her support for Ribbon of Promise, the non-profit organization that paid for the project.

She said she hopes the play makes a difference by forcing people to realize that school violence is very real.

"While I was at Thurston, I was thinking about it daily," Lynn said. "It's kind of hard to move on."

Lynn said some people were upset that Kinkel's trial was postponed until September of

this year. The resolution of his trial will bring closure for many, she said.

"Bullets really kill—it's not like T.V.," Lynn said. "I think the only possible solution is prevention."

Ribbon of Promise was one agency that emerged from within the community during the aftermath of the shootings.

The purpose of the organization is to end school violence and bring awareness to communities, said Betty Schenfeld, Ribbon of Promise office manager.

"We want to make resources available so people don't fall through the cracks," Schenfeld said, "like Kip Kinkel's family who said they went everywhere to get help."

If it's not a gun, it could be a knife or a bomb. Mastro Simone said that kind of animosity will find a way.

"This is a play where they can do it for each other not have it done for them," he said.

Westmoreland

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like we can't let it escalate."

Part of the problem is that Westmoreland is a University entity that's located in the no-man's-land of 18th Avenue and Chambers Street, a couple of miles from campus.

Westmoreland has 24-hour police coverage, according to Eugene police Sgt. Rick Gilliam. In addition, OPS sends out occasional uniformed officer, and the tenants pay for evening OPS student patrols.

"I feel like they're getting double coverage, given that it is an apartment complex," said Lou Vijayakar, director of Family Housing. "Our goal is to make sure OPS, EPD and the residents continue to keep it a safe environment."

This is not an unreasonable request, according to 10-year Westmoreland Area Director Sheri Donahoe.

"There's an educational curve that needs to happen," she said. "There needs to be a reality check."

Because it is student housing, there is high turnover in Westmoreland residents. If residents stay aware of who their neighbors are and who doesn't belong, the area should be safer, Donahoe said.

"If you compare us to the private sector, there are a lot of safety nets that are built in," she said. "The weak net is we're such a transient community."

Most crimes that do occur in Westmoreland are crimes of convenience, Donahoe said.

This is something Richardson knows first-hand. She organized a neighborhood watch in her area of Westmoreland in the fall of 1997 that has nabbed several criminals since its inception.

Just last summer, Richardson woke at 3 a.m. to find someone trying to steal a bike tire off her front porch. Richardson's neighbor called police, and the suspect was caught by the police.

"They don't come quite as frequently now," Richardson said.

Last term, Housing evicted one resident after he was arrested for possession of heroin.

What scares Richardson the most is the density of children in Westmoreland compared to other neighborhoods.

"There's so many kids here," she said. "If you don't belong here—we don't care what you're doing—you don't belong here."

But even Richardson knows how difficult it is to maintain a utopia in the area. The high turnover makes her neighborhood watch difficult to maintain as well.

"It takes an incredible amount of work," she said. "People are willing to work, but you're not going to find that many grad students who can put in the time."

Richardson said she is happy with the majority of what Housing does for its tenants but said security is lacking.

Tom Cassidy, chair of the Westmoreland Tenants Council, said he believes security coverage by the police and OPS has been lacking but added he is encouraged by last week's meeting.

"I thought it was a real success, but that doesn't mean we're through with security issues in Westmoreland," he said. "I believe [OPS is] making some changes that will improve our coverage."

OPS associate director Tom Hicks agreed that the meeting helped facilitate conversation between public safety and the tenants.

"I think they get adequate coverage. When there's an incident, the response has been pretty prompt," Hicks said. "It's as much a community issue as it is a police or security issue."

Police coverage of Westmoreland may be better than on campus, Gilliam said. There is always an officer assigned to the neighborhood, while there is not always an officer on duty in the University area.

"I don't think [police coverage is] any different there than it is anywhere else," she said.

A little common sense can go a long way in the neighborhood, Donahoe said. Many of the thefts are "crimes of convenience," she said.

If residents stay alert and keep attractive targets for thieves indoors, that should deter the criminal element, she said.

"There's always room for improvement," she said. "I think folks have got to realize if you live here you need to help work in unison with the safety nets you have in place."

ROTC

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For four years, as scholarship recipients, Rice and Nash have experienced it all. During the last four years, they attended the required military courses and labs, they toned their muscles through rigorous physical training exercises and they passed advanced camp, a place where both their minds and bodies were pushed to their breaking points. Now, as they near the end of their college days, Rice and Nash spend their time preparing the junior class for the impending trials while also refining their own managerial skills.

Captain Richard Lewis, a courtesy assistant professor of military science, said the journey of an ROTC student is a valuable one. With the help of the organization, participants become well-rounded and driven individuals.

"I think the ROTC enhances the diversity of the student population at the University," Lewis said. "The leadership skills they learn bleed into other parts of their lives; most people with the ROTC develop good moral characters and they have a strong desire to do the right thing."

Rice said she has definitely changed because of the ROTC. Because of the organization, she has gained a better understanding on the responsibilities of military officers.

"I never understood, until I joined this program, what it meant to be a leader," Rice said. "I'm constantly being watched by my subordinates. They really look up to me for guidance and direction. Everything I do makes an impression on them."

Rice had not envisioned herself as the military type, primarily because she had never been prone to physical activity. Instead of exercising when she was younger, she spent her high school career devoted to drama and theater productions. Only after realizing the expenses of college, did Rice begin to rethink her previous conceptions of the ROTC.

"I figured that I'd just go for it, and I'm glad I did," Rice said. "It did a lot for my self-esteem. I had never known what my body was capable of until I was forced to push myself."

Like Rice, Nash joined the ROTC to gain financial assistance for his education, but he also joined to fulfill his childhood fantasy.

"I thought it would be a lot of fun getting

dirty, and it is," Nash said. "We go out on gun, grenade and assault courses on campus, and we get to do so many things that I would not have otherwise done. Every little kid wants to play army, and this is a realization of the dream."

Both Rice and Nash said their experiences with the ROTC have made a definite impact on their lives. They've learned how to manage their time wisely, how to achieve their goals and how to motivate themselves to succeed. However, like every organization, the ROTC has its occasional problems.

"Sometimes it's a challenge to get along with some of my colleagues," Nash said. "But at the same time, it's the challenge of having to get along with them and being in the same working environment that really dictates how I'm going to do throughout life. The way I thrive and get respect is by learning how to deal with those people correctly."

Another downside of the ROTC is the negative stereotypes some people continue to believe.

"People think by wearing this uniform, we've lost our own personalities, our own

identity," Rice said. "They have this misconception that we are mindless robots who just follow orders, and that is not true."

Rice said she believes a lot of individuals don't understand what it means to be a part of the ROTC.

"It's really not fair," Rice said. "People don't realize the responsibility we have. We love this country enough to fight for it, to die for the peace of the land. That takes complete and total commitment."

Despite these occasional hurdles, Rice and Nash said they both appreciate what the ROTC has done for them. It provided them with valuable skills, a college education and a well-paying job.

"There is so much the ROTC can offer—jobs, self-esteem, self-confidence, physical fitness," Rice said. "People can gain the valuable direction and discipline that they need. A lot of young people still don't have these qualities, but they can learn them by being a part of this program."

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Oregon Emerald

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co. Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. A member of the Associated Press, the Emerald operates independently of the University with offices in Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union. The Emerald is private property. The unlawful removal or use of papers is prosecutable by law.

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