

Summer walk provides unique experience

■ Student activists will be walking up the Oregon Coast and holding forums

By Simone Ripke
Oregon Daily Emerald

Students who are looking for a different summer experience, who don't just want another job and who can't afford spending their time off at the beach have the opportunity to participate in the March for Mother Earth, a 363-mile and 23-day walk from southern to northern Oregon.

Steve Stephens, a senior double-majoring in philosophy and speech and communication at Oregon State University plans to embark on the march in Brookings on June 12 with 250 participants and walk up along Highway 101 to Astoria. Along the walk the group will hold five forums to address environmental concerns.

"This isn't an OSU thing or a U of O thing. This concerns all of us," Stephens said.

Politicians such as Gov. John Kitzhaber and Sen. Gordon Smith as well as the mayors of Portland, Salem and Eugene have been invited to attend the forums which will take place in Coos Bay, Florence, Newport, Tillamook and Astoria.

Kevin Bowles, an OSU graduate student majoring in speech and communications has worked with Stephens on making the march a reality. He said the issues addressed at the forums will be hydroelectric cars, air pollution and the ozone layer, adding hemp to wood products to aide in Oregon forestry and job development, encouraging Generation X voting and living in harmony.

"We just want to raise consciousness that there are alternatives and we've never even tried them," he said. "What we are suggesting are other methods."

Bowles said students who attend OSU are able to receive academic credit for participating in the walk. The credit available is in physical education, but those

students who can help with accounting and legal issues might receive credit in those fields.

Bowles said he doesn't know if students will receive the same amount, or any, credit from UO.

Jessica Standage, a senior health promotion and education major at OSU has worked with Stephens and Bowles from the beginning. She has helped organize and coordinate the march as well as finding places for the walkers to stay the night and eat.

Participants will be divided into 25 groups of 10 walkers during the march, which will advance by about 20 miles every day. Two vans will transport the walkers' backpacks and food supplies so that participants can walk freely without the weight of luggage.

Standage said she will participate in the march for the experience. She said she has worked at random jobs during past summers and said she looks forward to the walk as an activity she will never forget.

Stephens said providing him-

self and fellow walkers with an unforgettable experience was part of his motivation to organize the walk.

"It's just as much personal as it is environmental," he said. Walkers "are going to look back and see they changed their life forever."

Stephens said he started thinking about the walk after completing a 10-mile swim to raise money for Doernbecher Children's Hospital.

"It came from me wanting to share an experience that has a voice with other people," he said.

Stephens said the forums will give students and other participants the opportunity to express concerns. The forums will be filmed, edited and sent to politicians in the state.

Students interested in participating may contact Standage at 754-7542. Students should sign up by March 15. All walkers will be provided a guide on preparing for the physical challenge. There will also be a 20-mile practice walk.

Rising gasoline prices affecting state tourism

By Jennifer Kimura
The Associated Press

PORTLAND (AP) — Oregon's gas prices over the past two weeks have jumped 10 cents a gallon to rank among the highest in the nation, the AAA says, and there's worry the state's tourist industry will suffer this summer if prices keep climbing.

"What happens over the next few weeks will be critical in setting the stage for spring and summer prices," said Anne O'Ryan, AAA Oregon/Idaho spokeswoman.

The Energy Department predicted Monday that gasoline prices will continue to increase and could easily reach the \$1.75 to \$1.80 a gallon range during the peak driving summer months — and spike even higher in some areas.

That's creating worry in Oregon, whose mountains and coastline attract streams of visitors each summer.

"If we see any sustained high prices, what we'll see is an impact in everything," O'Ryan said.

The AAA on Monday said the state's average price at the pump has reached \$1.57 per gallon, with the highest average of \$1.59 along the coast and the lowest average in the Portland area at \$1.50.

As of mid-February, an AAA report said Oregon ranked fourth in the nation with an average of \$1.47 per gallon.

Such numbers worry people in far-flung parts of the state who depend on tourism as an economic mainstay.

"When gas prices go up, people do tend to cut down on their extraneous travel," said Yasha Sturgill, deputy manager of the Willowa County Chamber of Commerce. "Willowa County will certainly suffer the backlash of that."

The economy of the remote rural area in Eastern Oregon — which includes the Eagle Cap Wilderness Area, John Day Fossil Loop and Hell's Canyon Recreation Area — is heavily reliant on visitors who camp, hike, hunt and fish.

But recently, not as many tourists seem to be coming.

"Visitation has been down since the end of last summer and in the fall and winter," Sturgill said. "We have no other way into our county — no railroad, no airport. I would expect that we would see some impact."

Sturgill said she's already heard "quite a few people complain about the price of gas here. Any added expense is going to impact them."

O'Ryan, AAA spokesperson, said if prices keep going up — as the Energy Department says they will — "we might see a 'deja vu' of the '70s, when gas stations may only sell a certain amount of fuel to each motorist."

Nonetheless, some say they won't let high gas prices get in their way of having fun.

"I noticed the change at the pumps, but I just think it's the cost of driving a vehicle," said Dan Hansen, an avid fly fisherman who drives from Portland to the Deschutes River, to the coast or to other favorite fishing spots every week. "It's not going to prevent me from fishing."

Hansen, 39, said his 4x4 truck, which he uses only for fishing trips, gets about 24 miles to the gallon. For everyday commuting, Hansen said he uses public transportation and his bicycle.

If gas prices "get in the \$2.50 range," Hansen said he'll "look at getting a car that gets good gas mileage."

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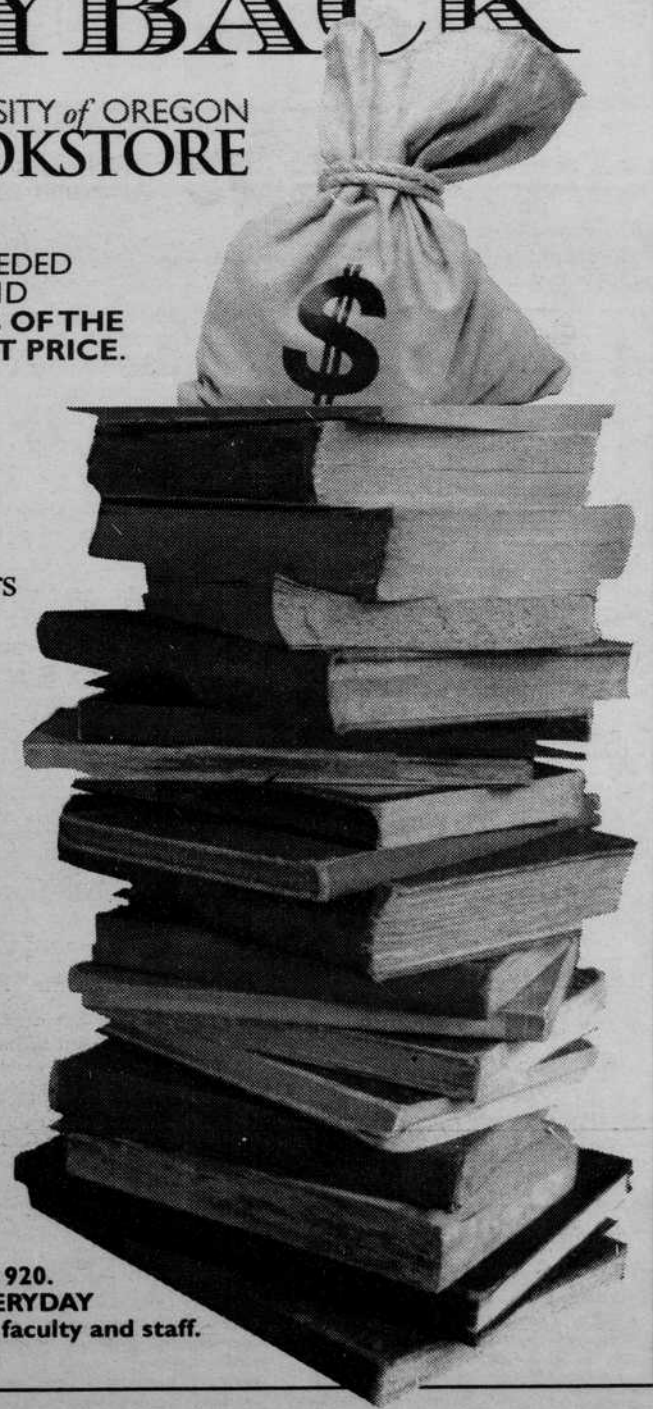
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