

CRIME WATCH

Thursday, Nov. 15

10:47 a.m. - A Gerlinger Hall exterior emergency phone was activated but there was no verbal response. Officers checked the site and received a report that a group of children passing by had pushed the button.

Friday, Nov. 16

7:03 p.m. - An officer spotted two suspicious subjects at Hayward Field. Eugene police officers cited them with possession of less than an ounce of marijuana.

11:28 p.m. - A student patrol reported a large group of males boxing in the

basement of Hamilton Complex. The resident assistant was notified.

Saturday, Nov. 18

7:54 p.m. - Someone reported hate graffiti had been placed in a men's restroom at the EMU.

Sunday, Nov. 19

2:26 a.m. - Someone called to report two intoxicated males who were being disorderly outside of Dunn Hall. The resident assistant asked them to leave, which they did, but they were disruptive outside the complex. The EPD responded and cited the subjects for being minors in possession.

11:41 p.m. - A student patrol observed three people with a bag of charcoal on fire on the ground near the Bean Complex and asked them to put it out.

Graffiti

continued from page 1

ishment, the EPD cannot stop graffiti artists from practicing their craft. Instead, last spring the city granted the Lane Arts Council \$25,000 to create the Art Wall Project, which gives graffiti artists legal venues where they can paint. The project ran from March 2000 to October 2000, when the funds were exhausted. However, there are still a few scattered "free walls" where artists can continue to paint.

Free Walls

The Lane Arts Council began by offering an alternative to local businesses that were being tagged: They could designate a wall on their buildings on which graffiti artists could legally paint.

Six art walls were created, some designated free walls where anyone can paint, and others reserved for specific murals.

One such location is Factory Fabrics, located at 1620 W. Seventh St. The business is located inside a warehouse and was having problems with taggers illegally marking the building.

So, Diane Twete, manager at Factory Fabrics, decided to contact the arts council and ask about having a mural painted. The result was something Twete calls "amazing."

"It has been so fun to watch [the painting process]," Twete said. "The artists have been so wonderful to me. As long as the kids keep it cleaned up and don't use cuss words, they can continue to paint on the wall."

Another wall on the Factory Fabric's building has been designated as a free wall and graffiti artists can still paint on it.

Twete said her neighbors, which include an automotive machine building and a white-water rafting supply store, haven't complained about the painting.

Critics speak out

But other projects haven't gone over so smoothly, and the program isn't without its critics.

"Shoe-A-Holic didn't get permission from the businesses around it," Art Wall Project adviser Steven Lopez said. "They wanted to be notified."

In addition to occasional business complaints, the EPD and Eugene public works maintenance officials said they have seen more graffiti and tagging as a result of the free walls.

"The point of the free walls was to see freedom of expression," Holmquist said. "However, many of the young taggers tag private property on their way to the free wall and on their way home."

Holmquist said tagging is its own subculture, with only 10 to 15 percent of offenders being gang members.

"Taggers are motivated by fame and recognition," Holmquist said. "They practice until they have the perfect tag and then unleash it on the city. It almost becomes an addiction — the adrenaline rush is so great."

J.J. Hill, the supervisor for public works maintenance who directly oversees graffiti removal around Eugene, said an increase in tagging has been apparent since the free walls started.

"The Art Wall Project was not a solution to the graffiti problem because we received more complaints," Hill said.

Public works maintenance paints over all reported graffiti, or in cases involving pavement or brick, uses a pressure washer or edger with an attached wire brush to scrape graffiti away.

Hill said he doesn't think anything will eliminate graffiti.

"The graffiti problem will never go away," Hill said. "Nothing we do is going to eliminate it."

Art Wall Project coordinator Lizzy Hughes agrees that some kids will do negative things even after they are given a place to paint, but the walls are not to blame for it.

"Not all of the kids who paint on the walls are taggers," Hughes said. "They can't be blamed for illegal activity."

Also, organizers of the free wall program emphasize that artists who paint on the designated walls know they can lose the venues if anything inappropriate is painted.

Twete said she hasn't noticed a significant difference in the level of graffiti since her building has had a designated free wall.

"We've had some instances, but whether that's a result of the free wall or not I don't know," Twete said. "Tagging just comes and goes."

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