

Grief roller coaster takes students for a ride

■ The University Counseling Center helps students cope with grief in the wake of Jill Dieringer's death

By Lisa Toth
Oregon Daily Emerald

When a person experiences a loss, a close friend's first response might be to limit contact with the friend, avoid conversation about the departed family member or treat the friend with deference.

But University psychologists and officials said these are just a few of the myths associated with grief. The University Counseling Center handles situations ranging from break-ups to divorced parents. But they mobilize differently in sudden situations such as the Feb. 9 death of 19-year-old freshman Jill Dieringer.

Ron Miyaguchi, a psychologist with the University Counseling Center, said the University deals with individuals experiencing grief on different levels. When Dieringer died from meningococcal disease, University counselors and psychologists held discussion groups to get a handle on grieving students' thoughts and ex-

pectations, especially those who lived with Dieringer in her residence hall, those who were in her sorority or anyone who shared a class with her.

Shannon Curnutte, the resident assistant in Cloran Hall where Dieringer lived, said she is still grieving over Dieringer's death and didn't want to comment.

"We have an understanding of the way the world works," Miyaguchi said. "The loss of someone very dear to us generates different responses — denial, numbness or shock — trying to make sense of something that doesn't make sense."

"All those different feelings are frequent of a person trying to cope with a senseless event," he said.

Miyaguchi said the pressure level of an individual experiencing grief varies with the intensity level of the situation. Seeking professional help is not necessarily better than discussing problems with friends and family, he said. But the chance to talk to a certified psychologist offers information, analysis and advice.

In bereavement group situations, Miyaguchi said the main focus is to make sure the members support each other. He said members in

group sessions can receive the education they need to understand what they are experiencing emotionally and mentally as well as what to expect in the future. Miyaguchi said reactions such as anger often surface some time after an incident has occurred.

Feelings about Dieringer's death were stirred up again Wednesday at Hayward Field during her memorial service. "If the student had an opportunity to deal with their feelings either through the groups we offered or with friends, they will probably be able to handle the feelings that [came] up at the memorial," Miyaguchi said. Miyaguchi classified traumatic situations he deals with as either random or predictable. He said predictable incidents include long-term illnesses that individuals have more preparation time to handle. But with situations such as car accidents and unexpected deaths, Miyaguchi said people experience more shock because of the rapid nature of the incident.

Sheryl Eyster, assistant dean in the Office of Student Life, said the office is continuing to work with students who want additional support following Dieringer's death. She said the

goal is to help students become more comfortable with the unique nature of how Dieringer died and the emotions that followed.

"Everyone experiences grief differently and goes through that journey differently," Eyster said.

Jon Davies, a psychologist with the Counseling Center, added that people also experience fears about their own mortality.

"When loss happens, it brings up a string of other losses," Davies said. "The idea isn't for me to provide the answers, but to allow people to express the feelings they are having."

After someone close to them dies, Davies recommended that people on the "emotional roller coaster" talk about the loss of a loved one and be supportive of each other. He said professional help is an option for people who may be suicidal, experience continual impairment at work or have no support base to talk with friends and family about their problems.

"The greatest fallacy about grief is that people should be over it sooner than necessary," Davies said. "People should take whatever time it takes to get over the grief. People should grieve at their own pace."

Guidelines to help resolve grief:

- Allow time to experience thoughts and feelings openly. There is no time limit to the grieving process. Each individual should define his or her own healing process.
- Crying offers a release.
- Acknowledge and accept positive and negative feelings.
- Use a journal to document the healing process.
- Confide in a trusted individual.
- Bereavement groups provide an opportunity to share grief with others who have experienced similar losses.
- If the healing process becomes too overwhelming, seek professional help.

Source: University Counseling Center

Lawmakers debate spending lottery funds on stadium

By Jessica Bujol
The Associated Press

SALEM — If you build it, they will come. That's the theory behind Rep. Bill Witt's proposal to entice a major league baseball team to Portland with a brand-new stadium.

But Rep. Charlie Ringo says the venerable American institution isn't one that should be funded with taxpayer dollars, especially in a penny-pinching budget year.

Witt, R-Portland, has introduced a bill that would allocate \$150 million in lottery-backed bonds for a baseball stadium once an owner steps up to

the plate and a major league team agrees to relocate to Oregon.

"We're convinced that Oregon would support a team, and it would create an economic benefit for the state," said Witt.

Supporters have already lined up behind the bill and Ringo, D-Beaverton, said that's one reason he decided to speak out against it.

HB 2941 is being cosponsored by 35 representatives and 17 senators, a majority in each chamber.

"I'm trying to turn the tide," he said. "Somebody in this building needed to be a proponent for the taxpayer."

Ringo said that despite the alluring

idea of having a major league team in the state, the Legislature shouldn't get involved. Lawmakers have more important things to do than work on bringing a baseball team to Oregon, he said.

"I think it's the wrong priority for Oregonians," he said. "We've got to invest in things like education and health care, not a baseball stadium."

But Witt said the money for a stadium wouldn't come at the expense of other programs in the governor's budget.

"What we're talking about here is using lottery dollars, intended specifically for economic development," he said.

Because the \$150 million has been

earmarked for economic development, he added, it couldn't be used for things like education or health care anyway.

Four teams — the Minnesota Twins, the Oakland A's, the Montreal Expos and the Tampa Bay Devil Rays — are primed for relocation, Witt said. Because of that, he said this is a unique window of opportunity to bring baseball to Oregon. A new, state-of-the-art ballpark would make a solid case for Portland, he said.

"We've been pretty much assured that if public funding is in place and private funding comes forward then we'll get a team in as little as four to

six months," he said.

The stadium would essentially pay for itself, Witt said, by generating revenue from things such as ticket sales and hotel rooms for ballpark visitors.

Though proponents say the team could be an economic boon, Ringo said the opposite is true.

"The reality is somewhat different. Spending all that money rarely has a positive economic impact," he said.

Setting aside \$150 million would also use up all of the lottery's bonding capacity for the next eight years, Ringo added.

"I'd hate to use all of that money now. We might need it later," he said.

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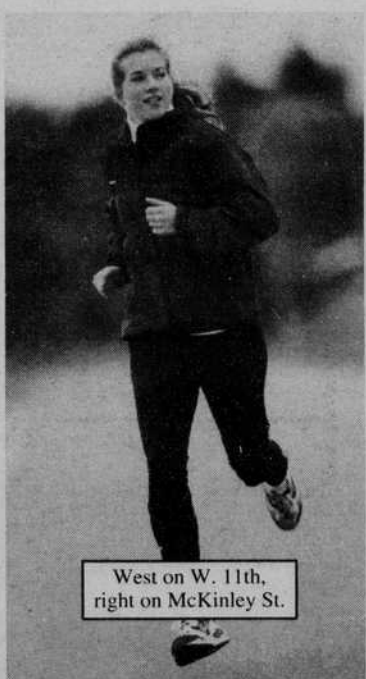
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