

# More than meets the eye

■ There is no 'type' of person who commits sex crimes, but those who do wear the label of sex offender for life

By Lindsay Buchele  
Oregon Daily Emerald

Those who work with convicted child molesters and pedophiles say that the University neighborhoods are safer places than most for these sex offenders to live.

Neighborhoods that are highly populated with University students contain almost no secondary schools, day care facilities, or families with young children; therefore, these areas are ideal locations for sex offenders to live under the conditions of their probations.

The logic is there, said Jeff Collins, a Lane County parole and probation officer. Sex offenders who have sexually assaulted minors have few places they can live once they are released on parole, since they are prohibited from having contact with anyone under the age of 18 or with their victims.

"We place offenders in a location where they are least likely to encounter people they shouldn't be around," Collins said. "We wouldn't place an adult rapist or someone who has raped strangers in a University neighborhood because these are the type of people they victimized before."

But concerns go beyond just where sex offenders live.

"I'm more concerned about if [the offenders] are getting proper treatment," said Lara Modisette, the sexual assault prevention and education coordinator for the ASUO Women's Center.

Shelly Wacker, the sex offender registration unit coordinator for the Oregon State Police, said there are 453 registered sex offenders currently living in Eugene. There are a total of 9,002 living in the state of Oregon and 87,000 living in California as of Jan. 31.

Collins said almost all sexual offenders are males who are either pedophiles or have molested a child or relative. But, he said, the term "sex offender" covers perpetrators convicted of a large variety of sex crimes, which include everything from statutory rape to Ted Bundy-type predatory assaults.

Bundy, the notorious serial killer, admitted to sexually assaulting and killing as many as 28 women before being executed in 1989.

"The Ted Bundys of this world are not released on parole," Collins said. "Once predatory rapists and rapists who show they will not change their behaviors are convicted, they stay in prison."

However, there is a tiny population of sex offenders who would pose a threat to female University students, Collins said, and they don't live in University neighborhoods. He said if people are looking for a certain type of person to watch for when it comes to sex offenders, there

isn't one.

"Sex offenders can be staff or students at the University," Collins said. "There is no such thing as a 'type.'" Collins added that some of the offenders under his supervision are staff and students at the University.

## Portrait of an offender

Dave\* began dating a 14-year-old girl when he was 18 years old, a relationship he says he now understands was inappropriate. When Dave was 20, the girl's parents pressed charges against him after he testified against their son, who had assaulted Dave. He was convicted in 1992 of rape in the second degree, commonly known as statutory rape.

He wasn't required to serve jail time, but rather was placed on probation, which created

rules that Dave had to follow. His probation was extended three times after he was caught drinking alcohol — against the rules of his probation — and didn't complete his required treatment program. Dave ended up serving nine months in jail after the third violation.

"I fucked up over and over again," Dave said. The system "got tired of dealing with me violating my probation."

While in prison, Dave underwent drug and alcohol rehabilitation. Once he was released, he joined his wife, whom he had married in 1996, and his daughter, who was born in 1994.

Since he began his parole, Dave has had to endure the intense impact of being labeled a sex offender, including having to get permission to live with his daughter and not having any contact with other minors.

"It's so hard not being able to tell my daughter why her friends can't spend the night," he said. "She's just too young to understand."

Dave said although his label as a sex offender has had a terrible effect on his personal life, getting a job hasn't been that hard.

"My employers understand the situation under which I was convicted," Dave said. "Most people understand once I explain that I didn't force myself on someone or try to have sex with a five-year-old."

Collins said that when most sex offenders are released from prison, they have a hard time fitting back into society.

"Imagine getting out of prison after 10 years," Collins said. "You have no job skills and tech-

nology has completely changed. You're scared to death."

This is usually enough to keep most offenders from re-offending, Collins said, because it's all too scary to go through it again.

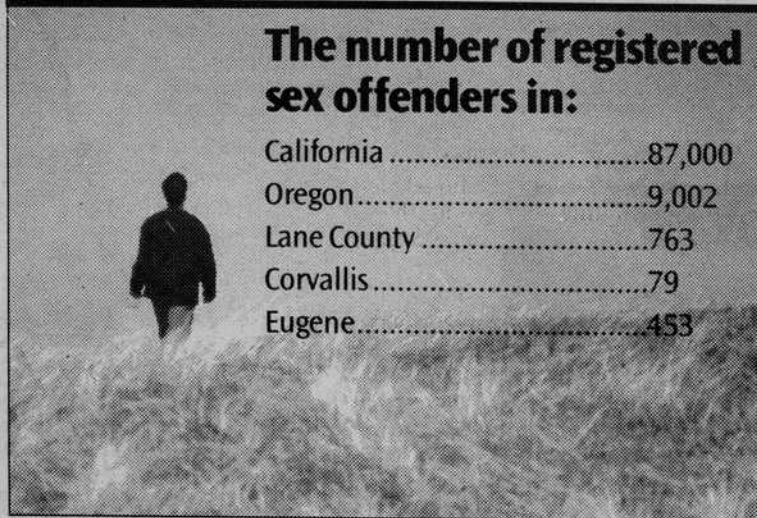
During his treatment program, Dave has encountered sex offenders who do force themselves on others and do target children as their victims. He said some of the men he's encountered will re-offend regardless of the counseling they may undergo.

Ray Broderick, the director of the Lane County Child Advocacy Center, an organization that provides legal and counseling services to child victims of sexual assault, said the center worked with 547 children last year alone.

Broderick said despite classification of sex offenders, if they've assaulted a minor, they prob-

## The number of registered sex offenders in:

California .....	87,000
Oregon .....	9,002
Lane County .....	763
Corvallis .....	79
Eugene .....	453



Brooke Mossefin Emerald

ably won't re-offend against an adult. He also said, however, this doesn't mean they are always harmless to adults.

"I wouldn't be breathing easy if an offender had just molested children because it's hard to know their whole history sometimes," Broderick said. "There are those few hard-core sex offenders who would even screw a doorknob and are omnivorous about their victims."

People also tend to look at sex offenders the wrong way, Broderick said.

"Offenders claim they were abused as children, but if you look at the majority of those who have been offended, they are females," Broderick said. "Yet the offenders are males — where are the female offenders?"

## Treatment and risk

Once sex offenders are released from prison, they are required to enroll in and complete an approved program for the treatment of sex offenders, therapist Judy K. Vogelsang said. This is an extensive therapy process that often means sex offenders will be in treatment for the entire length of their paroles.

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## Decision to notify rests with local officers

Since 1993, Oregon law has allowed community relations departments to assess whether or not to notify residents in a neighborhood of a sex offender's presence, and how to handle it if notification is deemed necessary, Lane County Parole and Probation Officer Jeff Collins said.

Shelly Wacker, the sex offender registration unit coordinator for the Oregon State Police, said community relations departments can give notification only for offenders on parole for sexual offenses.

"If a man who has molested an 8-year-old moves into an apartment complex where there are no children, he is not in an area where there is a risk pool," Collins said. "We consider a lack of victim population and how well an offender is doing with his treatment before we send out a notification. A notification can just blow people up."

Collins said although he and his colleagues may not necessarily notify residents, they always notify law enforcement, the University Department of Public Safety, and officers assigned to the University whenever a sex offender moves into a University neighborhood.

"It's also a matter of protection for the offender's family and victims," Collins said. "If putting the offender's name out into the community would hurt his wife or children, we would consider that before releasing the name."

He also said notification can provide people with a false sense of security. Driving kids to school to avoid having them walk by an offender's house is an overreaction, he said.

"It's far more likely that someone's child is going to get hurt in a minivan than by a child molester," Collins said.

DPS Associate Director Tom Hicks said the University does not keep any records on students, staff or faculty members who are convicted sexual offenders.

"If there were any instances of sexual assaults occurring, we would provide the specifics of the crime," Hicks said. "If we got specific information about an individual, we would look to the authorities to determine how to notify the campus."

No matter how much notification is given about convicted sex offenders, therapist Judy K. Vogelsang said there are offenders out there who have never been convicted whom no one knows about.

"The most dangerous offenders are the ones who haven't been caught yet," Vogelsang said. "They are living everywhere from the Whiteaker district to the Southwest Hills. We need to be awake and aware of those around us."

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