

United Way, YMCA provide ways to help out

■ College students can get involved in the community, which has a plethora of volunteer opportunities

By Lindsay Buchele
Oregon Daily Emerald

Lane County offers many community service options to those looking to do more than just work and play this summer — from enhancing the habitat of a Western Pond Turtle to becoming a Big Brother or Big Sister.

Lorna Baldwin, a coordinator of the City of Eugene Stream Team, said the team needs volunteers to do everything from collecting seeds in the

West Eugene Wetlands to salvaging native plants from development sites.

There are opportunities available for students not only to interact with their environment, but also with the people and organizations of the community.

"Volunteering can help a college student to become involved in their community," said Katie Paletta, United Way of Lane County volunteer specialist. "It's easy to become wrapped up in your individual life, and volunteering helps students go beyond that."

The nonprofit organization United Way attempts to get community members to care for each other by matching volunteers with other non-

profit organizations in need of help, Paletta said.

"All of the volunteer opportunities are available to college students," she said. "We currently have 500 positions available."

She said the positions are never completely filled because the 84 agencies United Way connects with volunteers are always in need of people.

One of these agencies is the Eugene Family YMCA, which runs the Big Brother/Big Sister programs in Eugene and Springfield.

Jude McKay, program coordinator for the Big Brother/Big Sister program, said there is always a need for volunteers who are willing to help keep kids safe and off the streets.

Volunteers are matched with little boys or girls who may be missing an important figure in their lives or are being raised by a single parent, McKay said.

"We try to match the volunteers up with the kids as best as we can," McKay said. "It's not done on a first-come, first-serve basis. We're looking for an adult who shares an interest and concern for the child."

For the Big Brother/Big Sister program, the University is one of the largest sources of volunteers.

"They're recognizing that maybe they got a break along the way and want to give others the same chance they got," McKay said.

He also said that the formal rela-

For more information

Career Center — Herdricks Hall, second floor

United Way of Lane County — 741-6000

Eugene Family YMCA — 686-9622

City of Eugene Stream Team — lorna.j.baldwin@ci.eugene.or.us

tionship between the big sibling and little sibling ends when the child reaches age 16, but often the pair continues the relationship.

Information about volunteer opportunities are available through the University at the Career Center.

Seat belt advocates' report gives states poor grades

By Nedra Pickler
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Advocates of tougher seat belt laws give more than a third of the states a below-average grade for their efforts to protect against highway deaths.

The report by the National Safety Council kicks off a nationwide police crackdown on drivers who do not wear seat belts and do not buckle up in kids. More than 10,000 U.S. law enforcement agencies will have checkpoints and increased patrols beginning Monday and lasting through Memorial Day.

The study found that people use belts more often and die in traffic accidents less frequently in the District of Columbia and 17 states that allow officers to stop and ticket unbuckled motorists.

Nineteen states got D's and F's in the report. Chuck Hurley, executive director of the Air Bag & Seat Belt Safety Campaign, said politicians in those states refuse to pass laws that are proven to save lives.

The report graded the states based on a government-approved seat belt use survey, the strength of restraint laws, fatality rates and participation of law enforcement in the crackdown.

"The U.S. ranks behind virtually every other developed country when it comes to seat belt use, with deadly con-

sequences," said Alan McMillan, president of the National Safety Council.

Traffic crashes killed 32,061 Americans in 1999 — or 15 per 100,000 people, the report said. Canada has 92 percent seat belt use and a traffic fatality rate of about 9 per 100,000.

California, which at 89 percent has the highest seat belt use in the country, is the only state to earn an A. Twelve other states and the District of Columbia receive a grade of B or

above. All of those states except one — Washington — have primary enforcement laws.

Several other states are considering primary seat belt laws. Florida state Rep. Irv Slosberg sponsored a bill this year to strengthen the state's law after his teenage daughter died in a crash when she was not wearing a seat belt.

"No father should ever have to face the kind of pain I did when Dori was killed," he said.

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