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River of advocacy

OSPIRG hopes to raise awareness of pollution in the Willamette through student and government activism

Jody Burruss

Environment/Science/Technology Reporter

The Willamette River is the most polluted river west of the Mississippi, with chemicals like lead, arsenic and dioxin being dumped into it every year, which is why OSPIRG (Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group) has made cleaning up the Willamette its top priority this fall.

OSPIRG is an organization that teaches students how to investigate problems and come up with practical solutions. The campus branch has several issues that it tackles every year.

This year, some of OSPIRG's main concerns will include getting young people to vote, increasing awareness about homelessness and hunger in the community, and increasing awareness and protection for and about wilderness areas. Their main focus this year is the Willamette River.

"If people were aware of how toxic it is, I think they would be outraged," OSPIRG board Chairwoman Vivian Vassall said.

Department of Environmental Quality environmental toxicologist Gene Foster said the group has collected data showing that in some areas of the river, more than half of the fish have skeletal deformities. He said this seems like a high incidence, and further studies are still being conducted.

About 75 percent of Oregon's



Jeremy Forrest Emerald

The Willamette River, the most polluted river west of the Mississippi, runs near 75 percent of Eugene homes.

population lives on or near the Willamette River, yet some parts of the river are so dangerously polluted that warning signs are required to be posted to let people know they should stay away, Vassall said.

There is a five and a half mile stretch of river in the Portland Harbor that has recently been declared a federal Superfund site by the Environmental Protection Agency.

EPA spokesman Bill Dunbar said that a Superfund area can be a contaminated site that has been abandoned or an operable site that poses enough threat to require immediate help from EPA.

By declaring a Superfund site, EPA can use political leverage to tell companies that played a part in the pollution to go in and clean it up, Dunbar said.

If the company refuses, EPA can charge them fees for EPA to go in and clean it up itself.

Because many people are unaware of the degree of pollution in the Willamette River, one of OS-

PIRG's major efforts involved in the Willamette River campaign is to raise public awareness on campus.

One way is by getting students to sign an unofficial petition if they are concerned about the river that says they will keep this in mind when they vote for a gubernatorial candidate.

Vassall said she is surprised this is not a bigger issue for University students or gubernatorial candidates. She says the issue is important

Turn to **OSPIRG**, page 6

SWAT interns educate on abuse

The Sexual Wellness Advocacy Team offers interns the opportunity to teach others about sexual assault and dating violence through multimedia projects

Jillian Daley

Family/Health/Education Reporter

Last fall, Erin Dury got a chance to work on a cause she has always supported.

"Back at home, my mom's always been on the board of the YWCA, so I've always been involved in women's rights," the sophomore said.

Her chance was to work for the Sexual Wellness Advocacy Team, a yearlong internship course offered through the University's educational leadership department. SWAT's mission is to educate the campus community on issues surrounding dating violence and sexual assault, and to present the information to the broadest audience possible.

Dury applied for the internship last year at IntroDUcktion, not knowing quite what to expect, but hoping to learn more about a cause she cared about.

"It was crazy," she said. "We created a presentation — PowerPoint. The first term we did a lot of training."

The training teaches interns how to support a survivor of rape or domestic/partner violence.

Multiple groups provide training for the interns, featuring volunteers from

Turn to **SWAT**, page 12

DPS offers tips for protecting yourself from theft

With bike thefts up last year, safety is as important as ever; DPS gives advice for returning and new students alike

Danielle Gillespie

Safety/Crime/Transportation Reporter

From burglaries of residences to theft of bicycles, stolen property is a common complaint among University students.

Tom Hicks, Department of Public Safety associate director, said theft is a concern on and around campus throughout the academic year and particularly in the residence halls.

"Residence hall theft occurs because other students are given the opportunity to commit a crime," Hicks said. "A lot of crime could be

reduced if rooms were kept secure." Students living off campus may also find it beneficial to keep their apartments and houses secure.

University junior Matt Hensel said during winter break last year, intruders stole a laptop, cameras and money.

"I know several houses in my area got broken into over break," he said. "I think that the Eugene Police Department could decrease theft if they increased patrol in student areas, especially over breaks, when many students are gone."

The most common areas for theft are the EMU and the libraries. Most items stolen on campus are backpacks, wallets, purses, bicycles and laptops Hicks said.

Hicks said many students have

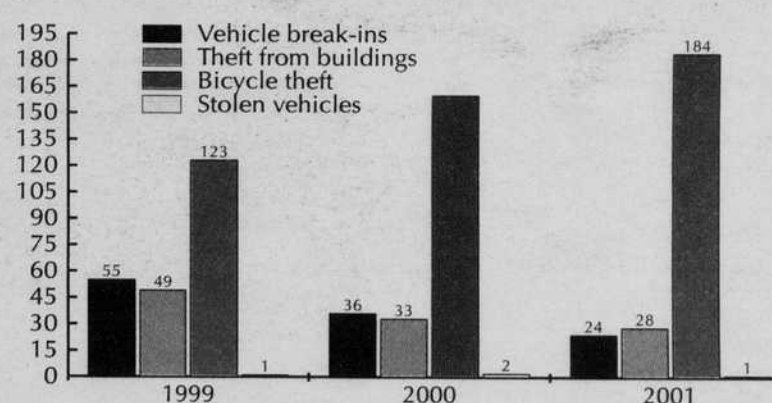
their laptops stolen while studying in the libraries because they leave them unattended.

"It happens because it's late at night and people are distracted and not paying attention," Hicks said. "Plus, it's open to the public and anyone can come inside."

Students can protect their laptops by purchasing a STOP plate at DPS, which leaves a permanent tattoo on the equipment if the plate is removed. The tattoo provides unmistakable proof that the equipment has been stolen, making it traceable by authorities.

Hicks said that items often are stolen out of vehicles, as well.

"Keep the vehicle locked and take expensive items out of the vehicle," he said. "Stay away from putting



valuables in the trunk because many cars have back seats that fold down and give access to the trunk."

He also said it's important to park vehicles and leave bikes on campus in well-lit areas.

"The number of bikes stolen every year varies depending on how many criminals are working in the area," Hicks said. "Last year, we had a fairly high number of bikes stolen

Turn to **Theft**, page 12

Student directory deadline nears

The student directory will be released soon. The deadline is Friday for submitting a form to restrict what information is made public.

If students do not wish to be listed in the directory, they may file a restriction of directory information with the Registrar's office.

Once the student files the form, however, no information about

them can be released to anyone, including the student.

That means that no information linking that student to the University can ever be released, even after graduation, unless the Registrar's office is notified in writing.

For example, if a résumé says a person is or was a University student and a potential employer calls,

information cannot be verified, Assistant to the EMU Director Donna Winitzky said.

Many people turn in the form before the directory comes out and then submit a letter releasing the information once the directory has been printed, Winitzky said.

— Jenni Schultz

WEATHER

Today: High 60, Low 45, occasional light rain

Friday: High 63, Low 42, chance of drizzle, then sun

LOOKING AHEAD

Friday

University and Eugene officials look to prevent riots

Monday

Where's all the Coke on campus?