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Clocks to change soon

When standard time begins, campus custodians change to second set of time-keepers

Andrew Shipley
Freelance Reporter

Somewhere, lying dormant in quiet storage rooms throughout campus, hundreds of clocks patiently await their time in the sun. For them, this glorious day arrives again Sunday.

Every year, the change back to standard time catches millions of people unaware, but public clocks are almost always coldly accurate. At the University, the mammoth task of changing the time falls on the custodial department in the facilities department.

Few people are aware of the grand production that takes place behind the scenes every 6 months when its time to change the clocks.

"People just assume the clocks will be right; they don't even notice," Facilities Services spokeswoman Greta Rasmussen said. "Most who realize that someone must be changing the times on all those clocks just assume that all are hardwired together, or that people go around winding each clock — not many people know the truth."

The truth, however, is not a great mystery. The University has two sets of 700 clocks that are virtually identical except for a one-hour time difference. Every 6 months, on the eve of the time change, custodial staff steal out into the night, 700 clocks in tow, to physically exchange every public

campus clock with its correctly set twin.

Ridiculous? Absurd? Not so, according to Pressman. "For over 40 years, all the clocks were hardwired together and could be changed instantly," she said. "The problem was, it never worked. We always ended up having to go clock-to-clock and change them individually."

The University needed \$300,000 to replace the system, so the staff masterminded a new plan. For \$30,000, two sets of clocks — 1,400 in all — were purchased.

"We tried other things. We tried atomic clocks, for example. They just didn't work," Facility Services safety trainer Keily Rasmussen said. In the end, they found standard battery-powered clocks provided strength in simplicity.

But staff found it was slow to take each clock down, change the battery and reset times individually, and replace the clock. With the dual-clock system, this procedure can occur all at once.

"(It may) seem a little strange," Rasmussen said, "but it is actually much more efficient."

Having the small army of twin clocks costs only \$2,000 yearly, including labor, clock maintenance and battery replacement.

Most clocks have already been dispersed into their respective building closets. Any students awake at 3 a.m. on Saturday night might just witness the University's unique changing of the clocks.

Andrew Shipley is a freelance writer for the Emerald.



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MEChA

continued from page 1A

help the kids with their homework, educate them about Latino culture and history, and assist those students who are struggling with learning English.

Jefferson student Catherine James Giraldo is a Latino student who has flourished in the Ganas program. Giraldo moved to the United States from Colombia in 1999 and didn't know any English when she first arrived. She said the MEChistas helped her learn the language and showed her that it's possible for Latino students to be successful and go on to attend college.

Caron estimated that 15 MEChA students have decided to become teachers and counselors because of their Ganas experience. He said this will ultimately benefit the greater community because there will be more culturally aware teachers and counselors working in schools as a result.

Approximately 50 students from MEChA and Ganas attended the Wednesday meeting to show support for the creation of more programs like Ganas to help students succeed in school. The presenters argued that it is essential for administrators and educators to fulfill the needs of the growing population of Latino students.

"I want (the board) to really see the power and potential of a program that meets the needs of Latino students," Coran said.

Ochoa said Ganas has been a tremendously successful program. He said one of the best indicators of its success is continuing student participation — because Ganas isn't a mandatory program.

"These students come because they want to be here," Ochoa said. "We have eighth-graders who've graduated to high school but keep coming back because there aren't any programs like Ganas available."

Right now, MEChA doesn't have the resources or capabilities to go out to other schools and establish more programs like Ganas, he said. However, Ochoa has encouraged student unions at the University to follow MEChA's lead and develop mentoring programs in other local schools.

Caron said the success of Ganas captured the interest of other schools in the state. He added that he has received numerous calls from educators requesting information on Ganas and asking advice about developing similar programs.

"A lot of schools are scrambling to accommodate the needs of the growing population of Latino students," Caron said.

Garcia, one of the speakers at Wednesday night's meeting, said Ganas is helping Latino students at Jefferson to realize they can have a chance at a better life.

"Ganas is providing an environment where bilingual, culturally competent leadership is thriving," Garcia said.

Contact the reporter at jenniferbear@dailyemerald.com.

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