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## Community reaches out to badly injured student

Spanish major Noah Smith remains at Sacred Heart Medical Center after an airborne tire hit his car Dec. 1

**Danielle Gillespie** 

Safety/Crime/Transportation Reporter

University junior Noah Smith was driving to Eugene from his hometown of Hood River on Dec. 1, after visiting with his family for the Thanksgiving break, when a tire fell off a vehicle heading in the opposite direction, hit the concrete median, and struck the cab of his truck.

The impact of the crash broke his neck and his C-7 vertebra, leaving him with no movement in his legs and limited movement of his arms and hands, according to his mother, Marilyn Smith.

"We don't know if he'll be paralyzed," she said. "He will have to go through intensive therapy, and there is always hope; it's just kind of one of those unknowns."

Noah Smith's insurance through the University's Health Center has expired, and the driver of the other vehicle was uninsured. Although he has automobile insurance, the coverage is limited, his mother said.

His family is unsure if they will be filing a lawsuit against the other driver

"We have hired an attorney to see whether there are any assets available, but if not, there's not much we ean do," Marilyn Smith said.

Noah Smith is working toward a major in Spanish and a minor in theater at the University. He became came interested in Spanish because of his love for traveling, his mother said.

After high school, Noah Smith traveled to Kenya and to South Africa before attending the University, and during college, he studied in Mexico on an exchange program and had plans to visit Chile in the spring, Marilyn Smith said.

"He is just very interested in other people and cultures," she said.

Noah Smith also has a love for acting, which he discovered in high school, when performing in the musical "Children of Eden," his mother said.

During his time at the University, Noah Smith has appeared in William Shakespeare's "As You Like It" and Thornton Wilder's "The Matchmaker."

On Friday night, Pour Babies, a local improv group, performed at Lord Leebrick Theatre Company as a benefit show for Noah Smith. The group donated all the money from ticket sales along with any extra contributions to Noah Smith and his family. Pour Babies earned about \$900 for them.

Lord Leebrick Theatre Company Artistic Director Corey Pearlstein donated the theater's time that evening to Pour Babies in Noah Smith's honor.

"My donation hardly seems pertinent," he said. "Noah is an amazing person, and he's a part of this theater."

Pearlstein met Noah Smith when he performed in "As You Like It," and said he has many friends not only at the University but in the Eugene community.

"His touch is just amazingly broad," he said.

Pearlstein said he has enjoyed watching Noah Smith perform at the theater.

"He is such a beautiful, innocent looking fellow, but then he starts blasting out hip hop," he said. "He's so sweet and endearing, but it's not like he doesn't live in this world."

University junior and Pour Babies member Jana Schmieding said she met Noah Smith her freshman year in acting class and they have been friends ever since.

Schmieding said he was kind of quiet during his freshman year but loved acting class so much that he even cried on the last day of class.

"Everyone fell in love with him after that," she said. "He is just kind of reserved, but he ended up being such a presence on stage; he just really started to open up after that year."

Former University student Kendall Dodd said she came to the performance because she wanted to show her support for Noah Smith.

"He is just the sweetest guy; he is open and accepting of everyone, and this is just an awful, random accident," Dodd said.

Noah Smith is currently at Eugene's Sacred Heart Medical Center, and sometime this week he'll be transferred to Portland's Good Samaritan Hospital for rehabilitation. He is expected to stay at the hospital for four to six weeks, his mother said.

If people wish to make a contribution to the Smiths, they can make a donation at any Pacific Continental Bank branch in the Eugene-Springfield area.

Contact the reporter at daniellegillespie@dailyemerald.com.



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