

COMMENTARY

Friday, February 7, 2003

Editorial

Businesses should not be silenced by vandals

Early Wednesday morning, vandals attacked three locally owned small businesses in the campus area.

Ordinarily, this wouldn't be a giant news item, although given the proximity of the businesses to our area and the fact that students are frequent shoppers in these stores, it would be newsworthy. Ordinarily, an editorial probably wouldn't be written about it. If we did tackle the topic, it would be straightforward and easy: Vandalism bad, local businesses good.

And in this case, we do believe those things. But the vandalism reported in Thursday's paper ("Vandalism victims mull likely connection," ODE, Feb. 6) seems to have a link adding a terrible dimension to the story. At all three locations were found copies of a recent Emerald containing a story about those same businesses speaking out about shoplifting ("Businesses hope shame can stem shoplifting," ODE, Feb. 4).

At first, we were dumbfounded. Was the perpetrator someone angry that their "right" to shoplift was being threatened? Could someone really get angry about such a ridiculous idea?

Then we heard that anti-capitalist phrases were scrawled on the newspapers that were left behind. Surely, this is a red herring. Anti-capitalists intent on destruction of the system are generally planners. They generally do not put their fists through plate glass windows in the middle of the night in 30-degree temperatures and leave blood behind. This act implies intoxication and irrational anger, not ideological (if misguided) attempts at social change.

In any case, the community should be outraged. Local businesses are critically important to the quality of life of any city — and this is especially true in Eugene, where the culture is one of specialty and community. Shoplifting and vandalism endanger small businesses as well as the city's spirit.

Additionally upsetting, though, is the potential chilling effect of an apparent tie between a media report and an act of retaliation. If the intent of the vandalism was to punish the businesses, then this is an act of terrorism, and the community should speak out.

So we are speaking out. The original story about shoplifting was not sensationalized or inflammatory, and it could just as easily have been produced by some other media outlet. At first, we did have a sinking feeling of being involved, until we remembered that no one committed crimes in response to other stories that could have angered readers: tuition increases, volleyball players quitting the team or student group funding increases and decreases. Why this article?

There is no quick answer, but we hope that those responsible are caught and prosecuted. We extend our sympathy to the stores involved. And we hope that local businesses continue both to be a valued part of the community and to speak out about issues that threaten their ability to survive.

Editorial policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailymerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

Letters to the editor

Vandals only hurt the community

Wednesday morning I arrived at work to find our pharmacy walk-up window vandalized, the glass shattered and broken out. Along the sidewalk were about 10 Oregon Daily Emeralds, including the story that quotes me concerning shoplifting, with messages like "Death to the greedy."

My feelings are this: We have a segment of our community that believes anyone who owns a business (providing jobs to our community) is automatically evil, greedy and out to smash the working class. This type of vandalism only illuminates their ignorance. Very soon, they will find there are no local businesses.

By vandalizing a locally owned, family operated business, they are actually contributing to the growth of nationwide and multinational conglomerates who truly don't care as much about our local community and take the uniqueness from our city.

We've been in business since my grandfather started a store on the Downtown mall in the 1930s, serving Eugene with quality merchandise and a unique shopping experience. The people who vandalize local businesses that stand up to shoplifting don't deserve to live in a great place like Eugene.

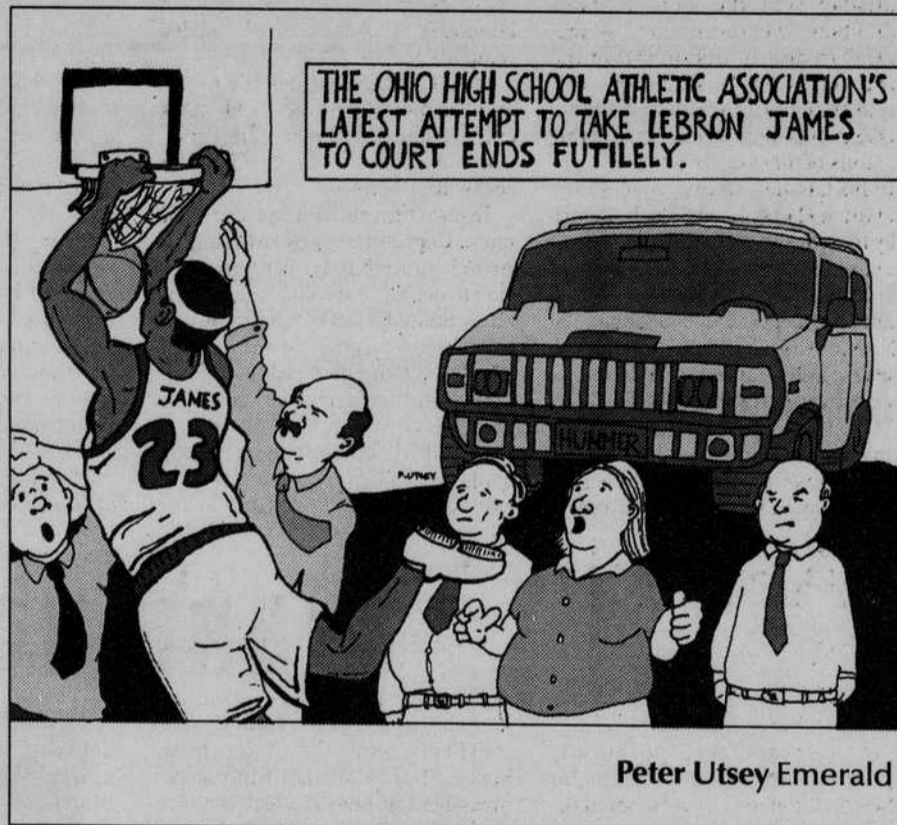
Eugene is known to have a minority population of people who believe in no government and dislike for any businesses. While I respect their right to hold that opinion, it is becoming more clear that the ideals they stand for are self-destruction and destruction of community.

Insurance will help us to replace our window. It will be more difficult to replace our sense of safety and trust.

Steve Hiron
owner, Hiron

University community depends on dialogue

The recent events of vandalism in our community have come as a shock and disappointment to many of us. As members of the Associated Students of the University of Oregon, the greater University community and the Eugene and Springfield area, we are committed to open and continuous dialogue in a for-



Peter Utsey Emerald

mat that is fitting for an institution devoted to higher education.

The diversity of opinions and differences of perspective are what makes us stronger, despite any of our differences. However, the strength and ability that our environment enables is dependent upon a responsible method of interaction and dialogue.

Our hope is that this violence is not seen as a reflection of our students or institution, and that we can continue to focus on the behavior and activism that has given us a quality reputation and opportunity for safe discussion.

Rachel Pilliod
ASUO president

Thanks for NeXturf

The members of the Student Advisory Board for the Student Recreation Center would like to express our gratitude to the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics for the gift of the new NeXturf artificial turf playing field.

We are aware that this gift was a way for the Athletic Department to thank University students for their support during an

amazing 2001-02 athletic season. We are proud to be part of a student body that enthusiastically supports its athletic teams. We are also grateful that our athletic teams do a wonderful job representing the University, and its students, across the nation.

The NeXturf field is now completed and — even though it is the cold, rainy winter season — the field is hopping with activity every day. Having this second artificial-turf field that is playable in all weather conditions and lighted for night activity adds a tremendous boost to Intramural Sports, Club Sports and informal recreation opportunities for University students.

We are aware that athletics paid for all materials and labor for site preparation, underground drainage, fencing, retaining wall, red rubber field border and NeXturf fabric, and that all of this cost in excess of \$1 million.

As you look out and see the constant recreation activity on the new NeXturf field, consider that as the greatest evidence of our appreciation.

SRC Student Advisory Board
Jon Lucchesi, board chair
Jill Robertson, vice chair
and seven co-signers

Selective euthanasia can save the world

Guest commentary

After more than two decades of observing and interacting with others, I have concluded that society is fundamentally flawed and in dire need of reform. Otherwise, humanity has no chance of surviving in the near future. We cannot sit by idly and watch as we become victims of our own success. As we hurtle headlong into the new century, it is time to solve the intractable problems that have bothered us for decades.

Our streets are overcrowded. Unemployment is rising and the economy is in the tank. The cost of medical insurance and social security is becoming prohibitively expensive. We are destroying our environment. Our natural resources are dwindling. Political dissent has reached levels unseen since the Vietnam War. Obesity, drugs, alcohol and tobacco are killing us by the millions and costing us billions. The world has gone to hell, and we can do nothing about it.

Or can we? I have stumbled upon an idea so profound, so revolutionary, that it can solve all the above-mentioned prob-

lems and return America to its glory days. I am surprised that nobody has thought of it before.

I propose, in the name of lifting America to new and unprecedented levels of peace, freedom, security and prosperity, that we begin a program of merciful euthanasia for the lesser members of society.

Now before you begin to whine about how unethical such a program might be, I urge you to look at the facts. Overpopulation, although it is not a problem by itself, brings together a whole host of issues, the burden of which is placed on the productive members of society.

Is it really fair to have a sizable amount of our hard-earned paycheck withdrawn to support a class of people who ceased to be contributing citizens long ago? What about the millions in jails and mental institutions? What have they done to thank you? How much happier would they be if, one day, they suddenly no longer existed?

My program would go like this: A committee of concerned citizens would identify what kinds of people are most distasteful to society. The federal government would then move these people to the nearest hos-

pital or prison courtyard, and that would be the end of it. The infrastructure for this program is already in place, so it would be implemented at a minimal cost. The benefits, however, would be enormous.

Imagine a nation free of Parkinson's disease, leprosy, osteoporosis, arthritis, scurvy and other undesirable elements. It sounds like a utopia. But why stop there? Currently, population control is limited to abortion, and even that doesn't discriminate between who might turn out good and who might turn out bad. My program, which is much more narrowly targeted, only removes those who are identified as bad. Everyone else will benefit.

The program works because it would purge the nation from all kinds of ills that I haven't even mentioned yet. Is our nation home to a certain unwanted ethnic group? What about an unpopular religion? We could easily rid ourselves of the Communists and the Greens. And once we implement this program, we could remove anybody who protests against it. I'm sure that Attorney General John Ashcroft will back me up on this one.

Peter Sur is a junior journalism major.