

# Forum covers education, crime concerns

Attendees discussed local building, housing, alcohol prevention and more at the West University forum

## Caron Alarab

Safety/Crime/Transportation Reporter

The West University Neighborhood Forum met Tuesday night, with more than 60 area residents, property owners and business owners coming together to address neighborhood issues with city officials and enforcement officers. While the event covered four major areas of concern, education and communication were the main topics of input among attendees and presenters.

"I'm excited," Assistant City Manager Jim Croteau said toward the end of the event. "And not only with the numbers, but with the level of interest."

A table was designated for each of the areas of concern — neighborhood building; neighborhood housing; alcohol prevention education; and crime, enforcement and sanctions — determined by the West University Task Force.

During the open house at 5 p.m., attendees trickled in while officials, officers and community members chatted over Pegasus Pizza and soda provided for the occasion.

At about 5:30 p.m., University Associate Vice President of Institutional Affairs Jan Oliver announced the first discussion session and encouraged attendees to make time to visit each table.

Croteau led the neighborhood housing table and took a broader look at demographics and the current condition of the community. He addressed concerns regarding apartment building development in people's "backyards" and the dramatically low number — less than one percent — of property owners who live in the area.

Neighborhood program manager Richie Weinman headed discussion at the neighborhood building table, which addressed the tasks of establishing a neighborhood association, increasing the owner-occupied ratio and promoting ongoing cleaning efforts in the area. University student and West University Task Force member Jackie Reed has been coor-

inating a neighborhood clean-up day — set for May 10 — to address the issues of property maintenance and area appeal. Reed said she was glad to see such a high volume of ideas generated at the forum.

"I didn't know what to expect," Reed said. "But to see so many people talk about a neighborhood they love is great."

Associate Director of Student Life Sheryl Eyster managed the alcohol prevention education table, which focused on better communication with student residents in the neighborhood. Eyster also mentioned the fact that prevention is not exclusive to alcohol, adding that substance abuse and addiction significantly affect local crime and safety.

At the crime, enforcement and sanctions table, discussion topics included the expressed need for a police bike patrol, the migration of greek parties to private property and how party hosts are treated when they call the Eugene Police Department. Oregon Liquor Control Commission officer Pete O'Rourke said authorities will continue monitoring the registration of kegs and other measures to ensure



Caleb Fung for the Emerald

Ward 3 City Councilor David Kelly, along with EPD officers, West University Task Force Members, students and community members discuss housing issues at the West University Neighborhood Forum.

safe partying while trying to implement better education efforts.

"Kids are going to be kids," he said, "but we need to get the information to them on what the consequences are."

The forum came to a close at about 7:15 p.m.

"I think the diversity was a success," Oliver said. "We had people from all different interests who were all focused on this one area."

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## Fraternity

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included in the University's endorsement standards for fraternities and sororities. If a greek house failed to comply with the endorsement standards — like Pi Kappa Alpha and Sigma Nu, the two fraternities that did not sign a substance-free compliance agreement — they would be disaffiliated from the University.

Interfraternity Council President John Hannam said forcing fraternities to go dry was a good idea, but many greek members were against the ban, and he added that their opposition has not been reconciled.

"I feel like alcohol is still a recruitment tool at some houses," Hannam

said. "It's just been downplayed more and kept more secretive."

Hannam said his own fraternity, Delta Sigma Phi, has been substance-free since it was first founded because members did not want to make alcohol the sole priority of their fraternity. He added that while the ban hasn't caused fraternities to dry out entirely, it has leveled the playing field for recruitment. The handful of fraternities that went dry on their own don't have to compete with the other greek houses' huge alcohol bashes now when trying to entice new members to join, Hannam said.

Faryl Kagan, a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon, said the ban has required fraternities to rely on group activities where fraternity brothers

actually have conversations with new recruits instead of just throwing keg parties. Activities such as "putt-putt golf" night and games of "broom ball" have replaced the mindless partying that used to be a fraternity mainstay, Kagan said.

"The things we used to do, that weren't as cool because we were partying all the time, are now really important," he said.

However, Kagan added the ban hasn't stopped fraternity members from drinking alcohol; they just take it off-campus now. Many greek houses rely on "live-outs," members with off-campus housing, to provide an appropriate party atmosphere. At Sigma Phi Epsilon, Kagan said there are two members over 21 with an off-campus apartment who host a senior

night party at least once a month.

Panhellenic Council President Alicia Lindquist also said the alcohol ban has pushed fraternities and sororities in the right direction by forcing them to initiate quality, structured recruitment efforts. However, Lindquist acknowledged that while alcohol is no longer the main focus in greek life, it still plays a significant role. Lindquist said many greeks are involved in "pre-funking," meaning they go to a live-out and drink before attending their greek-sponsored function.

"People still party as much; they just have other ways of doing it now," she said.

Director of Student Activities Gregg Lobisser said students have told him that drinking is still being done at

greek houses, but there are fewer and smaller parties, and greek members have taken steps to self-monitor and control drinking in the houses.

"Endorsement standards have not stopped alcohol consumption in fraternities, but it has resulted in a dramatic drop in consumption," Lobisser said.

He added the changes that have occurred indicate that safer living environments are being created in the greek system.

"Anytime you start a process like this, it's hard to stay on course with your commitment," Lobisser said. "It is true that they have some problems, but they also do some wonderful things."

Contact the senior news reporter

## Indictment

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"The government's made some choices here," Veralrud said, speculating that perhaps the Department of Justice hoped to find more sympathetic jury members outside of Oregon. "The question should be asked, 'Why there?'"

Most of Harris and Mohtadi's business operations were still shut down Tuesday. No one answered phone calls at the warehouse or at Universal Glass, 55 N. Seneca St., the business' distribution center. Two of the businessmen's three Web sites, Ghet-toweb.com and Smokelab.com,

were not working.

However, their retail shop Higher Source re-opened Tuesday, one day after U.S. Marshals raided the store.

According to Hugh Glass, an employee at Higher Source, marshals seized water pipes, glass pipes and hookahs, destroyed a security camera, disconnected the remainder of the cameras and turned off all electrical appliances in the store.

The marshals "stormed in with guns ablazing," Glass said.

Deputy Marshal Eric Wahlstrom said he didn't know why security equipment was damaged, saying the Drug Enforcement Agency was running the operation.

"I'm not sure why or what was done in the store," Wahlstrom said, although he did speculate that the reasons could be for evidence, or that there were undercover operatives.

DEA officials could not be reached for comment.

Displaced glass blowers and their families, however, had plenty to say about Monday's raids.

Dave Querubin, a glass artist who worked for Jerome Baker Designs, said he wondered why the government has not treated liquor store owners the same way it treated Mohtadi, Harris and their employees.

"Why is it such a harsh reality when a kid gets his hands on a glass

bong, but not a harsh reality when a kid gets his hands on a glass bottle of whiskey?" he said.

His wife, Donna, agreed.

"We all have families, we all have kids," she said. "And now we don't have jobs."

Veralrud said he thought the government's charges had little merit. Even if Mohtadi was convicted, Veralrud said he doubts his client would serve more than a year in prison. Right now, the lawyer said he's working on changing the trial location from Pennsylvania to Oregon.

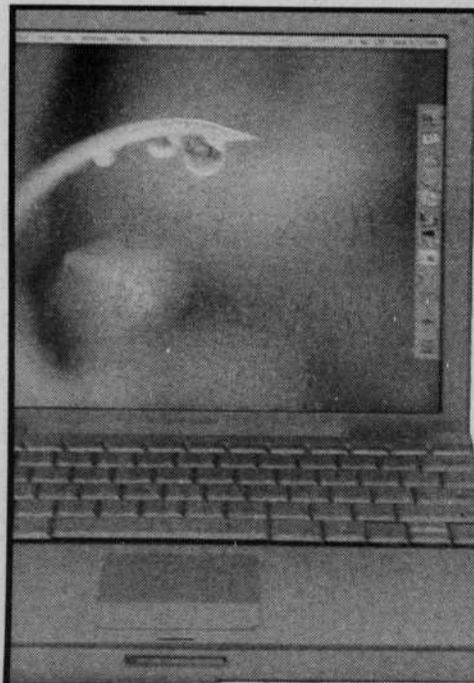
Other Eugene headshops remain unaffected by the crackdown. Employees at Hunky Dory Pipe & To-

bacco and Sweet Potato Pie said they did not encounter DEA or other government agents on Monday, and workers at Lazar's Bazar refused to comment.

Even though Higher Source is open once again, Glass is skeptical the store can operate without the sale of glass pipes or other material the DEA now considers "drug paraphernalia."

"I don't know if we can recover from this type of a loss," he said.

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