

# County VINE system aids crime victims

A new victim awareness hot line keeps those in Lane County aware of offender status, transfers and release

**Caron Alarab**  
Safety/Crime/Transportation Reporter

A new safety and awareness tool has been introduced to the crime victims of Lane County.

The Victim Information and Notification Everyday system notifies crime victims of offender transfers, placements or release from custody. VINE,

which electronically links the Oregon Department of Corrections computer database and the Lane County Jail's database to VINE's National Call Center, automatically notifies any person registered to receive offender information via live operator calls.

Providing information in English and Spanish, the system is available in more than 40 states and 900 communities across the United States and Canada. Lane County is the 35th county to implement the system in Oregon, which is the first state in the nation to provide notification on offenders' movements under parole/post-prison and probation supervision.

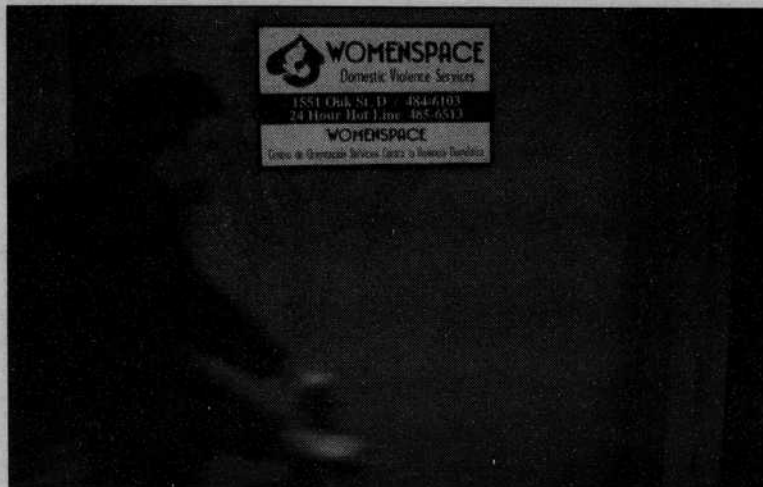
"It's an important service because it gives people information they can use to make vital decisions," Lane County Community Corrections Manager Grant Nelson said. "Having an automated system that is run by computers rather than people means it's cheaper, and it avoids human intervention."

Corrections officials in Jefferson County, Kentucky, implemented the system in 1994 in response to the brutal murder of Louisville resident Mary Byron on Dec. 8, 1993. After she was kidnapped and raped by her former boyfriend, Byron had requested to be notified if he made bail, but no one made the call when it was posted. The boyfriend murdered Byron on her 21st birthday, which prompted Jefferson County officials to reassess victim notification.

Court and corrections officials partnered with VINE company technology specialists and launched the automated VINE system one year after Byron's murder. University Sexual Wellness Advocacy team intern adviser Whitney Zeigler said the services provided by the VINE system are very important to the safety and inner strength of women who are in danger of being revictimized.

"Women shouldn't have to live in fear," the first-year graduate student said. "If this system gives them a little more control over their lives, that's empowering."

Calls to victims originate from the VINE system in Kentucky and con-



Mark McCambridge Emerald

Womenspace advises VINE users to take precautions such as having a safety plan.

tinue every half hour for 24 hours if there is no answer, or until notification is received and confirmed with a personal identification number. The system even includes an automated telephone hot line service with 24-hour toll-free telephone access to the current status of offenders.

Considering that certain conditions apply to the VINE system — including having caller ID service — Womenspace Community Outreach Director Margo Schaefer said users should call VINE to check in and make sure they know how it works. Anyone interested can call (877) 674-8463 seven days a week at any time for offender information or to register for the VINE program.

Despite VINE's complete system, local crime victim advocates such as Schaefer

have stressed the importance of creating a personal plan that incorporates the new system instead of using it alone.

"No one should rely on this system to keep themselves safe, which is why Womenspace offers 'safety plans,'" Schaefer said, referring to specific plans centered around services offered by Womenspace.

People who would like to create a Womenspace safety plan or talk to an advocate about the VINE system can visit the Womenspace advocacy center at 1551 Oak St., Suite D, or visit the organization's Web site at [www.enddomesticviolence.com](http://www.enddomesticviolence.com) for more information about local services.

"(VINE's) a great tool," she added, "but it's not the whole toolbox."

Contact the reporter at [caronalarab@dailyemerald.com](mailto:caronalarab@dailyemerald.com).

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## Nurse

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understanding. She said unnecessary procedures are often performed on sexual assault victims that cause even further trauma in

an already frightening situation.

Nurses will also learn how to document forensic evidence more efficiently in an effort to better prosecute sex offenders. Fowler said sometimes evidence is either missed or improperly collected, making it difficult to seek justice for sex crimes.

"The bottom line for having this program is to improve the response to victims," Fowler said. "We want to train examiners to be compassionate and not ignorant to the needs of victims."

The program will also feature speakers from various public service offices to discuss issues such as legal aspects of sex crimes, sexually transmitted diseases and vulnerable populations.

The National Crime Victimization Survey reported 249,000 victims of rape, attempted rape or sexual assault in 2000. While reports indicate sexual assault is declining, crimes on the University campus have seen an increase. In 2001, the University Department of Public Safety reported 11 forcible sex offenses, a dramatic increase from three reported in 2000.

Nadia Telsey, who teaches self defense courses at the University, said the increase could be attributed to a higher instance of reporting crimes.

Telsey had been actively involved in the anti-violence movement for

more than 30 years. In 2000, she established Breaking Free, a non-profit organization working toward providing awareness about rape and sexual violence. Telsey says rather than teaching physical methods of battling sexual assault, she teaches people to defend themselves verbally and through understanding the methods of attackers.

"We teach people how to heal from past events as well as how to avoid possible future attacks," Telsey said.

Breaking Free also works closely with Sexual Assault Support Services, another non-profit organization geared toward offering services to victims and promoting awareness. Beth Monterrosa runs SASS's In-Powerment program, an eight-week self defense program. SASS also offers a 24-hour crisis line and group advocacy services. All of their services are free, she added.

"We are not here to counsel people; we're here to offer support and allow them to choose how to handle the situation," Monterrosa said.

The SASS crisis line is 485-6700 or (800)788-4727. Victims of sexual assault can also contact the University's crisis line at 346-4488.

Contact the news reporter at [lindsaysauve@dailyemerald.com](mailto:lindsaysauve@dailyemerald.com)

## Assault

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For EPD, a "fight" usually refers to individuals already engaging in a physical confrontation, while an "assault" could be a fight that seems more one-sided. "Disputes" tend to involve more arguing and yelling than violence, while "menacing" indicates more threatening language, she said.

"Depending on the reported incident, in many cases, we will work together with DPS to handle the situation," she added.

In a recent incident, a male student requested to press charges against another male student after the two had a dispute in the Student

Recreation Center. According to the Student Judicial Affairs program, students who decide to file charges for a dispute, fight, assault or menacing incident on campus should contact different University resources depending on the details of the situation.

If an incident occurs in the residence halls, students should contact their complex director. If it involves fraternity or sorority members, students should contact the Greek Life office. For the majority of incidents, however, students should contact Student Judicial Affairs Director Chris Loschiavo at 346-1140.

Contact the reporter at [caronalarab@dailyemerald.com](mailto:caronalarab@dailyemerald.com).



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