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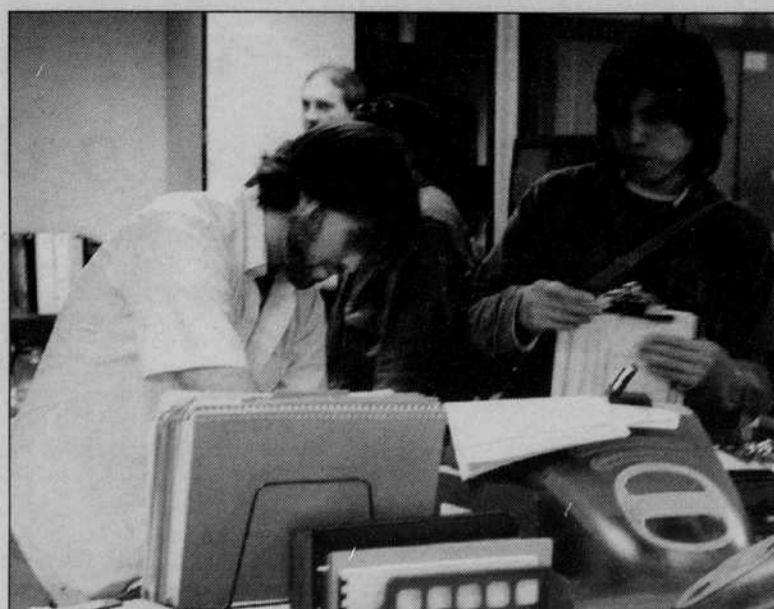
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Danielle Hickey Photo Editor

Senior Tim Johnson (left) and Sophomore David Kurushima (right) prepare in the ASUO office Saturday morning to petition door-to-door for housing codes in Eugene neighborhoods.

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HOUSING

continued from page 1

Associated Students of Lane Community College are trying to change that with a concentrated campaign to get housing standards in Eugene.

The combined group, called Eugene Citizens for Housing Standards, is asking the Eugene City Council to establish a rental housing program with minimum habitability standards covering structural integrity, plumbing, heating and weatherproofing.

"We're just wanting to get basic needs met," ASUO Campus Outreach Coordinator Shannon Tarvin said.

Group officials need the support of four city councilors to get a council work session on the issue. They said they already have the support of three councilors and are working to get the other five councilors on their side.

Ward 3 City Councilor David Kelly, the University-area representative, is one of the group's supporters.

"In the same way that we as a city government try to make sure people don't get robbed...I think that it's an important role for the city government to ensure that people have decent housing standards," he said.

Group officials said Ward 1 City Councilor Bonny Bettman and Ward 2 City Councilor Betty Taylor also support the standards, although neither councilor could be reached for comment.

Renters' rights are already protected in the Oregon Residential Landlord and Tenant Act, but renters must take any complaints to state court, which requires time and money.

Many renters have low incomes and can't afford to go to court, Tarvin said.

The proposed housing standards the coalition is pushing for don't actually create new codes. Instead, they augment existing codes by offering a local mechanism to enforce state law.

"It's just providing renters a way to force their landlords to come up to standards," Donahue said.

The state law enforcement model is based in large part on one recently enacted in Corvallis, he added.

In Corvallis, city inspectors act on written complaints from a renter. If the renter has notified their landlord of a problem and it hasn't been fixed, an inspector examines the rental. If the inspector decides the problem is actually a violation of city housing standards, the landlord is

given about a week to either fix the violation or be fined.

The system is supported by a yearly \$8 per rental unit fee paid by landlords.

"(The system is) not meant to be burdensome," Donahue said.

Eugene is the largest city in the state without housing standards, and their absence has long been an issue in the city.

Eugene had a housing code that was abolished in the early 1980s, Kelly said. He added that before he was elected, the city council talked about bringing the code back in the mid-1990s but decided against it. The West University Task Force brought up the issue again in June 2003 when it chose housing standards as its top priority for improving the neighborhood in the long term.

The city council directed staff to look into housing standards after receiving the task force's report but has yet to hear anything back, Kelly said.

Assistant City Manager Jim Carlson said little progress has been made on the recommendation in part because the city doesn't have the money to do public outreach.

The Eugene Citizens for Housing Standards, however, has made educating the public a major priority in its campaign. Volunteers canvassed the Whiteaker neighborhood on Saturday, giving out information about housing standards and collecting signatures.

"The overall majority that I talked to were very excited that there was a possibility of rental standards because they didn't think they had much recourse," Tarvin said.

Volunteers gathered 240 signatures in two hours in support of housing standards, she said.

The group has also been gathering signatures outside the EMU, and the response so far has been very positive, Donahue said.

Yeung said he was among the supporters of housing standards because his experience as a renter has shown him the need. Even though he and his roommates are thinking about moving, they've had little luck finding a suitable substitute.

"I've seen other people's houses and I think they're a lot worse off than ours," he said.

Contact the city/state politics reporter at nikacarlson@dailyemerald.com.

Tuesday
 Guest Artist Recital, Beall Concert Hall, 8 p.m. Acclaimed jazz violinist Diane Monroe joins the award-winning Oregon Jazz Ensemble for a performance during her weeklong residency as Robert M. Trotter Visiting Professor at the School of Music.
 AAA Brown Bag Lecture, Room 231, Lawrence Hall, 12 p.m. Kurt Lango, Landscape Architecture, speaks.
 Architecture Lecture, Room 177, Lawrence Hall, 5:30 p.m. Renowned architect, educator and author Ed Allen discusses "The Passage."

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