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COMMENTARY

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EDITORIAL

Housing code could better conditions

Residing in shoddy and mold-infested domiciles in Eugene may be comfortable for some, but most students who are subjected to such living conditions without legal recourse will say it's time for a change.

And if that change requires forcing local landlords to follow a housing code so their own rentals are worthy at least of the lowest standards of living, we say, so be it.

The fabled housing code has been a buzz issue around the ASUO and student advocacy groups for years. Few candidates for ASUO Executive have failed to promise a new housing code during their tenure, and even fewer — zero, to be precise — have actually made good on that promise.

But that could change this year, thanks to the efforts of local student governments and student groups, which have shown exceptional leadership in working toward a reasonable solution to the great housing debate. The ASUO, along with OSPIRG and the Associated Students of Lane Community College, formed the Eugene Citizens for Housing Standards to approach the problem more directly than in past years.

Three Eugene city councilors have already pledged their support to a set of housing standards the group drafted — just one city councilor shy of scoring a council work session on the issue.

Furthering the drive, Citizens for Housing Standards organized a community canvas last week in Ward 7, hoping to garner support from Ward 7 City Councilor Scott Meisner — the only moderate left after Ward 1 City Councilor Bonny Bettman, Ward 3 City Councilor David Kelly and Ward 2 City Councilor Betty Taylor, who have all promised support.

This is promising news, especially in these times when housing standards are clearly needed more than ever. In October, students reported frequently feeling sick as a result of mold growing inside their apartments. But the lack of legally enforced housing standards forced students to bear the burden of mold removal themselves. This is just one example of why housing standards, which have been implemented in many other cities, are so critical to the safety and health of students.

While we strongly support housing standards, one concern must be addressed and solved before the standards are implemented. Creating a safer environment — including better structural integrity, plumbing, heating and weather-proofing, which are all included in the proposal — is not cheap, and someone has to pay for it. Landlords will probably pass this cost on to students in the form of increased rent or security deposits.

The question, then, is whether the extra cost is a reasonable exchange for safer living. Most students who have lived in bad conditions will say yes, and we hope the city council will agree.

Students who feel housing standards would improve abhorrent conditions in their apartments or houses should contact the city councilor for their ward and demand accountability for unsafe living conditions.

EDITORIAL POLICY

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

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Growing up

I woke up yesterday, got dressed for work, looked in the mirror and realized I'm turning into an adult. It's a little frightening.

In the last year, I've gone from jeans and T-shirts everyday to dress clothes at least a couple times a week. I actually own a purse. I've started brushing my hair, and on occasion I wear deodorant. I can't remember the last time I took a day off in the middle of the week.

I'm holding down two jobs; one I've worked at for more than a year, and another that just might turn into a career. I got my W-2 in the mail earlier this month, and I actually put it somewhere where I'll be able to find it when I start filling out tax forms. That's another thing, I'm going to file taxes this year for the first time ever.

I applied to graduate in June and with the way I'm going, it seems like after that I can kiss any semblance of childhood goodbye. It's hard.

I feel like I'm standing on the edge of a cliff getting ready to dive into the abyss, and I don't even have a rope. Lately, when I lie in bed at night, I almost physically have to fight off the panic. There's a running soundtrack in my head that just keeps ask-

ing if this is what I really want to do with my life. I have this fear that I'm going to graduate, get a job, get married and never do another exciting thing in my life. It's irrational, I know.



Aimee Rudin

Five feet of fury

I also know that life is what you make of it, but ... I see it everyday. People walking down the street, in a rush, with some place important to go. In our society we're taught that's what success is — having some important place to go. But, to me, it seems like being stuck in a rut, trapped. Most people I see that have been deemed successful by society never have time to do anything but work, or maybe that's all they make time for. I don't want a life like that.

When I was young, I had this dream of

living someplace remote, off the grid. Somewhere where it snows in the yard in winter, but where I could grow tomatoes outdoors in the summer. I'm caught between trying to be a success and trying to live the life I've always dreamed about. I'm not sure how to do both, but I know that it's possible.

I think it has to do with taking the time to meander, something I rarely do anymore. I think it means walking down the street, making eye contact and smiling at people. I think somewhere in success there is time to take personal snow days and road trips. I don't think success means money or following the beaten path, and I don't think success means living in contradiction to my beliefs.

There's a job in Alaska, up on the Kenai Peninsula. I have the announcement posted on my wall above my desk at home. I've got my resumé and the application for it half-written, just waiting. Waiting for what, I don't know.

Contact the columnist at aimeerudin@dailyemerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OSPIRG is major asset to University community

There is a student group here at the University that I would like to talk about.

Last term alone this group did a major campus-wide research project on the true average cost of textbooks, collected more than 800 pounds of food on Halloween for Food for Lane County, held three river clean-ups picking up trash and debris along the Willamette River and helped more than 100 renters with their housing problems, to name a few things.

Who is this student group, you may ask? It is OSPIRG. The Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group has more than 100 members on campus and affects 20 times that many students at the University of Oregon through class presentations, research, educational events and the training of new leaders. I have only highlighted a few of OS-

PIRG's accomplishments. This group does so much to help the environment, protect student and consumer rights and promote an atmosphere of out-of-the-classroom education. To have a chapter here at the University of Oregon, and to continue the great work that affects so many students on campus and in their daily lives, OSPIRG needs to be fully funded.

A college campus is the birthplace of great ideas and even greater movements. OSPIRG is one important student group that fosters that same idea. I urge the PFC to consider the impact of this great group and allot them full funding.

Arista Hickman
sophomore
environmental science

Television plays major role in pushing drugs

Does anyone else feel that the "One Voice: Media United Against Drugs" is a

bit hypocritical? The "media" in this case seem to be television media. And dollar for dollar, television commercials are the biggest drug-pushers in America today.

They push Viagra, Lipitor, Procrit, Caltrate, Imitrex, Wellbutrin and Plavix, not to mention all the sugar and beer commercials. After watching football and drinking beer for years it suddenly dawned on me — I don't like beer.

And these are not just poor street kids pushing drugs. These are highly educated, highly paid drug-pushers. These pushers have been taught advanced psychology at prestigious universities to trick you and your kids into buying their drugs.

Now I realize that the local media are trying to do a public service with their "Media United Against Drugs" campaign, but to paraphrase Pogo: "You have met the enemy and the enemy is You."

Chris Pender
Eugene