

Troop Supporters aim to raise morale

The group is sponsoring letters and care packages for soldiers serving in Iraq

By Moriah Balingit
News Reporter

While troops in Iraq continue to fight, some University students are working to make soldiers' lives a little easier and provide one critical provision that is in short supply — letters from home.

Junior religious studies major Caitlin Sills recently established the Oregon Troop Supporters group to sponsor letter-writing to soldiers overseas, focusing especially on Iraq where Sills said "the troops have been forgotten."

The organization will also ask local businesses to donate items such as DVDs, CDs and reading materials to include in care packages to send to the soldiers.

Sills said she was inspired by a friend who is currently stationed in Iraq.

"I didn't realize how uplifting letters could be," Sills said. "It's a really big deal over there to get letters."

Seven people attended the first meeting Wednesday night. While the meeting was sparsely attended, those who did attend appeared fairly adamant in their support for the troops.

Sophomore political science major Anthony Warren said the group's mission is becoming increasingly important.

"The fact of the matter is that there's troops over there and they're putting their lives on the line every day," he said.

Portland resident Richie Hayes, a former University psychology major who recently left the Army with an



Tim Bobosky Photographer

Former University psychology major Richie Hayes (left), junior political science major Matthew Lawrence (center) and a few others gathered in the EMU's Metolius Room to hear Caitlin Sills (right) propose a letter-writing campaign for soldiers stationed in Iraq.

honorable discharge, was also in attendance. Hayes said his experience in the military, particularly in boot camp, compelled him to get involved with the organization.

"The environment (in boot camp) is extremely stressful," he said. "Going through all these trials creates a brotherhood between all these guys from all over the country."

The connection he feels with troops in Iraq is a personal one, he said.

"That would have been me at this point," he said. "It's hard being separated from your family."

Sills said the organization is apolitical and that people should consider joining regardless of their views about the war.

"This is not in any way a pro-war club ... I just want to make it clear that it's totally non-political," she said. "It's really about supporting the individual ... it's just compassionate to do it."

The sorority Pi Beta Phi is sponsoring a similar letter-writing effort, dubbed "Operation Pi Phi." Freshman English major Megan Ticer, who started the campaign, said she was inspired by a friend, much like

Sills. Ticer also organized care packages of books and magazines.

"My friend was fighting over there," she said. "I decided that there were probably a lot of men that were lonesome."

Ticer said that the letters usually just contain descriptions of daily happenings.

"We want to provide a way for (the soldiers) to get away for five minutes a day," she said. "We give them hope."

Contact the people/culture/
faith reporter
at moriahbalingit@dailyemerald.com.

NEWS BRIEF

CCRTF will meet to discuss student-police relations

The Campus Community Relations Task Force is meeting tonight to discuss several topics including tactics to manage off-campus parties. The meeting will take place from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the Lewis Lounge on the 4th Floor of the Knight Law Center.

In addition to party control, CCRTF will introduce new Eugene Police Chief Robert Lehner as well as new Eugene Police Sgt. Mark Montes, who will be assigned to lead the campus team.

The agenda also states that ASUO President Maddy Melton and Lehner will provide an update on student-police relations.

The group is also slated to discuss the findings of the Michigan State Off-Campus Party Study.

— Lisa Catto

CAMPUS BUZZ

Tuesday

Spring classified staff meeting, Ballroom, EMU, 10-11:30 a.m. Classified employees are invited to this twice-a-year opportunity to meet with University President Dave Frohnmayer and other senior administrators.

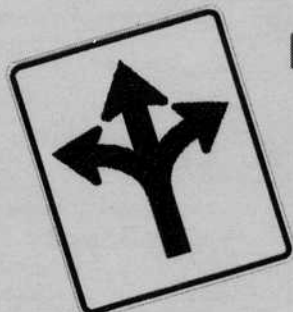
Human Resources Workshop featuring a presentation by consultant Karen Kempf entitled "Action Planning: Put the Wheels Under the Plan," East Conference Room, Bean Complex, 1-4 p.m. Pre-registration required.

Administrative rule public hearing, Owyhee/Metolius Rooms, EMU, 4 p.m.

Short story reading by Henry Alley, Robert D. Clark Honors College literature professor and author, from "The Rembrandt Brotherhood," Robert D. Clark Library, Room 301, Chapman Hall, 7:30-9 p.m.

Community Conversations: Political Parties, Dunn Hall Lounge, Hamilton Complex 7:30-9 p.m.

University alumnus Flutist Gary Lewis performs in the Faculty Artist Series concert, Beall Concert Hall, 8 p.m.



WHAT'S THEIR direction?

ASUO Candidate Debates

Today at 7pm in the EMU Fir Room

Pizza and beverages will be provided at 6:30pm

This is *your* chance to ask candidates questions!

Primary Election: April 12-14, 2004

General Election: April 16-19, 2004

Voting for the primary elections ends April 14th at 5pm!

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