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EARTH DAY

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— I believe a speech tournament — so there were noise restrictions on amplified sound in the amphitheater," she said. "You can't have Earth Day without speeches and music, so this year it's more of an Earth Day kickoff."

Julia Butterfly Hill, the environmental activist who lived in the branches of a redwood tree in Northern California for two years to stymie loggers, introduced local speaker Mary O'Brien at noon as the rain pelted onlookers.

"Go out and visit earth on a regular basis," O'Brien said. "It's important to go out and be with earth and see how earth is doing."

O'Brien also stressed the importance of making small moves toward a better environment.

"Taking the one step of stopping to use plastic cups makes an impact," she said. "Those cups made with oil and chemicals, you use it for maybe five minutes and throw it away so it can sit in a landfill for hundreds of years."

Hill later spoke on Wednesday evening in the EMU Ballroom as the keynote speaker for the ASUO and UO Cultural Forum's "Earth Day Kickoff."

Harmon said she hopes to make Earth Day more accessible to the general population.

"We want to make it more interactive, more enticing for the students who aren't necessarily environmentalist or who are extremely activist, but who care about the environment and to have things that people will want to see," she said. "Getting rid of the stigma is my goal."

Junior international studies major Anne Parker worked the Amnesty International booth for an hour in the afternoon.

"It's too bad that the weather is bad because they could rally a lot of support, but people are turned off by the weather," Parker said. "There's a lot of great information, but not a lot of people."

Parker said she considers herself an environmentalist.

"I make myself conscious of my impact on the planet and try to reduce my impact as much as possible," she said.

The Earth Day event has often jumped dates since its inception in the late 1960s, a decision which is somewhat obscured by history. The first Earth Day was declared as March 21, 1970, by San Francisco's mayor at the request of activist John McConnell. The date was selected to coincide with the first day of spring and the date of the Vernal Equinox — when the Earth is halfway through its orbit around the sun — as a symbolic representation of the desired equilibrium between humans and the Earth.

The history behind the more well-known date that is celebrated today is tied to U.S. Sen. Gaylord Nelson Nelson, who advocated for the environment in the 1960s, launched the Environmental Teach-In campaign at a September 1969 conference in Seattle as a grassroots demonstration open to the entire nation.

As part of the campaign, organizers planned a weeklong teach-in and a one-time event for April 22, 1970, dubbed "Earth Day." The event, which received nationwide attention, set the date for future Earth Day celebrations.

Harmon was positive about the day's events despite the poor weather. She said when it started to rain, organizers got canopies from different campus organizations and borrowed towels from the Student Recreation Center to dry the tables.

"People were there despite the rain," she said. "The people donating their time have been really gung-ho about helping out and all the organizations on campus have helped out."

Contact the business/science/technology reporter at stevenneuman@dailyemerald.com.

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RALLY

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The day began with taped mouths and was followed by a march that began outside the EMU Amphitheater and ended at South Eugene High School. Along the way, passers-by stopped to take notice of the silent group and read the signs, which stated "queers are everywhere" and "hear my silence."

University senior Michael Koopman stopped to get a better look at the marchers as they walked down East 13th Avenue. He said he felt the message was important and that the method seemed effective.

"I think that this approach is a lot more effective than people screaming at the top of their lungs," he said. "I ignore people when they yell because it just annoys me."

Drivers honked their car horns and some waved and yelled in support as the crowd made its way to the high school. Once there, about 45 students and community members gathered in silence and for the school to let out. With a rush of high school students walking by, the group took one last breath through their noses and ripped off the red tape. They burst into joyous screams and yells as they broke the vow of silence. Students and community members then spoke to the crowd about their personal experiences and called for an end to discrimination.

> "Silence hurt my child and my family until we broke that silence."
>
> **Elise Self**
> co-President/PFLAG

PFLAG co-President Elise Self spoke to the crowd representing the local chapter of the Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays national gay rights organization.

She told the crowd of her experience with her lesbian daughter and the importance of family support.

"Silence hurt my child and my family until we broke that silence," she said, explaining the challenges of developing open and supportive dialogue among family members concerning her daughter's sexuality. "With breaking our silence, we became empowered; we became proud."

Guadalupe Quinn, the Lane County regional coordinator for Oregon's statewide Immigrant Rights Coalition (Causa), also spoke in support of equal rights for everyone.

"I believe that everybody has the right to be treated with respect and human dignity, regardless of who they are," she said. "Everyone has a right to be who they are, everybody has a right to choose who they are."

Contact the higher education/student life/student affairs reporter at chelseaduncan@dailyemerald.com.

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