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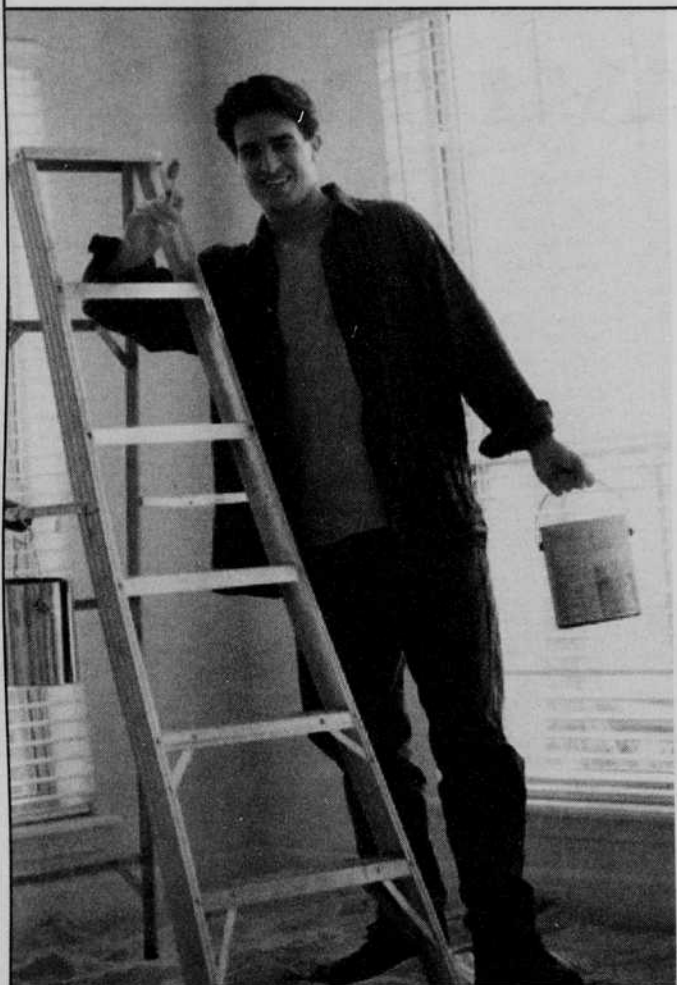
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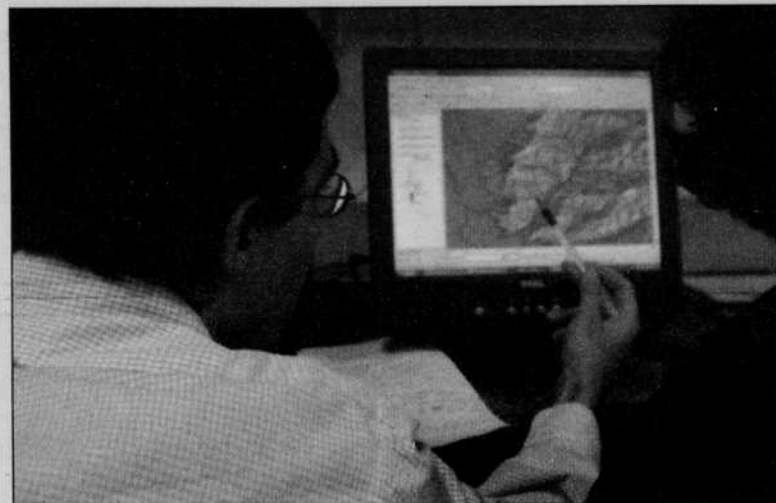
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LAUREN WIMER | PHOTOGRAPHER

Student Learning Program Coordinator Steve Mital works with students to find and map illegal dump sites in Lane County.

Student research team locates 200 illicit dump sites

The University's Illegal Dumping Research Team discovers and maps cases of garbage on public land

BY KARA HANSEN
NEWS REPORTER

University junior Kelsea Feola was looking from the window of a car when she spotted something unusual in the woods. Senior Gregg Shetterly noticed something from the corner of his eye, too. They stopped the car and peered over the edge of a slope in the Coburg Hills to find heaps of trash littered down a steep hill.

"It was the entire hillside," Feola said. "There were appliances, car-casses, trash, barrels and TVs."

Feola and Shetterly were doing fieldwork for the University's Illegal Dumping Research Team, a class that tracks and maps sites where people have illegally dumped garbage on public lands. The group has recorded about 200 illegal dumping sites this term according to Mark Neff, the team's graduate teaching fellow.

As part of the Environmental Studies Service Learning Program, the team of three undergraduates and Neff, accompanied by a coordinator, works with the Oregon/Washington Bureau of Land Management to help determine whether clean-up programs for illegal dumping in Lane County are effective.

Feola said the hillside they found was a "shoo-in" for level five, the worst severity rating for illegal dump sites. The team has found three or four level-five locations in the three 12-13 hour shifts they've spent in the field winter term, Neff said.

The dump sites have consisted mostly of household garbage and trash left in places where people have been shooting things or "partying," Neff said.

The group also found tires, broken appliances and cars, he said, but it stays away from anything that looks dangerous, such as large barrels that could have housed chemicals for methamphetamine production.

The team has headed out at 6:15 a.m. on several weekends, following maps of the Coburg Hills while looking for tire tracks that veer from the road and for trash visible from the street. It hopes to finish mapping the area with one more trip but may need to do more this spring, Neff said.

The group hopes to launch an Internet database spring term with the maps they generate that will allow the public to see where dump sites are and volunteer to clean them up, Neff said. The idea is loosely modeled on a Michigan program where volunteers have helped remove illegally dumped trash from more than 1 million acres of public land since the program began in 1991.

Neff said the purpose of the University's project is to "help encourage people to take responsibility for public lands and to raise awareness of a problem that many people don't realize exists."

Shetterly agreed that while many people enjoy activities in rural areas and in the wilderness, they may not know about illegal dumping.

"The places you go hiking aren't going to be messed up," Shetterly said. "You don't realize there's this public land out there that's being trashed. It's being used, but not for what it's there for."

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IN BRIEF

Ayyam-i-Ha celebration to benefit less fortunate

Baha'is around the world this weekend will celebrate Ayyam-i-Ha, a five-day celebration that precedes a 19-day fasting period.

Ayyam-i-Ha is a festival of hospitality, charity and service to the community. The festival is called "Inter-calary Days" in English because the festival usually falls on the five days left over from the rest of the Baha'i year. The Baha'i calendar is made up of 19 months with 19 days each.

The period of fasting that follows

the celebration involves praying and abstaining from eating or drinking during sunlight hours for the last Baha'i month, which is 19 days long.

Ayyam-i-Ha focuses on helping people who are less fortunate materially and people who aren't Baha'i. People are encouraged to bring canned food donations or blankets and coats for Lane ShelterCare.

Eugene's Baha'i population will celebrate Ayyam-i-Ha with a party that is open to the public on Saturday from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Chase Village clubhouse. There will be carnival games, square-dancing, cooking, decorating and refreshments.

— Amanda Bolsinger