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In my opinion

Bunny money

I love a good urban legend. So when a friend told me that some guy was threatening to kill a bunny if he didn't get \$50,000, I thought it was a great story.

And when I went to savetoby.com, it appeared to be a true one. An excerpt from the "welcome" page:

"Welcome, Toby is the cutest little bunny on the planet. Unfortunately, he will DIE on June 30th, 2005 if you don't (sic) help. I rescued him several months ago. I found him under my porch, soaking wet, injured from what appeared to be an attack from an alley cat. I took him in, thinking he had no chance to live from his injuries, but miraculously, he recovered. I have since spent several months nursing him to health. Toby is a fighter, that's (sic) for sure.

Unfortunately, on June 30th, 2005, Toby will die. I am going to eat him. I am going to take Toby to a butcher to have him slaughter this cute bunny. I will then prepare Toby for a midsummer feast. I have several recipes under consideration, which can be seen, with some pretty graphic images, under the recipe section.

I don't want to eat Toby ... However, God as my witness, I will devour this little guy unless I receive 50,000\$ USD into my account from donations or purchase of merchandise. You can



ANNEMARIE KNEPPER
WORKS ON PAPER

help this poor, helpless bunny's cause by making donations through my verified PayPal account by clicking on any of the Donate buttons on this site, or by purchasing merchandise at the Savetoby.com online store."

The balance, at press time was \$24,515.62.

I don't know who this person is, but I do think he or she is brilliant. Already the ransom-seeker is almost halfway there and with two-and-half-months to spare. The marketing genius continues with a very professional looking online store from which one can buy T-shirts, sweat-shirts, camisoles and hats, posters, mugs and baby bibs, all with the "hopeful" image of Toby emblazoned across the front.

Toby and his captor got national attention Monday when NBC News quoted the anonymous pet owner: "It's very serious. If we don't get \$50,000, we are going to eat the

rabbit." Animal advocates also weighed in on the "serious" issue, making all right-to-bunny-lifers look stupid with their misplaced outrage.

With even casual research (looking at the bottom of the Save Toby Web page) one can see that it is powered by CafePress.com, a "marketplace" where you can buy, you guessed it, T-shirts, hats, and mugs with such inspiring messages as "Hillary for President" and "I HATE TAXES." The CafePress, "the voice of the people" as the Web site claims, offers products advertising anti-Bush sentiment, fast food, release of the Great White, and ... animal cruelty prevention.

And if the image of Toby looks familiar, that's because it has appeared on the now extinct savefluffy.com, among other phony rabbit-killer sites, according to the myth debunker Web site snopes.com.

So the whole thing is really just a scam to sell cheesy apparel. And not since the "Marilyn Manson is really the guy who played Paul on the Wonder Years!" or perhaps "Little Mikey of LIFE cereal fame died from a Pop Rocks/Pepsi overdose!" have I been so amused by an urban legend.

Bravo to whoever created savetoby.com. You got us all — for a minute.

annemarieknepper@dailyemerald.com

INBOX

nobody makes a move.

—Zachary White
Junior

Financial aid eligibility laws discriminate against poor

Emily Smith's report on the consequences for reselling prescription amphetamines ("Student arrested for selling prescription drugs," ODE April 12) mentions that students with felony drug charges are not eligible for financial aid. This is true. However, students in Oregon should be aware that the law extends beyond felony violations.

According to the Drug Provision of the Higher Education Act of 1998, a student convicted of any drug offense will be penalized not only by the criminal justice system, but through the financial aid system too. Individuals with one possession conviction are ineligible to receive aid for one year. If they have two possession convictions, they are penalized for two years, while three convictions lead to a permanent aid ban. Students lose aid for two years for one sale conviction and permanently for two convictions.

These penalties stick, regardless of whether the convictions were misdemeanor or felony. Because the law only hurts students who need financial aid, it is discriminatory against the poor. Because minorities are convicted of drug offenses at disproportionate rates, it hinders African-American and Latino students, also at disproportionate rates, from getting an education.

So far, over 160,500 students have lost aid because of this policy. Thankfully, Senator Gordon Smith of Oregon

has said he would like to introduce legislation to repeal this law. University students should visit www.RaiseYourVoice.com and contact him to ensure that all students have equal access to education.

—Brian Dolber
Outreach Coordinator, Coalition for Higher Education Act Reform, Washington, D.C.

Scientists make another 'unfortunate mistake'

In an April 12 Emerald letter, Mr. Bailey quoted Paul McHugh's scientific justification that transgender identity is a mental illness ("Students need to examine science behind transgender").

I would ask that we remember the Nazi's "scientific" justification for ethnic cleansing. I would ask that we remember "scientific" justification for female inferiority around the world. I would also ask that we remember scientific racism in America when scientists "proved" that African-Americans and Hispanics were inferior to Whites.

There was even "scientific" proof that the world was flat and that the sun revolved around the earth.

Today, no reputable scientist would support these outdated and tragically bigoted hypotheses.

Perhaps in 20 years, McHugh's remarks will also become another unfortunate mistake of history, and yet another oppressed group will be able to live without fear and judgement.

—Elizabeth Mounts
Senior

Editorial

Nationwide libraries burned by budget cuts

Anyone who cares about the future of American commerce, politics, science, art, music, film or about our future as a society should take a moment during this week, officially "National Library Week," to reflect on the unfortunate state of the American public library system.

With the ease and speed of the Internet, it is easy to discount the public library as a home to musty plastic-covered books, a relic of the past.

Today, the estimated 16,421 public libraries in the U.S., often no longer valued as symbols of civic pride, have come under fire. When citizens reject local taxes and bonds, libraries and cultural programs are the first to go on the chopping block.

The community of Salinas, Calif., home of Nobel laureate John Steinbeck, provides an excellent example of the dismemberment of this great American legacy. In November, Salinas voters rejected two measures that would have added revenue to the city's budget. By December the city council moved to close the city's three libraries and lay off 33 employees because of lack of funds. Only after protests involving unions, national library experts, local schoolchildren and read-ins by celebrities was the community able to raise enough funds to keep the three libraries open, with a skeleton staff and minimum hours, until the end of the year.

According to the American Library Association, projected and announced library funding cuts nationally have topped \$11.2 million in the past 18 months, resulting in the "reduction in library funding ... cuts to operating budgets, limited hours, reduced materials budgets, hiring freezes or elimination of personnel and reduced library programming."

The ALA's "anecdotal reports" on budget funding contain the most up-to-date statistical data available, supplementing the most recent comprehensive federal data, which lags by two to five years. This speaks volumes about how our society has come to rank the importance of this public institution.

Libraries may seem old fashioned, but given proper funding, more libraries could offer audiobooks for iPods and connections to the all-important Internet, in addition to traditional book loans.

For many citizens living in poverty, libraries provide the only possible access to e-mail correspondence, worldwide news and many other online services. The Pew Internet & American Life Project found in 2004 that 23 percent of adult U.S. Internet users, close to 30 million people, have gone online from a place other than home or work. While some used the Internet at school and friends' or neighbors' homes, 26 percent used it at libraries.

Twentieth century historian Arthur Meier Schlesinger said, "The public library has been historically a vital instrument of democracy and opportunity in the United States. ... Our history has been greatly shaped by people who read their way to opportunity and achievements in public libraries." We couldn't agree more.

Eugene has been graced, relatively recently, by a new and grand public library that has become a point of pride for its citizens. It has become a beacon that speaks to the importance of education in our community, and we hope it remains as such for many years. We urge the majority of this nation to take another look at local libraries and give them the funding they deserve.

CORRECTION

Wednesday's article "Waterless urinal takes a trial run in restroom" said the Eugene Water and Electric Board charges \$0.87 to \$1.99 per gallon of water. It is actually \$0.87 to \$1.99 per 1,000 gallons of water, and the University pays 95.9 cents per 1,000 gallons of water as a "general service" customer. The Emerald regrets the error.

OREGON DAILY EMERALD LETTERS POLICY

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