Earth Day event honors University professor's life

The John H. Baldwin Film and Lecture Series took place on Saturday during the community celebration

BY EVA SYLWESTER
NEWS REPORTER

As bands played outside the Eugene Water and Electric Board building Saturday afternoon as part of Earth Day Celebration 2005, inside, the community celebrated the life of a University professor with the John H. Baldwin Film and Lecture Series.

Baldwin, a professor in the Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management, was the founding director of the University's Environmental Studies Program and Institute for a Sustainable Environment. He died March 7.

EWEB community education coordinator John Femal said this was the sixth year Eugene has had an Earth Day celebration downtown. The idea for a film and lecture series at the celebration had been discussed in previous years, but the celebration's former venue couldn't accommodate it.

When EWEB was chosen as the location for this year's celebration, the Earth Day Eugene Steering Committee began organizing a film and lecture series. Baldwin died in the middle of the process, and Femal said the committee chose to dedicate the series to Baldwin because of his "wonderful work."

"He was just a very active person who embodied a lot of what we were trying to get across," Femal said.

University senior Shaun Cook, who volunteered at the conference, knew Baldwin through PPPM classes.

"He had this way of making you see the correlation between your actions and the way the world is affected," Cook said, emphasizing that Baldwin's aim was not a guilt trip but a call to action.

"Don't philosophize, don't theorize, get out there and do it," Cook said. "Actions speak louder than words, and that's how John lived his life."

Speakers at the event described ways people could change their lifestyles in order to inflict less harm on the environment.

Robert Bolman, founding director of Maitreya EcoVillage in west Eugene, a community dedicated to sustainability, spoke about intentional communities and sustainable development. He said as the prevalence of sustainable communities rises, people will flock to them.

"I think a lot of people would happily not own cars ... if they could live in a park," Bolman said.

Lane Community College instructors Sandy Aldridge and Dale Lugenbehl discussed problems of the ecological sustainability of the American diet, especially the immense amount of water used in the production of meat. Aldridge and Lugenbehl said they live on a farm outside Eugene and grow their own organic food.

"Most of our eating is habitual, and just as we learned that way, we can unlearn and learn a different way," Aldridge said.

Bob Doppelt, director of Resource Innovations at the University's Institute for a Sustainable Environment, spoke on global warming.

"The science of abrupt climate change is virtually unchallenged in scientific circles and the rest of the world," Doppelt said, adding that if no change is made in greenhouse gas emissions, the global average temperature will increase 2.7 to 10.4 degrees by the year 2100.

Nevertheless, Doppelt emphasized the importance of climate protection action plans — even if greenhouse gas emissions stopped today, it would take more than 100 years for atmospheric conditions to return to normal.

"Humans are the cause of the problems today, which means they are not beyond our control," Doppelt said.

Femal said that while the film and speaker series was an experimental event, it's likely to become an annual one.

In the lobby outside the room where the lectures were given, a small television played a continuous repeat of Baldwin's last public interview on video, at a community forum at Cozmic Pizza in February.

In the video, Baldwin described a trip he took to Madras, India, with a group of University students, where the students observed that the local people were happy and healthy even though they had no money and few Western devices such as televisions.

"You can live as a normal everyday American, and you don't have to buy into ... the existing orders," Baldwin said in the video.

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Zane Ritt | Photographer

Joanie Kleban of Greater Goods shows her collection of colorful products to Ben Welch during an Earth Day celebration Saturday.

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