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In my opinion

The value of DDS (despite the mess)



ANNEMARIE KNEPPER
WORKS ON PAPER

The Assault Prevention Shuttle has had a long, contentious relationship with Designated Driver Shuttle.

I cannot and am not speaking for APS, DDS or the University. I can I only speak for myself and my experiences.

During my work as an APS volunteer, I've heard a constant stream of complaints against DDS. People connected to APS have raised concerns regarding the poor DDS work ethic (allegedly choosing to play video games instead of answering phone calls), forgetting to return keys to the office or van and subsequently not working, generally poor organization including having no spare keys available and not notifying APS when they are locked out and/or will not be working that night.

While volunteering once or twice a week in the APS office, I did not witness any of those events first hand and only heard of them after the fact.

However, the following did occur a few months ago when I was there. At APS, we received more calls than usual. Many calls were confused, inebriated people trying to contact DDS. When asked why they didn't simply press the correct extension, the callers responded that they had tried repeatedly and no one at DDS answered. There were workers in the DDS office, so one of our staff members walked there and asked what was going on. DDS employees said they had forgotten to turn the phones back on after turning them off for some reason. Accidents happen, but when your job is to answer phones at a popular shuttle service, one would think it strange that no one was calling. It's that kind of inattention to detail that APSers find so irritating.

Similar phone incidents occurred so frequently that APS began a log of when the DDS phone was not on during their scheduled work hours.

That said...

Does DDS save more lives than APS? Yes.

Does DDS provide a more valuable service to University students? It

depends on the student.

APS provides service to, on average, 70 people per night. APS runs every night of the week, from 7 p.m. to midnight on weeknights and until 2 a.m. on weekends. If keys are forgotten, workers can call someone to let them in immediately so APS can continue running as usual. APS has 12 paid staff members and more than 80 volunteers.

DDS runs from 10 p.m. to 3 a.m. every day. The DDS Web site, not updated since the 2001-02 school year, does not say how many people it serves each night. Its employees are paid and it does not rely on volunteers.

Now, it must be mentioned that not all DDS workers are irresponsible. In fact, many are dedicated, polite and good at their jobs. Nevertheless, an organization, like a team, is only as good as its weakest member. And the weakest members of DDS did something incredibly out of line — something so far from okay that it is reprehensible ("Designated drivers caught drinking," ODE May 3).

It seems that DDS suffers from failure to communicate. Evidently, it wasn't communicated that drinking on the job is totally unacceptable and could result in immediate dismissal and disciplinary action by the University. The University employee policy regarding drugs and alcohol is very clear:

"The illegal use, possession, or distribution of drugs and alcohol on institutionally owned or controlled property or as part of any University activity is proscribed conduct." (See Oregon Administrative Rule (OAR) 580-22-045(8).)

"The University may impose

disciplinary sanctions against any student or employee found to have violated this rule ... not limited to, suspension without pay, and termination of employment."

The DDS employee drinking incident was probably an isolated one.

Yet by not running at its scheduled time and not answering phone calls, which DDS admits has happened several times, DDS has been irresponsible in its position as a student-funded service. It's unfortunate a DDS employee did something as egregious as drinking on the job before the organization got a slap on the hand.

In an online post in response to the Emerald's article on DDS, one shuttle employee says "I believe that the benefit provided on the many nights we are running at full strength vastly outweighs the burden put on APS the few nights we can't run the vans." To this I must ask, the benefit to whom? The intoxicated riders? Or the person who chose not to drink but would like a ride because he or she does not feel safe walking alone at night? The latter is our customer, who couldn't get through to APS because drunk customers were flooding the phone lines when they couldn't contact a DDS representative.

APS and DDS are both funded in part by student fees. When APS resources go to serving DDS patrons, it is not only unfair to APS staff and riders, but the student body as a whole.

It is impossible to know how many assaults, rapes, and acts of violence APS services have prevented. It is also impossible to know how many drunk driving incidents DDS has prevented. Both services are valid and important to the University. Neither one is more essential than the other, and both organizations need to be working at "full strength" every night to ensure the safety of University students who have come to depend on these services.

annemarieknepper@dailyemerald.com

Editorial

Marijuana poses lesser threat than violent theft

It's no secret that Oregon has a bit of a funding problem. Public programs involving education, insurance and so on are losing steam as lawmakers in Salem and voters around the state continually show an extreme dislike for taxes.

The most recent example of these harms was reported Wednesday, by the Register-Guard. According to the Register-Guard, Lane County district attorneys will not prosecute more than 100 nonviolent misdemeanors such as car break-ins and credit card fraud. Instead, public lawyers will focus on crimes such as domestic violence, high scale robberies and drug dealing.

Unfortunately, this is just another example of how the U.S. government's drug war forces individual communities to ignore crimes that should take higher legal priorities. Instead of making sure people who break into cars are taken off the street and punished, prosecutors will use state funds to make sure the local stoner isn't assisting his neighbors in eating lots of food and forgetting stuff.

Not that drug dealing is a small matter. Some substances, such as PCP, pose serious danger to both drug users and innocent bystanders. Anyone who sells drugs that directly threaten society deserves to be prosecuted at the most severe level possible.

The sale of some drugs, however, should simply be a lower priority to the government than breaking into someone's car. The federal government recognizes marijuana as more dangerous than cocaine, which is legal for some medical use, while marijuana is a Schedule I drug and represents one of America's worst outdated policies.

Marijuana is a surprisingly mild drug. It is usually not chemically altered, it is much less addictive than most drugs, and it has been used medicinally for thousands of years. Also debatable is the government's need to regulate its citizens' substance use in the first place.

Of course, when money runs low, the need to make marijuana a primary public concern at the expense of prosecuting people who use stolen credit cards is totally irrational. As far as violent tendencies go, one should assume that a criminal who breaks into or uses another's personal property is certainly more dangerous than someone who sells a drug that the majority of the population has admitted trying.

The real shame is that Oregon must make choices regarding which criminals deserve to be reprimanded for their actions. Until Oregon lawmakers can figure out how to appease voters and fund public services, Salem should seriously evaluate its standards of community safety.

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Guest commentary

Ze/hir pronouns represent future in spite of linguistic conservatism

A great controversy has emerged recently in campus publications over the use of the gender neutral pronoun set ze/hir. This has manifested mainly in the Emerald's obstinate refusal to use ze/hir and the Oregon Commentator's outright hostility toward any sort of variance from a strict ideology of gender binaries. While the Emerald has merely provided a plethora of examples of dreadful journalistic style, the Commentator has — inadvertently, I'm sure — demonstrated that ze/hir is a perfectly usable form.

For those who are not familiar with ze/hir, it is used rather than she/her or he/him/his for some people who identify outside of a man/woman dichotomy. Like he and she, ze has several forms that are not particularly

easy for the average person to classify grammatically (he, she, ze; his, her, hir; him, her, hir; his, hers, hirs; himself, herself, hirself), but anyone who can use she and he is capable of integrating ze. Listening to individuals who respect self-identification and pronoun preference makes this quite clear, as they form sentences like "ze knows that's hir job," "that book is hirs," and so on. There is a pattern that is consistent and easy to produce.

A description of only the speech pattern of respectful individuals could be perceived as unbalanced; nevertheless, the school administration has shown an obvious inability to deal with gender identity based harassment, which is explicitly forbidden in the University's nondiscrimination policy.

Fights about pronouns are nothing new. Most, if not all, English speakers use "they" as a third person singular gender neutral pronoun, even though grammarians attempting to reinforce class hierarchies through language have tried for hundreds of years to convince us that this is impossible. Lord Brougham's Act, passed in 1850, limited the use of "he or she," and instead included all people under the masculine pronoun. None of this really matters in terms of the structure of the language, though. The reality of what forms people actually produce determines language. Ze/hir is clearly possible for English speakers to use, and is luckily becoming more and more widespread in many communities.

Pira Kelly is a senior linguistics major

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