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Nelson takes problem to board

By Lenna Fitch
Staff Writer

When all else fails, one takes his burden to the board.

"Hope it works. . . or we'll start a war," said Mike Ayers, student body president.

The Clackamas Community College Associated Student Government (ASG) voted unanimously to support Bonnie Nelson. She is an art major confined to a wheelchair with Multiple Sclerosis, who's been denied equal access to classes.

"The board should take the initiative in solving the problem," said Jerry Bellavita, assistant to the student body president.

Bonnie Nelson is on the agenda of the Nov. 10 CCC Board of Education meeting. The board meets at 7:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month and students are encouraged to attend.

Even though the law requires that all federal and state institutions make their facilities safe and accessible to handicapped persons (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act), Nelson found 17 stairs between her and two of her art classes at Smuckers.

She declined the many offers of help because of the risks involved in being carried up and down the steep staircase in a wheelchair.

She hopes to see a wheel chair lift installed. The Montgomery Elevator Company estimates the cost of this installation to be between \$5,000 and \$6,000.

"That doesn't seem like a lot of money," said Nelson, "when we consider that the school can afford a 'goof off' room in the Community Center with 3 pool tables, 4 foosball tables, and 4 pin ball machines. . . let alone the cost of the room. . . the tile, the paneling and fixtures. At the same time they deny handicapped students an education."

Shortly after enrollment this fall, Nelson made her problem known to the administration. CCC President John Hakanson said that every attempt would be made to correct the situation.

"But I still can't get up the stairs," said Nelson.

Nelson made arrangements with CCC art instructor Leland John, to do outside assignments in painting and drawing, but said she pays tuition and has a right to in-class instruction.

John said that she does very well. He suggested that since she is in this district, perhaps CCC could pay her tuition to another college until the situation is corrected.

One factor to be considered is whether it



Photo by Brian Snook

"Smiling Jack" White demonstrates the expertise that has put him among the best pool players in the world. (For related story and photos, see page 5.)

would be practical to install a lift in a building as old as Smuckers.

"The building isn't expected to be in use by the art department for more than 5 years," said John.

Jerry Bellavita argues that the figure should be more like 10 years.

Julie Bauch, secretary to Donald Fisher, Developmental Planner of CCC, said that all the buildings constructed by the college have ramps for the handicapped, and ramps are added where needed.

Fisher said that he was notified recently that there was a need for a ramp in one of the trailers. "We had one up in two days."

Fisher said that his office has made an extensive research into the feasibility of either a ramp or a chair lift. He said that an enclosed outside elevator for wheelchairs only, would be the most feasible because the hallway is not wide enough to accommodate an inside lift. The cost would be about the same.

He expressed the possibility, but explained

that the cost of an elevator had not been budgeted for, and would have to be approved by the board.

Meanwhile, Nelson has called Salem and countless other places.

"Everyone I talked to was willing to give me another person to talk to. All I got was a lot of frustration."

She wrote Senator Bob Packwood, who contacted Dave Backman, co-ordinator of the disadvantaged and handicapped in Oregon. He told Nelson he'd look into the matter and that was the last she heard.

"If I can't get something done about it at the board meeting, I'm going to engage in a suit," Nelson concluded.

"If the board doesn't support the students, the students may not support the board," said Mike Ayers, ASG president.

If ASG were willing to share the cost, Bonnie Jones, Chairman of the CCC Board of Education, said that it would show that they are genuinely interested in the student body.

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