

Victims' panel tells tragic stories of drinking, driving

by Jennifer Soper
Staff Writer

A teenage boy was killed less than a mile away from his home on the way to his church youth group. A young woman was fatally injured on the way home of dance practice. A young man is paralyzed from the waist down for the rest of his life. These are only a few of the tragedies the Clackamas County Victims' Impact Panel tells people about every month.

Attending the panel is just one of the steps drunk drivers must go through in Clackamas County.

"I can't express the words I feel, and I know there is no excuse for what I did, but I promise to you all that I will never drink and drive again as long as I live." That is just one of the reactions to the panel since it began.

The panel, which held its first meeting just over two years ago, is more than just part of a process. It

is made up of people whose lives have been forever changed by a drunk driver. The victims tell their stories to DUII offenders hoping the crimes won't be repeated. People who are in the diversion program, involved with community corrections, or have received a citation for minor in possession of alcohol are also sentenced to attend the panel. Driver's education students and the general public attend the panel also.

At each panel the speakers are introduced and then left to tell how a drunk driver severely affected their lives. The panelists don't quote statistics or blame other people for the choice one drunk driver made.

"I got involved when the panel was first organized. I felt I had good reason to join because my husband was killed by a drunk driver; I wanted to impress upon one person not to drink and drive,"

said panelist Carol Monahan.

"They tell their stories with the hope that they can prevent this from happening to someone else," explained Connie Strangfield, a member of the panel's steering committee.

After the panelists are through speaking, paper and pencils are passed out and viewers are asked to comment about the panel. Later the panelists read and discuss the comments that were made.

"I think reading the comments after the panel each time is reinforcement," said Sharon O'Shea, a member of the Victims' Assistance Program.

Although each of the panelists have very different stories to tell, they have similar reasons for being members of the panel.

"It makes the victims feel like they're doing something real positive with this tragedy that's happened in their lives," said Strang-

field.

"The healing comes from telling your story. It doesn't make the pain go away totally, but it makes it better," said Monahan.

"We know we can't stop the drinking; that's not our intent. It's the lethal combination of the two (drinking and driving) that we want to stop," Monahan continued.

Currently there is a study being done to establish the return rate of DUII offenders to the panel.

"Based upon the feedback that (the offenders) give us, it has a noticeable effect," said Sgt. Paul Steigleder of the Clackamas County DUII Taskforce.

"What sort of long lasting impact it has remains to be seen," Steigleder explained.

If viewer feedback is any indication of the impact the panel has on offenders, the return rate won't be high.

"I realize how difficult it was for these people to share their experience. I think this should be kept as part of the sentence/treatment for DUII conviction. It brings a realism that few other programs can," wrote one person after seeing the panel. "I think the panel gives (offenders) a different perspective than they're getting from any other kind of treatment," Strangfield said.

"It's an aspect that nobody ever thinks about before they get behind the wheel."

One member of the panel summed up the experience this way: "I cannot begin to describe how much the panelists stories touched my heart. They are doing a great service to the community. God forbid if I ever get behind the wheel drunk again."

Forney elected to NEA board

by Brenda Hodgson
Staff Writer

After an entire week of campaigning, Kevin Forney, publications designer at CCC, was elected to the National Education Association's Board of Directors during NEA's annual representative assembly last summer.

"At the beginning of the week there were only two of us running, and we were like 'This will be a breeze,'" explained Forney. "Later, two more women signed, which brought the total to four people running for three seats. Then the race was on."

The Assembly was held in Washington, D.C. Representatives from all 50 states attended, as well as some from overseas.

Forney was up early every morning traveling from hotel to hotel meeting with various representatives and support groups. "It was quite a drain waking up every morning at 5 a.m. with meetings beginning at 7 a.m.," he stressed.

"Most of the candidates were more concerned about hitting the major states, but I thought why not hit the hotels where several states' reps were staying instead of those with only major states. It was like killing two birds with one stone," said Forney.

Forney is the first classified member ever to be elected from Oregon. Classified members are members other than teachers and administration, such as cashiers,

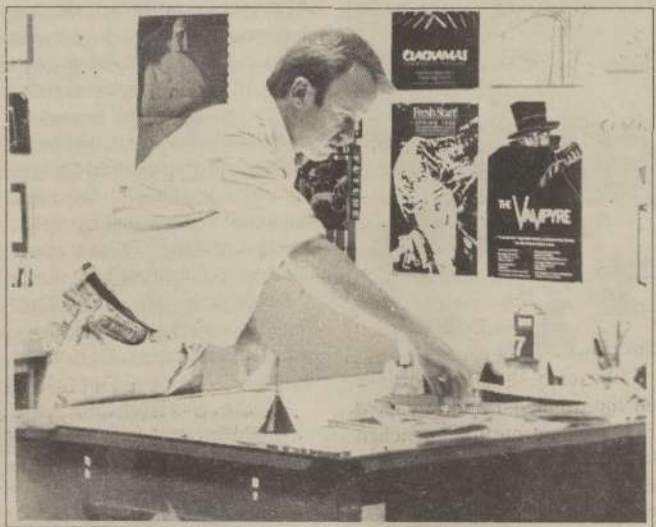
registrars, and custodians. Classified members were admitted as full members of NEA in 1984. Before that time, the NEA consisted only of administration and classroom teachers.

"Some teachers still won't vote for classified members," said Forney. "Someone said once 'You mean we could have a janitor for a president some day?' and I thought

'Well no, not unless you vote for him.'"

Forney was also appointed to NEA's National Publication Relations Committee.

"We basically assess how well we can implement the program," he said. "Our main message is toward states, businesses, and the government to urge them to invest in education."



Kevin Forney of the Public Information Office is a recently-elected member of the Board of Directors for the National Education Association. Photo by Cid

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Form now available

by Tootie Smith
Staff Writer

Available as never before to students at CCC are the Student Complaint Forms.

The student complaint process is initiated when a student brings a complaint against any member of the CCC staff or faculty due to mistreatment or incompetent instruction.

Realizing the inadequacies that exist in the present system, the form arose concurrently from the Counseling Office, Dean of Instructional Services office, and Student Community Services.

"Student complaints were not being handled as well as they should be," said Vince Fitzgerald, counselor.

The Student Complaint Form is an avenue allowing students to assume the responsibility for his or her rights.

Also, the supervisor is interested in being accountable for the performance and standards of his or her department, continued Fitzgerald.

Fitzgerald urges students who have complaints to try to resolve the conflict between the person involved before pursuing other steps in the three-step process.

"It should solve some problems we've had before of students going to the wrong person," said Fitzgerald.

"In the past, students mistakenly went to counselors to complain about an instructor, and that created friction between staff members, counselors, and fellow faculty," said Tom Richards, head of the English Department.

"I think it gives students a sense of satisfaction. We haven't had a lot of complaints, but now they don't have to wonder where the complaints should go," said Dean of Instruction Lyle Reese.

Reese also urged students who have complaints to try to resolve the conflict directly with the staff member in question.

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