

Peer helpers: friends helping friends

by Daniel J. Mala
Staff Writer

"There is nothing like helping people. Seeing the smile on their faces or them thanking you, it has its own rewards," Greg Griffith, an active member of the Peer Helper program at Clackamas Community College, said.

Roberta Donaldson and Richard Best co-head the program. They teach the class and provide the backup support necessary to make the program functional.

The peer helper program "has been around for about 22 years in the high school and middle schools," Donaldson said. At the high school level the program is called Natural Helpers. Recently many colleges have also been taking interest in the program.

Peer helpers are just what the name entails: friends that are willing to help friends. They may be students or teachers, but they are there, and they are willing to listen and help as much as they can within their capacities.

"Oregon State (University) has a marvelous program," Donaldson said, hoping that the program at CCC will evolve in a similar manner.

The Peer Helper program is very new to CCC, being only two years old. It originally got its

backing through the FIPSE Grant, which pertains to drug and alcohol treatment.

"We don't really have a history yet since the program is so new ... visibility and getting students to turn in the nomination form is the problem," Best said. He is looking for more involvement from the students, if not in active participation of the program than by nominating the students and faculty that will.

"Right now we're asking for people to pick up the nomination forms ... and select people that they think would be a good natural listener. Then submit it to the Counseling Department." Donaldson went on to say that after "the Counseling Department goes through the nominations, people that can actually attend the intensive two-day training session will be notified."

The tentative plan is to have the next training session on April 3 and 4. "Then people can decide if they would like to take the class," Donaldson said.

The two-day training is just the start. It is very intensive and covers lots of ground, including "listening, referrals, drug and alcohol, suicide and stress situations," Donaldson said.

After completion of the training, the students and teachers are

eligible to take the class. "It's a one credit, pass/no pass class. It is a transfer level class that is listed under the counseling section of the schedule," Donaldson explained.

Griffith, who is presently attending the class, said that "it's not even close to your standard class. For one credit I put in three to three and a half hours (a week) of homework alone."

But after four years of being either a peer helper or natural helper, Griffith has found many other rewards. "After this long, I guess I realized that this is what I want to do. I'm looking at secondary education; I want to be a counselor," he said.

As many students will do, Griffith is planning to go on in the Peer Helper program. This step involves doing an out-of-class project where the student comes up with his own plan, presents this plan to Best and Donaldson, and earns credit for a given presentation and summary.

The network is always there for the peer helpers that choose not to continue on in the program. No responsibility is placed on the peer helpers. "That is left for he or she to decide for themselves, though we might make suggestions," Best said.

This relatively-new program



Photo by Nolan Kidwell

Greg Griffith is an active member of the Peer Helper program at Clackamas Community College.

has the ability to do much good for CCC. Though it doesn't make mini-counselors, Donaldson explained that "we have a trained counseling staff here for those types of issues. What it does more than anything is put people in touch with other people. We

hope that it will not just involve a certain group of people, but that it will reach all ages, all interest groups and that it will be something that will be helpful to every individual."

'Portrait of Jennie' proves inspiring

by Hafidha Acuay
Staff Writer

"I love secrets," said Jennie. And she certainly has a lot of them. Like who she is, and what she's doing in Eben Adams' life -- and how she ages by years in just a few months.

I wondered all of these things when I saw the first performance of "Portrait of Jennie" Thursday night. I haven't seen a play in years, but have been wanting to; so even though I didn't know what "Portrait of Jennie" was about, I was eager to see it.

I'm glad I did. The play takes place in 1932 New York, and is about Eben Adams (John William Abbot), a discouraged and struggling young painter, whose life is altered by a

mysterious girl named Jennie (Kristy Crandell).

Jennie is "almost 15" upon first entering the scene, but she ages significantly with each new stage appearance. She is energetic, talkative and coy. More than once she says to the somewhat bashful Eben, "You'll wait for me, won't you?"

And he does, though never knowing when or where she'll turn up. In between Jennie's visits, he must eat and pay rent. He does so by selling his paintings, which consist mostly of seascapes. He isn't exactly bombarded with sales, however, and since "I'm not ready for any job yet," his rent is usually late, and he paints murals for a neighborhood diner in exchange for a month of free

meals.

But Jenny does inspire him in his work, and the result of this inspiration catches the eye of Miss Spinney and Henry Matthews (Lichen June and Hau Duc Nguyen), a pair of wealthy art buyers Gus convinced to look at Eben's work. Though not impressed with the seascapes, they are very interested in a sketch of Jennie. Matthews becomes very emotional describing her as "eternal" and comparing her to Mona Lisa.

With his professional future looking brighter, Eben concentrates more on Jennie, whom he's begun to fall in love with. But where is she? Why can't he find her anywhere? As she tells him later on, "You can't come to me;

I can only come to you."

The play goes on to deal with the mystery of Jennie and the love that develops between her and Eben.

Abbot was excellent as Eben; so was Crandell as Jennie. I am definitely looking forward to seeing her in the upcoming "Graceland." Ian Andrew Faulkner as Gus, the ruddy-faced Irish cabbie who loves pig knuckles and beer (not together, I don't think), was perfect; I honestly couldn't imagine him in any other role. Sara Rudolph was great as the awful Mrs. Jekes, the landlady who "could sour milk just by looking at it." I really enjoyed watching June play Miss Spinney and hope to see her again in "The Love Talker." Nguyen was fun to watch because his charac-

ter takes himself so seriously when he really isn't. The audience liked Jason Hildner, who played Arne Hildner, Eben's "colorful" artist friend. He had some of the best lines in the play.

Overall, I thought the play was very good. The only thing I found disappointing was the second act, which was a little depressing. The ending was good, though I was left still wondering, "Who is Jennie?" But then, I haven't seen a play in a long time, and don't usually get the punchline of really obscure jokes, so maybe it was just me.

The bottom line? See the play. It's worth the money. It runs in McLoughlin Theater Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. The last performance is on Sunday at 2:30 p.m.

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