

## Letters

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## The values of victims' rights



Say it loud and proud!

Salena De La Cruz  
Design Editor

It seems like a lifetime ago that my world was shattered. I was stabbed seven times by a 15-year-old girl, and the justice system I thought was there to protect me left me victimized again, wondering where my rights as a victim were.

It has been almost four years since the night of reckoning. That night she and another girl were arguing, and another girl tried to step in the middle, she pushed me. I pushed her back. She stopped and I thought it was done; it had only just begun. She hit me in the face. I got her in a headlock and

swung back. I had her on the ground and saw blood on her face and realized someone was hurt. I started walking away when I heard someone screaming, "She was stabbed!" I thought to myself, I don't have a knife, it isn't me. It was then that I saw blood running down my arm and felt wetness on my back, and pulled my hand away covered in blood. I ended up at Oregon Health and Sciences University Trauma Center for a night.

Since that night I've had to wait for the system to fight for me. It took approximately a year to go to court. I had to call them to receive updates on the case. They asked if court dates were good for her, never me. They didn't even consider her already 26 misdemeanors or four felony charges. Her defense was that I was older and bigger and could have done her more damage. Isn't *could* have the operative phrase here? I *could* have, but chose not to. She was SENTENCED to NOT A DAMN THING! Her official charge was Assault Four, a misdemeanor. She spent three days in the Donald E. Long Juvenile Detention Center and was ordered to pay \$1,500 in restitution at \$50

increments every month beginning October 1999, to be paid off by May 2002. She usually pays \$50 every six to eight months. When I call the mediator (someone who is the middle person between the victim and offender) in the case he tells me she is trying so hard to be responsible. I tell him all I want is for my nightmare to end, but it won't. Not as long as I live because I never got justice.

In these three or so years that have passed I've been to numerous doctor appointments for arm pain and back pain, due to my muscle wrapping around my nerve (according to my physical therapist), as well as post-traumatic stress. I still, to this day, have problems with my back, and she still has \$692 to pay in restitution.

In reliving this nightmare, I hope to enlighten people as to some of the things victims go through and how, maybe, things can change. "To preserve and protect the right of crime victims to justice," is just a section of the rights of victims in the Constitution of the State of Oregon, Article I, which sums up what victims should get. But they aren't because so much is done to give the offenders more rights because they are apparently trying so hard to change. I'm not bitter,

just existing in the judicial system and the rights victims seem not to have.

In a recent news brief in *USA Today*, President Bush was reported as trying to get more victims' rights in every state. That's a great first step, but the problem is not all those rules and regulations apply when you are a victim who is older than the offender. Currently, there is Measure 11, which holds juveniles to higher standards, but in my case she wasn't held to a higher standard because of the "could have." Because I was older and bigger.

She may pay the remaining amount off soon, or I could be waiting for years. But even if it is paid off, she'll never be the same as she was before I ever do. I've learned to forgive what she's done because that is the way I was raised, but I will never forget. Even if I wanted to, I have seven scars to remind me that justice wasn't served and it probably never will be. I hope Bush realizes that every time a person is victimized once by the system, there will never truly be justice and never truly be victims' rights.

To reach Salena De La Cruz e-mail wonderwoman41477@yahoo.com or drop by B-104.

## Save kids from office jobs; send them to school



Whatever.

Jennifer Kane  
Staff Writer

I can remember one of the greatest days of the school year when I was younger was Take Our Daughters To Work Day. It's a day dedicated to skipping school so I could hang out with my mother or father and peer into their daily lives. It was never a toss up as to what parent I chose to go to work with. It was always my mother.

That's because my father is a businessman. He sits at a desk all day looking at numbers. If those numbers are perhaps out of sorts, he throws them on somebody else's desk, and that person has to do the dirty work. I promised myself I would never become a person like that.

Two years ago I was in dire need of employment, and that's

when Take Our Daughters to Work Day became my life. I got a "temporary/summer" job at my father's office, where I became the girl who had to do the dirty work of all the shirt-and-tie men like my dad. That's when it became perfectly clear as to why I never skipped school and went to work with my dad.

Now 679 days later, I am still employed at the office. (I actually have a calendar with big red X's, counting the days that I have been a part of this horrendous working experience.) These jobs are simply a trap. Nobody actually enjoys their day-in and day-out office employment, but there are always so many people who have been working them for so long.

So when it came time for Take Our Daughters to Work Day this year, I honestly didn't expect many kids to join us at the office. If their parents are barely able to make it through a full eight-hour day, why would they expect their six- and seven-year-olds to be much different? But by 8 a.m., there was quite a showing of ram-bunctious rug rats running and screaming through the different departments. There was no escaping them.

By approximately 8:07 a.m., I heard the first "Mommy, I'm bored." And this phrase escaped every child's mouth at least 16 times during the remainder of the

day.

Now don't get me wrong, the office did a good job at providing "entertainment" for the

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kids. This included numerous tours of areas in the office, including the connecting warehouse, and even a visit to the semi trucks in the parking lot!

So what is my point you ask? No kid ever says "I want to be stuck in a dead-end desk job when I grow up."

The point of Take Our Daughters to Work Day is to give them a look into the lives of their parents. But if that life merely includes sitting on your butt typing numbers, then maybe you should just send your kids to school for the day. If you feel that your job is close to torture, well then, your kids are probably going to think they've actually entered hell. Please, for the sake of your child's sanity, next year on Take Our Daughters to Work Day, push them onto that big yellow bus they will thank you later.

To reach Jennifer Kane e-mail jenk403@aol.com or drop by B-104.

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