

Designated Driver

The value of the UO's DDS program

I am a driver for the UO Designated Driver Shuttle. In just one year on the job I have been stolen from and physically assaulted. I've seen a van vandalized and another hit by a car. I've broken up multiple fights and cleaned up unpleasant amounts of bodily fluids, but most importantly, I've prevented countless people from driving an automobile while under the influence. And we're open seven nights a week.



We have recently, for reasons unknown to us, come under attack by fellow students, being accused of not doing our job properly. Vague articles were written for *The Daily Emerald* with unclear accusations, giving our riders the false impression that our employees have been driving while intoxicated. Two of our employees did drink alcohol on one occasion while secluded in our office, but they never got behind the wheel of, or set foot in, a DDS van that night. The necessary actions were taken to resolve that one isolated incident. However, because of the accusations leveled against us, we are still asked on a nightly basis why our employees are driving drunk, which never happened to begin with.

As a program funded by the UO, we give rides to at least 200 university students on an average weekend night. We are frequently so busy on weekends that we have four to five vans working simultaneously to handle the high demand for our service. These seats are filled with students who are under the influence and are unable to drive, or simply students who are looking for a safe ride home to seemingly all corners of Eugene and Springfield.

After the first article was written, almost all of our passengers were under the impression that our employees were driving under the influence. I do not see why this one event which only involved two employees should have such an impact on DDS as a whole. There is no reason for our riders to ever feel unsafe when riding in our vans.

The articles written about us depict us as an unorganized group of people who have no passion for our jobs, but these assumptions are based on the few conflicts we have encountered this year. They overlook all the positive contributions our program offers. While we have had tough issues that have been dealt with, we still continue to offer a rare and widely used service to university students by preventing as many people as possible from getting behind the wheel while intoxicated.

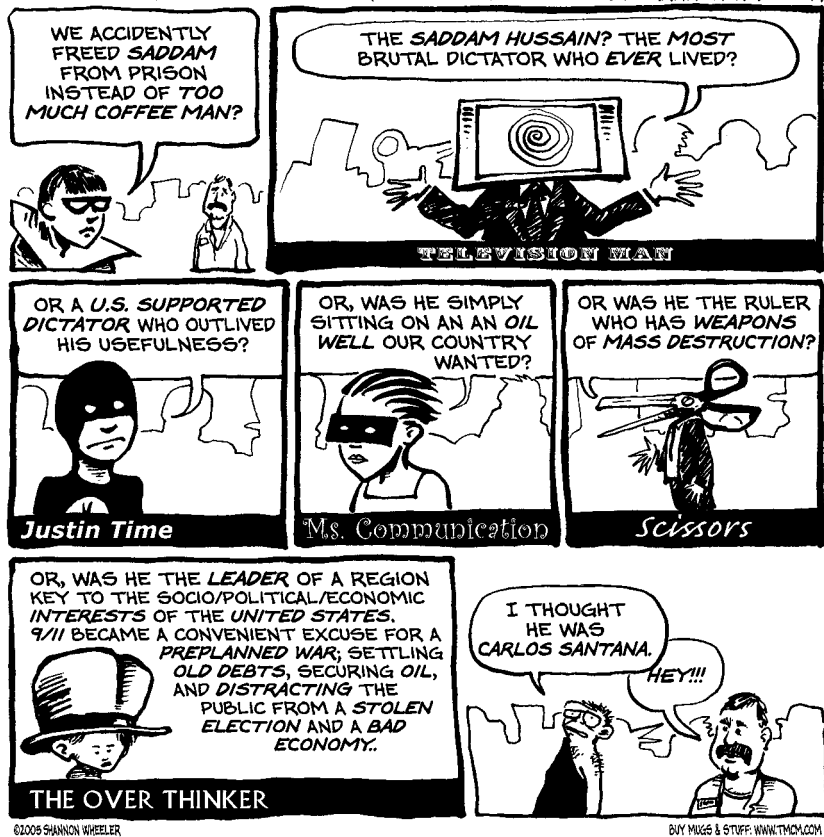
DDS has five operational vans, which are used every week. And with about 20,000 students at the university, the vans are (not surprisingly) used to capacity almost every night of the week. However, with students living in every pocket of Eugene and Springfield, having five vans running around is not always enough to get everybody safely home quickly. We are forced to periodically turn off our phones so that wait times do not amount to several hours.

This action has been depicted as negligence. But we can only take so many calls. On weekend nights it is common for us to work far past the end of our shift, sometimes keeping us out past 4 am.

We have hit our share of snags and complications, but I do not see why these small and infrequent occurrences should be used to make generalized assumptions about our service. Regardless of what both the past and future hold for DDS, we will continue to try our hardest to provide the community a valuable service by providing students an alternative to driving intoxicated, and a safe ride home.

Travis Allan Edwards is a driver for the UO Designated Driver Shuttle, phone 346-RIDE.

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

HITTING CONCRETE

Emily Willie's frustration and disgust of being "stuck in Eugene" (6/23) and the perceived snubbing of her son is palpable. However, it'd be interesting to know more about this family. Are they from somewhere else?

It's taken me eight years of living and working in different countries to discover that when you are from Somewhere Else, as uncomfortable and isolating as it can be, to not fit in is part of the experience. Birds of a feather and all that. Do they hail from the East Coast? Out East it's "I heard what you said — I'll discard the part I didn't like." Out West it's "I can't believe you said that — I'll just avoid you from now on."

What about her son — was he an asshole? A bore? Was his sense of humor lame? Or was he just so smart he was ripe for being cut down a la the "tall poppy syndrome"?

Some people tell me it has taken them four to 17 years to feel accepted in Eugene. Others find their spot instantly. A friend told me "I have a giant acorn tree in my backyard. Every year it drops a shitload of acorns. Some hit the soil, some hit cement. The ones that hit the cement don't grow."

You can hit concrete anywhere. Finding that gravelly spot, in the sun, where you can take root and spread limbs, takes a quite a bit of doing.

It has taken me a long time to realize that in some places you go in with light sabers swooshing, others, you have to be still, watch what moves, what gives under pressure, what rises to meet you and what doesn't. One day I'll wake up, and that stuck feeling will have dissolved. Just at the edges.

Lynette Chiang

www.galfromdownunder.com

A FUN GUY AMONG US

One June 14 I listened to KOPT's Nancy Stapp interview John Musumeci. And when you consider that, while the M-Man's wife is the actual station owner, he must nevertheless have some degree of influence over Nancy's

livelihood, I feel she conducted herself rather admirably. Maybe she wasn't as hard-hitting as I'd have liked, but still I thought she performed better than others might have under similar circumstances.

I do have to echo one complaint she expressed; or rather, I was left wondering why so many of the man's critics failed to call in and grill him. Of course, it could have been that the lines were full; nor did she choose to read e-mails aloud that day. I didn't attempt to call, but then I don't usually phone talk shows, simply because instead of a reasoned, rational exchange and examination of ideas, too often things turn to shouting, name-calling, interrupting, and wandering — or deflecting — from the main issues. Pointless, really.

As for Musumeci's performance, I got the impression of a man trying to paint himself as "well-meaning but misunderstood." OK; maybe. But one thing he said did catch my attention. When asked why he goes to so much effort to make so much money, his reply was: "Because it's fun."

Now it could just be me, but I find it hard to be sympathetic to a world view that justifies influencing decisions which affect literally hundreds of thousands of lives in major ways, simply because doing so gets one's ya-ya's off.

Bill Smee
Springfield

ECO-TOURISM HERE

Last week I attended an interesting event called FACTS (Family and Community Town Supper) sponsored by the Helios Network here in Eugene. FACTS is a series of community dinner meetings aimed at educating and discussing issues of importance to the development of this place we call home.

The theme of the FACTS dinner I attended was eco-tourism. I am interested in this subject for a number of reasons. First, I represent an economic development project called Oregon Crafted that has just published a tour guide to rural artists studios. This proj-

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