

LEISHA MCPARLAND OF THE
UO'S HOLDEN CENTER SERVICE
LEARNING PROGRAM



PHOTO BY TRASK BEDORTH

people think. McParland says the Holden Center welcomes volunteers of all ages, regardless of their student status. The Holden Center's Service Learning Program pairs volunteers with various nonprofit organizations in Lane County, such as FOOD For Lane County and Womenspace.

Furthermore, other volunteer-based organizations such as Greenhill Humane Society and NextStep Recycling are always searching for volunteers to help improve the community. And as the next election cycle gets underway, local politicians such as DeFazio offer volunteer opportunities and internships for students to work on their campaigns.

O'Connell encourages young people to go to City Council meetings and address the issues that concern them. "You really can make a difference, especially at the local government level because the leaders are so accessible," he says. "Find the topics you are passionate about and pursue them."

Though The Bus Project had to close its Eugene office due to a lack of steady volunteerism and minimal funding, Baggot says she would love to see another "Bus station" open in Eugene. The statewide program is open to people from all areas, and interested Eugeneans should email info@busproject.org to find out how they can ride the Bus and do something on a larger scale.

"Young people in Eugene have so much to offer Oregon," Baggot says. "There is a way of thinking about the world that makes Eugene special. ... Eugene has leadership, support, energy that can make anything happen." **EW**

obligation to humanity to be involved in the community and improve our nation for future generations, whether through environmental activism, human welfare or political action.

After a week of being sick, Graham visited the Occupy Eugene site in order to check on the progress of the Expression Center he'd envisioned. As he looked at the walls made from an old Taco Time building, the 23-year-old says he felt as though the universe was responding to him. The first real structure of this Occupy site was taking shape, creating a space for Occupiers to make signs and adding to Graham's vision of the movement gaining permanence. In that moment, Graham realized that something extraordinary had occurred — he'd made a difference. "It's not just signs," he says. "It's art. It's a platform where people can express themselves."

apathy toward young people. Baggot says it could be a lack of outreach from existing organizations. She says there are two critical ways of promoting civic involvement among youth: ensuring that they know their efforts matter, and making civic engagement fun and exciting.

At the Bus, Baggot and her peers use social media and tie-ins to contemporary subjects of importance to promote youth activism. O'Connell also harnesses the power of the internet, using social networking sites to spread his political concerns during elections and campaigning. And while in office, he reaches out to his constituents by posting updates on Facebook about his proposed measures and government doings.

For Rodgers, the key to engaging youth is providing them with positive role models. It starts in the classroom, showing children through mentorship that they can make a difference and that community involvement is valuable. And sometimes, finding out that what you are passionate about doesn't have a thing to do with politics.

Rodgers admits that he is among the majority of students who don't even know who Congressman Peter DeFazio is, but he's okay with that. He says this sort of disconnect could be remedied by politicians making more of an effort to get out and actually talk to their constituents. Rodgers acknowledges that our digital age has made it all too easy to lose this personal touch, though he adds that showing youth they have a stake and a voice in government can reduce the amount of apathy in the community. "It's important for (politicians) to be role models," he says.

McParland agrees, adding that it's important to highlight the achievements of young people who already are doing great things and making a difference. She says that by showing other community members — old and young — what young people are doing, people will become inspired and possibly even catch the "contagious" desire to volunteer.

Ways to get involved

"I've got news for people," O'Connell says, "there are a lot of people out there that are just like me and of similar age to myself." He adds that what people need are the right conditions "to get out there and do something."

Getting involved with a political campaign or with a volunteer organization is easier than most

'YOUTH JUST NEED TO REALIZE THAT THEY HAVE THE MOST AT STAKE SINCE THEY HAVE THE MOST TIME LEFT TO LIVE ON THIS PLANET.'

— PERRY GRAHAM

McParland says she is most inspired when she sees so many volunteers working on something together — and especially when they pass on the itch to friends who have never been involved in such volunteer efforts. "There's just something so inspiring about seeing people get out and do something in a communal effort — to see one person do something that is totally selfless."

How to make youth care

Graham says the best way to inspire civic engagement is for youth to find what they are most passionate about — the environment, politics, animal rights, human rights.

McParland says the source of that passion is discovered through exposure to new things. She encourages eager young volunteers to try their hands at various projects, even pulling weeds in community gardens. "I like to tell volunteers who just came from pulling weeds that it may be something small — just one drop in the bucket. But it's a drop in a big bucket of a larger picture."

Perhaps it's not the youth who are to blame; maybe it's the politicians and major activist organizations that exhibit



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A.J. O'CONNELL

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