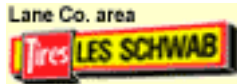


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Active Eugene Singled Out

By Lewis Taylor

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Eugene, a great place to meet active women?

That's the ruling by a national men's magazine, which calls Eugene one of the "50 best places to live" and singles it out as a great place for runners to meet their soulmates.

"If (our readers) are going to meet a life partner or a date, they're going to meet somebody who is equally fit," said Jake Ward, senior editor of Men's Journal.

"With Eugene having a big university and beautiful setting, we know people come from all over the country to be a part of that scene."

The April 2006 issue of Men's Journal, which hits newsstands today and features big-wave surfer Laird Hamilton on the cover, mentions the adidas bark trail near Amazon Parkway and calls Eugene the kind of place where "pickup lines are delivered at a jog."

"It's possible," said Brian Cohen, a 19-year-old single Eugene resident. "I usually go to parties, but you aren't going to meet your soulmate at a party."



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Others weren't buying it.

"It's hard to believe we'd be in the top 50 for anything," joked Peter Thompson, a single, 21-year-old University of Oregon senior and Eugene native.

Eugene may not quite be ready to swap its long-winded slogan, The World's Greatest City for Arts and the Outdoors, for one that focuses on picking up well-toned women, but the magazine story did mention another Eugene calling card: "Track Town U.S.A."

UO distance legend Steve Prefontaine also gets name checked in the magazine story, as does the Eugene Running Company. The retail store's group runs are deemed a good place to meet a life partner.

"It beats going to a bar," said Michael Black, the non-single co-owner of the Eugene Running Company.

Black said the group runs have not yet given rise to any runner marriages - at least none that he knows of.

"I don't know if the majority of people (at the group runs) are single," he said. "But single people do show up."

Justin Phillips, afternoon DJ for the radio station Star 102.3-FM, said the Nike store was one place he knew of where runners could meet other runners.

A bachelor with his own personal and professional dating experience to draw on, he said jogging wasn't the only way for Eugene singles to meet. Phillips has emceed "speed dating" events at Eugene bars, where 12 men and 12 women make the rounds and spend six minutes with each other.

"The thing that's neat about dating people in Eugene is you never know what you're going to get," Phillips said.

Eugene wasn't the only town singled out by Men's Journal. The magazine mentions Fruita, Colo.; Asheville, N.C.; and Santa Cruz, Calif., where "eligible women surfers outnumber eligible men 2-to-1."

In compiling the rankings, Ward said, the magazine used a highly unscientific method of relying on writers who were familiar with different regions of the country. Other cities were singled out as "up and coming," "telecommunities," "meccas" and "comeback" cities.

"The one unifying thread among them is that they're all places for adventure-seeking people," Ward said.

Other Oregon cities mentioned in the story included Hood River, named one of the country's most active cities, and Bonanza (population: 411), which was called one of the country's great hideouts.

Portland was named the "best of the best" for its combination of "adventure, attractiveness and affordability."

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