



Photo by Steven Wall

Alcoholism commonly plagues students; local programs offer counsel, treatment

By Kim Kalapus
Of the Emerald

Drinking... loss of control... self-destructive behavior... guilt feelings — and then more drinking to quiet the guilt. This is the insidious daily cycle of those who suffer from alcoholism.

It's an expensive, painful and deadly disease, one from which the career-bound college population is not exempt.

Accurate figures on the scope of the problem are hard to obtain because of its personal nature and the variety of treatment options available, says Jackie Shannon-Ney of Drinking Decisions, Inc. But Shannon-Ney says the disease exists at the University and is comparable to problems at other campuses throughout the country.

With drives such as National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Week, which was sponsored in part by Miller Beer a few weeks ago, alcohol-related problems of college students have been brought to public attention.

School pressures, separation from family and life in an environment that promotes alcohol use can weaken a person who may already be prone to alcohol abuse, Shannon-Ney says.

Although many students drink heavily in college and don't go on to become adult alcoholics, some are driven to the disease by personal factors such as family history of alcoholism, she says.

Sometimes friends encourage alcoholics to go on denying their problem, says Tod Schneider, director of outpatient services for the Lane County Council on Alcoholism.

For example, they might do assignments or make excuses for a friend who is often too drunk to go to class, Schneider says. But he says that helping the alcoholic cover up the problem only allows it to worsen. He emphasizes the importance of seeking professional help and support rather than struggling alone.

While the University has no official program to aid alcoholics, many agencies offer a variety of services in Eugene.

Resources are available for the student who has accepted that he or she has a problem.

Acceptance is the first step and usually the most difficult, Schneider says, adding that the majority of alcoholics who come to the LCCOA for treatment are referred to the agency by a friend or family member.

After a preliminary meeting with the reference person, the LCCOA counselor meets with the alcoholic and one or two people who are close to him or her. Once the alcoholic's denial of dependency ends, the severity of his or her problem is evaluated. The counselor then refers the person to either the council's own inpatient or outpatient program or to another community program.

LCCOA offers its own residential treatment programs as well as outpatient counseling and group support sessions. Fees for these services are based on ability to pay. The council, 474 Willamette St., also provides a 24-hour crisis line (484-1712), community education and a consultation program.

One non-profit treatment center on LCCOA's referral list is Serenity Lane, near campus at the intersection of 16th Avenue and Patterson Street. John Green, counselor and patient coordinator for Serenity Lane, estimates that University students comprise about 7 to 10 percent of the center's patients.

The center offers a 30-day inpatient program, including a two- to 10-day withdrawal period under a doctor's care and counseling and an 11-month "aftercare" program.

The outpatient program consists of an evaluation followed by 25 therapy sessions over a five-week period. This approach allows the patient to continue functioning in the community while still receiving intense therapy, Green says.

"Our main focus is on group therapy and helping people gain tools to stay sober one day at a time," he says.

Serenity Lane's fees range from \$1,700 for outpatient care to \$6,000 for inpatient services. Major medical insurance companies will cover up to 80 percent of the fees, Green says.

Serenity Lane's 24-hour phone number is 687-1110.

Another nearby residential center with similar services is Buckley House, Inc., 707 E. 17th (343-6512).

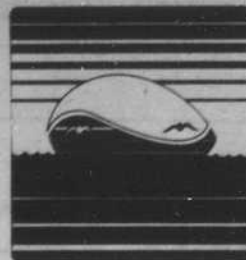
And treatment also can be found at Drinking Decisions, Inc., which offers three levels of therapy: basic education, counseling for people on the verge of a drinking problem and a six-month plan of intense help for alcoholics. The programs provide information and support for problem and non-problem drinkers of all ages.

Shannon-Ney estimates that University students make up about 10 percent of the program's participants. Drinking Decisions, 1188 Olive St. (484-9274), offers advice to people who feel they have lost control over their use of alcohol.

Alcoholics Anonymous, the group-support-oriented, worldwide organization, has no scheduled meeting on campus because earlier meetings drew sparse attendance. However, AA does meet at more than 50 other locations in the Eugene area each week. A list of meeting places may be obtained by writing to the Emerald Valley Intergroup Central Office, 795 Willamette St., 97401.

AA is a society dedicated to helping alcoholics achieve sobriety and has no membership fees. In addition to support groups for alcoholics, AA sponsors Al-Anon (741-2841), a support group for friends and family of alcoholics.

A complete listing of agencies and individuals working in the field of substance abuse may be obtained from the Chemical People Task Force, 2055 Patterson St. (342-4451.)



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