

'Network' to aid groups in stopping substance abuse

By Meg Springer
Of the Emerald

The use of alcohol and other substances among University students is the source of a number of campus problems, said Shirley Wilson, dean of students.

"Already this year we have had several accidents, some fatal, among UO students as a direct result of substance abuse," said Wilson.

National surveys document that 90 percent of college students drink alcohol and 20 to 30 percent of these students will develop serious problems related to their alcohol use.

Many students, faculty and staff are grouping together to try to create an environment free of substance abuse on this

campus.

Jane DeGidio, director of student development, and Judy Baldwin, assistant director, began writing a newsletter called Network because they saw "a growing need for a communications network on campus for people interested in eliminating substance abuse."

"Network is the thread that ties us all together," said Wilson. "It goes out to anyone interested or active in substance-abuse prevention."

The newsletter is published twice quarterly, and provides information on issues, programs and updates concerning substance abuse prevention locally and nationally, according to Wilson.

"There is quite a mix of peo-

ple interested in substance-abuse prevention on campus," said Anne Wyatt, member of the Network communications committee. "We need to continue to provide contact and information for people interested."

Wyatt, a journalism graduate and a recovering alcoholic, became involved with Network because of a desire to share her personal experiences with others.

"It's important for my own recovery to share the good things that I've come to know. Paradoxically, I need to give it away or else I can't hold on to it myself," said Wyatt.

Network stems from a core group on campus that is concerned about others, according to Wyatt.

"We really care about others, otherwise we wouldn't be involved," Wyatt said.

University faculty also is becoming involved. Recently, Stoddard Malarkey, director of the University composition department, planned a three-part seminar for English instructors interested in learning about behaviors indicating substance abuse, effective intervention techniques and resources available for students.

"This program is meant to familiarize the faculty with the central concepts surrounding substance abuse," said Steve Gallon, community educator for Serenity Lane who led the campus seminars on April 30, May 7 and May 14. "We want to offer suggestions and training on interventions so that the instructors are able to be of assistance to their students without appearing to be busy bodies."

Teachers need to be alert to the problem and call attention to the student's performance levels in a non-accusatory manner, Malarkey said.

"We're not pointing fingers or trying to be policemen, narcs or in-depth counselors," he added.

During the three two-hour sessions, instructors learned basic concepts and terms, listened to recovering students share personal viewpoints and suggestions, and were informed about the various programs available to students who want to seek help.

Joslyn Schier, a graduate teaching fellow in the English department who attended the workshops, said she now has a heightened awareness of inconsistent student performance and realizes the possibility of substance abuse involvement.

"We can't just brush over the student's problems," said Schier. "We need to show a



Graphic by Lorraine Rath

concerned recognition and then refer the student to an expert."

Malarkey intends to offer future seminars to all interested departments.

Student involvement also is increasing. A new student organization, Our Choice, is promoting a wellness lifestyle

other students," said Glen Synoground, an Our Choice member. "Our Choice was formed by a group of students who recognize that we, because we're students, are the single most important element to address and find solutions for substance-abuse problems."

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— Anne Wyatt

in such a way that substance abuse is reduced on campus.

"We believe that the key ingredient to addressing these problems are student-run organizations that provide a vehicle for students to help

Our Choice helps students discover creative alternatives to substance abuse, and provides a meeting place for students who need peer support to facilitate adoption of healthy lifestyle

Turn to Drugs, Page 12

Students discuss recovery from substance addiction

By Meg Springer
Of the Emerald

Because of the sensitivity of this issue, fictitious names are used in some cases in this article.

Alcohol and drug use is widespread on campus and many students are unaware of their own addictions; but outside support and concern can help students confront their problem and seek recovery treatment.

"Alcohol just didn't ever seem to be a problem. I grew up in an alcoholic family and drinking alcohol was just like drinking a soft drink to me," said Alisa, a University junior. "Now that I'm sober I'm able to re-examine my life, and it's very painful to see what was happening when I was growing up."

Alisa started drinking when she was eight years old. Her parents were alcoholics, and Alisa began to drink to "get away from all the abuse," she said.

"It was a matter of survival," she said. "We didn't talk within our family and I was told never to repeat anything that went on at home. I started using drugs and alcohol to ease the pain; otherwise I would have gone crazy."

On Alisa's 30th birthday, she snorted \$200 worth of cocaine. The next morning she said she woke up and started crying.

"I was disgusted with myself. I knew that I had to stop. I was bitchy and yelling a lot. My own kids were even scared of me," she said.

Alisa abstained from all substances on her own for six months before entering Alcoholics Anonymous for additional support.

"It's real hard for me to be around other alcoholics now because I can see myself in them. All I can do to help them is to use myself as an example and hope to plant a seed so that when they decide to quit, they know where to go," said Alisa.

A family counselor planted the seed in the mind of Daniel, a University sophomore who is a recovering alcoholic. When he was 17, Daniel's father and a counselor approached him with his drinking problem, and Daniel promised to quit. The promise was good for one month.

"I started to smoke pot instead of drinking," said Daniel. "I also began experimenting with acid and other drugs. I guess the plan was to let me do drugs until I hit rock bottom. It was up to me to want to change."

"I'd always thought my dog was the only person that really loved me. I'd get high or trashed and forget to feed him and feel a lot of pain and guilt," Daniel said.

Turn to Alcohol, Page 12

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