

Tow service for drivers who drink in the holidays

By Kaly Soto
Oregon Daily Emerald

Every year, they offer their services, and every year people ignore them. They are trying once again this year, and maybe people should listen and hear their plea.

Last year, Oregon Life Tow provided 162 tows home to people who were bright enough to realize they were incapacitated by alcohol and could not drive home. They will begin to service inebriated patrons at midnight Wednesday and the service will continue through New Year's Day.

Oregon Life Tow is sponsored by Atlantic Richfield Co. in conjunction with Mothers Against Drunk Driving and Oregon Tow Truck Association. The idea is that if you are going to drink during the holidays you're going to need a ride home. Of course, as the sponsors urged, the best choice would be not to drink at all during the holiday season.

At the annual Oregon Life Tow kickoff,

representatives from all of the organizations involved showed up to speak their piece. Tim Curtis, a sales representative for ARCO AM/PM was on hand to do some corporate well wishing.

"ARCO is proud to sponsor Oregon Life Tow for the fifth year," he said. "We are committed to safety."

Next, Bill Rice, who lost a son to a drunken driver seven years ago, shared his testimony and pleaded with people to be cautious during the holidays.

"I think that Oregon Life Tow is another way to get home safe and sober. The first is not to drink and drive," he said.

On Dec. 19, Rice's son Michael was delivering pizza when he was hit from the rear by a drunk driver, and the impact forced his car into an intersection and the path of another car.

Michael lived for 11 days, and "it was the worst time of my life. I am just now getting back. I plead with everyone, please do not drink and drive. If you do drink during the holidays call Oregon

Life Tow," Rice said.

Lt. Richard Weiss of the Springfield office of the Oregon State Police was very optimistic about the upcoming holiday season.

"The Oregon State Police support and applaud the efforts of Oregon Life Tow. Stopping drunk driving has always been a high priority. Last year 80 people were arrested during the holiday season. We had no fatalities in Lane County from drunken driving, though. Every available person will be used for patrol during the holidays. I'm sure most people would rather ride home in a tow truck than in an Oregon State Police vehicle," Weiss said.

Finally, Lee Dannerick spoke on behalf of the Oregon Tow Truck Association.

"You can now be towed (if you are intoxicated) without charge providing that you live within a 25-mile radius. Last year, there were 200 fatalities in Oregon due to drunk driving; we'd like to make that zero," he said.

Every year about 40 tow truck opera-

tors participate in Oregon Life Tow. Since then, the program has provided for more than 640 tows during the holiday season.

"There are more than 640 men and women alive today to enjoy this holiday season with their families and friends, because they made the right decision to use Oregon Life Tow sometime during the past four years," said Jeff Kuhn, ARCO AM/PM's district sales manager.

The chairwoman of MADD Oregon said Oregon Life Tow's holiday service is invaluable.

"Five years ago, before Oregon Life Tow began, the winter holiday period from Thanksgiving to New Year's was much more deadly for motorists than the summer holiday period. Alcohol-related fatalities were much higher and drinking drivers did not have the range of support that is now available," Jeanne Canfield said.

If you are feeling a little too much of the holiday spirit(s), you may call 1-800-243-4450.

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Working miracles with disabled children

SPOKANE (AP) - Dawn Frederick had held many sick and dying children. This was one she couldn't put down.

She carried the tiny blue-eyed baby during her duties at Sacred Heart Medical Center, sometimes laying her on a blanket on the floor next to her as she worked as a pediatric nurse.

The child, who had slipped beneath her bathwater at 11 months, had been declared legally dead. Revived, she was so damaged by the near-drowning that doctors saw little hope she would ever walk, talk or see.

The day Frederick reported for work and found the infant had been sent to Interlake School, she thought, well, tomorrow will bring another child.

Then she drove to Medical Lake.

Today, the "vegetative" infant has grown into a giggling sixth-grader who dawdles after school and loves Disney and dumb jokes. At school, she reads books aloud to first-graders. At home, she leans over the bed of a foster sister and coos like a mother dove.

The only thing brighter than her smile is the one on her adopted mother's face.

"This kid is my miracle," Frederick said from her Spokane home. "I am looking for others."

Frederick was single, 50 years older than her charge and working full time when she legally adopted Cinnamon Dawn Frederick.

The afternoon she drove to the state hospital at Medical Lake, the tiny girl, trapped inside herself, gave a clear indication of how she felt about being separated from Frederick.

A single tear rolled down her cheek.

"God knows which children need mothers and which mothers need children," Frederick said.

With her own children grown and away,

'God knows which children need mothers and which mothers need children.'

— Dawn Frederick,
Foster mother for disabled children

Frederick began visiting Cinnamon on weekends, holidays, Christmas Day. She talked to the baby constantly, carried her everywhere and put her expectations as high as possible.

Cinnamon rose to meet them. By the time Frederick brought her home as a foster child at 2, she could mimic for her adopted mother a clock, "tick tock, tick tock." By the time she was legally adopted at 4, the child that doctors believed would never walk got out of her wheelchair and crossed the living room.

Today, she strides from room to room, ponytail bobbing. She loves the mall and McDonald's, roller coasters and the Spokane Interstate Fair.

And she loves her foster sisters. Five years ago, Frederick quit her job as an assistant nursing supervisor to become a foster mother for other children with severe handicaps. Now she also cares for three girls who cannot walk and talk.

A team of nurses and caregivers stream in and out of Frederick's snug home. School buses come and go. Frederick keeps a schedule that would rival any corporate executive's.

"I could never do this if I had a husband," she says with a laugh, standing in a dining room that has been converted to a bedroom. "It's a fishbowl existence."

But children do better at home, Frederick maintains. When Cinnamon moved in, she couldn't stop looking at the photographs and art on the wall. Institutional walls are bare.

Turning her home into a 24-hour-a-day

foster home was more natural than even Frederick could have imagined. Her own parents had cared for 86 foster children in addition to raising her and her sister.

Although 34 of the 350 foster homes in Spokane County take children with disabilities, Frederick is one of about four that takes medically fragile children who do not walk, said Myrah Swim, a social worker with the state Department of Social and Health Services.

Children with such needs often have loving families, but those families are ill-equipped to care for them.

Other foster children come from homes that are neither clean nor safe. Frederick's home is both. Outfitted with special beds, a hot tub and two kitchens, the home is divided into two wings of spotless, well-lit rooms. Frederick, who has a bachelor's degree in nursing administration, runs a tight ship.

"It's the Cadillac of foster homes," said Yvonne Bowers, a licensed practical nurse who specializes in pediatric home care. "She expects near perfection."

Toward that end, she has butted heads with teachers, doctors and caregivers. Frederick has fired attendants who did not meet her expectations and argued with doctors who think children should be institutionalized. She has pulled children out of schools they did not appear to thrive in.

"If they don't do right by my children, I come out roaring," Frederick admits. "I have non-verbal children; they cannot speak for themselves."

Last year, Frederick waged an 11-month battle with the state over funding.

"It's been difficult and time-consuming, but we appreciate that she cares," said Swim, who licenses foster homes for the state. "We know she does. She's very, very strong and a strong advocate for the children in her home."

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