

Mardi Gras celebration to benefit local child-parent charity

FUND-RAISER: The event will help Birth To Three, which helps strengthen family relationships

By Melissa Lebahn
Community Reporter

You don't have to go to Louisiana to get a little piece of New Orleans.

The second annual Mardi Gras Gala, a benefit for Birth To Three, will take place Saturday at the Eugene Hilton. Festivities begin in the lobby at 6 p.m.

Birth To Three is a nonprofit organization with a mission to strengthen families and ensure the well-being of children through parent education and support services.

Shelley Kurtz, a newscaster on the television station KVAL, will reign as queen of the Mardi Gras celebration.

It will be an evening of fine dining in a traditional New Orleans style, dancing to the Etouffee Band (a cajun swamp-rock band), costumed guests and street entertainment.

Admission cost is \$50 per person. The

price covers a dinner, dance and entertainment. A raffle will also take place, but tickets must be purchased separately.

Only 2,000 tickets are available for the event's first-time raffle. Prize packages include an Umpqua River condominium stay, a Rogue River raft trip, Mount Bachelor ski package, Hinman Winery private tour, a stay at the Eugene Hilton and tickets to a Hult Center performance.

Tickets for the raffle are \$5 each or six for \$25 and can be purchased at Grocery Cart stores, Euphoria Chocolate stores and from Birth To Three.

Major corporate sponsors of the event include McKenzie-Willamette Hospital, CD World, Romania Dealerships, KUGN AM & FM, Clear 102.3, Funk & Associates and Koke Printing.

All revenue raised from this event will go directly to Birth To Three.

Birth To Three is open to all families with infants and young children ages newborn to 5 years old. It provides group-based parent education and support services through a range of programs for parents of young children.

Birth To Three is a nonprofit organization with a mission to strengthen families and ensure the well-being of children through parent education and support services.

Program content and structure are determined by the specific needs of the families being served and are designed to complement already existing community services and resources.

The organization's goals are to give parents support, encourage them to be the best teacher and role model to their children and to help them understand that parenting is the most important and challenging job they will ever have.

The program respects the individuality of each parent and child, encourages parents to find their positive parenting styles and encourages families to build support by helping other families.

The programs and services are available to all families, regardless of ability to

pay.

There are five programs: an infants program, a toddler series, making parenting a pleasure program, a program for families whose primary language is Spanish and a program for teenage parents.

These programs are responsive to parents' interests, build on family strengths and provide information about parenting, including child development, stress and anger management, communication skills and positive discipline.

Since 1978, Birth To Three has brought new parents together to share their parenting experiences, increase their knowledge of early childhood development, learn about community resources and develop support networks among themselves.

Ellen Hyman, development director of Birth To Three, said the families build support among themselves. The support they form with each other tends to stick with them throughout the next several years.

"Families usually stay indirectly connected," Hyman said.

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Pot use may affect mental performance

CHICAGO (AP) — People who smoke marijuana heavily — at least two out of every three days — may have trouble paying attention and performing simple tasks even a day after going without the drug, a study found.

Researchers compared 65 college students who smoked at least 22 days a month with 64 similar students who smoked nine days a month at most.

A day after going without the drug, the heavy marijuana users performed significantly worse on tasks that involved sustaining and shifting attention.

The ability to remember things newly learned did not differ significantly between the groups, the researchers reported in Wednesday's issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Marijuana's after-effects on thinking might result from drug residue in the brain, from drug

withdrawal or from actual damage to the nervous system, said the study's authors, Dr. Harrison G. Pope Jr. and Deborah Yurgelun-Todd of Harvard-affiliated McLean Hospital in Belmont, Mass.

Only further study can determine whether mental impairment from marijuana "should be considered a public health problem," they said.

The researchers analyzed test results from students — all recruited from the Boston area — in a way that adjusted for differences in the subjects' inherent ability to think and perform, the researchers said.

More than 40 previous studies have explored the residual effects of marijuana on mental and psychological performance, and the results have been inconsistent, the researchers said.


The question is important because after more than a

decade of generally declining use, marijuana has increased markedly in popularity among U.S. youth in the last three to four years, a researcher not involved in the study said.

The researcher, Robert I. Block, an associate professor of anesthesiology at the University of Iowa College of Medicine in Iowa City, found previously that heavy marijuana use does indeed harm mental functioning after users abstain.

But Block warned against making too much of the findings. Far more evidence exists about thinking problems associated with drinking than with marijuana use, he said in an editorial accompanying the study.

Most of the thinking problems reported in the new study would not make a heavy marijuana user stand out in a crowd, but they could hurt a person's academic performance and worsen over years, he said.

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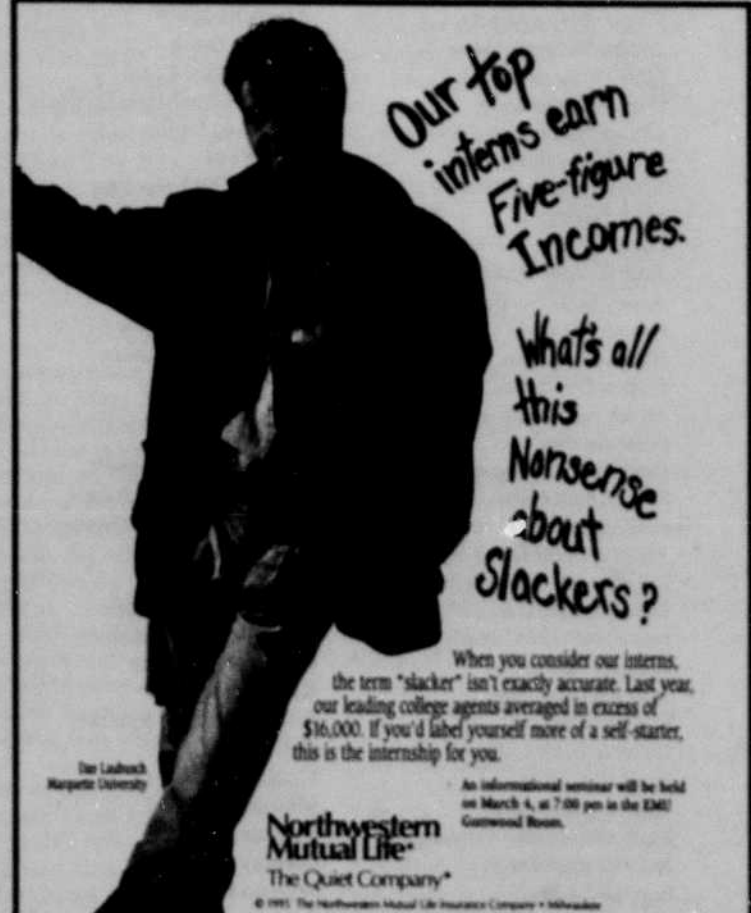
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An informational seminar will be held on March 4, at 7:00 pm in the EMU Commons Room.

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