

April awareness targets youths

■ Educating underage drinkers is a top priority of Alcohol Awareness Month

By Sara Lieberth
Oregon Daily Emerald

The statistics don't lie. Alcohol-related crimes, arrests, injuries and deaths continue to plague the nation's youth, including the considerably large demographic of underage college students.

In an effort to raise consciousness on this problem that won't go away, the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence designates April as Alcohol Awareness Month.

Nina Robart, project director for the Oregon Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking, said the best way to combat the problems of alcohol use and abuse is through policy and environmental change.

"Our emphasis is on prevention and treatment work statewide," she said, "but really on decreasing the availability of alcohol to youth, too."

Robart said getting information out to alcohol merchants and to hotel managers who rent rooms

during prom season is part of their year-long campaign to curb youth drinking.

"We want to convey, basically, that it's a problem and you can do something about it," she said.

According to 1999 NCADD reports, college students spend more on alcohol than on non-alcoholic drinks and books combined and their drinking is linked to two-thirds of all sexual assaults on campuses nationwide.

Furthermore, nearly half of college students who were victims of campus crimes last year said they were drinking or using drugs when they were victimized. And statistically, students with D average grade point averages drink three times as much as those who earn A's.

In Oregon specifically, drinking and driving crashes are the No. 1 cause of death among teenagers, and the average age young people start drinking in the state is 10.

"The unfortunate truth is that most people start drinking at this early age," Lane County Prevention coordinator C.A. Baskerville said. "We need to begin actively role modeling responsible use."

Collegiate alcohol use

At both two- and four-year institutions, the heaviest drinkers of alcohol earn the lowest grades.

Each year, sororities and fraternities spend roughly \$200 million more on alcohol than all other students combined.

Forty-four percent of college students reported binge drinking in the past two weeks.

SOURCE: CA Presley et al., "Alcohol and Drugs on American College Campuses"

Baskerville said that in a collaborative effort, the community-based prevention groups, private agencies and local government that make up the Lane County Prevention Coalition have recently agreed to focus on underage drinking not just for the month of April but throughout 2000.

Speaking on behalf of the local chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, office manager Charlie Durrant said their projects are by no means limited to April.

"Drunk driving and underage drinking do not go away the other 11 months of the year," she said.

Gambling

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the NCAA tournament through pools can lead to more serious consequences.

"You start out with these innocent pools, but it gets to be a lot more serious," said Gary Gray, who is in charge of complying NCAA regulations for the University athletic department. "The Pac-10 is trying to better educate students about the problems with

gambling."

In coordination with the NCAA, Whyte and Behavioral Health Online are creating awareness about the dangers of gambling addiction. On Behavioral Health's Web site — www.gobho.com — Whyte will moderate a chat room that will discuss ways to cope with the addiction. The discussion will be held today from 5 to 6 p.m.

Behavioral Health also provides information on gambling problems with advice from doc-

tors as well as contacts for further help.

"Behavioral Health has a lot of good mental health credibility," Whyte said.

Whyte's organization also supports compulsive gamblers through a national hotline. The number is 1-800-522-4700.

"We just want to make sure that if people need help, they get it," Whyte said. "It's a serious issue that is very treatable. The most important thing is to take that first step: telling someone."



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74% of UO students drink 1 or fewer days a week... or don't drink at all.

Most UO students have 4 drinks or fewer when they party.



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