

Recovery Month is about better health for everybody



KAREN WHEELER

September has been designated as National Recovery Month with a focus on educating and celebrating the many rewards recovery has to offer. Eastern Oregon residents are very aware of the impact that substance use has on those with substance use disorders and those who love them. In this light, September is a time to come together and reflect on not only this issue, but also the positive and affirming message that recovery is both possible and attainable.

In all, 3.8% of U.S. adults experienced a co-occurring substance use disorder and mental illness in 2019 (9.5 million people).

In 2020, 2,388 (42.4 of 1,000) Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care

Organization (EOCCO) members were identified as having a Substance Use Disorder (SUD); 7,192 (127.6 of 1,000) EOCCO members were identified with Mental Health disparities; and 897 (15.9 of 1,000) EOCCO members were identified as having co-occurring mental health/SUD issues. These numbers do not address the impact that SUD/MH issues have on the community, families, or peers of those living with the effects of SUD/MH disparities.

Last year and in 2021, GOBHI and Oregon Recovers partnered to organize a series of focus groups in Eastern Oregon to assess the experience of individuals with lived experience navigating the current substance use disorder (SUD) system of care. Participants noted many challenges facing those in recovery, however several key trends emerged.

Across the board, both individuals and family members identified a lack of understanding and knowledge of substance use and recovery as the primary reason they did not begin their journey to recovery sooner. Perhaps even more concerning, stigma of both substance use and recovery was an obstacle noted by participants throughout the focus groups.

In rural communities, this stigma can be especially pronounced due to isolation and loneliness. Efforts within public education as well as advocacy are crucial so we can convey that recovery can and does work.

The 2021 National Recovery Month theme, “Recovery is For Everyone: Every Person, Every Family, Every Community,” reminds people in recovery and those who support them that no one is alone in the journey through recovery. Everyone’s journey is

different, but we are all in this together. All of us, from celebrities and sports figures to our co-workers, neighbors, friends, and family members, throughout our lives have experienced peaks and valleys, both big and small. But with strength, support, and hope from the people we love, we are resilient.

Mental health and substance use disorders affect people of all ethnicities, ages, genders, geographic regions, and socioeconomic levels. They need to know that help is available. These individuals can recover, both physically and emotionally, with the support of a welcoming community.

Recovery Month celebrates the action and courage demonstrated by those in recovery, just as we celebrate health improvements made by those who are managing other health conditions such as

hypertension, diabetes, asthma, and heart disease. Too often, these recovery achievements go unnoticed or underappreciated.

We can all play a part in inspiring health and healing for people living with behavioral health conditions by supporting people who are on the path of recovery — no matter where they are in that journey — and by building awareness of these conditions in our own personal and professional networks.

Together we can help others realize the promise of recovery and give families the right support to help their loved ones.

For more, please visit the National Recovery Month page: <https://www.naadac.org/national-recovery-month>.

Karen Wheeler is the Chief Executive Officer of Greater Oregon Behavioral Health, Inc.

TAILGATE

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alone,” says Jandrokovic, whose husband, Phil, has made it for every Steelers tailgate since he took over his father’s tickets five years ago. “We take it in a crockpot so it’s easy to transport.”

If you like your tacos a little spicier, simply add salsa or hot sauce. Other optional toppings include diced avocado, chopped cilantro, sour cream or corn. I made the taco seasoning from scratch but there’s no shame in using a pre-packaged mix.

For taco seasoning

- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/4 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper

For salad

- 1 pound lean ground beef
- 3/4 cup water
- 1 head of iceberg or romaine lettuce, chopped
- 2 Roma tomatoes, diced
- 1/4 cup sliced black olives
- 1/4 cup chopped green onion
- 1 15-ounce can pinto or black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 cup Catalina or French dressing, bottled or homemade
- 2 cups tortilla chips or Doritos, crushed

Make taco seasoning mix: Measure out all the ingredients in a small bowl. Mix well. Taste and adjust salt or spices as desired.

In a large skillet, cook beef over medium heat 6-8 minutes or until it’s no longer pink and breaks into crumbles. Drain and stir in taco seasoning and water; bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, for 4-6 minutes or until thickened, stirring occasionally. Cool slightly.

In a large bowl, toss lettuce with tomatoes, olives, green onions, beans and cheese. Top with beef mixture and crushed chips; drizzle with dressing and toss to combine.

Serves 6-8.

— Philip Jandrokovic, Brighton Heights

BUFFALO CHICKEN EMPANADAS

If there’s one given at a tailgate party, it’s that someone will bring Buffalo chicken dip. Some make it with canned chicken (ugh!) but I wouldn’t dream of it; my go-to is shredded rotisserie chicken.

For a handheld twist on this old favorite, I stuffed the dip inside a refrigerated pie crust, creating an empanada-like treat.



Gretchen McKay/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette-TNS

Taco salad is easy to prepare, transports well and avoids the mess of a handheld taco.

I also tucked in a bit of chopped cilantro and a pickled jalapeno for some extra zip, with blue cheese dressing for dipping. (If you’re not a blue cheese fan, substitute ranch.) I used two dough rounds per empanada, but you also could cut the circles a little larger and fold them over to make it easier.

While I’ve made this dip countless times with Frank’s Red Hot sauce, I discovered Hank Sauce “Cilantro” this spring in Sea Isle, New Jersey and became a fan. It includes cilantro along with hot pepper and garlic.

- 3 cups shredded rotisserie chicken
- 6 ounces (3/4 package) cream cheese, softened
- 6 ounces shredded cheddar cheese
- 1/4 cup blue cheese crumbles, optional
- 1/3 cup blue cheese or ranch dressing
- 1/3 cup of hot sauce, or more to taste
- 2 packages refrigerated pie pastry
- Chopped cilantro and

pickled jalapenos
1 egg beaten with a little water, for wash
Blue cheese or ranch dressing, for dipping

Preheat oven to 450 degrees.

In a large bowl, mix together shredded chicken, cream cheese, cheddar and blue cheeses, blue cheese dressing and hot sauce. If it’s not saucy (or spicy) enough, add a little more hot sauce.

Unroll a pastry sheet onto a lightly floured surface. Using a floured 3-inch round cookie cutter placed halfway on the edge of the pastry, cut dough into circles, or if you want to get really creative, 4-by-3-inch football shapes. Repeat with remaining dough, chilling and rerolling scraps as needed.

Transfer half of the cutouts to greased baking sheets. Place a spoonful (about 2 teaspoons) of chicken mixture in the center of each one and flatten with your finger, being careful to leave room on the edges.

Top with a little chopped cilan-

tro and a pickled jalapeno. Brush edges of pastry with egg. Top with remaining cutouts and press edges with a fork to seal. If using football shapes, cut slits in the tops to resemble football laces. Brush tops with egg wash.

Bake 8-12 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from pan and serve hot, or allow to cool to room temperature. Serve with ranch or blue cheese dressing for dipping.

Makes about 3 dozen empanadas.

— Gretchen McKay, Post-Gazette

BLACK AND GOLD BROWNIES

Every party needs some sort of dessert, and brownies fit the bill for a tailgate. These get the black-and-gold treatment with the addition of yellow M&Ms. It’s a pain to sort them from the bag, but they add a colorful home team touch. I added chopped pecans, but you could sub in walnuts or almonds.

- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, plus more for pan
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- Generous pinch of salt
- 1 ounce semisweet chocolate, coarsely chopped
- 1/4 cup and 2 tablespoons cocoa powder
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 2/3 cup pecans or walnuts, coarsely chopped, or more to taste
- 1/4 to 1/3 cup gold or yellow M&Ms

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Butter 8-by-8-inch baking pan. Line bottom with parchment or wax paper, leaving an overhang on two sides. Butter paper; set pan aside. In a medium bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder and salt.

Place butter and semi-sweet chocolate in a microwave safe bowl, and heat in microwave, 10 seconds at a time, until smooth, stirring occasionally. Stir in cocoa powder and oil. Add sugars, eggs, vanilla and flour mixture; stir to combine well. Stir in M&Ms and pecans, if using, then transfer batter to pan with a spatula.

Bake 30-35 minutes or until a toothpick comes out with only a few crumbs attached (or sooner to make sure they’re soft). Cool completely before slicing into squares.

Store in an airtight container at room temperature for up to three

days. These also freeze well.

Makes 16 brownies.

— Adapted from marthastewart.com

PINEAPPLE JALAPENO MARGARITAS

A season opener calls for a really great cocktail. This pineapple jalapeno margarita offers a perfect balance of sweet and heat, and best of all, serves a crowd.

For pineapple jalapeno syrup

- 1/2 cup pineapple juice
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 jalapeno, sliced

For cocktail

9 ounces cointreau (or any orange liqueur you prefer)
12 ounces lime juice
8 ounces water
750 ml bottle of tequila (I like the peppery notes in blanco tequila)

Prepare pineapple jalapeno syrup.

Combine juice and sugar in a saucepan and gently heat until sugar is dissolved. Do not boil. Remove from heat and add sliced jalapeno. Let steep for 10 minutes, longer for more heat. Cool to room temperature.

Combine 3 ounces of pineapple jalapeno syrup with cointreau, lime juice, water and tequila in a container (enough to hold 57 ounces) and stir to combine. If time allows, chill the ingredients. Since you are not shaking the cocktail, there is no dilution so adding water is important for the cocktails to be balanced.

Grab a red solo cup — it is for a tailgate after all! — fill with ice, garnish with a lime wedge and enjoy!

Makes roughly 15 4-ounce cocktails.

— Raelynn Gigler

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