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Underage smokers fight up despite laws

John Hurlburt
Associate

Smoking – it's the new hot topic, and in 2009, Oregon will expand its Smokefree Workplace Law to bars, bingo areas and employee break rooms. Though the ban will impact thousands of smokers in the state, one sinew aside from the activists in the state, one sinew aside from the activists holds the majority of them together: when they were an adult.

In 2005, according to the American Lung Association, it was found that 23 percent of high school students were current smokers, and 54.3 percent reported having smoked at some point in their life.

Clackamas' youth population appears to be no exception to these statistics.

Lisa Nielson, a morning GED and Tri-City Alternative Program instructor, says that the bulk of her students, ages ranging from 15 to 17, smoke and were doing so before they were in enrolled in her classes.

"I've never had a non-student start smoking here," Nielson said, at least to her knowledge.

It is illegal for underage students to smoke on campus. First-time offenders usually receive just a warning, but more persistent lawbreakers can earn themselves a court appearance if a MIP (Minor in Possession) is issued.

One problem with the current rules is that they are not enforced, according to GED Instructor Steve Long.

Even though students receive citations for smoking, more often than not the case gets thrown out and the individual ends up not having to pay any fines.

"They know before we tell them not to smoke that they won't face any real consequences," Long said.

For student Angela Fender, the concept of trying to stop underage smokers is preposterous.

"We should educate instead of fighting it," Fender said.

Education on the topic is an approach the school has pursued. One method has been to hold forums for students highlighting the effects of smoking on human health.

During the forums, attendees were shown pictures of cut-away lungs from a healthy lung and a smoker's lung, in order to illustrate the differences between the two. They were also subjected to scenes of throat and mouth damage caused by cancer.



John Shufelt Clackamas Print

Student Chloe Blumer takes a smoking break outside. She started smoking at 14. Clackamas is looking toward getting young people to quit lighting up.

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Former president campaigns for wife at Oregon City HS

Matt Garrison
The Clackamas Print

More than 1,500 people gathered at Oregon City High School on Saturday, April 26, to listen to what seemed like a multi-generational rock legend campaigning for his wife to be elected as the 44th president of the United States of America.

They came to hear former President Bill Clinton speak on behalf of Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton.

"Hillary has supporters of all ages, races and walks of life," said Julie Edwards, Oregon communications director for the Hillary Clinton campaign. "Her supporters appreciate her 35 years of public service and her ability to work with others to get things done."

At the event, shirts were tossed into the crowd and attendees were given the chance to send text messages to meet Bill Clinton; there were two opportunities for two different members of the audience.

Clinton talked about problems including the economy, energy efficiency, eco-friendliness and affordable technology, as well as healthcare, diabetes, affordable college and trade. The concepts of raising

Pell Grants and caring for veterans coming out of Iraq were discussed as well.

"She (Hillary) has the best ideas, the best record of achievement and the greatest likelihood for turning this economy around," Clinton said.

"Unless we turn America around, we will not gain our position back in the world," he declared at another point.

He also noted the rise in the economy that occurred while he was in office and the drop that took place when Bush took over the reins.

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Robert Crawford Clackamas Print

Former President Bill Clinton smiles at the crowd that flocked to hear him speak in the Oregon City High School gymnasium Saturday, April 26.

Advocate opens doors for transgender youth

John Conley
Clackamas Print

Not long after stealing a copy of "The Transsexual Phenomenon" by Harry Benjamin from the corner store, Jenn Burleton in her mother's clothes, took a city bus to the county hospital and the psychology department, where she was like the individuals in the book and was ready to start

On April 9, she performed with her band, Uncommon Women, at Clackamas, before the Take Back the Night march. She was there to teach students and other attendees about transgender youth and their connection to domestic violence.

Telling her own story, she explained how a psychiatrist "spent the next year talking to me about football and baseball and whether or not I liked girls."

Soon, with research, Burleton began to realize the changes that puberty would bring. "I began to 'borrow' my mother's estrogen pills that she was taking for her menopausal symptoms," she recalled.

Six years later, in 1972, she transitioned to her true female gender identity.

Burleton is the founder of the organization TransActive, the objectives of which are to raise awareness and to advocate on behalf of children who identify themselves as transgender or are gender-nonconforming.

Burleton defined "gender-nonconforming" as anybody who has an identity, a form

of self-expression or views his or her gender in a way that is not stereotypically either male or female.

The organization works with grade levels K-12, assisting children and family members in communicating the child's gender identity, as well as allowing him or her to undergo transition – meaning the child can begin living in his or her desired gender role as early as kindergarten.

"Many of the children we work with have a completely different experience than the one I described" Burleton noted.

She attributes this to the willingness of these children's parents to support their child's gender identity and gender expression.

However, she added, "Many other children and youth, despite the decades since my childhood and adolescence, have the same negative and oppressive experience that I did."

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Helen Conley Clackamas Print

Jenn Burleton plays guitar and sings with her band, Uncommon Women, at the Take Back the Night event held on campus earlier this month.