

ALCOHOL, from page 8

the final draft of the agreement was not available until late in the week of March 8. Marchetti and Boyer were conducting street outreach to each store the to make a last ditch effort to get stores to sign the agreement.

What success of the program depends on, Boyer says, is bigger stores in the downtown area, such as Safeway, Whole Foods, and Plaid Pantry signing onto the agreement. Small stores will feel compelled to sign on if there is a critical mass. "If they don't take the lead and step forward, you're not going to get 100 percent compliance," Boyer says.

Marchetti is willing to up the ante if compliance isn't met voluntarily.

The City Council can be petitioned to allow Marchetti to work with the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) to declare downtown Portland an alcohol impact area. Doing so would create mandatory guidelines store owners would be required to follow regarding what types of alcohol they could and could not carry.

A similar string of events happened in Seattle. Seattle declared parts of its downtown area alcoholic impact areas in 2003 to respond to problems associated to street drinking. The program was, at first, voluntary. But businesses were not willing to voluntarily stop carrying particular types of alcohol because they were concerned "it was going to hit their bottom line," says Kimberly Archie, the deputy director of Seattle's Department of Neighborhoods.

Archie says that as a result, "we weren't seeing any improvement in chronic public inebriation."

The city of Seattle petitioned the Washington State Liquor Control Board in 2006 to make the alcohol ban mandatory.

Archie says there were no legal repercussions. Since then, statistics have shown a 21 percent decrease in admissions to detox centers, a 35 percent decrease in calls to the police, and a 61 percent decrease of drinking in parks.

Marchetti is hoping for similar results, voluntary or mandatory. An extensive public process is required before the OLCC can make a recommendation that the alcohol ban be mandatory. Marchetti says it would take at least a year, starting late this summer or early fall.

No real solutions

Almost everyone interviewed for this article thinks downtown Portland has a street drinking problem. But no one will stand behind the street drinking initiative as a solution to street drinking. At best, it will mitigate the problem.

"It makes it harder for them to get a lot of alcohol," Blackburn says. "I would never suggest that it's a cure to this type of alcoholism."

"We don't expect this to eliminate the problem," Marchetti says. She does expect it to decrease.

Some think it will simply decrease because street drinking will move to other areas of the city. "There are at least four stores just on the other side of the 405," Storeowner #3 says. "They can walk over there. What's the difference? It doesn't make any sense to me."

It is not possible, Marchetti says, to make the program citywide because "there are definite pockets of places that exhibit greater problems than other places. It's not feasible."

Spreading out the social services and low-income housing, self-policing stores, increasing fines and punishment for street

drinking, and increasing funding for treatment were all ideas offered by storeowners.

Many store owners already make efforts to self-police who they will sell alcohol to, checking a person's ID or asking for rent receipts given out by hotels to ensure that the customer has a place to take the alcohol back to. "We'll sell them alcohol if they have a street address," Peterson says.

"It's easy to do," Storeowner #1 says.

This storeowner also thought it would be beneficial to require all store clerks to take the same class the OLCC requires of servers at bars and restaurants. Part of what that class teaches is how to recognize people who are visibly intoxicated. Clerks who sell alcohol to such people, or to people who they know are chronic drinkers, should not have jobs at grocery stores, the storeowner thinks.

Zokoych says that street drinking, rather being an issue for businesses to deal with, is a behavioral and an enforcement issue. "You're not going to stop the behavior by not selling the container," he says.

Boyer and Marchetti said that there was no effort when the VibrantPDX initiative was being crafted to include a component that would increase the amount of alcohol treatment available to individuals, or create some sort of outreach or education program for individuals engaged in street drinking. "This is the start of the efforts," Boyer says.

But is there an effort to partner with Multnomah County — which is the principal funder for alcohol treatment in the county—to increase spending or outreach for alcohol treatment?

"There is not a well-thought out plan at this point," Boyer says.

Marchetti says that treatment was not considered along with the alcohol ban

because "our expertise and understanding of the problem is more on the supply line." Marchetti says she is also not sure if alcohol treatment is relevant. "I don't think we could say that all of the street drinkers are alcoholics," Marchetti says.

Archie says that as Seattle crafted its alcoholic impact areas, investing further funding in alcohol treatment was not considered. Yet she recognizes that Seattle's policy is not "a total solution to the problem."

Storeowner #2, along with a few other storeowners, said he would be willing to donate the amount of money they would lose in sales as a result of the alcohol ban—or at least a fraction of them—to social-service agencies that provide alcohol treatment. There is a precedent for businesses—at least business associations such as the Portland Business Alliance—taking their financial resources and putting them toward creating programs and policies that address social problems.

"In the long run, what solves the problem is providing services that help people get off the streets and support them in efforts to stop their drinking," Blackburn says.

"I would say that every single of our clients want treatment," Mattsson says. But the likelihood that they will actually enter a treatment program is slim. Ten people are discharged from Hooper each day. Only 10 treatment slots open up per month. That means that people who have the potential to successfully complete a treatment program are only cycling through detox, over and over again.

"It's not the best way to treat these clients," Mattsson says. "We have to expect we're going to see them over again."



"We should read to give our souls a chance to luxuriate." - Henry Miller

St. Johns Booksellers
new and used books ~ trade-ins welcome
8622 N. Lombard St. (Tri-met 17, 44)
503-283-0032 ~ info@stjohnsbooks.com
www.stjohnsbooks.com



DETOUR
cafe

3035 S.E. Division • Portland, OR 97202
503.234.7499

NEW CASCADIA
TRADITIONAL™

A DEDICATED GLUTEN FREE BAKERY

PORTLAND, OREGON

Mon-Fri 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sat 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
503-546-4901 1700 SE 6th Ave. Portland, OR 97214




LET'S TALK: WOMEN TO WOMEN CONVERSATIONS ON HEALTH

In celebration of National Women's Health Week, City of Portland Commissioner Amanda Fritz, along with Rose Haven, HomePDX, and Dinner and a Movie, will be hosting a series of **FREE** Women's Health Education talks entitled "Healthy Habits for Healthy Women" for low income women during the month of May. Topics will include:

- How to access **FREE** women's health screenings, presented by OHSU's Center for Women's Health
- How to access **FREE** reproductive health and birth control services

Women will also receive gift cards for grocery shopping, along with other treats! Contact Sara Hussein at 503-823-3994 for more information on locations and times.

Funding for this activity was made possible in part by the HHS, Office on Women's Health. The views expressed in written materials or publications and by speakers and moderators at HHS-sponsored conferences, do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services; nor does the mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.



Sisters Of The Road

Become a Sustaining Member of Sisters Of The Road!



A commitment to support of Sisters monthly through our Sustaining Membership Program makes a big difference!

Our Sustaining Members provide a stable source of monthly income that helps to cover operating expenses for the Cafe and our Systemic Change Program.

Join Today! Visit our website at www.sistersoftheroad.org to learn more and to sign up, or contact Marisa at 503-222-5694 x12. Thank you!

www.sistersoftheroad.org
133 NW 6th Ave, Portland, OR 97209 (503) 222-5694