

# Help shape public policy on alcohol consumption

By **ERIC A. HOWALD**  
*Of the KeizerTimes*

A nearly year-long effort by the Marion County Health and Human Service Department (HHS) is reaching its next phase with two opportunities for public input.

For the past year, the department has been assembling stakeholders to determine what is the most pressing public health issue in Marion County.

"After looking at over 30 data sources, and examining more than 90 indicators, the data assessment group has prioritized alcohol use as the area of focus as we wrap up the assessment and move in to program planning," said Susan McLaughlin, substance abuse and problem gambling prevention program coordinator.

Now, HHS officials are looking at how problematic alcohol consumption is affecting local communities and inviting anyone to participate in how the effort proceeds from here.

A town hall meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 26, from 6:30 to 7:45 p.m. at Broadway Recovery Services, 3325 Harold Drive N.E. in Salem. Participants are invited to share experiences, thoughts and ideas about alcohol use and its impacts.

On Friday, March 1, HHS is seeking input specifically on the impacts of alcohol on young adults. That meeting is slated for 2 to 3:30 p.m. at Willamette University's Putnam University Center, 900 State Street in Salem.

Information gathered during both sessions will be

used to craft public health programs and provide resources for meeting local needs.

Some of the factors stakeholders considered during their examination of public health needs included: the large number of events in Marion County that are built around alcohol consumption, allowing the sales of alcohol in three of Salem's largest parks and a general increase in the number of areas where alcohol is available at the point of retail and in social gatherings.

Some of the preliminary solutions to the problem include: normalizing designated driver choices, increasing shuttle systems and reducing consumption during large-scale, alcohol-driven events.

Such steps fall under the umbrella of harm reduction.

## Chemeketa narrows president search

Chemeketa Community College is hosting a series of community forums with the five finalists in its pursuit of a new college president.

Community forums with each prospect will take place on the Chemeketa campus Building 2, Room 170 Feb. 25 through March 1 from 4 to 5 p.m.

Candidates and their forum dates are:

Monday, Feb. 25, Robert Wynegar, Ed.D., currently president of the College of The Albemarle in Elizabeth City, N.C.

Tuesday, Feb. 26, Kimberlee Messina, Ed.D., currently interim vice president of in-

struction at Clovis Community College in Clovis, Calif.

Wednesday, Feb. 27, Tod Treat, Ph.D., currently interim vice president for instruction at Wenatchee Valley College in Wenatchee, Wash.

Thursday, Feb. 28, Julie White, Ph.D., currently senior vice president of student engagement and learning support at Onondaga Community College in Syracuse, N.Y.

Friday, March 1 - Jessica Howard, Ph.D., currently campus president, Southeast Campus, Portland Community College in Portland.



Marion County Health and Human Services is looking to redefine local norms when it comes to alcohol consumption. Two public input sessions are set for next week.

Rather than seeking to prohibit or put in place outright bans, public policy is enacted to reduce harm to some of the most vulnerable segments of the population. Hood River recently set out to combat the public perception of the city as a party town — an image bolstered by data revealing it had the highest per capita sales and consumption of alcohol in the state.

Rather than looking to close down bars, breweries, cideries and other outlets, public officials engaged owners who increased training for bartend-

ers, servers, security and event coordinators, asked for commitments from local law enforcement agencies to enforce liquor laws and reworked event licenses based on the behavior of the licensee and community norms. As a result, public perception is changing.

The end goal of all this investigation and planning is to arrive at policy solutions with the potential to change an entire population — by raising the standards of the community — rather than risk and prevention needs of individuals.

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