

DRUGS AND KIDS

Recovering addict says it's about education

County teens have higher rates of reported drug use

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

When people need a sober assessment of how serious a community's drug problem is, Eric Martin said, that is when he is usually invited to speak.

Martin, a recovery counselor, expert on drug addiction and a recovering addict who is an instructor at the University of Oregon, was brought in by North Coast Prevention Works Thursday to educate the public during two forums about heroin and recently legalized marijuana.

"Oregon is one of the top 10 drug-using states in one of the most drug-using countries in the world," Martin said, noting the state ranks in the top 10 nationally in past-year usage rates of every major drug, a distinction matched only by Colorado.

Younger problem

Clatsop County teens, he said, also have a higher rate of drug and alcohol use in the past 30 days than the rest of the state.

According to the 2015 Oregon Health Teens Survey, taken anonymously by eighth- and 11th graders, 9 percent of eighth-graders and 31.2 percent of high school juniors reported using marijuana at least once in the past month. More than 15 percent of juniors reported using prescription drugs in the past month without a doctor's note. From tobacco and alcohol to marijuana and prescription drugs, Clatsop County had higher rates of reported drug use than the state.

Astoria High School Counselor Andrew Fick said that with all the grim statistics, it is important to note that most kids do not use drugs or alcohol.

"I don't want the impression to be that schools look the other way," he said.

Fick said the high school focuses on preventative education, increasing access to help for those who have problems and providing students with plenty of opportunities to live an active, sober lifestyle.

Martin said the issue of youth drug and alcohol abuse is especially troubling because Oregon ranks in the top three

nationally for high school dropout rates. He said there is a strong correlation between dropout rates and drug use. Many people who end up in treatment for drug and alcohol abuse also show an earlier onset of use.

By age 25, Martin said, people become much more likely to get clean, party less and become more adult, based on behavioral data.

Opiates

Of special concern are opiates, which Martin said are the hardest to wean off of and have the highest rates of relapse. The drug is experiencing a resurgence, including overdose rates rivaling the HIV epidemic in the 1980s.

"We are sort of awash in black tar heroin on the West Coast of the U.S.," Martin said, adding cartels ramped up production after U.S. and Mexican authorities clamped down on methamphetamine.

Kerry Strickland, a former secretary at Astoria High School who spoke at one of the forums, said her son Jordan's issues started in high school, when he and friends started using prescription opiates when partying. Someone eventually introduced Jordan to heroin, she said, and he spent the next seven years battling addiction, visiting five treatment centers before finally getting clean at a facility in Hollywood, California. After seven months of sobriety, she said, he and a friend decided to go have a beer. Within two days, her son had relapsed and died of an overdose.

Community issue

"We live in a society where altering oneself is what we do to socialize," Strickland said, adding society needs to overcome the stigma of addiction and work together on the issue.

The closest people came to a consensus at the forum was on education. Some put the onus on schools, while others said the problem is one for the community as a whole.

"The scare tactics don't work on kids these days," said Michael Sahlberg, a paramedic with Medix who goes into schools to educate young people on drugs and alcohol. "They have to be informed."

YOUTH DRUG PREVENTION

North Coast Prevention Works, a Clatsop County coalition focused on preventing youth drug and alcohol abuse, meets from 3:30 to 5 p.m. the third Thursday of each month at Warrenton City Hall, 225 S. Main Ave.

Prosecutors, parents, health experts address heroin abuse

The Daily Astorian

A Connect the Dots panel presentation, "The Opioids & Heroin Epidemic," takes place from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Judge Guy Boyington Building.

Presenters include Clatsop County District Attorney Josh Marquis; Clatsop County Deputy District Attorney David Goldthorpe; Kerry Strickland, a Clatsop County parent; Lisa

Millett of the Oregon Public Health Division State Prescription Drug Monitoring Program and Overdose EPI/Injury and Violence Prevention; John McIlven, a licensed mental health counselor, Oregon's state opioid authority, operations and policy analyst and manager of the Health Professionals Service Program; and Dr. Safina Koreishi, medical director of the Columbia Pacific Coordinated Care Organization.

Brides on parade



Couples and future brides were treated to a fashion show and sampled exhibits at the ShoreStyle Wedding Faire Saturday at the The Loft at the Red Building. Charlene Harbor, along with other models, took a final turn modeling bridal gowns.

Photos by Linh DePledge/For The Daily Astorian



Erin Wilson and Nick Muir, of Beaverton, who are planning a coastal wedding, check out Holly McHone Jewelers of Astoria.



Cari Knapp modeling one of many bridal gowns from the fashion show.

KMUN broadcast area reduced due to equipment failure

The Daily Astorian

KMUN Coast Community Radio is down to its secondary station, KCPB (90.9 FM), after a piece of equipment broke on its Megler Mountain transmitter.

General Manager Joanne Rideout said an exciter, the term for the oscillator creating the radio frequency signal and the modulator adding the information to be transmitted, has broken.

While KMUN's signal still goes from the Tillicum House to Megler Mountain, the transmitter does not send anything out.

KMUN's broadcast has taken over KCPB. But the broadcast area for KCPB is only 700 watts, compared to about 4,000 for KMUN, Rideout said, meaning the station only reaches parts of the Long Beach, Washington, Peninsula and as far as Cannon Beach, instead of to Raymond, Washington, and Pacific City with the usual transmitter.

Rideout said the parts have been ordered from Portland, and the radio station could be back to normal as soon as Wednesday. Listeners can also stream KMUN at www.coastradio.org

Clatsop County hires new human resources director

The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County hired a new human resources director.

Robin Koch will join the county Feb. 8. She replaces Dean Perez, who left the position in June after 16 years for a new job in Bothell, Washington.

Mark Story served in the position on an interim basis since October.

Koch, a Portland native, has an extensive 20-plus-years background in human resources in both the private

and public sectors, according to the county.

She most recently served as employee relations manager for Tacoma. She has bachelor's and master's degrees from Pacific Lutheran University.

The human resources director oversees personnel-related responsibilities for the county's approximately 200-person workforce, including recruitment, training, performance evaluation, compensation and benefits, as well as risk management.

Transit district recognizes riders with free bus service

The Daily Astorian

The Sunset Empire Transportation District has announced that its annual Ridership Appreciation Day is Thursday. The district sets aside one day every year to offer free bus service on all regular routes in Clatsop County to bus riders and the local community in appreciation of their support.

Refreshments are available from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the Astoria Transit Center,

900 Marine Drive, and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Seaside Kiosk, 1111 N. Roosevelt Drive in Seaside.

Ridership Appreciation Day is scheduled to coincide with the Project Homeless Connect event, which is also being held Thursday at the Seaside Convention Center from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For information about Ridership Appreciation Day or Project Homeless Connect, contact Mary Parker at 503-861-5370.

Rep. Boone to appear at town hall on storm insurance tonight

The Daily Astorian

State Rep. Deborah Boone is part of a town hall on storm insurance tonight at Tillamook Community College in Tillamook.

"During the month of December, severe winter storms hit the North Coast," Boone wrote in a release Sunday. "Unfortunately, some folks incurred damage to their homes, cars, and property from flooding, falling trees, blown-off shingles, etc. And if you've ever filed an insurance claim, you know how frustrating that can be."

Boone, D-Cannon Beach, will hold the town hall with Rep. David Gomberg, D-Lin-

coln City, and representatives from the Oregon Insurance Division. They will work with residents on how best to address damages and work with their insurance companies.

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