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# Alcohol Often Least Talked About Threat to Our Lives

By JUDY CUSHING  
OREGON PARTNERSHIP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In the never-ending blitz of media interest surrounding kids and drugs, it often seems communities have barely a minute to catch their breath from one 'epidemic' to another.

Lately the media has been flooded with stories about Ecstasy and Raves. Newsweek reports on the dangers of Oxycontin and Vicodin. Families and communities are inundated with new information about the latest drugs, their dangerous effect and their connection to teens.

It's important to raise awareness when drugs invade our community. However, in this frenzy, we must not lose sight of the fact



Judy Cushing

that alcohol remains the single largest threat to Oregon's kids.

The truth is that alcohol is the most prevalent, least talked about threat to our homes and communities. We take it for granted that

adults keep beer and wine in the home, often only for a social occasions or holidays. We rarely think about how our behavior is a model for our kids. How many of us really stop to have a family discussion about the alcohol in our homes — what it is, its effects, and what it means — with our kids?

April is Alcohol Awareness Month. It's an opportunity to highlight our commitment to prevention and treatment of alcohol abuse. Here are some tips for raising alcohol awareness in your home and/or community: Talk with your kids. We know that in households where parents talk to their kids about alcohol, kids are far less likely to drink. Prom and graduation time are the perfect opportunity to have a family discussion in your home. Model

good behavior. Your behavior can be the model your kids follow for the rest of their lives.

Don't leave alcohol in un-monitored areas around your home.

Invite a prevention speaker or counselor to your school, business, or community center.

If you or someone you know has a problem or has questions about alcohol, call the confidential, toll-free HelpLine at 800-923-HELP. Teens can also get free confidential information at 877-553-TEEN.

Alcohol-related death remains the number one killer of teenagers in Oregon. More than suicide, more than any other drug, alcohol is public enemy number one when it comes to teen deaths.

Now is the time to talk about alcohol with our families, our chil-

dren... our communities.

Ask yourself this question, if one-in-four kids age 12 in Oregon used alcohol in the last month, is your child one of them?

While other drugs assume the media spotlight, alcohol continues to be the accepted, sexy, dangerous drug—that nobody talks about. You can have a huge and lasting impact on the biggest drug influence Oregonians face. Make the time to talk to your family during Alcohol Awareness Month.

*Judy Cushing is Executive Director of the Oregon Partnership. Oregon Partnership is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to substance abuse prevention and treatment referral.*

# Misuse of Mascots a Serious Problem

Outrage among the American-Indian community over the misuse of cultural symbols as sports mascots has prompted the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (CCR) to consider withholding federal funding to public elementary, middle and high schools that refuse to adopt a non-offensive image.

Elsie Meeks, the first American-Indian commissioner on the CCR, suggested that the commission recommend that civil-

rights enforcement agencies help eliminate offensive images and the use of such terms as "red skins" or "red raiders."

"Schools have a responsibility to educate their students, not perpetuate misrepresentations of any culture or people," Meeks said. Meeks, a member of the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, also works for the Lakota fund, promoting businesses activities on reservations. Cynthia Kent, a repre-

sentative of the Council on Native American Ministry expressed her concern that the use of culturally offensive images is a serious problem. "Almost one third of U.S. schools use some kind of indigenous religious symbol, image or names," she said. "Half of these are elementary schools. Our children are not mascots—this has got to stop." According to the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR),

there are more than 3,000 schools using images of American Indians; New York state schools make up 135 of those institutions. Richard Mills, commissioner of New York state education, said this is a problem. "The use of Native-American symbols or depictions as mascots can become a barrier to building a safe and nurturing school community and improving academic achievement for all," Mills said.

# Budget for the Wealthy, Not the Poor

*Editor's note: The following is an opinion piece from The Register-Guard in Eugene on Bush's budget:*

The first budgets presented by new presidents say much about their ideologies, values, visions and priorities.

The picture that emerges most clearly from President Bush's first detailed spending plan is one of a leader doggedly determined to cut taxes,

primarily for the wealthy, at the expense of programs that serve all Americans and are most needed by the poor.

It's scarcely surprising that Bush waited for Congress to leave town before releasing his budget.

If the evenly divided Senate had been more fully aware of the potential cost of Bush's huge tax cut, lawmakers would have been even bolder than

they were in shrinking it from \$1.6 trillion down to \$1.2 trillion.

The president's budget forced him for the first time to detail the spending reductions necessary to achieve his tax cut, and those reductions are sobering indeed.

They range from reductions in funding for children's hospitals, low-income energy assistance and community po-

licing to cuts in child-abuse prevention, inner-city economic development, environmental enforcement, housing and job training.

The Bush budget provides stark contrast with the president's reassuring rhetoric about compassionate conservatism — the need to revitalize inner cities, to "leave no child behind" and to be a good steward of the environment.

# Clinton Gets Mixed Grades on Civil-Rights

While former President Clinton often demonstrated leadership on civil-rights issues, he also missed a lot of opportunities to affect change, according to a report card issued by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights last week.

Clinton received high marks for using executive orders to promote non-discrimination in federal programs and funding, and for improving the diversity of the federal courts and government offices. But he lost points for failing to address racial disparities in capital punishment and for blundering on the issue of gays in the military.

"President Clinton was an active participant in efforts to eliminate discrimination of all forms," the report said. But the shortcomings of his tenure mean his promise to build a "bridge to one America" was, ultimately, "a promise only partly fulfilled."

The report also recommends ways the Bush administration can continue "the nation's commitment to equal opportunity under the law."

The Commission on Civil Rights is a bipartisan and independent agency originally established under the Civil Rights Act of 1957 and then re-established under the Civil Rights Act of 1983.

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