

# OPINION

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The Portland Observer

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## Deadly Dangers in Your Medicine Cabinet

### Guard children against overdose of over-the-counter drugs

BY BOB NIKKEL

For years, we've been bombarded with messages about how to keep our children safe: Lock up the liquor and gun cabinets and the cabinets with the cleaning supplies and other household poisons.

But what about the cabinet that holds a seemingly innocent arsenal of remedies for the common cold or a cough?

The contents of the family medicine cabinet are proving to be dangerous. In recent months, at least seven Oregon youths have been hospitalized for overdosing on over-the-counter medicines. These children were not at a club or a rave or other social gathering. In one incident, they were in someone's home, alone and in the other, on a break near school.

According to medical literature, an over-

dose of these medications, especially those cold remedies containing dextromethorphan, can cause elevated body temperature and heart rates, a rise in blood pressure, chemical imbalance, liver

can carry a box of cold medicine around openly, unlike alcohol and marijuana.

When our children are young, we routinely safeguard our homes with numerous locks and gates to block access and

*For parents and other caretakers, keeping children safe from over-the-counter drug abuse may be even more challenging than preventing them from using alcohol or abusing other substances.*

damage, impaired judgment, tremors, seizures and death.

For parents and other caretakers, keeping children safe from over-the-counter drug abuse may be even more challenging than preventing them from using alcohol or abusing other substances.

The drugs our youth are turning to are readily available, cheap and legal. Teens

entry. We can't afford to assume that once our children are older, they will be safe from dangerous and deadly substances. Anything can be toxic if you misuse it.

The availability of over-the-counter medicines, while convenient for consumers, is a challenge for parents. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, dextromethorphan is in more than 100 over-

the-counter remedies. As parents and caretakers of young people, we must do everything we can to keep them safe. I encourage you to take inventory of all household medicine cabinets and nightstands. Safeguard purses or other items where medications may be stored. Monitor the family's use of over-the-counter medicine and dispense medication only as needed.

You should also talk to your children about the dangers of over-the-counter drugs. Know where your children are, who they are with and what they are doing. This is a good practice to help reduce risk in many areas of behavior.

This is an issue with no quick parenting fixes or easy answers. But we can't afford to be silent. Schools are letting out for the summer. It's time to start talking to our children about the danger just down the hall of your home or in the aisles of a nearby convenience store.

Bob Nikkel, M.S.W., is the administrator of the Office of Mental Health and Addiction Services in the Oregon Department of Human Services.

## Cheap Shot My Foot

Rep. Dennis Kucinich, D-Ohio, recently proposed an amendment to a bill requiring an audit of all communications between Vice President Cheney's office and the CIA regarding Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. The proposal was hailed by one Republican representative, in a typical show of righteous GOP-style indignation, as the cheap shot amendment of the year.

Really? Not so very long ago we impeached a president because it appeared he might have used his power and influence as president for sex.

Now it appears as though a president and his high-level advisors might have used their power and influence to create a war in which Americans have died. Yet, all we have is a closed-door review of intelligence procedures.

No wonder the few brave legislators left on the Hill have to resort to amending pending legislation in a desperate attempt to get some answers for the American people.

Cheap shot my foot.  
Cyndi Clifford  
Vancouver

## Business Credits a Slap in the Face

### Schools suffer as business credits prosper

BY OREGON REP. MARK HASS

How is it the Oregon Legislature is passing tax breaks for Enron before passing out an education budget?

Lets start at the beginning.

In 1967, the Oregon Legislature passed a tax incentive designed to help timber, mills and other manufacturers comply with newly passed federal Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. This incentive allowed business to lower their state tax bill to compensate for costs of the new equipment these laws required.

During the 1990s critics wondered whether taxpayers should continue paying for this ever-growing subsidy. After

all, the new environmental regulations were a quarter-century old. Many questioned whether taxpayer should continue to pay businesses for simply doing what the law required.

In 2001, Gov John Kitzhaber said the time had come to let this subsidy expire. But the leaders of the Legislature wanted to extend it. In a rare spirit of bipartisanship, the two sides agreed to a compromise that called for higher standards and gradual phase-out of this credit by 2007.

I supported the compromise.

That's why I so strongly oppose the new measure that some House members forced through last week, without debate—a measure that would relax the environmental standard and extend this expensive tax break another 11 years to 2014. The fact that this bill passed the house before the legislature has addressed education funding is a slap in the face to every

person in Oregon.

Taxpayer should be alarmed for another, even more compelling reason. We all know that Enron managed to escape Oregon taxes last year, paying only the minimum payment of \$10. What many people don't know is that Enron received a tax break of \$1.1 million because of Pollution Control Tax Credit.

Even worse, Enron has applied for \$18 million in similar tax credits next year for work associated with the decommissioning of the Trojan nuclear plant.

In addition to pending the bottom line for huge multi-nationals like Enron, the Pollution Control Tax Credit enables individuals to take a credit for buying wood chippers. Wood Chippers? Yes. More than 500 state certificates last year went to people who bought wood chippers, because chipping wood creates less pollution than burning wood to dispose of it.

That may be true but in most instances the law already prohibits open burning. Whether this is valid application of the break misses the point: Does any one really believe that buying a wood chipper create new jobs in Oregon? Does anyone believe we should cut school days while subsidizing wood chippers?

Oregon needs to be smart in crafting strategies for the new century. We need to build our economy on real products and services that pull their weight in the world's market not on wood chippers and disgraced corporations like Enron.

Let's do what Oregonians do best when managing environmental standards against economics: Let's recycle this 30-year-old law and turn it into something that actually helps us move forward.

Democrat Mark Hass represents southwest Portland and Beaverton in the Oregon Legislature.

### EDITORIALS for The Portland Observer

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Email to news@portlandobserver.com



African American Health Coalition, Inc.

1st Annual  
Wellness Within REACH Walk



September 6, 2003

**What**  
Join us for the 1st Annual Wellness Within REACH Walk Sat. September 6, 2003! Walk the 1.5 or 4-mile course.


**When**  
The walk begins at 9:00 a.m.  
Other event activities begin at 8:00 a.m.

**For more information**  
For more information about participation or to volunteer contact the African American Health Coalition, Inc. at 503-413-1850, wbeamer@aahc-portland.org or mild@aahc-portland.org

**Where**  
Start and finish at Dawson Park, located at N. Vancouver and Stanton in Portland, OR.

**Why**  
The purpose of the walk is to celebrate our community's health and sustain ongoing free physical activity classes for African Americans in the Portland metro area.

**Entry**  
Entry fee is \$15 per person.



Racial & Ethnic Approaches to Community Health  
A program of the AMERICAN HEALTH COALITION, INC.  
Supported by the CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## The Portland Observer

# the On Web

www.portlandobserver.com

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The screenshot shows the website interface with a navigation menu on the left (Home, News, Sports, Health, Opinion, Police/Vancouver, Religion, Observer/Editor, General News, Contact Us) and a main content area with several articles. The top article is 'Adams High Awaits Wrecking Ball' with a sub-headline 'The Portland School District has proclaimed that there will be a new Whitaker Middle School to replace the empty and former Adams High School at 5700 NE 39th Ave. Of course the new building will look very different and will bring new housing with it — something that makes nearby existing neighbors a little nervous.' Other articles include 'Keeping a Close Eye On Crime' and 'Spraying Makes Progress in Mosquito Fight'.