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OPINION

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Reducing the Odds of Underage Drinking

Active parents are a key to prevention

BY KAREN WHEELER

You've seen the statistics: Nearly every alcoholic began drinking before age 21. And kids who start drinking before age 15 are five times more likely to have alcohol problems than those who wait. Yet getting kids not to drink can be challenging. Beer is almost as cheap as soda pop. And there's the peer pressure. Now you're fac-



Know where your kids are at all times. Take the time to get to know their friends.

ing a summer when they have no classes, no homework and fewer sports, clubs and other activities to keep them occupied. They're likely to watch more TV, and that means

grade school. As is true of many parents, I was able to tell them that our family is genetically at risk of alcoholism, so alcohol isn't something we want to risk experimenting

sports and other activities are great alternatives to alcohol. My 14-year-old son plays the electric guitar, so we identified rockers who don't use alcohol or drugs or who did and quit. He starts high school and our 18-year-old daughter starts college in the fall. We've talked with them about not only our expectations, but also the advantages of doing well in school, not impairing brain development and establishing how they want to be viewed by their new peer group. Refusal skills ("thanks, but I don't want to get kicked off the team") can be learned by discussing everyday challenges, such as how to kindly turn down someone asking for a date.

more exposure to beer and liquor ads. In fact, they're likely to see more beer and liquor ads than their parents will. As a parent, what to do? First, acknowledge that ours is a year-round responsibility. Our job is not to be our kids' friends, but their parents. We can't be lazy about it. Know where your kids are at all times. Take the time to get to know their friends.

When you take them to an activity, get out of the car and meet the other parents. When your children and teenagers go to other kids' homes, talk with the parents and learn their addresses and phone numbers. Set expectations. I began talking to our daughter and son about alcohol before they entered

with. At our house, we've never had that "uncomfortable talk" about drinking and drugs; it's a part of our normal conversation. We talk about how ridiculous ads are that, besides exploiting women, show alcohol as a fun activity when the consequences of irresponsibility can be anything but fun. With expectations come incentives and consequences. When my daughter was 12, we told her that if she did well in school and didn't drink she'd get a phone.

Our teens know that if they do poorly in school, they'll be grounded with no TV, no phone, no Internet; if they drink, the consequences will be greater and the family will seek counseling. Music,

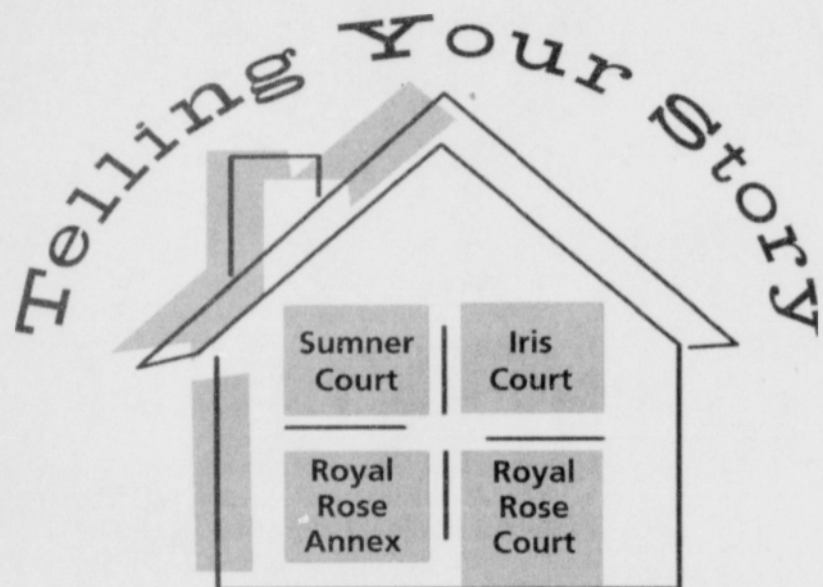
If you drink, set a good example. Practice moderation. Don't drive after drinking. More help for parents can be found on the Oregon Department of Human Services website oregon.gov/DHS/addiction/underage-drinking/main.shtml or at stopalcoholabuse.gov.

If it sounds hard, it's because we parents are afraid our kids will hate us. Love means caring enough to keep them clean and sober. They will thank us later.

Karen Wheeler is addictions policy manager in the Oregon Department of Human Services.



The Housing Authority of Portland and the Multnomah County Library invite you to an evening for



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False Sell on Spending Limit Initiative overly harsh, arbitrary

BY MICHAEL LEACHMAN

Proponents of a ballot initiative that imposes an overly harsh and arbitrary spending limit in Oregon's constitution are calling their measure the "rainy day amendment." This is like trying to sell a lightning rod by calling it an "umbrella."

Oregon does need a rainy day fund that can be used to maintain schools, public safety and other state services when the economic weather turns foul, but this so-called TABOR (Taxpayer Bill of Rights) proposal does no such thing.

Even worse, if the Legislature ever finally creates a rainy day fund, the misnamed measure will render the fund impotent to help protect services during a downturn.

Here's how. The proposed amendment counts unemployment insurance payments under the spending limit. In a downturn, when many people are laid off, unemployment insurance payments increase. When the 2001 recession hit, unemployment insurance payments from the state to laid-off workers increased by \$1.3 billion.

Oregon prepares for periodic recessions by funding unemployment benefits through a trust fund held separately from the rest of the state budget. No state income taxes support unemployment. The amendment being pushed by proponents of TABOR would nevertheless include unemployment payments in the arbitrary new spending limit.

Last November, Colorado voters suspended use of a similar mea-

public services.

If the TABOR amendment had passed in Oregon in 1990, state services in Oregon would have had \$7.3 billion less in the current 2005-07 budget cycle. That amounts to a 24 percent cut in current state spending and service levels. That would be like eliminating state funding for all of the following services and departments combined: K-12 education, the Oregon Health Plan, corrections, state police, environ-

Calling this scheme the "rainy day amendment," even though the measure renders a potential rainy day fund useless, is a joke.

sure for five years after Republican Gov. Bill Owens, business leaders, and the state legislature agreed that it was damaging Colorado's universities, health care system, road maintenance and other crucial public services.

Like Colorado, the proposed Oregon measure restricts spending growth to the rate of population growth plus inflation, a level that forces deep and unpopular cuts to schools, public safety and other

mental quality and agriculture. Calling this scheme the "rainy day amendment," even though the measure renders a potential rainy day fund useless, is a joke. But if voters place this ruse in Oregon's constitution, it will not be a laughing matter.

Michael Leachman is a policy analyst at the Oregon Center for Public Policy, a local group formed to advance economic and social opportunities for all.

Hip Hop Wake Up Call

Setting a positive example for fans

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

Even if you've never tasted Cristal, you probably know what it is. After all, the high-end champagne has been mentioned in lyrics by everyone from Ludacris to Jay Z, making it the eighth most referenced brand in music in 2005.

With all the attention — and the increased sales such attention generates — you'd think Cristal would embrace hip hop culture, thanking its spokesmen and women, i.e. rappers, for the extra income. Not quite.

Frédéric Rouzard, the managing director of Cristal, recently gave The Economist magazine the impression that he was less than happy with hip hop's obsession with his company's product, saying "we can't forbid people from buying it."

Jay Z, a platinum selling artist and record executive, took offense to Rouzard's statements. Let's hope others in the game will wake up and become more mindful of the products — and the images — they broadcast to the world.



Hip hop music and culture has both formally and informally pushed a variety of products over the years. Cadillac, Nike... you name it and an artist has mentioned it in a song. And those lucky corporations profit greatly. After

all, hip hop is consumed all over the world and many — including young, white suburbanites — learn everything there is to know about urban culture by listening to the music and watching the videos.

If Sean "P. Diddy" Combs says "Pass the Courvoisier," chances are millions will do just that. Until now, mainstream rappers haven't paid much attention to the impact their words have.

With Jay Z calling for a boycott of Cristal, it seems hip hop is poised to move away from the brash materialism that has become its calling card. Jay Z has street cred.

Judge Greg Mathis is national vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

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