

OPINION

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Beer Can Spoil Holiday Cheer

Planning required when serving alcohol

BY KAREN WHEELER

The winter holidays are a time for celebratory gatherings of family and friends, food and drink, and high spirits. But there's one ingredient that can quickly spoil the holiday cheer - alcohol.

Give serious thought to the food and drinks you're serving; consider keeping the party alcohol-free.

However, if you decide to add alcoholic beverages to your holiday menu, a bit of planning and preparation can keep your event merry and bright.

If offering liquor, be responsible.

way you won't be adding to the eye-popping statistics of Oregon's serious underage drinking problem.

There's something else to remember: In Oregon, it's illegal for anyone to serve more alcohol to someone who is showing signs of having too much to drink. And, there's the third-party liability law, which means that if you allow an intoxicated person to leave your party, you may be liable for any damages or injuries your guest causes to others on the way home.

Here are some tips for holiday party givers:

Avoid making alcohol the main focus of social events. Entertain guests with music, dancing, games, food and conversation.

Many adults prefer nonalcoholic beverages, so offer plenty of alcohol-free choices such as sparkling



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Prepare for that relative who tends to imbibe too much. At the same time, make arrangements for non-drinkers and young people. This kind of planning will ensure that your guests have fun and don't turn into party problems or, worse yet, holiday statistics.

Traffic studies tell us that an average of four persons a year for the past 10 years have died on Oregon roads during the Christmas holiday. When New Year's statistics for the decade are added in, we learn that 41 percent of the fatal holiday highway crashes involved alcohol.

Keeping alcohol out of the hands of young people is always the way to go - and it's the law. During holiday parties, keep an eye on the liquor cabinet or punchbowl when kids are around. Research tells us that one place youth procure alcohol is at parties where parents and other adults have left them unsupervised.

Instead, offer teen guests challenging games, activities like a white-elephant gift exchange, fun beverages and good food. That

water, juice drinks and sodas.

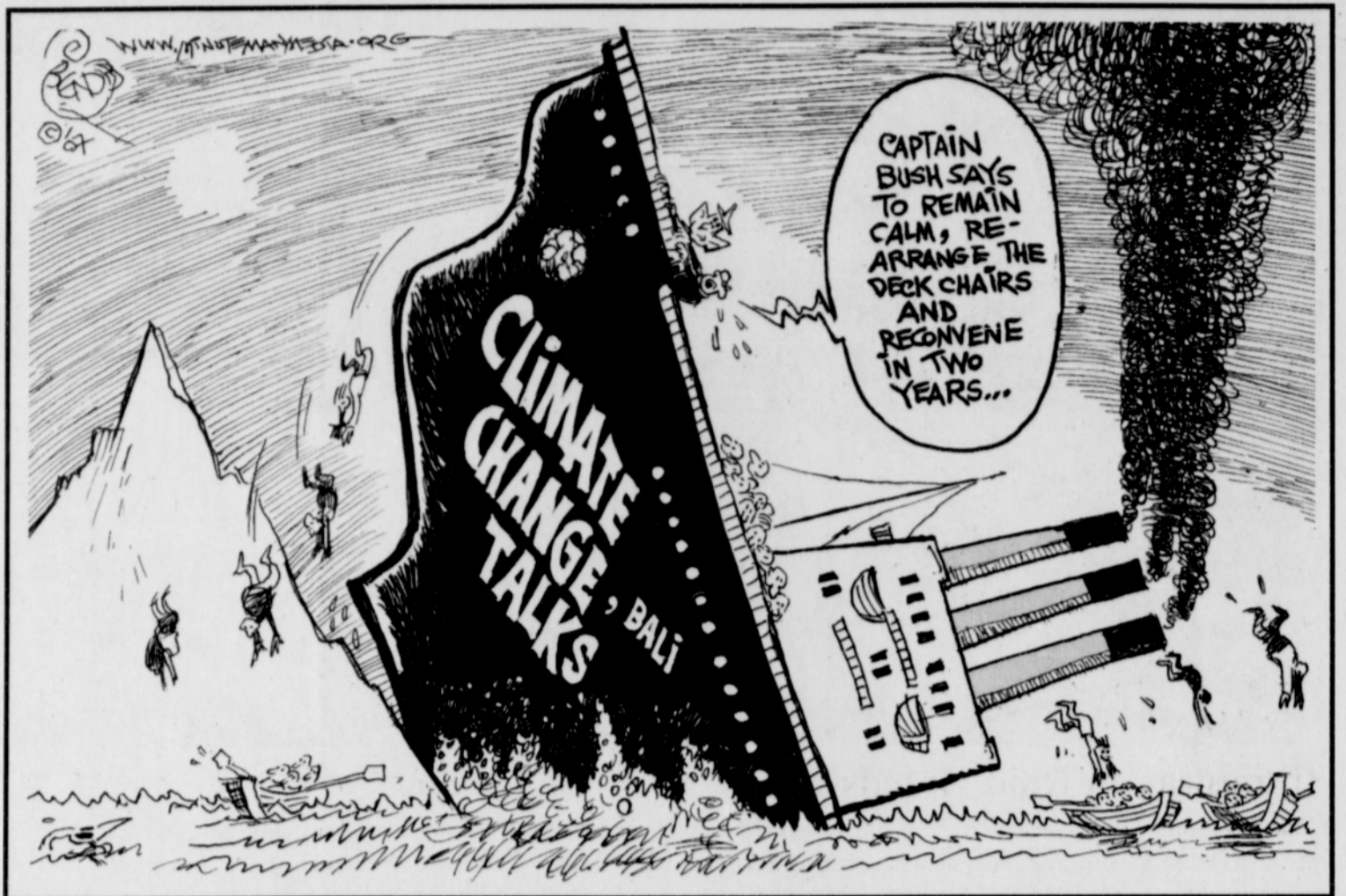
Provide guests with nutritious and appealing foods to slow the effects of alcohol. High-protein and carbohydrate foods such as cheese and meats stay in the stomach much longer, which slows the rate at which the body absorbs alcohol. Avoid salty foods that encourage people to drink more.

Measure the correct amount of liquor into drinks (no doubles) and don't serve anyone who is under age or appears to be impaired. Don't serve alcoholic punch or other beverages that make it hard to gauge how much alcohol one consumes. Don't force alcoholic drinks on guests or rush to refill empty glasses.

Stop serving alcoholic beverages at least one hour before the end of the event. Serve coffee, alcohol-free beverages and desserts at that time.

Before the party, recruit people who won't be drinking to help ensure that everyone has a safe ride home.

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



Don't Imprison the Next Generation

By criminalizing ordinary student misbehavior

BY MONIQUE L. DIXON

When our children are being arrested in our schools for "crimes" such as fighting that used to warrant in-school detention, a short suspension or a phone call to parents, it is a sign there is a not only a failure in our school systems, but in our justice system as well. Students of color are being suspended from public schools at much higher rates than their white peers. This phenomenon, recently coined "learning while black," adds a new, unexplored dimension to the issues of racial profiling and providing legitimate educational opportunities for poor and minority children.

The criminalization of ordinary student misbehavior is nothing new. It has been the reality of school discipline practices in America since the late 1980s when schools adopted "zero tolerance" policies.

But, states and school districts took the notion to new

extremes by passing laws that required the suspension or expulsion of students for the possession and/or use of any weapon, drug, or the commission of other serious violations on or off school grounds. With many school-discipline policies written in ambiguous language, it has been left up to administrators to judge on a case-by-case basis what could be deemed a serious violation.

The problem is clear. Many school administrators have the statutory authority to exercise discretion in cases that do not involve guns, drugs or assaults on the faculty. Instead they are choosing to have elementary-school children arrested for playing with paper guns.

Something has to be done to reverse the highly destructive trend of throwing children out of school for acting like children. Guns, weapons and drugs should never be allowed into or on school grounds, yet in the aftermath of Columbine, for many minority students, fighting, not doing your homework and other nebulously defined infractions could get these students kicked out of school and landed in the juve-

nile-justice system.

We should ask ourselves what safeguards are in place to prevent a disproportionately doled out, reactionary punishment instead of using discretion?

Clearly there will be less sympathy for the "foul-mouthed," disruptive child, and some would argue that is the way it should be. In other words, imperfect children do not deserve a chance for

tended to punish - firearms and drug offenses. And, if they were applied to all students equally, no matter their race, ethnic origin or socio-economic status.

But school districts across the country went to extremes when they teamed up with law enforcement to create another educational track in this country's schools - the "schoolhouse to jailhouse track" - by imposing

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redemption or an opportunity to improve themselves just throw them to the police and the problem is handled.

Civil-rights and racial justice organizations such as Advancement Project have come to understand that it requires collective action to stop these immoral acts of incarcerating our youth.

Zero-tolerance policies seem reasonable as a matter of school safety, and would be acceptable if they were applied to only those serious offenses they were in-

two doses of punishment: Suspensions or expulsions and a trip to juvenile court - for what used to be considered acts of typical adolescent misconduct.

Therefore, handcuffing a 5-year-old girl for having a temper tantrum in her St. Petersburg, Fla., school and the egregious incidents in Jena, La., are more the rule than the exception.

Monique L. Dixon is a senior attorney with Advancement Project, a Washington-based racial justice organization.

Letter to the Editor

HIV Prevention

Thank you for the article on the HIV prevention efforts taken by minority communities (Portland Observer, Dec. 5). Since the beginning of the epidemic, the rate of AIDS diagnosis for Hispanics/Latinos has continuously increased at disproportionate rates.

Hispanics/Latinos have major misperceptions about HIV transmission and face numerous barriers such as stigma, lack of access to health care, and cultural and physical isolation. While 80 percent of the patients diagnosed with HIV and AIDS are white and non-Hispanic, an increasing percentage of newly diagnosed cases are among racial and ethnic minorities. These clients are often the most isolated from primary care and support services.

Cascade AIDS Project has been providing training and capacity-building assistance to agencies serving this underserved group. One of the main obstacles we face is the stigma that often accompanies the disease and the lack of awareness that exists in regards to risk and prevention.

Nevertheless, since the beginning of the program LUES (Latinos United Fighting AIDS), we have trained numerous community health educators and we have provided education to Latino youth, middle school students and their parents.

An important component of this program involves working with Latino youth at Oregon Council of Hispanic Advancement. These amazing kids have provided us with incredible feedback that has allowed us to produce social marketing materials in the media to educate the Latino population in general. We have produced radio broadcasting materials and a video. We are conducting a campaign on the radio in the near future and will air a PSA on local Hispanic TV.

Once again, I really appreciate your efforts to support this cause.

Roberto Astorga
Latino education coordinator
Cascade AIDS Project

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