

Drinking from 1A

drink guys under the table. Here I am, five foot nothing, who could out-drink a freshman in college. It wasn't as cool as I thought it was, but that was my claim to fame.

"I was never going to be the head cheerleader," she continued. "I was never going to be involved in sports. I never had parents that were actively involved with my school. Just barely making it was all I could look for."

Nicole, like her mother, father, eventual husband and, for a brief time she feared, her sister, all became alcoholics.

She lives in Florence now with her family and her son. She fears that he'll begin drinking one day as well. He's in elementary school right now, showing no interest in alcohol.

But that's today.

As Oregon's sudden boon in the brewery business has put drinking front and center as a way of economic recovery, what will her son's attitudes be when he grows older?

To prevent her son from following in her footsteps, Nicole, like many others in the community, are taking part in the Healthy Directions initiative — an area prevention and health promotion coalition that was formed through Lane County Public Health.

The goal of Healthy Directions is to bring about awareness of, and attempt to lower, teen alcohol use in the Siuslaw region.

Lane County Community Health Analyst Emily Buff Bear, who is spearheading the initiative,

explained.

"We have a grant that allowed us to look for communities in Lane County that needed assistance working with under-age drinking prevention, in particular communities that had higher rates of alcohol use — especially by youth. We decided to work in Florence because there was interest and the will."

That will came from a variety of factors, one of them being an April 2017 Florence case that left a 14-year old student with a potentially fatal blood alcohol content of .354 — more than four times the Oregon legal limit of .08 for adults.

In that incident, the teen had met up with another friend who brought two fifths of Black Velvet whisky to drink. The teen consumed one fifth over a short period of time, which eventually led him to pass out. A passerby saw him unresponsive and foaming at the mouth. The teen survived, but the concerns remained.

While incidents like that have raised public awareness, it's the unreported and more subtle normalization of alcohol and teens that brought Healthy Directions to Florence.

A 2015 study conducted by the Center for Disease Control found that 33 percent of youth drank alcohol.

According to Buff Bear, Siuslaw area statistics are higher.

While she was unable to provide actual numbers due to privacy concerns, she stated "I can tell you that Siuslaw School District has a higher rate than the county. Both the county and the school district have

a higher rate than the state average."

While the recent legalization of marijuana and the national attention on opioid addiction has caused many organizations to focus solely on those issues, Buff Bear points out that those issues are relatively minor when compared to liquor.

"Alcohol is the drug of choice for any youth in Oregon," she said. "That's statewide. Not so much tobacco, or even marijuana and prescription drugs. When it comes to age of initiation and use of drugs it's usually alcohol that they start with."

Florence Police Commander John Pitcher agreed, saying, "Other drugs play a factor in our day-to-day lives as police officers, but alcohol is by far the number one issue we are dealing with in our community."

While underage drinking is an issue that needs to be addressed, Buff Bear points out that it's not endemic to all teens in Florence. And while it's easy to focus on the 33 percent statistic, 66 percent of youth aren't drinking — a number that's dangerously overlooked.

If you ask youth how much they're personally drinking, you get the 33 percent," she explained. "If you ask them how much they think others are drinking, they say 80 percent." Youth who don't drink think everyone else their age is.

From that perspective, it's not the oft cited "peer pressure" that gets youth to drink, but a resignation to its perceived normalcy.

"That's a dangerous misconception," Buff Bear said. "If adults and

youth think that all the kids are using these substances anyway, it does make our youth more likely to use."

"If we recognize the 66 percent who are just going about their lives without using drugs or alcohol, they're less likely to drink," she continued.

As to why that 33 percent does drink, Buff Bear believes it has to do with the prevalent normalization of alcohol.

"I'd say our culture has really glorified it," she said. "It feels like everybody is drinking."

In Oregon, normalization is a driving force in economic health.

A 2014 meeting of the Commissioners of the Oregon Liquor Control Commission spoke with alcohol industry experts regarding the financial impact of alcohol production in the state.

The Oregon Wine Board reported that the wine economy has a \$2.7 billion statewide impact. The Oregon Brewers Guild estimated they have a \$1.6 billion impact.

Large cities like Portland and Eugene are not the main areas to reap the benefits of alcohol production, either. Rural employment was noted as having the most significant impact from craft beer, wine, spirits and cider. They reported that 44 out of 74 Oregon breweries are in rural areas.

Producing alcohol represents more than 2 percent of employment along the North coast.

Alcohol tourism is also a significant employer. From vineyards to brewery tastings, 94,000 Oregonians in hospitality and tourism directly benefit from alcohol production.

hol production.

Florence is no exception.

City officials have made attempts to bring a major brewery to town in an effort to boost employment, but have thus far been unsuccessful.

However, the selling of alcohol is prevalent.

Florence has one of the highest density of alcohol distribution in Lane County. A recent census looked at the number of alcohol outlets — liquor stores, bars, convenience stores, etc. — and compared them to population size.

It found there is one alcohol outlet for every 100 people. That figure is four times the Lane County average. Only five other areas in the county have a higher density, which are located in downtown Eugene and Cottage Grove.

Of particular concern is how these outlets are dealing with teen alcohol use. In 2012, the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC) performed a minor sales check in Florence, surveying how many businesses checked IDs. Only 62 percent of businesses complied, "significantly below the 2011 statewide average of 76 percent," the OLCC report said.

The businesses were Rite Aid, Griff's Cleawox Market, Abhi's One Stop Market, Twin Lakes Store, Florence Liquor Store, Abby's Pizza, Buy 2 @ Florence, Chen's Family Dish, Kozy Kitchen and Pizza Hut.

But that was in 2012 and these businesses may have changed their practices. Buff Bear praises Abby's Pizza in particular for its enforcement of ID checks.

But no other OLCC studies have been released since 2012 to definitively prove which businesses have gotten better and those that have fallen to the wayside of the rules.

"The fact that there haven't been any others just highlights for me how the OLCC does not appear to be funded for some of its most basic functions as a regulatory body," Buff Bear said.

"We're not disparaging retailers," Buff Bear pointed out. "We think they're very strong partners in preventing youth drinking." But the advertisements these establishments have can create issues, she explained;

"How much money do alcohol and tobacco outlets spend on advertising? If a teen sees a lot of advertising and many adults drinking in bars, it normalizes a lot of that behavior for our youth. They like to think that they're adults, and if they see things that they think is normal adult behavior, then they're going to do that."

But that doesn't mean that adults should stop drinking altogether, Buff Bear points out; "We can partner with adults and make sure they're using alcohol in moderation."

But what are the responsibilities of adults and businesses then? Are they just as culpable in teen drinking, or even more so, than the teens themselves?

In *Saturday's edition*, find out how parents and adults can be the major contributors to teen drinking, how Nicole's parents alcoholism allowed her to drink, and what Florence area teens think about the issue.

Market from 1A

Fillman also wants to remind people there are still a number of weekends left in this season if they are interested in selling at market.

"If someone wants to vend, come down on a Saturday or Sunday and see me. I will hook them up with everything they need. You need to have a City Business License, which we have the paperwork for, and all they have to do is fill out the application. The cost is \$65 for the first day you set up and that includes your Florence Business License,

your market application fee and your first day of booth space. After that it is only \$25 a day to set up and sell your stuff."

For more information on the Florence Boardwalk Market, check out the groups Facebook page.

Business has been very good this season according to Market Manager Linda Fillman. There are new vendors, food booths and music this season that has been attracting more visitors to the area than previous seasons.



MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

Eclipse from 1A

It's almost more about people than it is about the planets."

April Platt, a teenager from Coos Bay who came up to see the eclipse with friends, looked at the eclipse as history.

"It's a really amazing link to history because so many things have happened since the eclipse. But the eclipse is the same," she

said. "It just shows the world keeps turning on its axis regardless of what we do and how we grow as a civilization. It's really amazing to think what people in 100 years are going to be doing when they're watching the eclipse."

Platt's friend Jessica Bainbridge also saw the moment as a generational link.

"It's special because we'll be able to tell our grandchildren about it. It'll be neat to say we were at the event and we got to see it. The

last time it happened was 1918, and I think it's pretty cool."

That moment to tell the grandchildren finally arrived at around 10:12 a.m. The air began to chill. The boats on the docks hid in a glowing shadow.

Eyes darted upward as the eclipse began to reach its totality.

Generations sat side by side, elbow to elbow with strangers. They forgot the troubles in their lives momentarily as they gazed at the skies, sharing a ritual that has

occurred for billions of years.

They were on a journey of discovery that has been going on since the beginning of time.

The typography of our landscapes change at glacial speed, languages and cultures fade and begin anew and even the stars in the solar system vanish with time. But the eclipse has remained constant; an event shared throughout the aeon.

What the people discovered around the Florence pier on Aug. 21 was the exact same thing their ancestors discovered, and their ancestors before them; An ephemeral message etched in the writing of the cosmos and passed down the genetic line of humanity, linking everything to everyone.

That's how Avie and Janice Welsh saw it, grandmother and granddaughter; Avie in her small fold out chair, notebook in hand, and Janice pointing at the heavens.

When Avie was asked what she thought about the eclipse, she said "I loved it. We got our observations done."

"And we've finished some pretty serious discovery," she said, then closed her book until the next eclipse.

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Friday 8/18	Mary Kay Phillips Jim Jordan	Florence Florence	Fresh Harvest Café & Bakery Three Rivers Casino Resort
Saturday 8/19	Robin Siewell Ray Bray	Florence Florence	Safeway/Florence Safeway/Florence
Sunday 8/20	Judy Caputo Jolie Charles	Florence Corvallis	Grocery Outlet One Stop Market
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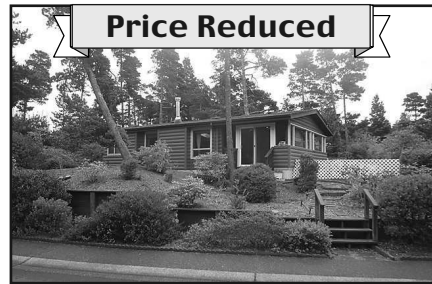


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