

Drugs other than alcohol cause accidents

Evidence suggests that drugs other than alcohol are increasingly playing a role in traffic crashes and fatalities in Columbia County. According to the Oregon Department of Transportation, in 2003 more than 25,000 people were arrested for driving under the influence of intoxicants in Oregon. Of those, 1,400 were suspected of and evaluated for being under the influence of drugs other than alcohol. That's 277 more than the number evaluated in 2000. From 2002 to 2003, there was a 4 percent state-wide increase in intoxicant-related driving fatalities, with one fatality occurring in Columbia County.

"When people think of driving responsibly, they most often decide 'I won't drink and drive,'" explained Gretchen McKenzie, statewide Impaired Driving Program Manager for ODOT's Transportation Safety Division. "That same thinking needs to be applied to other drugs as well. These include over-the-counter drugs and prescription medicines as well as inhalants and certainly, illegal drugs like marijuana or methamphetamine. Like alcohol, they can contribute to dangerous levels of driving impairment."

Oregon DUI laws apply to mental and physical impairments caused by intoxicants including alcohol, inhalants and illegal or controlled substances.

Some over-the-counter and prescription drugs can impair drivers as well.

"There is still much work to be done to reduce intoxicant-related traffic injuries and fatalities," said McKenzie. "We want to remind people that by taking OTC and prescription medications and choosing to drive, they can unwittingly contribute to the problem. The 'do not operate heavy machinery' warning means cars, too."

Holiday periods such as Labor Day weekend typically have higher traffic fatality rates than non-holiday periods. ODOT's Transportation Safety Division encourages drivers to avoid driving under the influence and to adopt these tactics for reducing DUI offenses.

1. Designate a driver. According to studies, designated drivers – people who have not consumed alcohol or drugs – save thousands of lives and spare thousands more from injury due to intoxicated driving. Annually more than 70 million people across the country serve as designated drivers or are driven home by one.

2. Take the car keys. Prevent a person from driving under the influence by asking them to hand over the keys well before they become impaired. If the person is already impaired, make every possible effort to take away their keys and find

other transportation for them.

3. Report drivers you suspect may be under the influence. If you see a driver weaving, driving with the windows down in cold weather, passing dangerously, straddling the center line, making wide turns, driving too slowly or tailgating, the driver may be ill or intoxicated. Report the car's description and location to the police of sheriff or call 800-24-DRUNK (800-243-7865). Keep this number in your car or programmed on your wireless phone.

From more information about DUI in Oregon and ODOT's impaired driving programs, contact Gretchen McKenzie at 503-986-4183 or visit <www.odot.state.or.us/transafety/Impaired_Driving.htm>.

Taking steps to end Alzheimer's, Oct. 2

The fourth annual 2.5 mile St. Helens Memory Walk, a fundraising event to increase awareness and support programs and services provided by the Alzheimer's Association in Columbia County, will take place October 2 in Olde Towne, St. Helens.

Currently, 4 million Americans have been diagnosed with the disease. That number is expected to surge as 76 million baby boomers begin reaching the age of geriatric risk.

"We are in a race against time as the baby boom population ages and the number of people with Alzheimer's disease reaches epidemic proportions," said Judy McKellar, Executive Director of the Oregon-Greater Idaho Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association.

The largest private funder of

Alzheimer's disease research to date, the association has committed \$136 million towards research. Until a cure for Alzheimer's disease is found, the association is committed to providing support to those with the disease and the people who care for them. Programs and services provided by the Alzheimer's Association include a toll-free HelpLine, information and resource referral, education programs, support groups, care counseling and a resource library.

Since 1989, Memory Walk has raised over \$120 million nationally to fund research and support services provided by local chapters. The 2003 Memory Walk in St. Helens raised over \$8,000 – money used to provide direct services to families in Columbia County.

For information about the walk or to be a team captain, call Kristin Church at Community Action Team, 503-397-3511 or 800-404-3511.

Vernonian's art at Art Institute

Vernonia artist Heather Headley's acrylic piece, "Frozen," will be on display at the Komen Portland Race for the Cure® "UP CLOSE in PINK™" from September 2 through the end of the month. The show, which features artists' expressions of their feelings about breast cancer, is a perfect fit for Headley's piece, which was designed for a friend who recently underwent treatment for breast cancer.

Headley, a recent mother, created "Frozen" for her friend "Cathy" last year, when Cathy lost the child she was carrying due to radiation treatments she was undergoing for her breast cancer.

Headley's message in "Frozen" is that she "hopes that the painting evokes compassion for the difficult subject matter." It's a message that Cathy understood. Upon receiving the piece, she cried and said it was beautiful. She also encouraged Headley to enter it in the Komen Portland Race for the Cure® "UP CLOSE in PINK™" art show.

The "UP CLOSE in PINK™" art show will take place at the Art Institute of Portland. Admission to the show is free.



Above, Vernonia artist Heather Headley's acrylic painting, entitled "Frozen," was chosen for display at both UP CLOSE in PINK™ art show and Komen Portland Race for the Cure®.

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