

Alcohol and driving do not mix

Memorial Day weekend traditionally kicks off Oregon's summer driving season. When the automobile is combined with warm-weather drinking parties, it's often a recipe for drunken driving arrests or tragic accidents, says the Oregon Liquor Control Commission.

"Alcohol and driving absolutely do not mix," said Teresa Kaiser, OLCC executive director. "The numbers tell the story. Proms, graduations and family summer vacations are too often marred by traffic collisions and deaths involving drivers who are intoxicated."

About 36 percent (184) of Oregon's 512 traffic crash fatalities in 2003 were alcohol-related, according to the Oregon Department of Transportation, Transportation Safety Division. And 163 (37 percent) of the state's 436 traffic crash fatalities in 2002 involved alcohol. Thousands more were injured in these wrecks.

Oregon traffic deaths declined 13 percent to 445 in 2004, ODOT reported, but more than a third of the fatalities involved an impaired driver.

Too many young people are part of this tragic tally, said Kaiser. In 2003, 34 Oregonians under age 21 were killed in alcohol-related traffic crashes; 10 were 15- to 20-year-old drinking drivers. Across the nation, 2,834 persons under 21 were killed in alcohol-related traffic incidents - 1,146 aged 15-20, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

Research paints a frightening picture of the havoc wreaked by impaired drivers, said Kaiser. According to ODOT and the NHTSA, for every 140 miles driven in Oregon in 2000, somebody with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 was at the wheel of a vehicle. Police reported that 838 crashes involved a driver or pedestrian with a BAC of .01 or more. (.08 is the legal limit for driving in Oregon)

Drivers with BACs of .10 or above were involved in an estimated 5,700 crashes that killed 132 persons and injured 1,600; those with BACs of .08 -.09 were in about 100 crashes that

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Health Notes

By Audeen Wagner



HEART WALK. The walking team from Providence Vernonia did very well, with the yard sale (which raised about \$1200 for the Heart Association) and the Heart Walk in downtown Portland. Thanks to all who donated to the walk and to the success of the sale. The picture is of the Vernonia "Cardiac Queens," from left, Cathy Rozinek, Sandy Alsbury, Brittany Fox, Sandy Fox, Sue Blair, Marla Rethwill, and Judy Hargis. Great job, ladies!



ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS (Continued)

As we said before, there is much information available about the various kinds of mental illnesses, so we're continuing the subject, with some more mental health issues.

Panic Disorder. "Panic attacks" can be overwhelming experiences, and can happen to anyone. The cause of panic disorder is not known, but research shows that a chemical or hormonal imbalance are often the underlying cause. Drugs or stress, or other situational events can also be the trigger for panic disorder.

An example of a panic attack: Imagine that you've just stepped into an elevator and suddenly your heart races, your chest aches, you break out in a cold sweat and feel as if the elevator is about to fall. What's happening here is a panic attack, an uncontrollable panic response to ordinary non-threatening situations. Doctors diagnose panic disorder if a person has four of the following symptoms during such an attack: sweating; hot or cold flashes; choking or smothering sensations; racing heart; labored breathing; trembling; pains; feeling faint; numbness; nausea; disorientation; or feelings of dying or losing one's mind. A attack lasts typically about 10 minutes, but may be shorter or longer. A person may feel nervous and jittery for many hours after experiencing a panic attack.

It is estimated that two to five percent of Americans have panic disorder, so you are not alone if you have these symptoms. Severe stress, such as the death of a loved one, can bring on attacks; or, a stimulant such as caffeine can also trigger the disorder.

Panic disorder can be treated either by taking medication or by behavioral therapy that is specific for this disease. The two methods of treatment seem to be equally effective, and the decision about which to take depends largely on the preference of the individual. A combination of medication and therapy offers some improved benefits in some patients. Clearly, it is a matter to be discussed at length with a healthcare professional before making decisions about treatment.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. PTSD is an anxiety disorder that occurs after a person experiences a traumatic event that caused intense fear, helplessness, or horror. Such things as rape, war, natural disasters, serious accidents, or even witnessing a violent event, can be the cause.

While it is normal to experience a brief period of anxiety or depression after any of these events, people with PTSD have a tendency to re-experience the event, to have symptoms of excessive emotions, irritability or outbursts of anger, nervousness, sleeplessness, and nightmares. These symptoms commonly appear within three months of the experience, although sometimes they occur many months or even years later.

We associate this disorder with war veterans who have experienced combat situations; what we used to refer to as "shell shock" or "battle fatigue" is most likely PTSD. It is estimated that 15 to 30 percent of the 3.5 million men and women who served in Vietnam have suffered from PTSD.

There are many different treatments for PTSD, and individuals respond to treatment differently. It can be treated effectively with psychotherapy or medication, or both.

There are many more kinds of mental illnesses, and the important thing to know is that they are now treatable, most with a high degree of success. Any health care provider can give detailed information to patients, and can provide referrals to specialists and agencies for help.

MAMMOVAN: The next visit to Vernonia is on Wednesday, June 22. The mobile van comes out from Tuality, and sets up in the clinic parking lot. A nice convenience for our community. Call the clinic (503-429-9191) to schedule your mammogram.

The Vernonia High School class of 1985

20 year reunion on Friday, August 5,
at the Scout Cabin in Hawkins Park.

If you attended school with the class of 1985
at any time from K-12, you are invited to attend.

Deadline for registration/payment is June 24, 2005. Contact Jamie (Gallaty) Whitmore at 503-359-9726 or tealeeves@msn.com or Elizabeth (Fletcher) Marxer at 503-861-1766 or coasteez5@hotmail.com or go to vernoniaclassmates.com for registration and prices.

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