

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

8th graders and alcohol

During a recent ride-along with the Vernonia Police Department on a Friday night, thankfully, the only item of note was minors drinking. That's bad enough. The latest statistics on kids and alcohol are disturbing.

According to a draft report on Alcohol Data Trends found on the Department of Human Services (DHS) website at www.oregon.gov using 2005-06 data: Eighth grade students in Oregon were more likely to report drinking alcohol in the past 30 days than the national average for 8th graders (31.9 percent vs. 17 percent). Girls reported higher rates of current alcohol use than boys (33.9 percent vs 29.9 percent). Another report said 58 percent feel alcohol is easy to get and 29.1 percent don't think drinking poses any great risk of harm.

How many 8th graders know that drinking large amounts of alcohol can lead to coma or even death?

Other recent studies indicate that people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcoholism than those who begin at age 21.

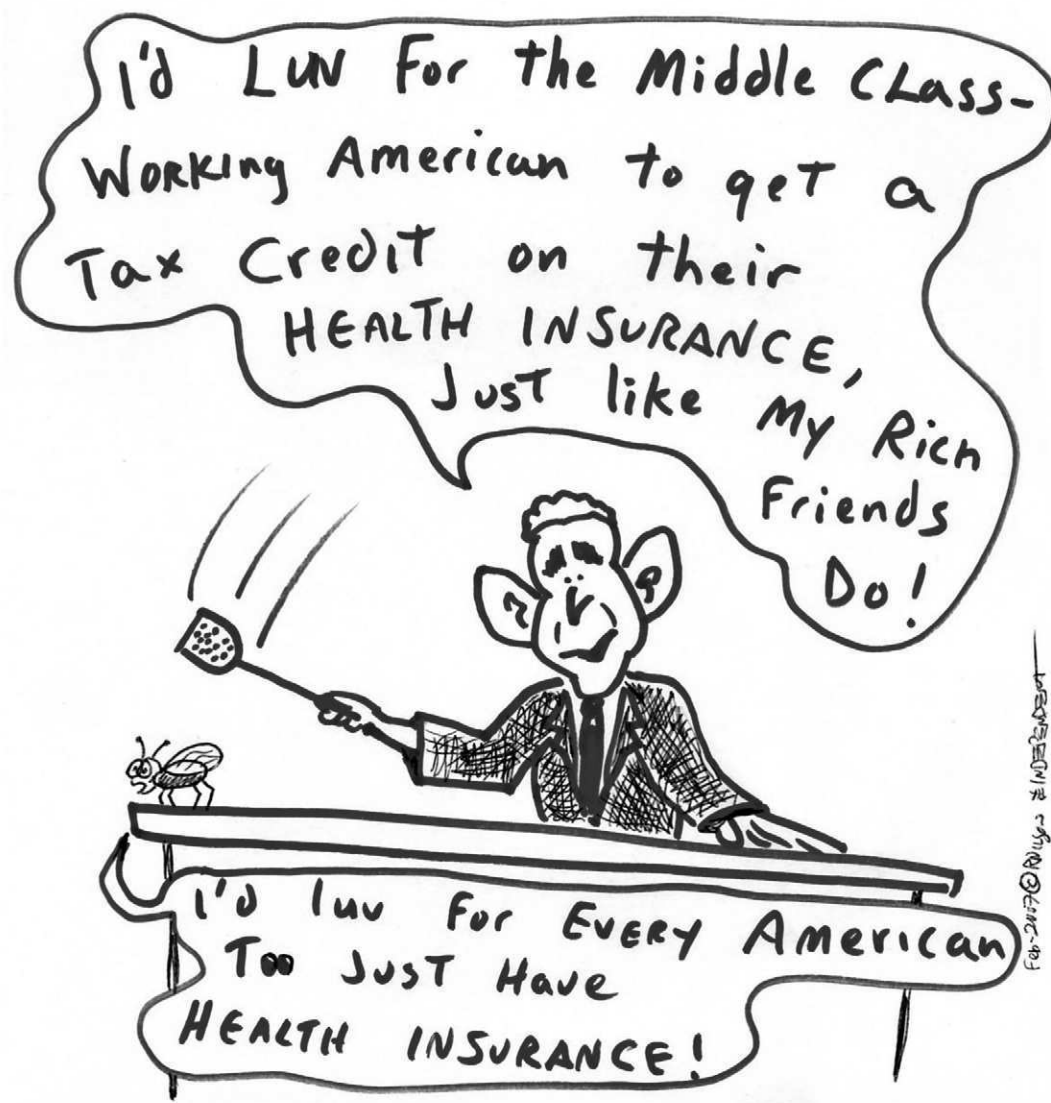
Know the signs: How to tell if you or a friend has a drinking problem? If one or more of these warning signs is present, he or she may have a problem;

- Getting drunk on a regular basis
- Lying about how much alcohol he or she is using
- Believing that alcohol is necessary to have fun
- Having frequent hangovers
- Feeling run-down, depressed or even suicidal
- Having "blackouts" – forgetting what he or she did during drinking
- Having problems at school or getting in trouble with the law

There is a test online at www.alcoholscreening.org that goes into more detail.

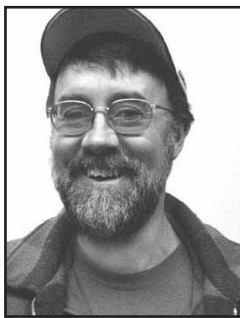
Apparently, prescription drug abuse by young people is also on the rise because there is a perception that, since the drugs are 'legal,' they are safe. Well, alcohol is a legal drug whose abuse can cause a lifetime of problems – if it doesn't first cut life short. In 1998, 35.8 percent of traffic deaths of 15- to 20-year-olds were alcohol related.

What can parents do to help their children make healthy choices? Be a good role model. Talk to your kids, tell them not to use alcohol or drugs. Don't let them drink in your home, on the mistaken idea that if they drink there they won't drink elsewhere. See www.oregon.gov/DHS/addiction/gethelp for more.



Ike Says . . .

By Dale Webb, member
Nehalem Valley Chapter, Izaak Walton League



This topic has been in our local paper twice now, but I thought I would add to it just a little to give a sportsman's perspective. The Gun Free School Zone Act has hit with a thud in our little community. The current Act has been in force since 1996; the original Act was created in 1990 but was voided by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1995. So how could it be that a law restricting the movement of firearms on public streets could be in effect for 10 years with few people aware of it and very few abiding by it? Evidently it is not being enforced; we can only hope it stays that way.

Why do I say that? First, the act does nothing to provide security to the schools. Second, none of us wants to see a normally law abiding citizen being locked up in prison for violating this Act. Stop and think about that second statement and look around to the people you know are hunters or gun enthusiasts. Nearly 50% of them should have been locked up in prison by now. Do you think that is right? Hopefully this Act will once again be appealed to the U.S. Supreme court and again be thrown out. The Act depends on the Commerce laws for enforcement and the supreme court very distinctly decreed that carry-

ing a gun into a school zone has little to do with commerce. Evidently our congressmen and senators couldn't read the U.S. Supreme Court decision. Stop and think about it; if interstate commerce laws can regulate guns, then the government can regulate anything you buy, including how you use the item you have bought and where you can travel with that item. The highest court in the land said "no," but until a new case gets in front of the court, we will have to conform with the Act if we wish not to lose our jobs, savings and freedom.

I recently conducted a poll on a popular hunting forum here in Oregon. The results were interesting. Only 48% of the respondents were aware of the Act. So, where do these people pack their firearms while crossing a school zone? Four percent said in the gun rack, 31% said laying on a seat, 43% in a soft gun case, 20% in a hard gun case and one percent in a trunk. No one said in a locked container and no one said in a locking gun rack.

Under the present Gun Free School Zone Act, the only legal way to carry a firearm through a school zone is in a locked container (which can include a trunk or locked canopy), a locking gun rack (I could not find one in Cabelas), or if the person with the gun has a Concealed Handgun License or similar recognized license. There are a couple of other exemptions involving getting permission from the school district. For people without a CHL, your weapon must be unloaded. People with a CHL can carry right into the

Please see page 3