

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Oregon is a national leader

April is Alcohol Awareness Month. Oregon ranks fourth in the nation for alcohol-induced deaths. Alcohol is associated with increased unintentional injuries such as motor vehicle crashes, falls, drowning, burns and firearm injuries. It is also known (known, not believed) to increase violence and behaviors such as child maltreatment, homicide and suicide. A recent underage party in Vernonia resulted in three arrests and eight referrals to the Columbia County Juvenile Department. Is that unusual? Well, maybe the arrests are unusual, but not the drinking. Oregon has higher rates of alcohol use across all age groups than the nation as a whole. Wow, isn't it great to be Number One? Yes, it's legal to drink if you're over 21. Heck, Vernonia recently even had "Drunks Crossing" signs chalked in by some Good Samaritan on the street between the two busiest drinking establishments.

What about heavy or binge (binge is defined as 5 or more drinks within a couple of hours) drinking among 11th graders? In 2006, about one of every four 11th graders reported binge alcohol use. Even scarier, one of every eight 8th graders reported binge drinking... and these rates have been increasing! By comparison, use of marijuana and meth has gone down in the same two age groups. Interestingly, Columbia County has higher rates of drinking in both these age groups than Multnomah County, but lower rates than our neighbors in Clatsop County.

Research indicates that young people who use alcohol before age 15 are four times more likely to become alcohol-dependent than those who wait until age 21 to drink. Also, one of the best predictors of alcohol use among kids is the message they receive at home. What are you, as a parent, saying to your kids about alcohol? What kind of example are you setting? IT MATTERS.

There are resources available to help you or your children if alcohol is causing problems in your family. Columbia County Mental Health at 503-397-5211 has information and services. Alcoholics Anonymous can help, call them at 503-223-8569 or visit them online at www.aa.org. If someone else's drinking is bothering you, try Al-anon at 503-292-1333 or www.oregonAl-Anon.org. Overuse of alcohol can be an addiction.

One memorable quote from Narconon of Oklahoma, Inc., "Addiction is predictable. It will end in one of three ways: DEATH, PRISON or SOBRIETY. You choose."

APRIL 15TH

TAX DAY

IS COMING SOON

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BE SURE AND PAY
YOUR TAXES ...
SO WE CAN USE
THE MONEY FOR ...

BAIL-OUT'S!

REMEMBER IT'S A VOLUNTARY ACT → GOOGLE: VOLUNTARY TAX

Ike Says . . .

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



Hunters, it is time again to start thinking about applying for tags. Don't wait too long and jam up ODF&W's computers. New this year is the ability to make on-line purchases of controlled hunt applications. According to reports I have seen, the process

is easy. I just might have to try it myself!

Have you seen all the people at Vernonia Lake recently? I don't think it's the weather that is drawing them; nope, I bet the recent stocking of trout is putting most of those vehicles in the parking lot. Vernonia Lake is a real draw in our community and the trout fishing is usually red hot during the planting season.

The Nehalem River sure has been looking good lately, a nice aqua-green. I managed to get out in my kayak a few days ago and made the float from Anderson Park to Pittsburg. The river is clear of any dangerous trees and would make for a great family drift while the river is at the current height. It will be interesting to see what kind of fishing pressure there will be in the Nehalem Valley since fishing rules have changed regarding the retention of Cutthroat Trout during the late-spring-through-summer river fishing season. Finally, I will get to eat a few nice creek trout again. I can taste them now, lightly floured, sea-

soned and fried hot in butter, yum!

I have noticed a few deer on my drive to work and back and it seems that Hair Loss Syndrome is still with us. Of 12 deer I have seen recently, five had HLS; two of those were Whitetail deer over at the Wauna paper mill. Most of the afflicted deer were either last year's fawns or yearlings. It just doesn't appear that HLS is ever going to go away. We have had this problem for a decade now and the Blacktailed deer population continues to decline. In my opinion, HLS is a major player in this decline and, of course, this year's winter added even more mortalities. Deer that have HLS at this time of year may stand a chance of survival, but it will all hinge on the weather and how soon protein-rich forage appears.

The legislature, as I write this column, is considering several bills to change the way commercial fisheries are conducted on the Columbia River. One measure bans gill nets completely and another will remove gill nets from the Columbia River and place them into safe areas, where wild salmon are far less likely to be caught. There has been a contentious fight between sports fishermen and commercial interests for decades over allocations of the fishery between the two groups. It will be interesting to see if this fight will be put to rest.

Another fight that is occurring in the legislature, is between sportsmen and predator supporters. It has been rumored that the Ways and Means committee may try to gut ODF&W's abil-

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