

Clatskanie, OR  
(Columbia Co.)  
Chief  
(Cir. W. 2,807)

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## The Trident



## The Needle in the Flowers

Editorial Comments

by Deborah Steele Hazen

Last week's early spring sunshine and mass blooming of daffodils brought out the spring fever in many of us.

Spring is the rebirth of life after the "death" of winter, and we associate it symbolically with joy, hope and promise.

It was, then, a particularly unsettling feeling last Friday, when the person who was planting spring flowers in the planter box in front of the Chief office, uncovered a used hypodermic syringe with a bent needle that had apparently been pushed into the dirt sometime during the winter. Thank goodness she uncovered it with a garden trowel, and did not puncture herself.

It's our guess it wasn't a medical professional or a person using prescription drugs who left it there. We hope the IV drug user who used our planter box as a disposal site for his or her dirty needle did it carelessly and not maliciously.

Just as the needle and syringe lurked beneath the surface of our flower bed, so substance abuse continues to contaminate our society, and unfortunately, rural Northwest Oregon is not immune.

We were interested in information circulated recently by the Clatsop County Interagency Narcotics Team (CCINT).

Consider these statistics from CCINT's "Quick Facts for Year 2000" sheet:

\* In the year 2000, CCINT efforts resulted in the arrest of 94 individuals on a total of 206 charges. Of the 99 cases taken on by the task force during the year, 77 cases were closed by arrests and 12 cases remain active. The remaining 10 cases became inactive.

\* In the year 2000, CCINT seized an estimated \$1.2 million of illegal narcotics. Specifically broken down by drug type:

- Marijuana plants - \$1,150,000
- Methamphetamine - \$116,850
- Marijuana - \$22,825
- Cocaine - \$15,705
- Ephedrine - \$6,400
- Tar Heroin - \$4,930
- Crack Cocaine - \$990

Broken down by Clatsop County communities...

Astoria had 47 percent of the narcotics arrests (possession, delivery and/or manufacture of illegal drugs) made in Clatsop County in 2000 with 16 arrested for cocaine-related charges; 12 arrested for heroin-related charges; nine arrested for methamphetamine, and six arrested for marijuana.

In Seaside, which had 24 percent of the county's narcotics arrests - 13 were arrested for cocaine, seven for marijuana, two for methamphetamine, and one for heroin.

Warrenton, with 21% of the narcotics arrests during the year, had eight people arrested for methamphetamine, seven for cocaine, and five for marijuana.

Gearhart had two arrested for meth and one for marijuana, while Cannon Beach had just one meth-related arrest.

In the unincorporated sections of Clatsop County, two were arrested for meth and two meth labs were located and dismantled. There were two marijuana-related arrests made and 22 marijuana-grow operations were located.

Of course, these figures only indicate the activities of law

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enforcement officers regarding drugs in Clatsop County, not the actual toll that substance abuse of all kinds takes on human lives and relationships, nor the role it plays in other kinds of crime, in poverty, disease, non-productivity - in all kinds of misery and unhappiness.

We do not have similar statistics for Columbia County, but we would guess that a comparable drug problem exists here.

Another document that has recently crossed our desk is the "Status of Oregon's Children: County Data Book 2000 - Kids in the Middle," published by Children First for Oregon, which reports, among other social indicators, statistics regarding alcohol, illicit drug and tobacco use among 8th graders in Oregon.

We quote from the section on substance abuse:

"The consequences of alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse among middle school children in Oregon are felt far and wide. Substance abuse among preteens undermines motivation, interferes with cognitive processes and social relationships and can contribute to debilitating mood disorders. For society, it is a serious public health concern that has implications for school failure, mental health services, drug and alcohol treatment and juvenile crime.

"Oregon preteens report using drugs, tobacco and alcohol at alarming rates. According to a recent Oregon school survey; more than one in four 8th graders (26 percent) reported drinking alcohol in the past month."

Clatsop County statistics listed in the "Status of Oregon's Children 2000" indicate that 26 percent - equal to the state average - of 8th grade students reported drinking alcohol in the past month - while Columbia County statistics show 31 percent - 5 percent above the state average.

Columbia and Clatsop counties are both equal to the statewide average of 13 percent for 8th graders who report using illicit drugs during the past month. It is estimated that 73 children and youth in Clatsop County, and 117 in Columbia County are in need of treatment for alcohol or other drug use.

As far as tobacco is concerned, 21 percent of Clatsop County 8th graders and 25 percent of Columbia County 8th graders report using tobacco in the past month compared with only 13 percent statewide.

According to the Children First for Oregon report:

"Many of the risk factors for adolescent substance use are shared by other adolescent problem behaviors. These predictors include poor and inconsistent family management practices, family conflict, a low bonding to family, early and persistent problem behaviors, academic failure and a low degree of commitment to school. The greater the number of risk factors present, the greater the danger of substance abuse later in a child's life."

The report confirms, what we have long believed to be true:

"Much of the current research reveals that the use of tobacco, alcohol or drugs may be a learned behavior, either from parents or peers. If parents use drugs or have a positive attitude toward the use of drugs, adolescents are much more likely to use drugs - and in many instances, this leads to extended substance use by the child. For example, parental use of marijuana has been associated with their children's use of other illegal drugs, including cocaine and barbituates.