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For Immediate Release 03/03/09

Lane County Advocates Work to Increase Awareness of Problem Gambling; Rally at University of Oregon Planned

Visual/interview opportunity: 9:45 a.m., University of Oregon's EMU Amphitheatre

Contacts: Julie Hynes, Lane County Problem Gambling Prevention coordinator, 682-3928; Navit Parker, University of Oregon Problem Gambling Awareness Project coordinator, 346-0412

Last year, Oregon's problem gambling treatment clients had the highest rate of suicidal thoughts on record, according to recent statistics from Oregon Problem Gambling Services. Almost half of all clients (48 percent) said they had seriously considered ending their lives within six months of entering problem gambling treatment.

Officials do not know the exact reason for the jump in suicidal ideation, although the slumping economy could be a factor.

Despite – and because of – the problem, advocates would like to raise community awareness that, even in these hard times, there is hope and help for problem gambling. To raise awareness, local advocates are holding a rally at the **University of Oregon's EMU Amphitheatre on Wednesday, March 4 at 9:45 a.m.**

The rally is being held at the university to not only help increase community awareness problem gambling, but also among college students, who tend to have higher rates of problem gambling than the general population.

"Most UO students are unfamiliar with the issue of college problem gambling," said Navit Parker, UO student and coordinator of the university's new Problem Gambling Awareness Project "Because of this lack of

and coordinator of the university's new Problem Gambling Awareness Project. "Because of this lack of awareness, the issue is neither validated nor understood."

Research shows that about one in 20 college students have a problem with gambling, said Julie Hynes, Lane County's problem gambling prevention coordinator, who is working with Parker on the UO project. University of Oregon's Problem Gambling Awareness Project is the first of its kind in Oregon. The project, housed within UO's Substance Abuse Prevention Program, aims to spread problem gambling awareness throughout campus and "create a supportive environment for problem gamblers seeking help and to help students to avoid developing a problem," said Parker.

Young adults tend to have high rates of depression and suicide, so reaching the community at a younger age could help them avoid serious troubles in the future – particularly during flagging economic times.

Michele Tantriella-Modell, director of Emergence Problem Gambling Counseling Services, said that help is available, and it is effective.

"Folks come into our program reporting they cannot control their gambling," said Tantriella-Modell. "After going through our program they have their lives back and are enjoying all the things they used to do before gambling was a problem. We have seen first hand how gambling treatment works."

Tantriella-Modell wants people to know that gambling treatment is free to all gamblers who want to stop or control their gambling. Treatment is also free to family members or anyone who is affected by gambling. Help is available by calling the 24-hour free helpline, 1877-MY-LIMIT (or online at www.1877mylimit.org).

A map of the rally location and more information are available online at <http://www.lanecounty.org/prevention/gambling/OPGAW.htm>.

Event participants include:

Navit Parker, *Coordinator, UO Problem Gambling Awareness Project*

Ronda Hatefi, *Founder, Oregonians for Gambling Awareness Organization*

Julie Hynes, *Coordinator, Lane County Problem Gambling Prevention*

Michele Tantriella-Modell, *Director, Emergence Gambling Treatment Program*

Background

About 75,000 Oregonian adults have gambling problems (2.7 percent).

Consequences of problem gambling include more than just debt; families and jobs are often lost, and depression and alcohol or drug abuse is quite common among problem gamblers. In Oregon's gambling treatment facilities last year, one in 20 problem gamblers said they made an attempt on their lives in the six months leading up to treatment. About one in four problem gamblers in Oregon said they committed crimes to finance their gambling.

Despite the problem, there is hope and help for problem gamblers and their loved ones. Effective prevention and treatment programs are the most cost-effective way to mitigate problem gambling. The Emergence Meridian Gambling Treatment Program in Eugene offers free treatment services for anyone affected by gambling problems, including loved ones.

Need help?

Anyone concerned about possible gambling problems can receive free and confidential help by calling the 24-hour help line at 1-877-MY-LIMIT, or going online to 1877mylimit.org.

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