

# Relay paying dividends

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The 18 teams involved in Saturday's 15th annual Drug Free Relay did important work in keeping the community a step ahead of the insidious evils of drug and alcohol addiction.

And let's not kid ourselves. Drug and alcohol addiction are problems everywhere, even in this pristine part of the world. When they get a foothold, they can tear apart families and cause dysfunction in the community.

The 12-hour relay is conducted annually. Step by step, lap by lap, hour by hour, the relay helps raise money for Union County programs that promote drug and alcohol prevention and to heighten awareness of addiction issues. The relay was conducted by the Union County Safe Communities Coalition, and thanks to them for their continuing efforts to spread their important message.

Thanks also to volunteer groups who assisted with the relay, including the EOU softball, track and field and women's basketball teams.

As Nigel Wrangham of Eugene, a certified drug and alcohol counselor and prevention specialist, said, "Prevention is a relay." He said people can build momentum by being role models and spreading the message of the positives of a drug and alcohol-free life.

The relay concluded with a memory lap. Participants walked one lap silently with light sticks to salute those who have succumbed to drug and alcohol abuse or are fighting a continuing battle.

As La Grande Mayor Dan Pokorney said, the community is committed to becoming drug free. "This community cares and is not going to stop working until it is drug free."

It's time for each of us to take up this good work in helping make our community drug free.