

Our View

Legislature shouldn't let program expire

Jessica Barnett died when she was 17. She had started fainting when she was 12. It looked like a seizure. Her lips would go blue. She was put on epilepsy medication. The fainting didn't stop.

Her grandmother read an article about Long QT syndrome. The Mayo Clinic defines it as "a heart rhythm condition that can potentially cause fast, chaotic heartbeats. These rapid heartbeats might trigger you to suddenly faint. Some people with the condition have seizures. In some severe cases, LQTS can cause sudden death." The family thought that's what Jessica could have. It is treatable.

They had her tested. One test was positive. Some at a different clinic were ruled negative. Her doctors didn't believe that was what she had.

Jessica fainted again one day. It was a bad episode. Paramedics couldn't revive her and she died. Genetic testing after Jessica was dead confirmed she had Long QT syndrome.

Her parents wanted answers. They called the CEO of the hospital to try and arrange a meeting with her doctors. They were denied, so they decided to sue.

Her parents gathered up her medical records. Jessica's mother discovered the cardiologist never even looked at one of the tests. It was only sent to her general practitioner because that was the hospital's practice. Other tests were apparently misread.

The family was tested. Her father had it as well, though showed no symptoms.

A lawsuit was settled out of court. Another 18 months after the lawsuit was settled and five years after Jessica's death, the parents finally got to meet with her doctors. They didn't know the family had requested to meet with them. They had not been told.

"The physicians jaws dropped open. They were thinking: 'If we'd actually spoken to this family we may not have had to go through litigation,'" Jessica's mother said. "They were right. All we ever wanted was to have our questions answered and know they were making changes so this wouldn't happen again."

The Oregon Patient Safety Commission discussed this case and cases like it. This case was from Canada. All those details we provided are courtesy of the efforts of the Canadian Patient Safety Institute and Jessica's family. Where it happened, though, does not matter so much as what can be learned from it.

Medical errors and mistakes where patients are harmed are going to happen.

Oregon actually has a model that allows families to get answers when medical errors occur — outside of a courtroom.

Passed in 2013 by the Oregon Legislature, the early discussion and resolution system allows for an open conversation between patients, families and medical providers when serious harm occurs. It creates confidentiality protections. Participants can speak candidly and reconciliation can be found without an adversarial lawsuit. This can encourage that improvements are made in patient safety. It can lower costs in the medical system. And families can get answers. Analysis of the program's performance is convincing. You can find more about it at the Oregon Patient Safety Commission's website.

But the program will go away without action by the Legislature. It is scheduled to sunset on Dec. 23, 2023. Senate Bill 110 introduced at the request of Gov. Kate Brown and the Oregon Patient Safety Commission would get rid of the sunset provision. It was state Sen. Tim Knopp, R-Bend, who moved the bill be sent to the Senate floor for a vote with a recommendation that it pass. It should.



The Education Corner

See United States history in the making



SCOTT SMITH
EDUCATOR

Over the last several months we have witnessed history happening in our country that has not happened since the Civil War. It is United States history in the making. Do you remember your U.S. history classes? How well do you know the Constitution and amendments and what they stand for? Yes, there are those who do understand really well and those who think they know them, and those who really don't know. What does the First Amendment really mean?

In many schools dealing with remote learning, especially at the elementary ages, the teaching of social studies has sadly taken a back seat. Understanding the schools are doing their best in these unprecedented times, now is a great time for all of us to review what our founders felt would make us a leading country. The United States is a network of people and cultures working together for the betterment of the world and was designed 246 years ago knowing the country would grow and change. Have we taken it for granted?

We as adults should use this opportunity to refresh ourselves and bring our children into the discussion of what it means to be a United States citizen. Below are some general questions along with resources you might consider when locating and fact-checking yourself. There are many ways of using the internet to search and locate information. Engaging with your children on this quest will give them a stronger understanding of just how to locate and discuss information about questions that develop during their life.

Our government is built on three areas: the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the amendments. Understanding them and discussing why they were written might provide for a better understanding of just why our government operates the way it does along with what our responsibilities are as United States citizens.

The Constitution: When and where was it written? Who were the authors? How many parts are there in the Constitution?

• kids.britannica.com/kids/article/constitution/352996

The Bill of Rights: What is the "Bill of Rights"? Who were the authors and why? Do they still apply today? How?

• www.ducksters.com/history/us_bill_of_rights.php

bill_of_rights.php

Amendments: What are constitutional amendments? Who and how can you make an amendment? How many amendments are there? You hear people say, "It's my First Amendment right." What does that mean?

• www.ducksters.com/history/us_constitution_amendments.php

How do the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the amendments impact our daily lives? Do they really mean what you assumed they did? What are some ways you might be able to support our government? We are a diverse country made of multiple cultures each having its own perspective and understanding. Over the last couple of months has our government been in jeopardy? These are all questions we should reflect on as Americans, United States citizens, and how these issues could be peacefully addressed.

Scott Smith is a Umatilla County educator with 40-plus years of experience. He taught at McNary Heights Elementary School and then for Eastern Oregon University in its teacher education program at Blue Mountain Community College. He serves on the Decoding Dyslexia Oregon board as its parent/teacher liaison.

Letters

Long live radio station KEOL!

I was saddened by reading that KEOL at Eastern Oregon University will be defunded for the 2021-22 school year. I am also frustrated with the lack of understanding of what being associated with KEOL means to students.

Being a volunteer at KEOL from 2012 to 2017 allowed me to improve my verbal communication skills tremendously. I was also editor-in-chief of The Voice during my senior year and that too helped me learn how to communicate better. That's what makes KEOL and The Voice so important to the EOU community: communication. Understanding how to communicate better with one another is a key element to a successful future.

I disagree with Zachary Cahill's opinion that radio may become obsolete. Low-power community radio station license applications have increased over the past several years. Internet and satellite radio aren't going away any time soon, and while both influence terrestrial radio sta-

tions, in smaller rural communities like La Grande, radio stations like KEOL offer an important option: no corporate sponsorship/influence. They also are a great training ground for the radio personalities and journalists of tomorrow.

Also, KEOL is one of the few remaining free-form radio stations, meaning there is no set "playlist" that DJs must follow. They are the masters of their own shows, selecting whatever they would like to play, under the guidance of FCC regulations.

Even if 2,500 words were allowed here, I wouldn't have enough to cover what KEOL has meant to so many over the past 40-plus years. Long live KEOL!

Rory Noble
Baker City

It takes willful awareness to combat racial bias

I would like to add to the comments made by Patricia Kennedy of Union in her recent letter to the editor concerning inclusiveness and the Union County Sheriff's Office under Cody Bowen.

I certainly agree with her assertions that coverage from The Observer on this issue would be an important step in our nation's efforts in the direction of combating white supremacy. In many ways the importance of our police departments in confronting implicit bias is paramount in this struggle. Sheriff Bowen seems like a progressive person who might be willing to consider this topic as part of his commitment to the people he serves. As Kennedy suggests, an interview from him would be an important service to our community as well.

In a book study group on "The Person You Mean to Be (How Good People Fight Bias)" by Dolly Chugh, I am learning that it takes "willful awareness" from all of us to combat implicit bias. I believe that includes encouraging our local law enforcement departments in making a point of being aware of implicit bias that may exist within their ranks. Inherent bias lives in all aspects of life, and we all need to be mindful of where it might be hiding, no matter where it exists.

Mary Helen Garoutte
La Grande

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