

Portland suicide rate is more than twice the national average

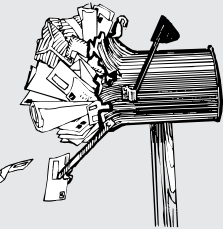
REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

By Melinda Hasting
Special to The Southwest Portland Post

Officer Scott Foster of the Portland Police Bureau attended the Maplewood Neighborhood Association meeting in September and made remarks about the increase in suicides in Southwest Portland this last year. There were three or so in the last month on his beat and I spoke with him afterwards to get details. He said usually Portland Police Bureau gets spikes during the holiday season but this year the numbers have remained high city-wide and haven't dipped back down to the usual levels. Officer Foster said he is seeing a trend with older people and gunshot wounds. If you want to pursue something like this, please let me know and I'd be happy to dig deeper and look at the comparative numbers from year to year. I talked with Mark Marshman, public information officer for Portland Police (he returned my call asking for Scott Foster's contact info), who said that Portland has a much higher rate of suicides than the national average. He also believes that our summer numbers are strange, given the weather being better. He referred me to Lt. Cliff Bacigalupi, head of the department's Behavioral Health Unit

that was formed to address the issue (I didn't ask when it was formed). The national average of suicides is 17 per 100,000, whereas Portland's is 40 per 100,000. (Our 40/100,000 rate now exceeds Las Vegas.) Moreover, there seems to be no sub-par economic correlation; most of them here are white men between the ages of 45 to 55 years. He said Cliff would give me the rates on SW Portland, but believes that the spike Foster was referring to was reflective of an overall pattern in Portland that spans years. He said the suicide rates are taking a toll on first responders. He said NW Portland has the highest rates of suicide conventionally, but that there could well have been a recent rash in SW Portland and that Lt. Bacigalupi would give me the recent stats. Left a message with Cliff and will prepare questions for his return call. Marshman said that Cliff would give me more details about Vista Bridge. I know that Foster told the group last month that the (temporary) fence around the bridge was largely ineffective because people can simply go around it and enter the area. Update: Lt. Bacigalupi stated the police bureau would hold a press conference on Monday (Sept. 30) to release new figures on Portland suicide rates. He said he wasn't sure what the 40/100,000 rate Marshman was referring to, but I left a message for Marshman asking for some clarification. We'll see.

Letters to the Editor



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Local filmmakers looking for \$20,000 kickstart to finish comedy

I'm writing to see if you would be interested in publishing a story about *Bad Exorcists*, the independent film we shot in Portland earlier this summer. You may remember leaving me a voicemail when we were filming at Riverdale High School. I apologize for not returning your call, but things were a bit hectic at the time as I was handling dozens of extras for the school scenes. If you're interested, please check out the Kickstarter campaign we launched yesterday (September 4). We've had a terrific response so far. <http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/573714290/bad-exorcists> Correct, we have completed shooting the movie and are now in the post-production stages. However, we have publicity stills from our numerous locations across Southwest Portland including Riverdale High School. Essentially, I think *Bad Exorcists*

is a good story for the SW Post because its creators were born and raised in SW Portland, and returned to Portland to make the production possible. The core cast and crew members began making movies together at Wilson High School before going their separate ways for film school and work in the industry. Our writer/director Kyle Steinbach was able to bring everyone back together from across the country to rally around his terrific script and shoot the movie on a remarkably small budget. Kyle is currently living in Multnomah. Please let me know if you'd like to interview him or request any more information about the project.

Louie Sloss
Producer

Thank you from Spring Garden Park

RE: "Volunteers support Multnomah's Spring Garden Park and its natural play area," by Erik Vidstrand, The Post, September 2013. Thank you very much for the great coverage of National Night Out. We really appreciated our spot on the cover and hope that it attracts more great families to our project.

Lori Howell
Chair
Friends of Spring Garden Park

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Advertising Sales: Leslie Baird Design
Graphic Design: Oregon Lithoprint
Printing:

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The Post has a circulation of 7,000 in Multnomah Village and the surrounding neighborhood business districts including Burlingame, Capitol Hill, Garden Home, Glen Cullen, Hillsdale, South Portland, Raleigh Hills, West Portland and Vermont Hills. The Post is published on or about the 1st of every month. Subscriptions are \$14 per year. Back issues are \$2.50 each when available. All major credit cards accepted.



The Post is printed on recycled newsprint using soy-based inks.



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