

Assisted suicide number rises to 42 in state in 2003

Forty-two patients used legal physician-assisted suicide in 2003 compared with 38 in 2002, according to a sixth annual report from the Oregon Dept. of Human Services (DHS).

"This is an increase, but the number remains small in comparison to the average 31,000 Oregon deaths every year," said Mel Kohn, DHS epidemiologist. "Overall, about one-seventh of one percent of Oregonians die from taking legally prescribed medication."

In a report released by DHS, demographics and characteristics of those who took lethal medications last year include:

*The number of prescriptions written for lethal medication increased from 58 in 2002 to 67 in 2003.

*The main reason patients chose physician-assisted suicide were concerns about losing autonomy; a decreasing ability to participate in activities that make life enjoyable; and loss of dignity.

*Patients who participated during 2003 were

more likely to be younger and highly educated, and lived west of the Cascades in comparison to other Oregonians dying of the same underlying illnesses.

*Rates of death by lethal medication were highest among patients suffering from Lou Gehrig's disease, HIV/AIDS and cancer.

*During 2003, prescribing physicians were 29 percent less likely to be present at the time patients took lethal medication vs. an average of 47 percent during 1998 to 2002.

*Complications were reported in three instances; all involved vomiting and none involved seizures.

*Half of patients were unconscious within four minutes of ingestion and died within 20 minutes. Time from ingestion to death ranged from five minutes to 48 hours.

*The proportion of patients with a psychological evaluation went from 31 percent in '98 to 5 percent in '03.

Oregon's Death with Dignity Act went into effect in November 1997.



Melissa Wanke

Wanke recognized as B&G Youth of the Year

Illinois Valley High School student Mellissa Wanke, 17, daughter of Patti McKay and Lester Wanke of Cave Junction, has been selected as the 2004 Youth of the Year for the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Rogue Valley.

Wanke, a six-year member of the I.V. Boys and Girls Club, is eligible for a \$1,000 scholarship from the National Presidential Service Award. It can be applied to the college of her choice.

She plans to attend High Tech. Institute in Phoenix, Ariz. and learn to become a Pharmacy Technician.

Wanke competed against Katie Sokol from Grants Pass, and Diana Blunkall from White City. Competitors had to complete eight essays about home and family, plans after high school, life obstacles, and their involvement with the community. Judges then interviewed competitors by asking questions about their essay responses. They also had to give a three minute oral speech.

All three competitors received gift certificates to Southgate Cinema and Wild River Brewing & Pizza Co. for their efforts.

The secret of getting ahead is getting started.
- Sally Berger -

Happiness is good health and a bad memory.
- Ingrid Bergman -

BLM, USFS plan GP site

A contract was recently awarded to SDA Inc. of Greenwood Village, Colo. to build a new facility in Grants Pass for approximately 185 Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service employees.

The facility's new location at N.E. Spaulding Ave. is near the south Grants Pass exit off I-5.

Approximately 150 BLM employees of Grants Pass and Glendale resource areas and 35 forest service employees of the Galice and Illinois Valley ranger districts and the supervisor's office will be located in the new building.

Forest Supervisor Scott Conroy said that BLM and forest service have been jointly located at N.E. Greenfield Road for the past several years, and that they will continue to improve operations and increase collaboration at their new site.

He added that the two

agencies will maintain coordinated visitor and public information services at the new facility. Services include special forest products permits, wood permits, recreation passes, map sales, and outdoor recreation information.

"One-stop shopping, better use of human and financial resources, reduced duplication, and increased information sharing are some of the many advantages of working closely together under one roof," said Tim Reuwsaat, BLM Medford District manager.

BLM has been moving employees from two of its four resource areas from Medford to Grants Pass during the last two years. The Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest had consolidated its headquarters in Medford as part of improving business operations, but will continue to have ranger district presence in Josephine County.

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