



A GOODLY NUMBER OF EQUESTRIANS, including several from Illinois Valley, saddled up for a poker ride at Lake Selmac Horse Camp on Saturday, June 3. The

friendly competition was sponsored by the Sourdough Chapter of Back Country Horsemen of Oregon. (Photo by Dale Sandberg)

State aims to reduce problem of suicide by elderly

A comprehensive plan for how the state can confront the problem of elder suicide, responsible for the deaths of approximately 100 older Oregonians every year, has been released by the Oregon Dept. of Human Services.

Oregon’s suicide rates among people 65 and older are higher than those of other age groups and have ranked at the top nationally for more than a decade, said Dr. Mel Kohn, state epidemiologist in DHS.

“This is an important issue that will only get worse as our population ages,” said Kohn. “This plan is both a call to action and a roadmap for preventing further deaths.”

DHS has received \$100,000 from the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to help implement the plan. SAMHSA and Sen. Gordon Smith, of Oregon, are supportive of Oregon’s plan, which is at the forefront of older suicide prevention, Kohn said.

“Identifying the warning signs of depression and taking action is critical to preventing suicide,” Smith said. “Coping with the stress of growing older, deteriorating health and increased levels of pain can overwhelm even the most prepared among us.”

The plan describes the characteristics and circumstances most common

among suicide victims aged 65 and older, such as:

- *Eighty-six percent were males. The rate for males was nearly nine times higher than that for females.
- *Ninety-nine percent were white.
- *Depression was reported in 50 percent of males; 61 percent of females.
- *Seventy-six percent of males and 72 percent of females were reported to have physical health problems.
- Firearms were used in 79 percent of the suicides. It also notes contributors to the problem, including:
 - *Social stigma and misconceptions about suicide and behavioral health care.
 - *High prevalence of mood disorders among older adults, particularly those with certain chronic health conditions.
 - *Decreasing opportunities for social connection and support with aging.
 - *Barriers to care. Lack of resources and political will to build community systems of care for older adults.
- “Often, suicide is preventable,” said Bob Nikkel, DHS mental health and addiction services administrator. “But just as there is no single cause of suicide, there is no single solution. Tackling the problem requires a multifaceted approach involving our behavioral health system and all of our communities.”
- State and local senior service organizations were

involved in developing the plan, said James Toews, DHS seniors and people with disabilities administrator.

“We hope to build on the strong network of senior service providers in communities throughout Oregon as this important work gets under way,” he said.

The plan proposes that partnerships be built across disciplines and a range of intervention programs be developed in many settings. It also calls for integrating primary and behavioral health care and bringing suicide-prevention activities into existing service delivery systems.

Three specific strategies are outlined, with specific activities to be conducted at state and local levels:

- *Improve clinical care and services for older at-risk adults.
- *Develop and implement evidence-based suicide prevention practices in communities.
- *Develop and improve information gathering systems, evaluation and research.

Local efforts will have state support, Kohn said. Specifically, DHS will:

- *Work with local partners to coordinate community forums and begin disseminating the plan.
- *Establish an e-mail listserv for interested parties that will include postings of events, new research and training information.

Three GP transients cited in unlocked home crimes

Three transients -- ages 16, 18 and 19 -- were nabbed in connection with entering unlocked homes and burglarizing them, said the Police Division of the Grants Pass Dept. of Public Safety (GPDPS).

Arrested was Joshua S. Jones, 18. Identified as suspects, with charges of first-degree burglary and theft referred to the juvenile department and district attorney, were Karissa M. Henderson, 16; and Robert J. Drumm, 19.

Jones was charged with two counts of first-degree burglary, two counts of first-degree theft by receiving and selling, and attempted first-degree theft.

Charges of third-degree robbery, and second- and third-degree theft were re-

ferred to the D.A.

Officers responded Wednesday, May 31 to an antique store regarding someone trying to sell property from a recent burglary. Jones and the two others were located nearby, and he was taken into custody.

The other two were found in possession of stolen property, said GPDPS. Jones was selling it at antique stores, the agency said.

GPDPS added that those involved were going door-to-door during the day and knocking on doors.

If no one answered, they would look for a way in, often finding unlocked doors, officers indicated.

In one incident, a home owner surprised Jones, who pushed the man and fled, GPDPS reported.

We can judge the heart of a man by his treatment of animals.

- Immanuel Kant -

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