

USE OF SECLUSION ROOMS AT 4J CHALLENGED

The recent tragic Sandy Hook school shooting has called attention not only to gun control, but also to how the U.S. deals with young people who are behaviorally or mentally challenged. One controversial method that some Eugene 4J schools are using to deal with students in its behavioral programs is to put them in seclusion rooms.

Jennifer Harrison said her son Jared, who has attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and was placed in the behavioral program at McCornack Elementary, was repeatedly put in a seclusion room and had restraint used upon him from first through fourth grades. The room, 12-year-old Jared said, had carpeted walls, a peephole and a screen with a timer. The 15-minute timer started when a he became quiet, he said. Jared told *EW* he thinks the longest he had to stay in the room was two hours, and he was in the room sometimes twice a day.

Seclusion room data that Harrison obtained from 4J shows that in 2010-11 the district used seclusion more than 200 times at elementary schools including Cesar Chavez, McCornack, Twin Oaks and Camas Ridge.

"The most important thing isn't our particular story, it is the numbers of reported restraint and seclusion," Harrison said.

Harrison, who is trained in special education herself, said the information about Jared's experiences came to light one day at the end of his fourth grade year in 2010 when she was called to pick him up early. Since it was the end of the day, she bypassed the office and went straight to his classroom. She heard his screaming from the hallway, and upon entering the classroom, she found two teachers sitting on him. Jared was not allowed to return to school after the incident.

A review of the 4J restraint and seclusion procedures used on Jared, conducted by a retired administrator, found no wrongdoing on the part of the school, according to a letter to Harrison from former superintendent George Russell.

Harrison filed a request for a special education due process hearing with the Oregon Department of Education in July of 2010, saying Jared was denied a free appropriate public education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. An Office of Administrative Hearings judge found in October 2011 that the district did not provide Jared with a free appropriate education and needed to, among other things, meet with Harrison to discuss transitioning Jared back to school, complete a behavioral support plan and give one hour per week in social skills instruction, including "how to trust adults, conflict resolution, self-advocacy, problem-solving strategies, self-soothing strategies, dealing with authority, appropriately expressing emotion, and organizational skills." The judge also ruled Jared should get 30 minutes per week in counseling dealing with anxiety, trauma or other related issues.

When asked if the seclusion room traumatized him, Jared said, "Since that's how school started for me, I thought that was just how school was." He



PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

says, "Sometimes I would kick and scream at the doors and try anything I could to get out."

One of Jared's incident reports from 2008, which calls the seclusion room a "safe room," said that "he was in the room quiet for about 48 seconds before he began to cry uncontrollably. He was screaming that he was scared and that he could see faces." When he was allowed to sit outside the room, "still weeping," he pulled a loose tooth out of his mouth and, saying he had blood in his mouth, "demanded to rinse out his mouth." The report says he went to the sink and did so "without permission" but returned to his seat.

Harrison said it wasn't until her legal case to try to get Jared help and back in school began that she understood the full extent of what was happening to Jared. She said, "I still don't know how many times Jared was restrained and secluded." But she points to the beginning of the use of seclusion as a time when Jared regressed to thumbsucking and bathroom accidents. Jared, who is now 12, says, "At the time I was scared of being alone."

Harrison said she acknowledges that Jared's behavior was problematic. "My son was having many behavior problems at school, and I do not dispute this, but yelling obscenities, not following directions or even threatening does not qualify as 'imminent threat of serious bodily harm.'"

According to 4J spokesperson Kerry Delf, "The Oregon Department of Education provides guidelines for the use of seclusion rooms to ensure student safety and support. These guidelines state that the use of seclusion rooms is permitted only as a part of a behavioral support plan when other less restrictive interventions would not be effective and the student's behavior poses a threat of imminent, serious physical harm to the student or others."

Harrison says, "My son's behavior is shocking, but it's important to note that there is not one incident where there was a real threat of serious danger, after all he was just a little guy."

The use of seclusion rooms is controversial. Harrison said it is something people expect to see in prisons and mental hospitals but not elementary schools. A 2011 study of restraint and seclusion in children and adolescents in a psychiatric journal said a systematic review of the past 10 years of literature on the subject found only seven studies, and "there is some indication that seclusion and restraints can lead to severe psychological and physical consequences."

Jared is now attending school through HomeSource Charter School, however HomeSource and Bethel schools just announced the charter school will close at the end of this school year.

Harrison said it was hard for her to get over feeling guilty for not protecting Jared. She is still fighting to get Jared back in school and get him the counseling and help the judge ordered. A jury in April will hear the most recent petition filed with the Lane County Circuit Court.

Harrison said it helps Jared to talk about what happened, and she wants to make sure other people know about the use of restraint and seclusion because it affects not only the students who are placed in the rooms, but also the other kids who see and think "this is how the 'different' kids get treated. Everyone knew what was happening to the kids in Room 7."

— Camilla Mortensen

JARED HARRISON

lighten up

BY RAFAEL ALDAVE

Taxpayers are surely getting their money's worth from hard-working Lane County Administrator Liane Richardson. In addition to her other duties, Ms. Richardson has now taken on the role of sheriff of Free Speech Plaza.



Anybody want to buy a weekly newspaper? Not this rag, of course, but *The Jefferson Review* and the *Scio News* are currently on the block cheap in order to "avoid imminent closure," according to a notice from the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association. Cash only and the deadline for inquiries is Friday, Dec. 21. Call the owner at 971-3217. Contrary to conventional wisdom, print publications still have a lot of life left in them and not all are shrinking to oblivion. Some media pundits are predicting that newspapers will make a comeback when advertisers recognize that print ads have more impact per dollar than web ads. At least one study has shown that print content has more credibility and memorability with readers than web content. One indicator of print's potential: Rupert Murdoch is busy buying up newspapers, large and small.

Off the Waffle is holding an "official End of the World" grand opening of its new downtown shop between 8 am and 1 pm Friday, Dec. 21, at 840 Willamette St. The original south Eugene store remains at 2540 Willamette. See offthewaffle.com or call 654-4318. Hours at the new location have not been finalized, say owners Omer and Dave Orian.

Eugene physician **Pamela Wible** tells us she has been hired as "the official health-care blogger" for *The Oregonian* newspaper. Wible is getting national attention for her new book, *Pet Goats & Pap Smears: 101 Medical Adventures to Open Your Heart & Mind*. Her book describes how she enlisted local residents to help her design her one-person medical practice, providing high-quality care with low overhead (her office is at Tamarack Wellness Center). Find her blog at wkly.ws/1ee

What's a cash mob? The Springfield Chamber's Greeters Committee is holding its networking gatherings in local small businesses and encouraging members to show up expecting to spend \$10 at the business. A cash mob was scheduled at the new location of Euphoria Chocolate at the Oakway Center in Eugene Dec. 19. Last month the cash mob at The Arc Lane County raised \$419, which bought 1,200 pounds of clothing for the disadvantaged. See arclane.org for other ways to support The Arc.

American Denturist College is now open at 1241 Oak St. in Eugene and is enrolling students from across the nation. The new college expects to train 200 students per year and to generate \$8 million a year for the local economy, according to Todd Young, director of education. Classes start Jan. 7. The two-year program costs about \$38,000, including books and fees, according to the school catalog. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that denturists made an average of \$35,000 a year in 2010. Young says the college will help fill a void from the closing of the denturist program at George Brown College in Toronto. Call (800) 544-6267 or email todd@americandenturistcollege.com for more information.

Mountain Rose Herbs was honored with the 2012 Oregon Sustainability Award at the Northwest Environmental Conference and Trade Show in Portland in early December. The business was cited for its "uncompromising commitment to organic agriculture, sustainable business practices and a steadfast focus on the pure aesthetics and freshness of botanical products." See mountainroseherbs.com