

# COUNTY OPENS NEW CRISIS CENTER

In May 2013, when Lane County was attempting to pass a jail levy — a tax to increase the number of open beds at the Lane County Jail — the focus was on incarceration. Criminals were being released due to a lack of capacity, proponents said.

Opponents to the levy pointed out that jail beds don't stop the revolving door of drug abuse or mental health issues that often land people in jail. The levy passed, and three years later it was so successful in raising funds that the budget committee has voted to reduce the tax.

But that's not the only story about the proposed 2016-2017 Lane County budget, county administrator Steve Mokrohisky says. Lane County has cut 22 funded but vacant positions and is working to decrease its deficit, but it also has added a new mental health crisis service.

Mokrohisky says the new budget moves the focus away from "what we don't have" to solutions. Drawing upon the book *Scarcity: Why Having Too Little Means So Much*, Mokrohisky says scarcity — such as Lane County's long-time lack of Secure Rural Schools funds and timber money — can create greater focus and efficiency, or it can distract from broader opportunities. So he says in the new budget, as part of the public safety system, Lane County is moving toward breaking the cycle of crime.

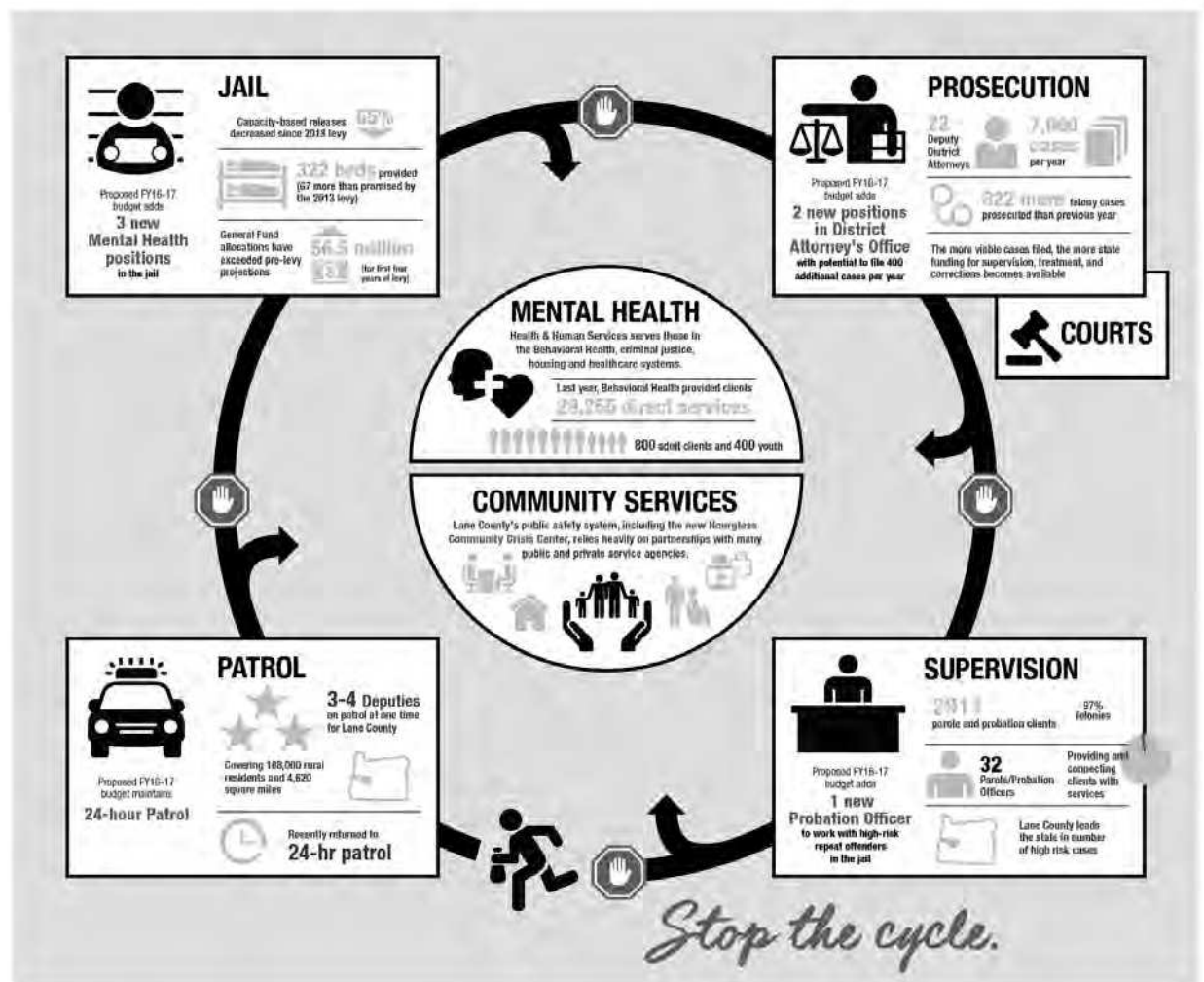
The new Hourglass Community Crisis Center on Centennial Loop is a free 24-hour center for mental health crisis assessment and stabilization. Hourglass is operated by the nonprofit Columbia Care Services.

Mokrohisky tells *EW* that while the new crisis center doesn't stop the problem, it is a "move in the right direction" and it has shifted the conversation to how to connect people to needed services.

Program Administrator Randy Anderson says, "We have what's termed a 23-hour program," geared toward mental health crisis, staffed with qualified mental health professionals and peer support. Anderson says someone might come to Hourglass via an organization such as CAHOOTS (Crisis

## Lane County Public Safety System

Creating a safer and healthier community through partnership and support.



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Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) or the jail.

Eugene and Springfield police as well as Lane County law enforcement can all send people to Hourglass. He gives the example of someone who EPD might run into who doesn't need to be arrested or doesn't rise to the level of a danger to themselves or others, or someone leaving the jail who doesn't have an exit plan. Hourglass also welcomes walk-ins by people who need it, or calls from those in a mental health crisis or their friends or families.

Hourglass is not a residential program, Anderson clarifies, though if someone comes in with a need for sleep as

part of her crisis, then a bed is available. Hourglass also provides footbaths and laundry, and it hopes to have shower facilities in the near future, he says.

Anderson says the crisis center has six or seven spots open at a time and offers a "low-stimulation and peaceful environment for individuals so they are able to relax and focus" and then helps people connect to needed community services.

For more information or to get help from Hourglass, call 541-505-8426 or go to [columbiacare.org/hourglass-community-crisis-center.html](http://columbiacare.org/hourglass-community-crisis-center.html).

## SLANT

• If *EW* or a member of the public files a public records request about City Hall, could we trust the findings provided by the city? Could we afford to file the request if the city deemed it not in the "public interest"? And what about Kesey Square (aka Broadway Plaza)? Is it safe from becoming an apartment building? How do we have confidence in our government if decisions that affect our community seem to be made in secret? **Oregon's public records laws**, though faulty, were intended to make sure our government operates in the light, not in smoke-filled back rooms. Our cover feature this week delves into Oregon's faulty public records system, and how these shady practices have trickled down to Eugene. Note to government officials: If you are not doing anything hinky, then making public records *public* won't hurt anything. Delays, excessive fees and obfuscation only erode public trust in our public officials.

• **Lane County** Administrator Steve Mokrohisky and county spokesperson Devon Ashbridge dropped by *EW*'s office last week to fill us in on the county's budget. For the

first time we can remember, instead of bemoaning the loss of Secure Rural School payments in lieu of logging money, the county is planning a budget based on what we actually have (and that does include pot tax). While the *R-G's* coverage is jail beds, jail beds, jail beds, we are more interested in what the county is doing to keep people out of jail. Lane County has the lofty goal of improving critical services like law enforcement patrols, prosecution of criminals and mental health, while maintaining service levels and reducing the budget deficit. The county has also added a much-needed equity and access position. We're feeling encouraged and looking forward to seeing how this 2016-17 budget pans out.

• Former interim UO president Robert Berdahl posed powerful questions about **Oregon higher education funding** in a May 19 op-ed in *The Oregonian*. Berdahl began his career as a UO history professor, eventually climbed to the presidency of the University of Texas and then became chancellor of the UC Berkeley. He has retired in Portland. Two of his questions: "What is it about Oregon's priorities that accounts for spending over twice as much on corrections as on higher education? Why do we cheer when one of our university athletic teams is ranked in the top 10 or contending for a national championship, but seem satisfied that 'record' funding for higher education leaves us in 41st place?"

• We concluded from the City Club of Eugene May 20 meeting that it is very **tough to measure how effective local law enforcement oversight is**, but it is important that Eugene has both the police auditor and Civilian Review Board that report to the City Council. A couple scary notes from the meeting: Auditor Mark Gissiner mentioned just in passing the "heroin and meth epidemics in Eugene." Joel Iboa, member of the Integration Network, noted that "across the U.S. we are heading more and more to where the police and military merge." He also spoke about the idiotic surplus military equipment that has been dispensed from the feds to local communities. That certainly is scary. Continuing this civic conversation, the NAAPC and WethePeopleEugene.org are sponsoring a forum 7 pm Wednesday, June 8, at EWEB 500 E. 4th Ave., on "Police Accountability and Force."

• Outside experts usually take the stage for events sponsored by the UO Wayne Morse Center for Law and Politics, but the **Election 2016 series is tapping Oregon faculty**. "Thunder on the Left and Right: Populism in the 2016 Elections" was a lively topic for four UO professors and a full house May 23. One of our favorite quotes came from Margaret Hallock, economist and director of the Morse Center from 1988 to her retirement in 2015. Arriving in Oregon in 1974, she listened and has never forgotten what Demo leader Grattan Kerans told her, "We're populist here. That means we don't like rich folks." More events are ahead in the 2016 Election Series.