

Keizertimes

SECTION A

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#stopsuicide

Mother strides on five years after son's death by his own hand

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

Conversations about suicide are a minefield.

Take, for example, the most basic terms we use. We typically say someone "committed suicide." It's a statement loaded with the type of judgements routinely leveled against suicidal individuals — weakness, apathy, selfishness and unwillingness to pull oneself up by the bootstraps.

"We're trying to change that universally, we'd prefer people say someone died by suicide," said Shawn Lott, a Keizer woman organizing Salem's first ever Out of the Darkness Walk for suicide prevention on Saturday, Oct. 8. "You're not committing something the same way someone might commit a crime."

The past five years have been a crash course in Lott educating herself on the trials and tribulations of those feeling more than sad. On Oct. 27, 2011, her son, John "Speed" Sommer, was found dead from an apparent overdose on sleeping pills.

Lott had only heard about her son's struggles in the days leading up to his death. She had taken her first day off of work that year for the express purpose of going to talk with him. He was having trouble



Submitted ABOVE: Shawn Lott and her son John "Speed" Sommer in better days. RIGHT: Sommer decked out for racing.

she brushed aside suggestions to seek counseling and she avoided talking about it as much as she possibly could because talking about it would make it real.

"You feel ashamed, you feel guilty — all the time. Several months later, I had a breakdown at work," Lott said. Coupled with her notions of what other people thought

of her, Lott was wrestling with the, at times, contradictory messages from faith communities.

"People would say that John was in a better place or that everything happens for a reason, but at the same time I knew that people who die by suicide aren't supposed go to heaven," Lott said. Please see SUICIDE, Page A8



Michael Schwindt

Man leads cops on 7-hour hunt

A man found sleeping on a lawn in north Keizer sparked a seven-hour manhunt Monday, Aug. 29.

Shortly after 8 a.m., officers from the Keizer Police Department were called to a report of a suspicious person sleeping in a lawn in the 700 block of New Terrace Drive North, part of the Terrace Green Neighborhood Association in north Keizer.

Two officers responded to the call and made contact with the subject who was identified as 29-year old Michael Allen Schwindt. Within minutes of identifying the man, officers learned he had a warrant for his arrest issued by the Marion County Circuit Court. The warrant, issued on Aug. 24, was for 18 counts of identity theft.

While attempting to take Schwindt into custody, he escaped from the officers fleeing on foot through the surrounding neighborhood. Several other Keizer officers in both marked and unmarked police vehicles responded to the area establishing a perimeter while a K-9 team from the Salem Police Department responded to assist with tracking the fleeing suspect. The search was called off about 9:45 a.m.

By mid-afternoon, KPD received another call of a suspicious person in the same general vicinity of the earlier call who was reported to

Clark seeks second term

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New Homegrown play

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Band Camp!

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Lead found in water at Keizer schools

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

When testing for lead in the water at all its schools, Salem-Keizer decided to take out of service any faucets or drinking fountains that measured at least 15 parts per billion.

One of those fixtures is at McNary High School after a sample came back at 800 ppb.

But the faucet in a sink in classroom 233, which Principal Erik Jespersen said was used for a staff work area, was an outlier. Of the more than 70 water fixtures

tested at the school, it was the only one that contained 15 ppb. Two, a hallway drinking fountain and a sink faucet in room 245 were 10 and 11, respectively. Nine fixtures tested at less than one ppb.

The school district's action level of 15 ppb is a more cautious standard than the Environmental Protection Agency's standard of 20 ppb.

Samples were taken by TRC Solutions on July 30 and analyzed in a lab on Aug. 10.

Two fixtures in the gym still need to be tested because the new floor was being

waxed at the time.

"They've been very, very diligent at making sure that not only at McNary but all schools in the Salem-Keizer district, to make sure that every single source of water is tested," Jespersen said. "We are absolutely committed to making sure that all of our students, staff and community members that have access to water, get clean water."

Clagget Creek Middle School also had one fixture reach the action plan as a sink faucet in classroom 100 tested on July 27

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The race is on for city council

In November, Keizer residents will get the chance to vote on three open city council seats, but only one will be a contested race. Keizertimes spoke with the candidates for Position 1, Allen Barker and Laura Reid, about their visions for the city and what they think they can bring to a role on the city council.

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

When Allen Barker was looking to relocate his family to Oregon a few years ago, he and his wife used Keizer as a base of operations.

As they investigated other towns in the Willamette Valley and beyond, they soon realized they enjoyed Keizer just as much as any other place they'd visited. Soon they were drilling down in to what made the city so enticing.

"I started asking questions about how Keizer was doing so much with what seemed to be a very small budget. I wanted to know how they were able to do it, and that's when I discovered the city's history of volunteerism," Barker said. They moved to the Iris Capital in May 2015 and, not long after, Barker volunteered for the city's budget committee. In doing so, his respect for the city and its leaders only grew.

"We've done miraculous things with only a little bit of money because of our city staff doing an incredible job of keeping expenses down," Barker

er said.

Barker is a retired tower crane operator with past experience in finance and business planning, and said smart development is going to be the key to Keizer's future.

"Right now my biggest concern is that we are only able to get by on a budget like this because of the people who live here, but Keizer is aging. If we're going to maintain what we have, we have to bring in new blood, and volunteers, to the city through fresh development," he said.

While he doesn't see volunteerism as waning in the city, he said it's taking place in different ways than the city used to count on when constructing the likes of Keizer Little League Park.

"Police and parks are the top two issues from the residents I've talked with, and those are the same ones we came up with when I was working on the budget committee, so we have to figure out a way to fund those services," Barker said.

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By ERIC A. HOWALD
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Teachers learn many things from their students, but Laura Reid gleaned one that she knows helped prepare her for a seat on the city council.

"I've had thousands of students and met so many of their families, and I've seen the support McNary (High School) gets from Keizer businesses. They've helped me understand what it means to be part of a small community in a large school district, and I feel like they taught me what it means to live in Keizer," Reid said.

Reid has taught college writing and public speaking to Celtic classes for as long as she's lived in the city — 15 years — and she would like to bring those skills to bear on the council.

"I am absolutely new to this, but I feel like one of my strengths is listening to people and weighing information fairly to make good decisions," said Reid. "That's part of what I teach. Students have to appreciate the complexities of a variety of issues and real-

ize everybody has something to win and lose in any argument."

Her bid for the city council is her first foray into public life, but she's been heavily involved in other aspects of the Keizer community through her work at McNary and her church.

Through her recent conversations she's had with residents, in no small part because she canvassed to collect signatures, Reid discovered that one of the more prevalent issues was concerns about pedestrian safety.

"There's a lot of people who are interested in safer pedestrian pathways and installing sidewalks in the sections of town where we don't already have them," she said.

She's been paying close attention to recent conversations at the city level regarding policing and parks and has appreciated the attention to detail, especially when it comes to seeking input from city residents while considering fees to create dedicated funding for police and parks.

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Allen Barker



Laura Reid



Celts face Vikings on road

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