

# CLINIC: Clients travel 3-4 hours for new treatment

(Continued from Page A1)  
clients, some of whom are driving from three or four hours away.

"I underestimated the need, and there are fewer buprenorphine prescribers than ever," said Nielsen.

Buprenorphine is an alternative to the methadone for opioid addiction, and while the two drugs share a number of side effects, buprenorphine causes less sedation. Both drugs work by dampening opioid receptors and lessening the craving for the high induced by heroin or opioid pain-relievers like hydrocodone and oxycodone.

Becoming a buprenorphine prescriber can result in added costs for a doctor. It can mean paying more for liability insurance and costs related to support, tracking and accountability, which Nielsen said seemed to be the primary reasons for the low number of doctors willing to take it on.

Conversely, the partner doctor at Renaissance Recovery is nearly tripling the number of his available buprenorphine prescriptions with the onset of the new year (2017).

The goal with each new client is to work toward full recovery in about a year on average, Nielsen said. Clients enrolled in the program receive a prescription for buprenorphine along with a variety of support services to aid recovery efforts. For the first two months, new clients must check in with the doctor every week, and then less often as the dose of the drug is gradually reduced.

The support side of recovery is where Nielsen feels Renaissance Recovery is poised to make the biggest impact.

"We've started seeing an even more diverse group of clients. In the past it was what some people would see as the stereotypical addict or repeat DUI offender, but now it's people who got in a bad car wreck, were prescribed Vicodin and have since moved on to heroin or other substances," he said.

Other societal changes have also led Nielsen to change the way Renaissance does business.

"We've embraced technol-

ogy because we found many of our clients were willing to. Every client that comes in can sign into our secure website and they can send messages to their counselor, find out meeting times and topics at our site and tap into other available resources," Nielsen said.

Progress in the ways addiction is thought about – and treated – have also had an influence. Traditionally, recovery programs viewed abstinence as the only route to health, but Nielsen said the industry is moving toward a harm reduction model. Rather than trying to hold clients to pledges of going cold turkey, it might mean coming up with new parameters when they are using controlling substances – like not drinking alone, or not injecting drugs.

"I always think what we do is a taboo subject and a lot of people don't want to admit how big the problem is. We're trying to take a leadership role in recognizing the problem and meeting it," Nielsen said.

The success of the buprenorphine program and other have led Nielsen to increase the number of employees on site and expand the hours of some existing employees.

For more information about programs available at Renaissance Recovery, visit [renaissancerecoveryresources.com](http://renaissancerecoveryresources.com), or call 503-304-4358. Renaissance Recovery partners with more than 20 insurance agencies and is part of two coordinated care organizations that qualify for the Oregon Health Plan.

# PLAY, continued from Page A1

portions of a play structure in Wallace House Park last week after a slat on a bridge broke and a slide was damaged.

It's a temporary fix while Johnson figures out where to pull the money from to pay for repair, but it's also a portent of what might be in the future of Keizer parks unless a stable funding source is secured.

Johnson originally estimated the cost to repair the structure at \$2,000, but the number climbed up after getting exact prices on replacements and labor.

The damage to the slide is believed to have been an act of vandalism, but it's harder to determine what happened to the bridge. The manufacturer agreed to cover the replacement slat under warranty, but not the slide. The total for part alone amounted to \$1,574. Johnson also doesn't want to void the remaining warranty on the play structure, which means a licensed

installer has to perform the repair. Labor will cost another \$1,900.

There is no excess within the parks budget. The general fund, which the city uses to pay for police and parks among other expenses, does have a contingency component but fixing a play structure using those reserves falls far down on the list of priorities.

Johnson could use money from a match grant fund for parks improvements, but that would pull money away from other potential projects that serve to engage residents in park ownership. A \$5,000 match grant was awarded last year to rehabilitate Carlson Skate Park, but the project fell through. The money was rolled over into the matching grant fund this year and Johnson is loathe to use it for another purpose. City officials are hoping someone with a plan to fix the issues at the skate park comes forward.

"What it comes down to is operating funds and seasonal temporary hires. I watch my spending already, and I would

have to go without something. It doesn't hit me this second, but I have to prepare for what's down the line," Johnson said.

If he cuts back on hours for seasonal hires, it will mean he and Shelton have to scramble to make up the difference when park usage kicks into full gear next spring.

Another option is holding off on equipment purchases. He was hoping to get a new mower, blower and trimmer in June 2017 with any funds he managed to save during the rest of the year. Repairing the Wallace House Play structure would make that more unlikely.

"If one of our current machines blows up or goes out of service, we won't have the tools to do the job," Johnson said.

A wind storm that took down several trees in Keizer parks requiring a tree service to step in also took a chunk out of what he hoped to be saving toward the purchases.

As of Nov. 14, Johnson was still weighing his options and the play structure was still blocked off.

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