

CRISIS,

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Jones said their job is to "stabilize" and "triage" the building by providing support to staff and students.

The bulk of what the crisis team does happens before school starts when a group of counselors, usually 3-5, depending on the anticipated impact of the tragedy meet with administration to discuss how to present the tragedy to the teachers and student body. So everyone is on the same page, an email is then sent with a script to tell teachers exactly what to say to students.

Often a member of the crisis team will go into the deceased student's classroom, read the script if the teacher is unable to and then answer questions.

"We do a good and deliberate job of just giving the facts because it's not uncommon for kids to say, 'I heard' or 'I saw'," said Gail Winden, a transition counselor with the school district. "Everything is scripted. We work real hard to meet them (students) where they're at and allow them to begin to process."

THINGS A GRIEVING CHILD NEEDS

- a. Someone to listen to them
- b. Empathy
- c. To know they are safe
- d. Have their questions answered over and over again
- e. To know it's not their fault
- f. Permission to feel
- g. Opportunity to express their feelings in several ways
- h. Have feelings validated
- i. Structure and routine
- j. Permission to be quiet
- k. Permission to be a child

The crisis team will also follow the student's schedule.

"We'll have a physical presence in the classroom of the student because those tend to be the toughest classrooms to get back on track because there's an empty desk there," Jones said.

While the school day proceeds as usual, students are also encouraged to go to a safe place somewhere in the building, like the McNary library, where they can talk with a counselor one-on-one.

"It's allowing the school to go along with their

routine because routine is really important," Curran said. "It's keeping the school functioning at a normal level for those students are aren't as impacted and the students that are impacted have a safe place to go."

In the safe place, kids are encouraged to do something to help the grieving family, like make a card. Those students are documented so the full-time counselors in the building can follow through.

The crisis team hears a lot of the same questions from students and staff: "Why?" or

after a suicide, "I should have known."

"Every person who knew a person says, 'Man, what did I miss?' Every teacher who had a kid, 'What'd I miss?' That part is universal," Jones said. "Lowering that level of responsibility is a lot of the work."

But the crisis team is mainly at the school to listen. They are not grief counselors.

"Any loss involves a fairly lengthy process to heal from," Jones said. "We can't fast forward that process for any building for any reason. Sometimes there's a misunderstanding that we're supposed to fix it, which is human nature and I get why, but really our job is to come in a stabilize. Every building that we've gone to any response to this year is still healing from that but that's not our role. Our role is to go in so that they can even just have a normal school day and do school again. Those counselors in the building are still going to be seeing kids who are continuing to be impacted. We're kind of like the EMTs. We're not the doctors."

Social media has had a huge impact on the crisis team. While the counselors

no longer break the news of a tragedy to students, they also have to quash rumors.

Jones said the best thing parents can do during a tragedy is be available and be a good listener.

"People in general are very uncomfortable talking about death and especially talking about that with their kids," she said. "If there's one message I could say to parents, there's no magic to it."

While Jones likes to alternate members of the crisis team and not call the same people every time, being a counselor takes its toll on those who respond.

Curran makes a point to give his wife and kids a hug when he gets home.

"One of the things that every counseling program is going to talk about is self care," Curran said. "The difference between day in and day out and going to a response is you're definitely with a magnitude of grief and loss like it's on steroids. You're like an vacuum sucking up everyone's emotions and at the end of the day you just need to let it out. It's just human nature. You're trying to take care of other people but it's important to take care of

yourself. That's why we have each other and we debrief."

Jones enjoys a good cry. Earlier this school year, she was on her way to a movie theater when she got a call from law enforcement about a tragedy.

"I walked in and the lights went down and I just started crying," she said. "I just indulged myself. I was sitting in a dark theater and I thought 'I'm just going for it right now!' No one knew but it was one way I could take care of myself."

But Jones has also seen the good that can come out of tragedies.

"For every big black cloud that happens, there are always incredible silver linings," she said. "Sometimes it's a heightened awareness around the needs of our community, an increase in empathy, an encouragement to everyone around that people matter. And I guess that's one of the biggest surprises to me in every one of the responses that we ever go on. I always come out of them on the other end with a renewed sense of the goodness of people, kids, staff, parents, community. There's always a silver lining."

TRETT,

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watching *The Mickey Mouse Club* and a segment on kids in California collecting bottles to raise money for polio research stuck with him. He spent the next two years collecting bottles with a group of friends and sending the money he recouped to the muscular dystrophy association.

He also set a goal of becoming a camp counselor at the Salem YMCA where he met the man he calls his mentor, Carl Greider. Greider not only welcomed him into the fold, but he tapped Trett as an organizer of a Big Brother-like program the YMCA was launching when Trett returned from living in California.

"I'd gotten involved with Big Brothers down there and Carl jumped up when he heard and told me I had to on the task force he was setting up," Trett said.

Eventually, when help arrived in the form of a grant, Trett ended up running the program for a couple of years.

Trett had started as a volunteer in the fire service in 1974 and eventually applied for a paid role as the Keizer Fire District's public education officer in 1995. Then-Chief Greg Frank had encouraged him to apply.

"It didn't take much. I like the a-ha moments you see in people's eyes," Trett said.

The role took him into classrooms throughout the city continuing to work with youth, but a one-day safety course at Whiteaker Middle School hasn't stopped blossoming.

"Apparently, the kids really enjoyed our time together and the teachers asked if there was something else I could teach. That's when we started the CPR and first aid certifications," Trett said.

In 1996, then-choir director Barb Fontana asked Trett if he would accompany the choir on a trip to Reno as a chaperone and first

"That brings such a sense of pride in your community."

— Jim Trett
Keizer First Citizen



responder if the need should arise.

That led to him becoming a "choir groupie."

"To go to a competition and watch the adjudicators

praise our students, that's something. We were in New York one time and one of the adjudicators stared at the kids for a while after they finished and said only, 'Middle school?' That brings such a sense of pride in your community and just being part of that is thrilling to me," Trett said.

Trett retired from KFD in 2009, but his role at Whiteaker and now other schools only seems to expand. Last year alone, Trett helped certify more than 1,000 local students at Whiteaker, Stevens, Walker and Parrish middle schools in first aid, CPR or both.

He still gets stories from former students who put their knowledge to the test in the heat of a moment. Others will pull their certification cards, received years prior, from their wallets while standing next to him

in line at the grocery store. A display of the moment when he empowered them to act in a crisis.

These days, it's fairly difficult to do anything around Whiteaker without running into Trett. He's handed out schedules, helped students collect food for their annual Stuff the Bus campaign and chaperoned dances. All of that is in addition to his role as a city councilor and mayor in his new hometown of Detroit.

Even though the students whose lives he touches get younger and younger each year, Trett said the secret to connecting with young people over the years hasn't changed.

"My big thing is that if you treat kids with respect, they will reciprocate," Trett said. "I feel like I've had some success in helping a few of them turn around."

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MESS	RULER	TEAR
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