

Opinion

Help and hope for Oregon's suicide crisis

That 825 Oregonians died in a single year by suicide is a sobering assessment of our collective ability to help those who feel trapped in their own despair.

That it's such a hidden statistic, however, is an embarrassing reflection of our collective ignorance. Hundreds more people died by suicide in Oregon in 2017 than by traffic crashes, firearms or drug overdose.

The suicide rate in Oregon is well above the national average, as it has been for the past three decades. Yet this undeniable public health issue has lacked the public attention and sustained outcry that it desperately needs.

Some of that stems from the stigma that persists around mental illness and suicide, shutting off conversation or even acknowledgment that a suicide has occurred. Some may stem from the fear of encouraging "copycat" behavior. Regardless of the motivation, however, our families, schools, communities and media organizations have too often chosen the easy way out by simply keeping silent. Meanwhile, the suicide rate in Oregon and the United States has continued to climb.

Clearly, silence hasn't worked. This month, news organizations around the state are collaborating to bring attention to the problem of suicide, report on populations at highest risk and share resources on how to prevent it. While the "Breaking the Silence" project won't necessarily provide answers, it aims to start a statewide effort to confront it. Using responsible reporting practices that examine, not sensationalize, suicide, these stories can provide the common understanding, motivation, tools and questions that can help the community mobilize against this public health threat.

The data shows just how widespread a problem this is. Oregon's suicide rate is 14th highest in the country and suicide is the second leading cause of death for those ages 10 to 34, according to the Oregon Health Authority. One fifth of those who kill themselves are veterans. More than half the

deaths are caused by firearms.

While those statistics may seem daunting, they can also provide possible avenues where leaders can make a difference. Such data,

in the aggregate, can help build support for increased funding for veterans' health services or provide tangible prevention options, such as the 2017 law that allows family members and police officers to petition a court to take away firearms from someone at risk for suicide or causing harm to others.

We also need to recognize that Oregon's youth are struggling. Nearly 9 percent of eighth-graders self-reported having tried to kill themselves one or more times in the previous year and nearly double that percentage considered it, according to Oregon Health Authority data. That children just entering their teen years would even think of suicide as an option should be its own open-and-shut case for more counseling, support and training in schools. And health officials can lead by providing guidance for families, schools, health departments, physicians and nonprofits on how to talk about suicide both as a general public health issue and on an individual basis.

This is not an insurmountable problem. Resources already exist and show that crisis counseling lines and other outreach efforts make a difference. Even friends and family members can take steps to help a loved one who is struggling by asking a series of questions about whether they have wished they were dead, thought about killing themselves or made any plans toward killing themselves. But it requires the willingness to have those uncomfortable conversations in the first place.

The effects of suicide reach far beyond the individual. The injury is borne by families, friends, communities and the public at large. It's long past time to start treating it that way.

(By the Editorial Board of *The Oregonian*.)

guest editorial

guest column

Home visiting proposal will boost parental responsibility

By JOHN TEAGUE

You may have heard someone say, "It's the parenting."

There are at least two reasons that may be right. As a child's first teachers, parents set the example. And research shows children are more apt to stay out of trouble and do better in school when their mothers and fathers are skilled parents.

Home visiting services are proven to develop basic parenting skills among parents who have otherwise not learned them. They work by enabling young, inexperienced parents to receive coaching from nurses and mentors in their own homes, voluntarily. Among other things, the home visitors help moms and dads understand how to make their homes safe for children, how to engage their children (including through eye contact, reading and play), how to respond positively to stressful situations, and how to prepare their kids for a life of learning. The visits are known to yield significant dividends for the families and for society.

Home visitors lay the groundwork for long-term, positive outcomes, such as higher school-readiness and less involvement in the criminal justice system and, in many cases, parents

who equip themselves for better jobs.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids will soon publish a report, *Parenting Works in Oregon*, that details many of the benefits and outcomes of home visits. Notably, after they participated

in one program—Healthy Families Oregon—program, there was a substantial increase in the number of parents who reported reading to their children every day. That may seem like basic parenting, but many parents never had a parent read to them and didn't experience or pass on that positive influence. Additionally, parenting-related stress, a risk factor for child maltreatment, decreased in 65 percent of participating parents. In 2017, 26 percent of children who were abused or neglected were under three years of age, and almost half of those were younger than one. A longitudinal study of the Nurse Family Partnership home visiting program found participation in that program cut child abuse and neglect in half.

As you might expect, the availability of home visiting services doesn't come close to meeting the need. Between 2014 and 2016 only 18 percent of the pregnant women receiving Medicaid and who were potentially eligible for home visits received them. And between 2016 and 2017, 580

families who were found eligible for services from Healthy Families Oregon didn't receive services because capacity had been reached. Year after year, 40 percent of Oregon's children under five years old face socioeconomic issues that put their healthy development at risk.

There is, though, good news. In 2017 and 2018, Oregon received federal funding from the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV). That funding enabled programs such as Early Head Start, the Nurse Family Partnership, and Healthy Families Oregon to serve about 4,000 families. That's about 20 percent of the Oregon families that are eligible for home visits.

Oregon lawmakers will soon consider a proposal to vastly expand the availability of home visits, enabling eligible young families to receive two to three home visits, enhancing existing services, and enabling trained professionals to continue to assist when requested.

Arguably, home visits that introduce and develop basic parenting skills and responsibility are a wise investment in these children and families and in our community.

(John Teague is chief of the Keizer Police Department.)

Enforcement trumps a border wall

By DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

During the two years when Democrats controlled the Oval Office, Senate and House, President Barack Obama squandered a major opportunity.

He failed to push for a vote on a DREAM Act, which would create a path to citizenship for qualified undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as minors. That matter was left for a vote in the lame-duck Congress; and that vote proved to be a gesture, as the Democratic Senate failed to garner the needed 60 votes. America will never know how it might have ended if Obama had put his back into it.

Ever since, Obama's failure to push for this key promise of his 2008 campaign remains an object of contempt among conservatives—who presume Democrats preferred to dangle the issue through the 2012 election and gin up resentment among Latino voters.

With President Donald Trump's failure to push Republicans to change immigration laws when they controlled the White House and both houses of Congress in 2017 and 2018, Trump may find himself in that same corner of shame.

With 1 million or so undocumented migrants expected to cross the southwest border this year, Trump's commitment to building his signature border wall doesn't seem to be doing the trick, and he hasn't focused on measures that actually could improve the nation's immigration machinery.

When Trump first got into office, a big drop in southwest border apprehensions suggested his anti-immigrant campaign rhetoric had such a chilling

effect that his promised wall might be superfluous. But then the numbers began to climb.

Former Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen argued that a law which prevents immigration officials from promptly returning minors from the so-called Northern Triangle countries and a court decision that limits how long the government can hold minors serve as loopholes that "create a functionally open border."

That's why Mark Krikorian of the pro-enforcement Center for Immigration Studies always has argued that changing immigration law and enforcement would be far more effective than building a wall—not that he's opposed to spending on a wall.

Trump's push for the wall shows that he is working to keep to his 2016 campaign promise: But it really can't do much to discourage economic migrants who ultimately would not qualify for asylum but nonetheless believe they will be able to get into the United States through a port of entry.

That's the problem with Trump's beloved wall. It may resonate with his base, but it won't bring about the changes the base wants.

And it's hard to get Republicans—many of whom do not share Trump's view on illegal immigrants—to die on a hill for a big-ticket item which the public opposes and politicians doubt will work.

Krikorian doesn't think it's too late for Trump to switch his focus to changing the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act so that federal officials can send undocumented minors who don't qualify for

asylum back to non-contiguous countries the same way that they can return minors from Mexico and Canada.

Could such a measure make it through the Democratic House? Not now, but that could change if the flow of migrants through Mexico continues at such dangerous levels.

"Politically it is essential for the Republicans to make it clear that (House Speaker) Nancy Pelosi and (Senate Minority Leader) Chuck Schumer are the reason we have this border disaster," said Krikorian. "They are playing the part of (German Chancellor) Angela Merkel in inviting an unlimited number of people to come to the United States."

Krikorian believes that the GOP Senate should put its efforts on reworking immigration law so that it doesn't encourage border chaos.

It doesn't help when Trump says, as he did last week, that he wants to "get rid of the whole asylum system." It was another act of verbal self-sabotage that showed an executive ready to bar not only economic migrants, but also refugees fearing for their lives.

The antics with the president's since-retracted threats of closing the border with Mexico only reinforce a portrait of an executive who hasn't focused on a goal—reducing illegal immigration—so much as on winning.

So, Trump claimed victory Friday morning because Mexico has done a better job of enforcing its southern border under his threat. Does anyone think that will last when the mercurial president takes his eye off the ball?

I get how the Trump base cheers on the president's ability to drive the left crazy with his rhetoric: But it's not going to fix a humanitarian crisis.

(Creators Syndicate)

letters

break of a contagious disease such as the measles. Why would anyone want to make the quarantine permanent? What is the point of denying perfectly healthy kids an

education or after school activities? This is segregation. I thought we were done with segregation in schools. Please ask your representative to vote no on House Bill 3063.

Holly Garland
Keizer

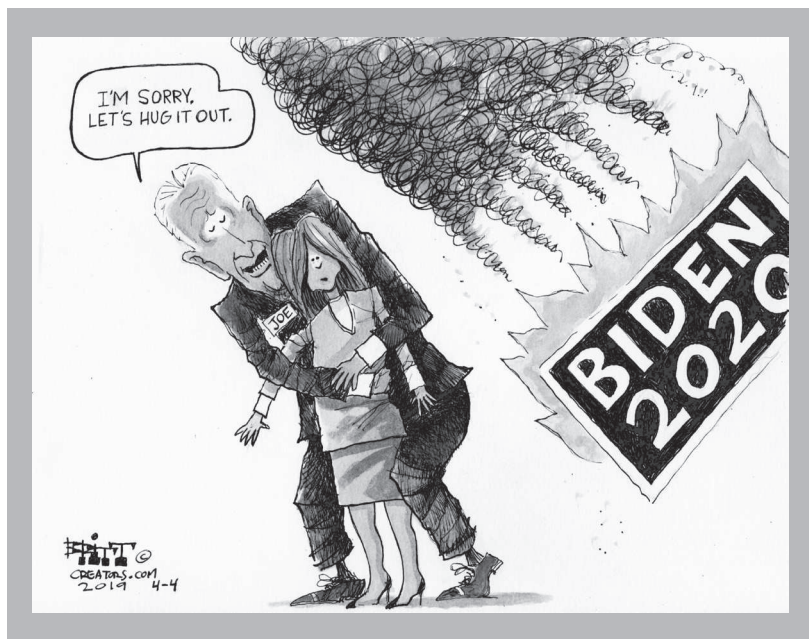
Share your opinion

Submit a letter to the editor, or a guest column by noon Tuesday.
Email to: publisher@keizertimes.com

Tell legislators to kill HB 3063

To the Editor:

Ask your lawmakers to vote no on House Bill 3063. The current measles outbreak was not spread in a school setting. So why are Oregon lawmakers currently pushing a law that would permanently ban unvaccinated or partially vaccinated children from daycare and schools? Healthy unvaccinated children do not harbor illness or viruses, they cannot spread what they do not have. I thought that education was important to Oregon's elected officials. In Oregon there is already law that unvaccinated children must be excluded from school during an actual out-



Electric cars for everyone

Surprise might be the reaction of those Americans who have believed the Tesla to be first among fully-electric automobiles. However, when history is checked, we learn that the electric auto has had a long and storied past, going back to the 1800s. Then, too, E-cars enjoyed high success well into the early years of the 20th century.

Nevertheless, the electric car began to lose its edge in the U.S. auto market during the 1920s. Its decline was due in part at least to improved roads and a broadened highway system. Also, the discovery of oil reserves inside the U.S. and throughout the world made gasoline available and affordable. Also, of no small significance, the electric starter was invented in 1912, disposing of the crank-starter risks for broken bones and dislocated shoulders.

Meanwhile, until costs come down and range lengthens, auto consumers will mainly rely on the more practical gasoline options. Yet, the option to choose a gas-guzzler will increasingly make way for disincentives through climate change weather hazards, state emission caps and the number of attractive electrics (EVs) on the market. Ultimately, choosing a polluter over a

true zero-emissions vehicle will become a no-brainer.

There are other arguments that can also keep bending a "divining rod" toward an EV. One reason would be that many Americans, a number growing exponentially over the years, are increasingly fed-up with our democratic-republic having to negotiate with corrupt foreign despots in order to ensure the safe passage of affordable oil to our shores. With the rise in domestic production and electric grid capable of "juicing-up" 150 million EVs (or three-quarters of all cars on U.S. roads), the path to energy independence is evermore promising. Meanwhile, another oil embargo like the 1970s and gas price hikes at stratospheric levels remain relevant persuaders.

When the Tesla Model S began to outsell the Mercedes S-class, not only did the alarms go off in Stuttgart but savvy, future-minded Americans also took notice. It is the massive machines with costly technical features and high costs to operate and repair that have turned a lot of heads. After all, unless the combustible engine's after-market muffler system with decibel levels in ear-deafening range is all a driv-

er wants out of life, more and more Americans will be moved instead to the instant torque, smooth acceleration and purring-quiet of the EV.

There is an on-going debate over the cause(s) behind the melting of the earth's glaciers. However, more and more Americans of all ages are experiencing serious breathing problems and other catastrophic health problems from noxious petrol fumes. In fact, it looks from every indicator on the heating-up of our planet that the biggest challenge ever for the human race will be achieving survival controls and non-polluting vehicles stand tall among the contributing problem-solvers.

One very attractive feature of EVs is that they're inexpensive to operate, providing the owner a car free of mechanical problems that lead to expensive-to-repair-breakdowns. Breakdowns nowadays that thwart the amateur mechanic! Also, no small potatoes, e-cars have proven to be cheaper to insure. Meanwhile, the sun continues to shine, providing clean, near-to-forever renewable energy to power humankind's transportation needs.

(Gene H. McIntyre shares his opinion regularly in the *Keizertimes*.)

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