

Foster home: Morgan has often refused treatment after crashes

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whether the adult foster home and the state are protecting her from obvious danger.

“Absolutely, we’re concerned about that,” said Astoria Police Deputy Chief Eric Halverson, who has shared police reports with the agency that licenses the adult foster home for the state. “How much control over her ability to come and go across the highway, though, is another question.”

Halverson described it as “one of those difficult questions on how much government can interfere in the lives of others.”

Mike Sangari, the resident manager at Angel Adult Foster Care, the Harrison Avenue home where Morgan has lived for several years, is deeply concerned, but believes his discretion is restricted to when Morgan is at the home.

“The first thing comes to my mind, ‘Could be your son. Could be my son. Could be your brother, your dad. Anybody.’ Do you want them to go through this? Of course not,” Sangari said. “But can I do something about it? No.

“Can I get upset over it? Yes.”

A familiar presence at Safeway

Fierce and independent, Morgan, who goes by “Berta,” routinely maneuvers her motorized wheelchair from the adult foster home down the steep hill to Safeway at 33rd Street and Lief Erikson Drive, where she is a familiar presence among store employees and the panhandlers and homeless people who hang out near the supermarket and the Astoria Riverwalk.

“When I tell her not to go, she goes,” Sangari said. “Rain or shine. It doesn’t matter. She goes.”

People have called police to complain that Morgan is driving her motorized wheelchair in the street or is being reckless. But police reports show that Morgan has often been in the crosswalk and has had the right of way



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Police and emergency crews have responded to several traffic collisions involving Morgan near Safeway.

when she has been hit.

Drivers have said they did not see Morgan, or were alerted by passengers too late to avoid an accident. In some of the cases, police have cited drivers who have struck Morgan for failing to stop for a pedestrian or warned them about inattention or using a cellphone while driving.

Morgan has apparently escaped life-threatening injury from the low-speed crashes, although the extent of her injuries is not completely known because she has often refused treatment.

Robert Pullins, Morgan’s brother, who lives in Astoria, said his sister has a good heart but is headstrong and does not like people telling her what to do.

Pullins said Morgan “had a pretty rough time of it” in the past with relationships that were marred by violence.

“I’m definitely concerned,” he said of Morgan’s trips to Safeway and the traffic crashes. “I keep telling her that she needs to really be careful and, if need be, stay away from there.”

State license was at risk

Oregon regulates adult foster

homes through licensing and inspection, but the homes are operated as private businesses. Older or disabled adults who are unable to fully care for themselves pay to stay at the homes or are covered by Medicaid, the federal and state health insurance program for the poor and disabled.

In September, the state Department of Human Services notified Angel Adult Foster Care, where Morgan lives, that the state would not renew the home’s license after inspections revealed several problems.

The state found that the adult foster home did not have a second evacuation exit route that was wheelchair-accessible because the backyard led to an area with “overgrown weeds covering broken concrete with an 11-inch drop off and an almost foot-long piece of rusted rebar sticking out of the cement.”

The state also found that wheelchair ramps were rotted and in need of repair to be safe.

The adult foster home had a history of failing to obtain approved background checks for caregivers, the state noted, and in previous years had unqualified caregivers working alone.

Jay Pichika, who operates Angel Adult Foster Care and adult foster homes in Southern California, where she lives, appealed the state’s decision not to renew her license.

Last week, the Department of Human Services withdrew the ruling after finding that Pichika had addressed and resolved the issues that had been raised by the inspections, including improvements to a wheelchair ramp.

‘A tough balance’

Oregon’s regulatory oversight shows that the government — and the public — has an interest in ensuring adult foster homes are operated properly and residents receive adequate care.

The state’s administrative rules for the homes, which cover 146 pages, stress that care should be provided in a way that “supports and enables the residents to maximize their ability to function at the highest level of independence possible.”

But state rules also require detailed care plans for residents that cover behavioral interventions and transportation. Care plans are supposed to be

CROSSING DANGER

A woman who lives at an Uppertown adult foster home and travels by motorized wheelchair has been involved in several traffic collisions near Safeway over the past several years. Caregivers and police worry about her safety.

- **Nov. 25/33rd Street and Lief Erikson Drive:** A driver making a left turn out of the Safeway parking lot struck Morgan in the crosswalk and fled the scene. She suffered severe scrapes to her legs. Police are investigating the crash as a felony hit-and-run.
- **Nov. 6/Astoria Riverwalk:** A city Parks and Recreation Department truck bumped into Morgan near Safeway and the Astoria Riverwalk close to the Astoria Riverfront Trolley stop.
- **Aug. 9/33rd Street and Lief Erikson Drive:** A driver making a right turn from the Safeway parking lot on a green light hit Morgan in the crosswalk. She complained of hip pain. The driver was cited by police for failing to stop for a pedestrian.
- **July 3/Harrison Avenue and 35th Street:** A driver in a truck with a boat trailer struck Morgan with the trailer as he made a right turn from Harrison on to 35th. She reported that her left hip was sore. The driver was warned by police about using his cellphone while driving.
- **June 30/33rd Street and Lief Erikson Drive:** A driver making a right turn from the Safeway parking lot on a green light hit Morgan in the crosswalk. She said her left hip hurt and her left knee was a little skinned up. Police could not determine whether the driver or Morgan had the right of way.
- **July 29, 2014/33rd Street and Lief Erikson Drive:** A driver leaving the Safeway parking lot struck Morgan in the crosswalk. She was found lying on her side on the ground about 10 feet into the crosswalk. The driver was cited by police for failing to stop for a pedestrian.
- **May 22, 2013/32nd Street and Marine Drive:** A driver making a right turn to Marine Drive from a stop sign hit Morgan. She said she was hurt on her left chest and leg.
- **Nov. 15, 2011/Harrison Avenue:** A driver was backing out and struck Morgan near the adult foster home.

***Source:** Astoria Police Department

reviewed and updated when a resident’s condition changes.

“That’s, I think, where the balance comes in. How to respect people’s self-determination to make decisions for themselves but also work with them to ensure that they’re safe,” said Devrey Hachenberg, the adult protective services and adult foster home licensing manager for NorthWest Senior and Disability Services, which licenses adult foster homes in Clatsop County for the state.

“And it’s a tough balance to try and figure out.”

‘Home away from home’

After The Daily Astorian visited Angel Adult Foster Care Friday morning, Pichika said by phone from California that she would consider having someone take Morgan to Safe-

way and pick her up when she wants to return home.

Pichika said Morgan has grown attached to the home and she does not want to do anything to upset her. She said she tried to take action previously but “nothing was worked out.”

Morgan, sitting by the fire at the Safeway lounge on Friday morning, lifted up her pant leg to show a nasty wound near her right knee from the November crash. She explained that she uses the crosswalk but still gets hit, counting the number of times on her right hand.

On Friday afternoon, police, a fire truck and an ambulance were called to Safeway after yet another report that she was in some kind of trouble.

Even though Morgan is at risk, she does not want to stop coming back. “This is my home away from home,” she said.



Erick Bengel/The Daily Astorian

McClure Park, at Eighth Street and Grand Avenue, is scheduled to get a slide this summer thanks to a \$15,000 grant from the Oregon Community Foundation. The slide will have slight bends and meander down the hillside.

Grant: Investing in a city park is ‘a great strategy’

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“You’re actually using old timbers to construct the playground or climbing areas for kids,” said Angela Cosby, director of the Astoria Parks and Recreation Department. “It essentially gives the visual appeal of not the same brightly colored plastic playgrounds.”

Citizens step in

McClure Park — an almost-acre park at the northwest corner of Eighth Street and Grand Avenue — is where McClure High School once stood.

Astoria’s first graduating high school class graduated from McClure High in June 1893. The building was demolished in 1919, according to the Parks and Recreation Department’s draft master plan, and the neighborhood is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 2012, the Friends of McClure Park began asking neighbors what they wanted out of the park (now rated in “fair” condition in the parks draft master plan). In January, the City Council approved the project plan, which incorporates information from the city’s engineering division and independent researchers like Tom Homing, a Seaside geologist.

Because the Parks and Recreation Department has

trouble maintaining the city’s parks at current staffing levels, it has started relying on “Friends of”-type groups to help maintain certain areas for them, Cosby said. The Friends of McClure Park members regularly mow grass, pull weeds and pick up trash. They have basically adopted the park for the city, she said.

“If community groups would really like to see change, this is one way they can get involved and help make that possible,” she said.

McElroy said the friends group doesn’t know how much the rest of the playground equipment outlined in the plan will cost. “We haven’t really developed a plan that we can cost out,” he said.

Kevin Cronin, the city’s community development director, moved into the house nearest McClure Park in August with his wife, Darcy Cronin, and their three children. Darcy Cronin plans to join the Friends of McClure Park board.

“I think anytime you make investments into a city park, they’re going to pay dividends in terms of having more people use it. But also you’re going to attract more folks in the neighborhood who also want to invest in their house or invest in their business,” Kevin Cronin said. “It’s a great strategy.”

Hanukkah: ‘It’s a home-based holiday’

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Goldeen has hosted many of the Hanukkah gatherings at her Astoria home.

“It’s a home-based holiday,” Goldeen said, underscoring the casual atmosphere.

Hanukkah is a lesser holiday for Judaism when compared with Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, the Jewish New Year and the day of atonement, respectively. Goldeen said Hanukkah has taken on an outside importance in the U.S. because of the proximity to Christmas. Hanukkah begins on the 25th day of Kislev, the ninth month on the Jewish calendar, in November or December. The holiday started Dec. 6 and ends this evening.

“What I think is important about Hanukkah, is that after all this time, we still celebrate it, after thousands of years,” Goldeen said, tears forming in her eyes. “I think that’s what is important. It still matters to us.”

Hanukkah celebrates the re-dedication of a holy temple in ancient Israel after the successful revolt of Jewish Maccabees against the Greek-descended Seleucid Empire around 160 B.C. The Maccabees needed eight days to create oil for the menorah in the temple, but only had enough existing for oil for one night.

As the miracle goes, one day’s oil lasted for eight, signified by the eight branches of the menorah lit over the course of the festival. Gatherers at Goldeen’s brought candelabrum of all styles, from metal and glass to animal heads and even a pair of menorah-crowned glasses, all lit up. They sang traditional melodies and recited blessings, spending the night in a friendly holiday party as the menorahs were allowed to burn out.

Food and games

In Goldeen’s kitchen, gatherers honored the miracle of the oil with latke potato pancakes, fresh-baked braids of challah bread and other dishes incorporating oil. Just as ubiquitous were the less traditional offerings, including chicken sausage, spaghetti, deli wraps, salads and fruits.



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Michael Conneran tries on a pair of menorah-styled party glasses during a Hanukkah celebration Sunday.



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Sunday’s celebration of Hanukkah included traditional fried foods such as latke potato pancakes (pictured) and challah bread.

“It’s a community potluck,” said Carol Newman of Brownsmead. She said people outside Beit Salmon are invited to Hanukkah and bring whatever kosher additions they desire.

In the main room, as the menorahs burned, kids spun the ubiquitous dreidels in a game of chance. Written on each of the four sides of the spinning tops are Hebrew letters Nun, Gimel, Hei and Shin, translated into “A great miracle happened there (in Israel).”

The letters also signify a player’s winnings, depending on which side faces upward when the dreidel comes to a rest.

The winnings can be anything from matchsticks and pocket change to chocolate coins. The game signifies a way Jews hid their worship, after practicing Judaism was decreed illegal by the Greek Seleucid leader Antiochus IV.

“When the Jews were together, the bad guys would come around, and then they (the Jews) would spin their tops,” Newman said. “We’re just playing a game.”

Keeping tradition alive

Cecelia Cohen, a native Californian who now lives on the Long Beach (Wash.) Peninsula,

‘What I think is important about Hanukkah, is that after all this time, we still celebrate it, after thousands of years.’

Ann Goldeen

president of Beit Salmon Congregation

recently returned to the U.S. after 35 years living in Israel. She is one of about 70 Jews Goldeen estimated live in the Lower Columbia region.

Cohen teaches a Hebrew reading and writing class as part of an effort to sustain Jewish traditions.

“Around here, you feel like you’re in a minority,” Cohen said.

Occasions like Hanukkah, she added, provide an outlet for culturally linked people to gather. “That’s really what Hanukkah is about, light and hope.”