

Elder abuse: For every one case reported, five are not

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With elder abuse cases, law enforcement and social service workers face major hurdles that are not often seen in other crimes. Victims, such as the elderly Lake Oswego woman, die or have cognitive issues that make them unaware of the abuse. Records that might help prove financial abuse are not always easily released from banks. Most of all, victims may not want to report a family member or their only caregiver.

For every one case reported, authorities say, five are not.

'It's their choice'

Steve Hawks, an adult protective service worker through Northwest Senior and Disability Services, is tasked with investigating elder abuse in Clatsop County.

His job is to investigate if an incident occurred, file a report and offer social services to the victim. He works closely with law enforcement and others in his Warrenton office and headquarters in Salem.

He can strongly recommend a victim move into a foster home, assisted-living facility or accept in-home care, but the largest hurdle is that the decision is up to the elderly person.

Unlike child protective services that can remove a child from a home, an adult has the right to make their own decisions. If an adult loses their cognitive ability to decide, it is up to a guardian or conservator.

"I can't remove an adult from a home under any circumstance. Sometimes I would like to, but I can't," Hawks said. "It's their choice."

Last year, Clatsop County had 224 reports of elder abuse. Hawks was assigned to investigate 133 of them. Just in January this year, Hawks has already investigated 20 cases.

More than 38,000 elder abuse cases were reported statewide in 2014, up from about 30,000 in 2013.

Hawks said he has not seen an increase in cases, but rather more complicated cases.

"I see more of a trend of complex cases, especially financial exploitation," he said. "We have a lot of retired seniors here with some wealth. Their cases tend to be more complex."

Self-neglect

The most common referrals Hawks receives are for cases of self-neglect. The reports usually come from concerned friends, family, Medix personnel or police officers.

Hawks said the perception of self-neglect is being disheveled or not taking baths, but it is actually about cognition. He asks the people if they understand not bathing or having moldy food in their refrigerator can be harmful. Hoarding is another example of self-neglect.

"I had to climb up and into (a hoarder's house)," Hawks said. "It was not a pleasant experience when I looked at what I crawled through to get to where the person was sleeping in the middle of everything."

When a scam is reported, it is assigned to Hawks as self-neglect. Since adults have the right to spend their money anyway they wish, scams are not considered financial exploitation.

By investigating a scam as self-neglect, Hawks asks victims if they understand what they are doing. As an example, he will ask if they really think they will receive a check for \$2 million from a lottery they never entered?

The Oregon Department of Justice has been a huge resource in combating scams, Hawks said.

Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum hosted a first-

ever elder abuse conference last month, where scams and other barriers were discussed. In addition, the state Legislature is considering funding for Oregon's first full-time elder abuse prosecutor.

Unfortunately, Hawks said, once an elderly person gets involved in a scam it can become similar to a gambling addiction.

"Even with all of that education, they will continue," he said. "I wish I could tell you we have had great success with victims of scammers, but I can think of several where they are currently involved in them."

Financial exploitation

Astoria Police Deputy Chief Eric Halverson said most elder abuse cases in Clatsop County involved scams or other financial exploitation similar to the case in Lake Oswego.

Forgery or fraud calls to Astoria Dispatch have increased from 58 in 2012 to 163 in 2015.

"It's far more complicated now," Halverson said. "A person can be anywhere in the world doing this. Actually being able to track it back and get to the source of it is very hard."

Scams and financial exploitation prey on the victim's trust. Victims are left feeling embarrassed and ashamed, which can lead to them not wanting to report the crime.

"We see financial crimes more often than we do physical abuse, but that's not to say there is not physical abuse, as well," Halverson said.

Some detectives and officers around Clatsop County carry a pocket guide for legal issues related to elder abuse. The pocket guide includes definitions for the different types of elder abuse.

Police officers, doctors, nurses, social workers, attorneys, and many other professionals are mandatory reporters of elder abuse. They can face penalties for not reporting an incident.

Law enforcement is taught to look out for certain types of injuries. A common assault injury to the elderly is black eyes.

In addition, Hawks said, he comes across a sex abuse case once or twice a year.

No matter the type of elder abuse, Hawks said, it comes down to if the victim wants him to proceed. He will continue to visit a victim months after an initial report. He offers services and recommendations, but it's the person's choice to seek further help.

"I have to be ready emotionally and mentally for walking away or being able to put something in place right then," Hawks said. "Those are the sad ones, when I know I'll be back."

Stepping in

Prosecuting the niece in Seaside would likely not have been possible without the aunt's dedicated friends. One happened to be an accountant, and another was a lawyer.

One friend described the process as a full-time job. The friends and a Lake Oswego Police detective visited multiple financial institutions to piece together the evidence. They knew they needed a well-documented case to get a prosecution.

The allegations of theft and criminal mistreatment spanned five years, dating back to 2009. The stolen money, meant for Catholic charities after the aunt died, has since been sent to the charities.

Prosecutors say the case shows the importance of watching out for the elderly, and the positive impacts of people willing to step in.

"It took me a while to get over my shock," a friend said. "I couldn't believe anything like this would happen."



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Cameron Moore smiles as he talks with people during a meet-and-greet for county manager candidates at the Barbey Maritime Center on Jan. 28.

Manager: Moore was one of 49 applicants

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"Being county manager is a great professional opportunity, and Clatsop County is a great place to live, and I couldn't be happier to be chosen," Moore said in a press release. "I'm looking forward to getting out there and getting started."

Moore has nearly 30 years of experience in public service administration and economic development with several public and private entities. He has held positions in Pennsylvania, Arizona, Iowa and Illinois.

Since 2007, he has served as the chief executive officer for the Champaign County

Regional Planning Commission, which offers developmental, planning and childhood educational services to local governments. Moore led an intergovernmental organization with a staff of 215 employees and a \$25 million budget.

The News-Gazette newspaper, based in Central Illinois, noted the regional planning commission had been hurt by a lack of a state budget. Last summer, offices at the planning commission's center closed, impacting 100 of the agency's employees. A low-income home energy assistance program and weatherization program were completely shut down.

"The employees being impacted are those where all or part of the funding for their position is not available to us due to the lack of a state budget," Moore told the newspaper.

Moore has a bachelor's degree in public administration/political science/international management from Augusta College in Illinois.

He and his wife are avid hikers and outdoors enthusiasts who have visited the Pacific Northwest on several occasions and had made it their long-term goal to settle in the area.

He was one of 49 applicants for the vacant county manager position.

The Board of Commissioners worked with Heather Gantz, of the Waldron executive search firm, to narrow the field to three finalists.

"It was a tough decision, we had some real great candidates," Scott Lee, Board of Commissioners chairman, said. "We're looking forward to working together."

Former Cannon Beach city manager Rich Mays will continue to serve as interim county manager until Moore arrives in April.

The county manager is the top administrator for the county and oversees a \$60.3 million budget and 203 employees.

Tax: Those who rent for periods longer than 30 days will remain exempt from the local tax

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The city collects tax from condominiums and hotels, but has long exempted single-family rentals from the tax, which brings in about \$210,000 in revenue to the city.

"Rentals weren't so prevalent, then," Sweet said. "A few years later, the council decided to add this exemption."

By removing the exemption, he said, this will add short-term rentals to the residential zone.

The city previewed their actions at a work session last month when they unanimously supported regulation of short-term rental properties, stressing homeowner accountability and the need for a balance "between community and privacy."

At that meeting, City Attorney Peter Watts advised officials they were "well

within" the city's right to remove the exemption. "You are not adding a regulation but removing an exemption," Watts said.

"The reason the City Council was looking at this was fairness," Sweet said Thursday. "It levels the playing field in terms of incoming transient business. Where condos and hotels had to pay it, and homes did not, it wasn't a fair tax."

Officials intend to use new revenues to cover costs associated with short-term rental properties, Sweet said. "Because we're going down this path, the taxation becomes important. This will also help potentially

with fire and police coverage, parks and maintenance of our city, because there is a cost to the city for transient business."

Those who rent for periods longer than 30 days will remain exempt from the local transient lodging tax.

Other exemptions to the city code will remain in effect, including those for medical clinics, convalescent homes and those whose rent is less than 50 cents per day.

For 2015-16, the city has budgeted in \$210,000 from condos and hotels paying the 7 percent transient lodging tax, Sweet said.

The state requires an addi-

tional 1 percent tax from transient rentals, without exemptions for single-family residences.

State tax revenues go to promote Travel Oregon.

If the City Council approves the removal of the exemption at their March 2 meeting, it would go into effect 30 days later.

The council and Planning Commission continue to develop short-term rental regulations.

"We are putting the narratives together and beginning to form the zone code," Sweet said.

A short-term rental presentation at the Planning Commission takes place Thursday, Sweet said, with a joint work session with the Planning Commission and the City Council in March. "We could have the final version of those regulations in June or July, and then we move forward from there."



Chad Sweet



Peter Watts

Pot industry: It's an agricultural enterprise

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A lot of people attending the trade show were "consumers of the product," Busenbark guessed.

"We look at it as a business opportunity," he said. "A significant part of our business is cannabis."

The next aisle over held a booth for the Oregon Cannabis Association, a nonprofit professional organization representing growers, processors, dispensaries and other businesses. The executive director is Amy Margolis of Portland, whose Emerge Law Group specializes in weed work. One of the firm's attorneys, Dave Kopilak, was the primary drafter of Measure 91, which legalized recreational use, possession and cultivation in Oregon. Voters approved it in 2014 and the law took effect July 1, 2015.

Conventional farmers might respond "Hmm, well ..." but Margolis said Oregon's cannabis trade is, at root level, an agricultural enterprise. Voters said so.



Eric Mortenson/Capital Press

Blair Busenbark, COO of Adaptive Plastics Inc. in Salem, says marijuana growers are new buyers of the company's Solexx-brand greenhouse panels.

"In 2015, they officially made cannabis an ag product," she said. "The upshot is, this became a cash crop like any other cash crop."

But it is a different animal, for sure. One of the bigger outfits, Chalice Farms, is opening a 24,000-square-foot grow, processing and distribution facility near the Portland Airport. It will be housed in a warehouse.

Other businesses abound. Security firms that provide video monitoring and "product transport." Software that allows you to check your regulatory compliance. Marketers, electricians, packaging companies and extraction services. The latter extract cannabis oil from fibrous marijuana plant material. The oil is used in edibles consumed by

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Blair Busenbark
the chief operating officer and sales boss of Adaptive Plastics Inc., a Salem company

medical marijuana patients.

Some of the businesses crowding into cannabis will no doubt fall by the wayside, but people attending the convention seemed ready to chase what they see as economic opportunity.

Noah Stokes, founder and CEO of CannaGuard, a security firm, opened the conference by noting marijuana is still federally illegal.

"We're saying screw it, we're actually going to do this," Stokes said, "and I love it."