

Animal shelters are a potential ally in suicide fight

By **MOLLY HARBARGER**
The Oregonian

The Washington County animal shelter is not often the first line of defense against suicide. But over the span of three months, shelter staff intervened with seven people who planned to kill themselves.

Most people who are considering suicide will say “yes” if asked if they plan to commit suicide. The problem is to know when to ask the question.

An unusual collaboration between the Washington County public health department and the medical examiner’s office has figured out a simple way to do that. It appears to be paying off.

Kimberly Repp, an epidemiologist, has earned national praise for a form she developed that death investigators fill out when they determine the cause of a suspicious death. The information provides more recent data about suicides in Washington County than state or federal reporting systems. The database is then used to identify trends



Washington County
Kimberly Repp, an epidemiologist, and Charles Lovato, a death investigator, teamed up to create a database that has led to better suicide prevention efforts in Washington County.

that can strengthen Washington County’s suicide prevention services.

For instance, several death investigators in one month wrote that the subject gave up a pet to the shelter before dying.

Repp took that information to the animal shelter

staff, volunteers and veterinarians, who agreed to be trained in identifying people who might want to hurt themselves and how to intervene.

Her model takes about two minutes to collect the data, and officials say it is saving lives.

guide law enforcement. But by the time a local public health worker could access that information, it’s about 3 to 4 years old.

Vital statistics in death certificates only told Repp who is most likely to commit suicide, not why.

Plus, Washington County is not well-represented by state data, because its demographics tend to be superlative. The county has the most diverse population by race and ethnicity, the highest birth rate and the lowest death rate.

Repp needed better data — a surprise in a state with among the highest suicide rates in the country.

A federal report released this summer said that, on average, two people a day die by suicide in Oregon. The rate increased by 17.8 people per 100,000 over the year before.

Better data

Five years ago, Repp was tasked with the annual statewide survey of health needs by each county.

Through that process, Washington County residents said again and again that suicide was one of their biggest concerns.

So Repp started to look at what she could glean from the state and national data to help suicide prevention efforts in the area. She was stymied.

Oregon is a founding member of the Violent Death Reporting System, a national effort to provide states with information about violent deaths — which include suicides — to help craft health policy and

gator for 32 years. He joined Washington County’s medical examiner’s office seven years ago.

His job, along with a team of death investigators, is to show up to the scene of any violent or suspicious death and figure out the likely cause of death.

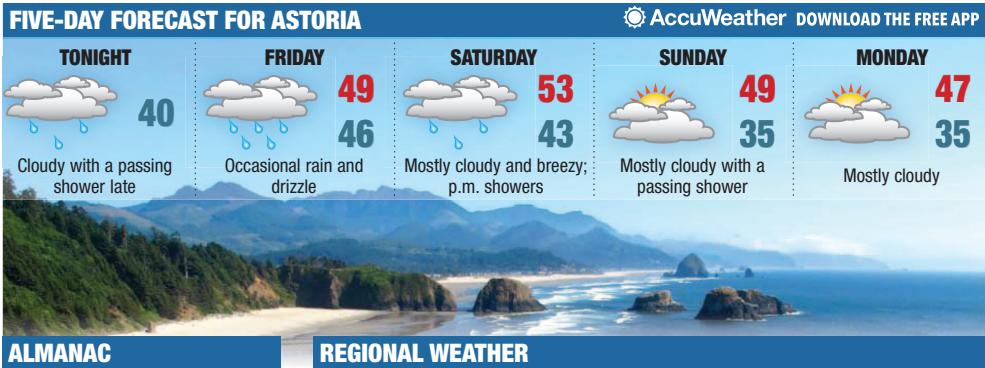
To do so, he examines the body and on-scene evidence, interviews witnesses and tracks down friends and family. He then writes up a report with a narrative of what he thinks happened and submits that to the medical examiner.

Much of that information is scraped into the state and federal databases and then aggregated.

But Lovato’s work often extends beyond what shows up in the report. His job has traditionally been to evaluate all the information he collects in a binary way — is it relevant to the cause of death or not? If not, then it usually doesn’t end up in any of the resulting data sets.

Repp wanted to know what wasn’t in there, so she approached the death investigation team and asked a question few people do — could she tag along to some crime scenes?

Lovato was surprised that all that information that never makes it into reports could be useful beyond watercooler talk in the office. He knew that much of what he reports is used in state and national trend lines, but he had never worked with public health officials before and didn’t know what could make his data better.



Astoria through Wednesday.	
Temperatures	
High/low	51°/37°
Normal high/low	48°/37°
Record high	64° in 1980
Record low	19° in 1924
Precipitation	
Wednesday	0.29"
Month to date	7.53"
Normal month to date	8.34"
Year to date	60.92"
Normal year to date	65.71"

SUN AND MOON				
Sunset tonight	4:36 p.m.			
Sunrise Friday	7:58 a.m.			
Moonrise today	10:58 p.m.			
Moonset today	11:42 a.m.			
Last	New	First	Full	
Dec 29	Jan 5	Jan 13	Jan 20	

UNDER THE SKY
Tonight's Sky: Johannes Kepler's birthday (1571).

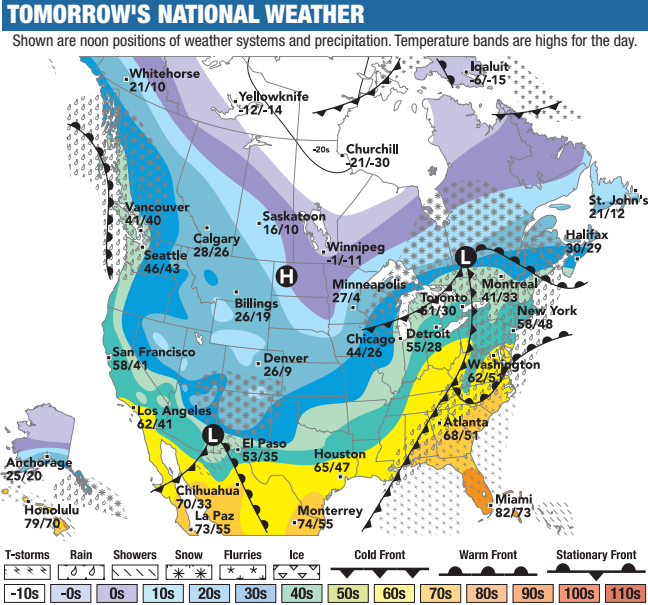
Source: Jim Todd, OMSI

TOMORROW'S TIDES			
Astoria / Port Docks			
Time	High	Time	Low
5:59 a.m.	8.8 ft.	12:00 p.m.	2.6 ft.
5:44 p.m.	7.9 ft.	none	

NATIONAL CITIES						
City	Hi	Lo	W	Hi	Lo	W
Atlanta	54	52	sh	68	51	r
Boston	36	31	s	52	47	r
Chicago	50	44	r	44	26	c
Denver	32	10	sf	26	9	c
Des Moines	60	26	t	29	10	c
Detroit	43	42	r	55	28	c
El Paso	53	36	pc	53	35	sh
Fairbanks	-3	-13	c	-1	-8	c
Honolulu	83	71	pc	79	70	t
Indianapolis	52	50	r	52	29	pc
Kansas City	62	22	t	32	15	pc
Las Vegas	54	37	pc	51	35	pc
Los Angeles	65	46	s	62	41	s
Memphis	63	45	t	55	34	pc
Miami	80	74	sh	82	73	c
Nashville	62	58	r	63	33	r
New Orleans	73	64	t	68	58	r
New York	41	38	pc	58	48	r
Oklahoma City	50	25	pc	40	22	pc
Philadelphia	45	40	pc	59	49	r
St. Louis	60	33	r	42	23	c
Salt Lake City	31	20	sf	28	13	pc
San Francisco	58	44	s	58	41	s
Seattle	45	36	pc	46	43	r
Washington, DC	50	45	pc	62	51	r

Weather (W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, i-ice.

REGIONAL CITIES													
City	Today			Hi.	Lo.	W	City	Today			Hi.	Lo.	W
	Hi	Lo	W					Hi	Lo	W			
Baker City	35	20	c	34	25	pc	Olympia	44	33	c	43	41	r
Bend	36	20	c	38	29	pc	Pendleton	36	25	sf	37	33	c
Brookings	52	39	pc	54	40	pc	Portland	47	39	c	45	43	r
Eugene	48	35	pc	47	36	c	Roseburg	48	35	pc	49	35	pc
Ilwaco	48	42	c	49	47	r	Salem	48	37	pc	46	41	c
Klamath Falls	36	14	c	35	17	pc	Seaside	48	41	pc	49	46	r
Medford	44	27	c	45	29	pc	Spokane	29	20	c	29	28	sn
Newberg	46	37	pc	44	41	sh	Springfield	47	35	c	46	37	pc
Newport	49	42	pc	49	44	pc	Vancouver	46	38	pc	44	41	r
North Bend	52	41	c	53	40	pc	Yakima	39	25	c	34	27	r



DEATHS

Dec. 26, 2018
HEBERT, Gerald Wayne, 72, of Gearhart, died in Gearhart. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.
Dec. 25, 2018
JARVIS, Carolyn Kay, 76, of Warrenton, died in Seaside. Caldwell’s

side. Caldwell’s Funeral & Cremation Arrangement Center in Seaside is in charge of arrangements.
Dec. 25, 2018
JARVIS, Carolyn Kay, 76, of Warrenton, died in Seaside. Caldwell’s

Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.
REITH, Laura, 98, of Astoria, died in Warrenton. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

THURSDAY
Clatsop County Recreational Lands Planning and Advisory Committee, 1 to 3 p.m., fourth floor, 800 Exchange St.

Cannon Beach Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.
Astoria Planning Commission, 6:30 p.m., City Hall, 1095 Duane St

ON THE RECORD

Domestic assault
• Late Wednesday, Warrenton police arrested Jeffery John Fletcher, 33, of Warrenton, on two charges of fourth-degree domestic assault and one count of third-degree assault. A heavily intoxicated Fletcher struck a 2-year-old in the face before fighting with a female occupant of the house and later a 16-year-old, according to police. He was taken to the hospital for a medical evaluation related to his high blood alcohol content before being lodged in the Clatsop County Jail.
• Around 3 p.m. Saturday, Warrenton police arrested Sara Jane Welch,

58, of Warrenton, for fourth-degree assault and harassment. Welch got into a fight with a female roommate, spitting at and punching her, according to police.
• Around 6 p.m. Saturday, Warrenton police arrested Christopher Michael Peterson, 30, of Warrenton, for fourth-degree assault. Peterson got in a fight with his significant other in front of their children, according to police. Peterson eventually picked her up off the floor and threw her into a folding closet, causing minor injuries, police said. The assault charge was enhanced because of the presence of children.

Burglary
• Early Monday, Seaside police arrested Kevin Edward Walsh, 24, of Seaside, for fourth-degree assault, first-degree burglary, first-degree criminal mischief, second-degree escape and harassment. A call came into police around 12:50 p.m. Sunday of two unknown people entering an apartment without permission and refusing to leave. Walsh fought with a male in the residence before fleeing with Candice S. Kimbley, 23, of Seaside, police said. Police later apprehended Walsh and Kimbley, who was arrested for first-degree criminal trespassing.

LOTTERIES

OREGON		
Wednesday's Pick 4:		
1 p.m.:	1-9-6-3	
4 p.m.:	5-2-6-5	
7 p.m.:	0-2-5-1	
10 p.m.:	4-0-6-2	
Wednesday's Lucky Lines:		
04-08-11-15-FREE-18-23-28-31		
Estimated jackpot: \$27,000		
Wednesday's Megabucks:		
15-23-29-33-41-42	Estimated jackpot: \$6 million	
Wednesday's Powerball:		
05-25-38-52-67, Powerball: 24,	Power Play: 2	
Estimated jackpot: \$294 million		
WASHINGTON		
Wednesday's Daily Game:		
7-2-7		
Wednesday's Hit 5:		
05-07-14-		
16-31	Estimated jackpot: \$100,000	
Wednesday's Keno:		
05-09-10-13-21-25-33-39-41-44-47-48-49-51-52-71-76-77-78-79		
Wednesday's Lotto:		
09-18-19-27-33-35	Estimated jackpot: \$2.1 million	
Wednesday's Match 4:		
01-03-15-22		

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