

Crimes: ‘We’re being very cautious’

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accompanying them to a hospital out of the area. But in situations like Wolf’s, “where you’re concerned about a high level of drugs in someone’s system, and wondering if they’re going to survive the high ... do you just say, ‘You know what? Yeah, we’ll let him come in and die in the jail?’ Hell no, you don’t,” Phillips said.

Once someone is under the jail’s supervision, the jail is responsible for the outcome.

In April 2020, 34-year-old Alexander Jimenez died in custody. He, too, had been medically cleared for the jail, but went unconscious during a struggle with officers. An investigation concluded that officers did not use excessive force and that the cause of Jimenez’s death was the toxic effects of methamphetamine. Two other inmates have died at the jail in the recent past — a

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suicide in spring 2020 and a natural death last winter.

“Just terrible events,” Phillips said, “and so we’re being very cautious.”

What Wolf needed, and what the county doesn’t have, is a secure detox facility, he said.

Police routinely encounter people in the throes of mental illness and drug addiction. In some cases, jail is not where they belong, Workman said. In Wolf’s case, he “should have been in jail that first day,” he said.

Although Phillips believes everyone did what they felt was right, he said better communication among the agencies involved, and a more deliberative process for what Workman believes was a somewhat unique

case, could have stopped Wolf’s spree after the first incident.

The sheriff said he told Workman afterward, “‘If we get any of these again, just let me know. Everyone slow down. Let’s figure out if there’s something we can do.’”

Workman said, “We are all vowed that this situation will not happen again.”

As law enforcement tried to figure out what to do with Wolf, Phillips said he had begun to work with the hospital and jail staff on what could be done to bring him into custody. “We would have been uncomfortable but willing to accept Mr. Wolf in that situation,” Phillips said.

It was during that process that the sheriff reached

Knighton: ‘People have really made me feel welcome’

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“The worst call”

When Wolf was released, Tajah Eide, the mother whom Wolf had threatened along with her daughters earlier that day, got a phone call. It was from the Warrenton officer who had shown up at her house and had been in contact with her through the event.

She called it “the worst call.”

Eide remembers the disbelief in the officer’s voice when he explained the situation to her. And she remembers what went through her mind.

“I was like, ‘Oh, my God — so what am I supposed to do? Just stay up here all night long, hoping and praying he doesn’t come back until he does something else stupid and can get arrested?’”

“Knappa reminds me of home,” he said. “I tell people that all the time. It’s two hours from Atlanta. You guys are two hours from Portland.

“I love it,” he said of the North Coast. “I love the weather, the scenery, the seafood ... people have really made me feel welcome.”

If you see his office, Knighton also loves catch phrases and sayings that reinforce life’s positives.

“Anything that we do, we try to make sure that we love it,” he said. “My catch phrase is, ‘I love what I do.’ I’m a small-town boy. I grew up in a middle class home. My grandmother raised me, and I grew up in a very religious home. I was a singer.”

After graduating from high school, he said, “I matriculated at Albany State University, a historically black college, where I majored in music vocal performance. For a while I sang opera, and I went back to teach at my alma mater, went on to teach at another school, and one day just decided it was not for me.

“I got introduced to working in a classroom with people with disabilities and special needs. And I’ve now been doing that for 13 years.”

Knighton said he will soon finish his master’s in psychology and applied behavior analysis, and hopes to be a clinical psychologist.

‘A little sunshine’

Knighton has introduced some of his past life — the music — into his job as a community connector.

“I have introduced therapeutic practices, and also included songs that I have written to motivate children to be more social. I am planning on introducing a glee club, possibly for both the middle school and the high school, and also a friendship circle.”

Friends and a little sunshine, which people on the North Coast can use during the winter months. Long-time residents know all too well the winters can get depressing.

“The weather here — I love it — but gray is a color that really drains people out,” Knighton said. “People are deprived of sunshine. They need a little sunshine!”

In addition, “I am seeing this new form of disability called ‘failure to thrive.’ Failure to thrive (in relation to depression and anxiety) is when people don’t have a will to do anything. They are very anxious ... they don’t have any goals or ideals.”

Meanwhile, he said, “I’m happy to be in the Knappa School District. I don’t think I could have found another place that gives me the ability to be innovative, artistic and nostalgic (‘I.A.N.’). I’m happy to be here.”

As a certified life coach, Knighton said he also does private consultation for in-home behavioral strategies. And he also gives voice lessons for aspiring singers.

Dispatch: Agreement with Seaside could be extended

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But laying the groundwork for possible consolidation is not the point of the agreement between Seaside and Astoria, officials say.

“This is to address a more immediate need of staffing shortages,” Spalding said. “We are definitely not going into this that it’s a test for some future consolidation effort.”

“The simple answer of it is anything is always possible,” said Jon Rahl, Seaside’s assistant city manager. But, he added, echoing Spalding, “It’s not the conversation right now. The conversation is, ‘We have a staffing issue. How are we going to solve it?’”

There are other issues that need to be addressed in any discussion about consolidation. It isn’t as straightforward as moving all operations to one of the existing centers.

Both dispatch centers are in the tsunami inundation zone. In more recent talks about possible consolidation, discussions have focused on the need for any consolidated center to be located outside of the inundation zone, Spalding said.

And while the separate Astoria and Seaside dispatch centers now use the same software and hardware, the dispatchers wear different hats. In Seaside, dispatch-

ers also handle some front desk work and manage the records division, Spalding noted. The Seaside center also handles a lower volume of calls because they have fewer subscribers to dispatch services than Astoria.

Workarounds

Seaside dispatch supports Seaside police, Seaside fire, Cannon Beach police, Gearhart police and several rural fire protections services on the south end of Clatsop County. Astoria dispatchers serve the Astoria and Warrenton police and fire departments, a number of rural fire protection services on the north end of the county and the



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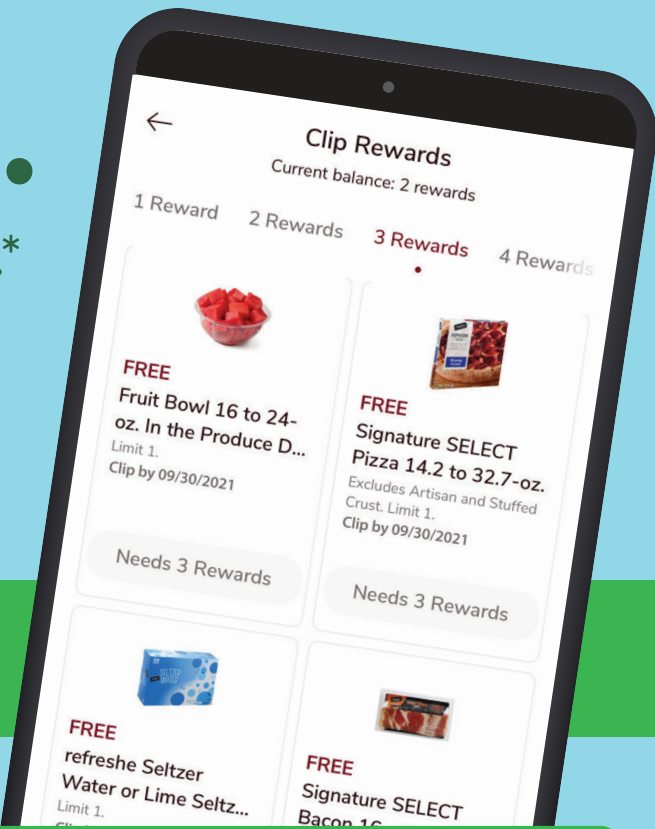
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