

## IN BRIEF

## Hospitals make testing appeal as virus cases spike

Local hospitals have urged people not to come into emergency rooms or urgent care clinics for COVID-19 testing as virus cases surge.

People are directed to contact the Clatsop County Public Health Department at 503-325-8500 about testing options at the county's drive-thru testing site at Camp Rilea in Warrenton.

"Clatsop County's emergency department and urgent care clinics are for treating emergencies and illnesses," the hospitals and county said in a statement on Monday. "We need to keep them open for those who need care. They are not the place for people simply looking for COVID testing."

The Oregon Health Authority reported 55 new coronavirus cases for the county on Friday.

Since the pandemic began, the county had recorded 3,062 virus cases as of Friday.

The health authority also reported a 37th virus-related death for the county.

The health authority said a 60-year-old man tested positive for the virus on Aug. 16 and died on Aug. 27 at Providence Seaside Hospital. The state said he had underlying health conditions.

## Astoria man arrested after crash that temporarily closed Astoria Bridge

An Astoria man was arrested Friday night for drunken driving following a multivehicle crash that closed the Astoria Bridge for a few hours.

Norbel Lopez Sereno, 36, was arrested for driving under the influence of intoxicants, reckless driving and reckless endangerment.

Officials say the incident started when a Chevrolet Camaro driven by Sereno crossed into the northbound lane, crashing head-on into another vehicle.

A third vehicle rear-ended the vehicle in the northbound lane, and a semitruck then crashed into the Camaro, pushing it into another vehicle.

Sereno was extricated from the vehicle and taken to Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria with serious injuries.

Officers found an odor of alcohol and open containers inside the Camaro, officials say.

— *The Astorian*

## DEATH

Jan. 6, 2022

POETSCH, Melinda Mitchell, 61, of Warrenton, died in Warrenton. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

## ON THE RECORD

## Assault

• Ronald Albert Lafreniere, 55, of Hammond, was arrested for assault in the fourth degree, strangulation and menacing. All charges relate to domestic violence. The crimes are alleged to have occurred on Friday on Duane Street in Astoria.

## DUII

• Chance Lynn Smith, 37, of St. Helens, was arrested on Sunday at Marine Drive and Second Street in Astoria for driving under the influence of intoxicants.

• Joseph Bailey Sellers, 53, of Astoria, was arrested Thursday on 30th Street and Marine Drive for DUII and reckless driving.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

## TUESDAY

**Clatsop County Planning Commission**, 10 a.m., (electronic meeting).

**Clatsop Care Health District Board**, 5 p.m., (electronic meeting).

**Lewis & Clark Fire Department Board**, 6 p.m., main fire station, 34571 U.S. Highway 101 Business.

**Cannon Beach City Council**, 6 p.m., work session, (electronic meeting).

**Warrenton City Commission**, 6 p.m., City Hall, 225 S. Main Ave.

**Clatsop Community College Board**, 6:30 p.m., (electronic meeting).

## WEDNESDAY

**Clatsop Soil and Water Conservation District Board**, 10 a.m., Oregon State University Extension Service, Conference Room 231, 2001 Marine Drive, Astoria.

**Port of Astoria Finance Advisory Committee**, 1 p.m., (electronic meeting).

**Clatsop County Board of Commissioners**, 6 p.m., (electronic meeting).

**Warrenton-Hammond School District Board**, 6 p.m., Warrenton High School Library, 1700 S. Main Ave.

**Gearhart City Council**, 6:30 p.m., work session on election law training, (electronic meeting).

## THURSDAY

**Seaside Civic and Convention Center Commission**, 5 p.m., 415 First Ave.

**Gearhart Planning Commission**, 6 p.m., (electronic meeting).

## the Astorian

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## CLOSE CROP



Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

A photographer takes photos while a wave crashes over logs at Cape Disappointment State Park earlier this month.

## Seaside man sues state hospital, alleging sexual abuse as patient

Abuse allegedly occurred in the late 1990s

By ARDESHIR TABRIZIAN  
Salem Reporter

SALEM — A Seaside man is suing Oregon State Hospital, claiming he was sexually abused as a patient in the late 1990s by a psychiatric aide who was later convicted of sexually abusing three underage boys and attempting to kill one of his victims.

The man sued the hospital, former employee Frank James Milligan and the Oregon Department of Human Services in late December in Marion County Circuit Court, seeking \$3 million in damages.

The complaint alleges Milligan was allowed access to the man when he was 16 as a psychiatric aide and used his position of authority to abuse him and other young boys.

Milligan has been in the custody of the state Department of Corrections for over 21 years, having been convicted of abusing boys in three separate criminal cases in 2000, 2001 and 2015.

He is incarcerated at Oregon State Correctional Institution in Salem, with his earliest release being in September 2071, according to the state's website.

The complaint said Milligan was hired in 1994 as a psychiatric aide at the state hospital in Salem. At an unspecified time, the man — then 16 — had significant health issues that required his admission to the state hospital, which cares for Oregonians with mental illnesses who are court-ordered to get treatment.

At the time, the state hospital operated under the state human services department's direction before a 2009 law split off some programs to form the Oregon Health Authority. The health authority has been the hospital's parent agency since July 2011.

Representatives for the state hospital and the Department of Human Services declined to comment on the allegations in the suit. Matthew Sweeney, the attorney representing the plaintiff in the lawsuit, could not



A \$3 million lawsuit has been filed against the Oregon State Hospital alleging sex abuse.

**THE COMPLAINT ALLEGES FRANK JAMES MILLIGAN WAS ALLOWED ACCESS TO THE MAN WHEN HE WAS 16 AS A PSYCHIATRIC AIDE AND USED HIS POSITION OF AUTHORITY TO ABUSE HIM AND OTHER YOUNG BOYS.**

be reached for comment Friday.

According to the complaint, Milligan sexually abused the patient when he was at the hospital.

The victim is identified in public court documents, but Salem Reporter does not identify victims of sexual abuse.

Due to Milligan's threats of punishment and his authority to inflict it, the complaint said, the man was reasonably afraid Milligan would physically retaliate or kill him. He did not report Milligan's abuse to anyone at the state hospital and repressed all thoughts of the abuse he had suffered, according to the complaint.

The man returned home to Seaside after his release from the state hospital. The complaint said Milligan went to Seaside and threatened to kill him if he ever told anyone what happened, the complaint said.

After Milligan threatened him, the man repressed memories of the abuse, the complaint said. Unable to

mentally process what he'd endured at the state hospital, he suffered many setbacks in life and had trouble finding his place in the world.

The man struggled to find housing and provide for himself and eventually became homeless. "Living on the streets aggravated his already delicate mental state and (he) had many encounters with the criminal justice system," the complaint said.

The complaint said he and many others fell victim to a pattern of abuse of children under the state hospital's supervision and care.

It went on to say the abuse was a result of state hospital and Department of Human Services leadership lacking oversight of employees, their facilities lacking proper security and monitoring, the hospital failing to report suspected abuse to the Department of Human Services, and "the culture in which the abuse of juveniles was not taken seriously."

The complaint also said the state hospital and Department of Human Services didn't put in place effective policies and procedures to prevent abuse as new cases of abuse by employees came to light, and that they didn't terminate Milligan's employment when the Department

of Human Services knew or should've known the threat he posed.

As a direct result of the state hospital's and Milligan's abuse, negligence and violation of rights, the complaint said, the man has suffered "severe and debilitating emotional injury, pain and suffering, emotional trauma, and permanent psychological damage." He will also incur costs for counseling, psychiatric and psychological medical treatment, and reduced ability to earn income due to the abuse, the complaint said.

Milligan previously pleaded guilty in July 2000 in Clatsop County to two counts of attempted first-degree sodomy and first-degree sexual abuse, admitting to abusing a boy under 12 in August 1997, according to court documents. He was sentenced to six years and three months in prison.

Milligan was indicted in August 2000 on charges of attempted aggravated murder, first-degree kidnapping, two counts of first-degree sodomy and first-degree sexual abuse. The charges alleged he abused and tried to kill a different boy under 12 in July 2000. He pleaded guilty to all charges in August 2001 and was sentenced to 30 years in prison.

In September 2015, a jury in Marion County found Milligan guilty of two counts of first-degree sexual abuse and first-degree unlawful sexual penetration, court records showed. The Dec. 30 complaint said the victim was a minor in his custody at MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility in Woodburn.

A Marion County Circuit Court judge sentenced him to 35 years in prison on those charges.

## WANTED

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Contact: John Anderson • 360-269-2500