

LIFEWAYS: Police chief frustrated with lack of mental health services in the county

Continued from 1A

response over the past several months, but the pace of improvement needed to be quicker.

Judy Cordeniz, the outgoing CEO of Lifeways, said GOBHI had not discussed their announcement with her prior to a pointed press release Friday.

"I had not heard of this, so I'm not going to comment," she said. "I can assure you that Lifeways will do what we need to do to ensure that clients and service areas are adequately taken care of."

Also on Friday, Lifeways announced new CEO Tim Hoekstra, who will oversee the organization's services in Hermiston, Pendleton, Umatilla, Milton-Freewater and Ontario. Calls to Hoekstra were not returned by press time.

Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock is a board member of GOBHI. He said he was not surprised by the announcement, as there have been many discussions about concerns with crisis services in the county.

"About a month ago, all the law enforcement officers in Umatilla

County signed a letter to GOBHI indicating that they needed a new source of crisis intervention services," Murdock said. "They submitted it to GOBHI and the GOBHI board."

Campbell said he had received the letter.

"I'd say (the letter) as much as anything was the catalyst for speeding up the changes," he said. "I think Lifeways has been trying very hard, but when you get behind the eight ball, help can be appreciated."

He said goals for Lifeways would include decreased reliance on emergency rooms and jails for people in mental health crisis. He said that could include assessing people in need at home or in the streets, instead of automatically transporting them to a hospital or jail.

"That's something the entire state has been pushing for the last several years," he said.

Murdock said the Aspen Springs facility, which is being constructed in Hermiston and is slated to be run by Lifeways, could be one part of a solution.

The facility, which he said is still in the licensing phase, has 16 beds to hold people in crisis.

"I think if we can get some true changes (to Lifeways) in the next 60 to 90 days, it would enhance the operations of Aspen Springs," he said.

The changes comes just days after an incident with a man in crisis caused local law enforcement to note problems that have stemmed from a lack of mental health services in the county.

Peyton Hobbs, 24, smashed a window at the Hermiston Police Department Wednesday, then demanded officers arrest him. Police arrested Hobbs, who is known to officers and the community and has a history of mental illness, for criminal mischief. He was lodged at the Umatilla County Jail. Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said as of Thursday afternoon, Hobbs was no longer in jail and had been turned over to Saint Anthony Hospital.

Edmiston said he received a message from a sergeant early Thursday morning that Lifeways had placed a direct hold on Hobbs

and requested that the Sheriff's Office transport him to St. Anthony.

"He was not released from jail — he was taken from jail by Lifeways," Edmiston said.

Edmiston said he did not know why Hobbs was transferred in the middle of the night.

"I spoke with a family member (of Hobbs) who was trying to find out where he was," Edmiston said.

Though he did not identify any specific entities, Edmiston on Thursday said he was frustrated with the lack of mental health services in the county, and concerned with the increased pressure on police to handle people in mental crisis.

"At what point do we say the police can only do so much?" he said. "I am concerned at this trend of 'train the police more.'"

Edmiston said 20 of his department's 27 sworn officers have received crisis intervention training. But he said their training does not always ensure mental health professionals will follow through once the initial crisis has passed.

"We send officers off to a weeklong training, and tell them, if you do A, B, C, then X, Y, Z will happen," he said. "(The officers) do A, B, C, and often X and maybe Y will happen."

He admitted that law enforcement doesn't always know what roadblocks mental health professionals face in trying to provide their services, but that based on comments he received on his press release, many people had witnessed the lack of resources when it comes to mental health resources.

"I still want to be a glass half full type of person," he said. "But after 20-plus years in this profession, I've seen enough that it can be very difficult to remain optimistic."

Murdock said he did not think the announcement Friday was a direct result of Edmiston's comments. Edmiston himself did not have a comment on GOBHI's announcement.

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STUDENTS: Altrusa increasingly acting as the safety net for district's homeless and impoverished

Continued from 1A

"It was embarrassing for me and I didn't know how it caught on so easily," he said.

Despite his situation, Daniel said his grades didn't drop, and he tried to stay focused and tune out the noise.

In the meantime, Tasha was trying to find a way out of the tent. She eventually found a solution from the Community Action Program of East Central Oregon's moving forward rental assistance program, which provides temporary rental subsidies to people in need.

Actions snowballed rapidly: Tasha started talking with CAPECO on Dec. 7 about the program and by Dec. 18 she was signing paperwork to move into a new apartment.

Tasha decided to surprise Daniel with the news, telling him that they were going to be staying with a friend. When he walked into the empty apartment and realized it was all their's, he was shocked.

"I had forgotten what it was like to have my own room," he said.

Altrusa of Pendleton went a

"I had forgotten what it was like to have my own room."

— Daniel Lamont, on moving into a new apartment

step further by donating Christmas gifts to the family, purchasing new clothes for Daniel and new furniture for the apartment.

"We didn't think anyone cared enough," Tasha said.

Growing need

Debbie McBee has heard that sentiment before. McBee, a Pendleton School Board member, is the co-chair of Altrusa's KARE project.

KARE — Kids at Risk Empowered — provides clothing, hygiene products and other essential household goods to homeless children within the Pendleton School District on a quarterly basis.

Altrusa is increasingly acting as the safety net for the district's homeless and impoverished children.

Several years ago, Altrusa

started Feeding the Child, a program that packed backpacks with food for students to take home to their families.

When they started the program, McBee said they were filling 20 backpacks a week. Midway through the 2017-2018 school year, Altrusa is now packing 247 backpacks per week and will continue to pack more.

McBee said the increased demand reflects a community with growing needs. While 20 percent of the district's students qualified for free and reduced lunch in 2007, in 2018 four out of the district's six schools have more than half of students who qualify.

In its second year, the KARE program is starting to grow as well, having already surpassed the 30 students it served in 2017.

To continue funding the program, Altrusa will hold the Love Keeps Us Warm event at the Slickfork Saloon on Feb. 10. It will feature live music, dessert and hors d'oeuvres. McBee said 100 percent of the proceeds from the \$25 tickets will go toward KARE in addition to any donations made at the event.

McBee said Altrusa drops off the supplies at the schools and rarely meets the students that benefit from KARE face to face.

But last year, McBee was personally thanked by a student who cried as she embraced McBee.

"She didn't have a perspective that strangers would care about her," McBee said.

"Same crap, different pile"

Ozzie is another beneficiary of the KARE program, having received a sleeping bag and other supplies from Altrusa.

Because of his prior homelessness, Ozzie, an 18-year-old student at Pendleton High School, declined to share his last name.

His family's troubles started early in 2017, when his mom took a four-week trip out of the country. Ozzie said his mother relied on people to pay the electric and rent bills while she was away, but they didn't come through.

When she returned, they were evicted from there home.

Ozzie and his mom stayed in a hotel for a while before moving in with his brother and his girlfriend.

With all of them cramped into a

two-bedroom trailer, Ozzie said he slept on a fold-out couch that didn't have enough room to fold out. He remembered having to wake up in the middle of the night to readjust the cushions because they continued to fall off the sofa.

During this time, Ozzie said he tried to keep his public and private life separate, opening up more to his friends when life was going well while staying more quiet during the tougher weeks.

Ozzie and his mom moved into a trailer of their own in October, and although he said his room is about the size of a storage closet, he has enough space and is happy just the two of them again.

Once he graduates from high school, Ozzie hopes to move to the San Diego area and pursue a career in writing graphic novels. To Ozzie, his bout with homelessness was just another obstacle to overcome.

"Same crap, different pile," he said. "It's the way you deal with the crap that matters."

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Review shows pesticides harm threatened salmon, whales

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal scientists have determined that a family of widely used pesticides poses a threat to dozens of endangered and threatened species, including Pacific salmon, Atlantic sturgeon and Puget Sound orcas.

The National Marine Fisheries Service issued its new biological opinion on three organophosphate pesticides — chlorpyrifos, diazinon and malathion — after a yearslong court fight by environmental groups. At the urging of pesticide manufacturers, the Trump administration had sought a two-year delay of a court-ordered deadline to issue the findings by the end of 2017, but it was unsuccessful.

The exhaustive 3,700-page federal review, dated Dec. 29, concludes that chlorpyrifos and malathion jeopardize 38 out of the 77 species under the jurisdiction of the fisheries service and that diazinon was found to jeopardize 25 of the listed species.

The report makes detailed recommendations to the Environmental Protection Agency for new restrictions on how and where the pesticides can be sprayed to help limit the harm.

EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt in March reversed an Obama-era effort to bar the use of chlorpyrifos on fruits and vegetables after peer-reviewed academic studies found that even tiny levels of exposure could hinder the development of children's brains.

EPA's press office did not respond Friday to a request seeking comment about the latest federal study on the threat to protected species.

Organophosphorus gas was originally developed as a chemical weapon before World War II. Dow Chemical, based in Midland, Michigan, has been selling chlorpyrifos for spraying on citrus fruits, apples, cherries and other crops since the 1960s. It is among the most

widely used agricultural pesticides in the United States, with Dow selling about 5 million pounds (2.3 million kilograms) domestically each year.

Dow AgroSciences, the Dow subsidiary that sells chlorpyrifos, did not respond to a request for comment Friday.

The Associated Press first reported in April that lawyers representing Dow and two other pesticide companies sent letters to three of Trump's Cabinet secretaries saying the academic studies were flawed. Dow wrote a \$1 million check to help underwrite Trump's inaugural festivities, and company CEO Andrew Liveris led a now-disbanded White House manufacturing working group.

CropLife America, an industry trade group that lobbies Congress and federal agencies on pesticide regulations, said it is still reviewing the final National Marine Fisheries Service opinion.

"The denial of a requested extension of time to complete the opinion resulted in a document that has the potential to create exaggerated and unfounded concerns regarding threatened and endangered species and have a negative impact on farmers as well as public health protection," said Jay Vroom, the CEO of CropLife.

A coalition of environmentalists and commercial fishermen has fought in court for more than a decade to spur the federal government to more closely examine the risk posed to humans and endangered species by organophosphates.

Studies have shown for years that even low levels of pesticides running off into streams and rivers can impair the growth, swimming ability and reproductive systems of salmon. Potentially harmful levels of the toxins then build up in the bodies of orcas, also known as killer whales, that eat salmon.

FLU: Has killed 20 children in the U.S. this year

Continued from 1A

and get a flu shot — now.

Umatilla County Public Health Administrator Jim Setzer said the same thing. "Get your flu shot," he ordered, in a voice that brooked no disobedience.

I planned to do just that. Sometime.

Then the flu happened.

On the second day of my internal storm, unable to sleep any more, I walked from my bed to the kitchen and back, feeling as if I'd run a marathon. I snuggled back under the blankets and spent the next few hours binge watching "The Good Wife" and "This is Us,"

checking my newsfeed, texting friends and playing nerdy word games — Scrabble, Words with Friends and Word Streak.

Finally, bored, I searched the Internet to find out how many others are in my predicament. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that the U.S. is in the midst of an especially severe flu season. Flu season ramped up early this year. A map on the website showed flu in every state. So far, influenza has killed 20 children in the U.S. Several more weeks of significant flu activity are on tap. The CDC reported high flu activity in Oregon

and 26 other states.

I read an article from the *Bend Bulletin* with interest. The story said all 349 beds in Bend, Redmond, Madras and Prineville hospitals are full. Flu appears to be the culprit.

The most pervasive strain, H3N2, is nasty. This year's vaccine included H3N2, but the strain morphed and mutated into something different.

It's still a good idea to get a flu shot say the experts. The vaccine is a cocktail of viruses that are inactivated and mixed with

proteins, fats and antigens. If vaccinated people get the flu, they are likely to get a milder version.

It's definitely worth considering. I won't be so blasé next year about it.

The storms appears to be lifting now. Life will go on. Next year, however, when influenza season threatens like dark clouds on the horizon, I won't wait to get a flu shot. I'll be first in line.

East Oregonian staff reporter Kathy Aney writes about health and human interest.

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DEREK RICHARDS

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