

OPIOIDS: In 2016, more Americans died from opioids than breast cancer

Continued from 1A

“A lot of our fellow Americans are addicted to opioids right now,” Hargen said. “This is a health crisis of historic proportions.”

“One of the biggest threats we are facing today is the opioid crisis,” Fitzgerald said.

‘This is not a character flaw’

Some people find the strength to walk into clinics like Rice’s to get their lives back.

Rice isn’t a white coat kind of guy. With his longish gray hair, denim jeans and empathetic manner, he is someone to whom you’d spill your guts over a cup of coffee. His patients settle into comfy leather chairs and chat openly about the past weeks or days. One twenty-something man said he started taking pain pills after shoulder surgery.

“I kind of liked the way they made me feel,” he said. “After the doctor stopped prescribing, I kept taking them.”

They talked about dosages and side effects and upcoming surgeries. One female patient had experienced stomach cramps after dissolving a film version of Suboxone under her tongue. Rice suggested letting the drug absorb in her mouth and then spitting out the rest.

Rice chips away at the opioid crisis each day. The epidemic has grown into a beast with several heads. In 2016, more Americans died from opioids than breast cancer.

Alena Davis, one of Rice’s patients, managed to avoid such a fate. The Pendleton registered nurse injured herself in 2006 while helping to move a 500-pound hospital patient. She soon found herself addicted to hydrocodone. That started an 11-year odyssey.

Davis functioned as a nurse, working at an assisted living facility and hospital. Even her common-law husband didn’t realize her secret. Finally, as she despaired about ever getting off opioids and facing horrible withdrawal symptoms, she attempted suicide. The next day, her brother and husband drove her to La Grande to see Dr. Rice.

“The first thing Dr. Rice



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Michelle Frizzell recounts her ten-year addition to opioids after breaking her foot that led to the Department of Human Services taking her son.

By the numbers

Nationwide in 2016:
116 Americans died each day from opioids
42,249 people died from opioid overdoses
2.1 million people had opioid use disorder
948,000 people used heroin

Source: 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health

said to me was, ‘This is not a character flaw,’” she recalled. “I will always remember that.”

Davis got started on Suboxone, felt better almost immediately and is slowly whittling her dosage. She works as a traveling school nurse with the InterMountain Education Service District.

‘They were wrong’

Dwight Holten, CEO of Lines for Life, an organization that works to prevent suicide and drug addiction, likes to hear such success stories. He said Oregon has turned a corner. Doctors are prescribing fewer opioids here than they were several years ago, though Oregon leads the way in numbers of seniors hospitalized for opioids.

“We are making progress, but we have lots of work to do,” he said.

Holten said doctors must write fewer narcotic pain prescriptions and explore other ways to manage pain (such as physical therapy and acupuncture). Addicts need better access to treatment and the public needs greater understanding of the danger of opioids.

Holten places the

blame for the opioid crisis squarely on the doorstep of Big Pharma, which in the late 1990s and early 2000s marketed opioids such as hydrocodone and oxycodone as having a low risk of addiction.

“They were wrong. The risk of addiction is extraordinary,” Holten said. “If you’re on opioids for 30 days, there’s a 47 percent likelihood that you’re still on them in three years. If you’re on them for 90 days, there’s a 60 percent likelihood you’re still on them in five years.”

Opioid prescriptions almost tripled between 1991 and 2011.

Holten worries about super-strength synthetic opioids like fentanyl and carfentanil that are hitting the streets, especially on the East Coast. Fentanyl is 50 times more potent than heroin and a few grains can kill. Carfentanil, used to sedate elephants and other large animals, can be lethal for humans.

Holten said getting people into treatment for opioid addiction is an uphill battle.

“It’s significantly easier to get opioids than to get treatment for opioids,” he said. “We’re going to flip that.”

Especially in rural America, there aren’t enough doctors who have taken the eight-hour class required to prescribe Suboxone. Even when they get the training, they are limited in the number of prescriptions they can write. The limit rises over time. Rice can write prescriptions for 275 patients at any one time, but he is always bumping up against his limit. More doctors are coming around and as of 2017, nurse practitioners and physician assistants are eligible to prescribe, Rice said, but there is a shortage. Those who get trained won’t be sorry, he said.

“It’s an incredible rush,” Rice said. “I don’t know why everyone doesn’t do this.”

He gets an avalanche of Christmas cards each year from grateful former patients.

Michelle Frizzell, now 42 and clean for more than five years, works at Rice’s Pendleton clinic as a certified alcohol and drug counselor. She tells opioid addicts they are strong enough to get clean.

“Your brain can be rewired. You can recover,” Frizzell said. “It doesn’t have to be a death sentence.”

“They’re just regular people,” said Rice, of those who start treatment. “The vast majority of people get better.”

Contact Kathy Aney at kaney@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0810.

Manson corpse case on ice for another month in heirs dispute

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The corpse of Charles Manson will remain in a morgue for at least another month while would-be heirs and a friend wait for a court hearing to fight over his remains.

A Kern County Superior Court commissioner on Wednesday set a March 7 hearing in the dispute that includes a son of Manson, a grandson and a pen pal who collected and sold memorabilia of the murderer.

The Kern County coroner’s office filed the case to have a judge referee who should get the body of the cult leader who orchestrated the 1969 killings of pregnant actress Sharon Tate and eight others. Manson, 83, died Nov. 19 in a Bakersfield hospital.

Deputy Kern County Counsel Bryan Walters said “bodies are stacking up in the morgue” from methamphetamine and opioid epidemics and the coroner would like to dispose of the body.

The latest person to emerge in the fight for Manson’s remains is Michael Brunner, whose mother was one of the first members of the so-called Manson family.

Brunner was born in April 1968, a little more than a year before the world learned the name of Charles Manson and the bizarre following he cultivated. At the time of the

Tate slayings, Mary Brunner was in jail.

Brunner’s attorney filed papers in court Tuesday that included a birth certificate and baptismal certificate for a Michael Manson, whose parents are listed as Charles Manson and Mary Brunner.

Michael Brunner, 49, who was raised by his maternal grandparents and took their name, is the last survivor of three men acknowledged as Manson sons, attorney Daniel Mortensen said. That would put Brunner in line to take control of the remains if two wills purportedly signed by Manson are deemed invalid.

A Manson grandson, Jason Freeman, who is the son of the late Charles Manson Jr., is also seeking the body. Michael Channels, a longtime buddy of Manson and avid “murderabilia” collector and dealer, is listed in one will as executor of the Manson estate and sole beneficiary.

Mortensen said delivering the body to Channels would violate the wishes of his client and go against the public interest.

“It cannot be ignored that Mr. Channels is a dealer in Manson memorabilia, with a public and macabre interest in the infamous crimes of (Manson) and a long history of sensationalizing and seeking to profit therefrom,” Mortensen wrote.

WOLF: Bullet found in the wolf’s spinal column

Continued from 1A

dates back to Dec. 18, 2017, when an Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife trooper was inspecting a trap line near Elgin and spotted a dead wolf next to one of the foothold traps.

Upon further investigation, the trooper determined the 63-pound wolf had “more than likely” been shot after being caught. X-rays and a necropsy revealed a small-caliber bullet in the wolf’s spinal column.

Sanders was interviewed by OSP, and admitted to killing the wolf after finding it in one of his traps. The trap was also not marked or branded with his information, as required by law.

Based on its location, the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife believes the wolf was the offspring of a new breeding pair in the Mt. Emily Wildlife Management

Unit, born in April. The department is awaiting DNA results to confirm the wolf’s identity.

Four wolves are known to have been inadvertently caught by licensed trappers since the species began returning to Oregon. In all previous cases, the trapper contacted ODFW and wildlife biologists were able to respond, collar and safely release the animal.

Wolves were removed from the state endangered species list in Eastern Oregon, though it remains illegal to shoot them except in specific cases, such as if a rancher finds a wolf in the process of attacking livestock or in defense of human life.

Another gray wolf was poached in November 2017 in Wallowa County, in addition to several reported incidents in southwest Oregon, where the species remains federally protected.

OUTPOST: Spent the last several weeks remodeling

Continued from 1A

move up,” he said. “We’ve just met so many amazing people who live here on the mountain.”

They started their business a couple of years ago, selling organic vegetables at a small farm stand near the top of Weston Mountain.

“My wife and I love gardening,” Ren said. “And she grows such a big garden, we didn’t know what to do with all the produce.”

Ren, a mining engineer by trade, suggested they build a small farm stand. The first year, he said, they sold vegetables based on the honor system — leaving produce out, asking customers to take what they wanted and leave money at the stand.

“It worked amazing,” he said. “We sold a lot of produce that year.”

But the couple wanted to interact with their customers more, growing the business a bit in its second year. They also started selling some baked goods, such as hand-made bread, huckleberry cinnamon rolls and pies.

“Right now, we’re making a fresh pear-cranberry-ginger pie,” Ren said. “We can’t make enough of it.”

They will continue to sell produce at the Blue Mountain Outpost. At the Alpine Outpost, the store will continue to cater to the basic needs of residents and travelers, offering produce,

as well as items like eggs and local honey. Ren said his wife also makes soaps and bath bombs, which they will sell in the store.

Much of their summer menu will revolve around what’s grown in the garden. In winter, they’ll focus on comfort foods.

“Hearty soups, burgers, we have a pizza oven. It’ll be simple to start, but as we grow, we’ll expand the menu,” Ren said. Victoria, originally from Austria, attended culinary school and hopes to add some Austrian food to the menu.

Ren said he hopes people will come to the restaurant to enjoy nature and the company of others.

“We want to make it a place where people can come meet, play table games, and get away from their smart phone or computer,” he said. “Get back to what’s really important — quality time with each other.”

The couple has spent the last several weeks remodeling the building.

Ren said that with the right approach, the area has the potential to bring in more visitors — similar to the Bavarian village of Leavenworth, Washington.

“We have everything to do it,” he said.

Contact Jayati Ramakrishnan at 541-564-4534 or jramakrishnan@eastoregonian.com

CYCLE: Last time the ride was in Pendleton was in 2010

Continued from 1A

day four, the route heads into Pendleton for two overnight stays Wednesday Sept. 12 and Thursday Sept. 13 of Round-Up week. After the layover in Pendleton, riders will loop back east, traveling through La Grande before returning to Baker City.

Dollarhide said cyclists will be housed at Pendleton High School, but efforts will be made to send them out to the wider community. With the Round-Up in town, there will be no shortage of things to do.

The last time Cycle Oregon wound its way through Pendleton was during the Round-Up’s centennial celebration in 2010.

Round-Up Publicity Director Randy Thomas said he was unsure how the cyclists would mingle with the rodeo crowd, but the 2010 visitors enjoyed their stop.

“We had spandex and Wranglers coexisting harmoniously on the Round-Up Grounds,” he said.

Thomas said the Round-Up issued 1,270 tickets to Cycle Oregon riders in 2010 and is setting aside an even larger amount for 2018: 2,000.

Cycle Oregon’s benefit to the community won’t just come in the form of tourism dollars.

Dollarhide said as the ride gets closer, the chamber will begin soliciting interest from volunteers to help coordinate the cyclists’ stay.

With thousands of riders from almost every state in the union and a sizable international contingent



EO file photo

A tent city with housing for more than 2,200 cyclists and support staff has sprung up on the grounds of the Pendleton High School campus in 2010. Cycle Oregon has announced the bike tour will return to Pendleton.

“We had spandex and Wranglers coexisting harmoniously on the Round-Up Grounds.”

— Randy Thomas, Round-Up publicity director, on the 2010 Cycle Oregon stop in Pendleton

from countries like Canada, Germany and Japan, hosting the riders will be a significant undertaking.

Cycle Oregon will spend approximately \$150,000 to hire volunteers from local community organizations to undertake tasks like unloading luggage and feeding cyclists, the proceeds going directly to those organizations.

Furthermore, some money Cycle Oregon raises from the event will likely be reinvested back into Eastern Oregon.

Through the Cycle Oregon Fund at the Oregon Community Foundation, the nonprofit has donated \$1.8 million to local organizations throughout the state.

While many of the projects are bicycle specific, like \$5,000 to the Boardman Parks & Recreation District for new bikes and helmets and \$5,000 to Pendleton High School for stationary bikes, there is a wide variety of grantees.

Other local contributions include \$3,000 to Weston for a city hall preservation