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Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Friends of Trevor Smith hold up honor beads during Saturday's Out of the Darkness walk in Pendleton. The purple necklaces indicates they lost a family member or friend to suicide.

Border visit shows progress

By BEN LONERGAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Last week, Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock joined roughly a dozen members of the National Association of Counties' Immigration Reform Task Force on a visit to the United States' southern border.

The trip allowed Murdock and several others to see inside of United States Border Patrol facilities in El Paso, Texas, as well as a refugee center in Juarez, Mexico, just across the border. Murdock, who returned last Thursday, spoke of the visit as a transformative experience, saying that the visit changed his perceptions of the border crisis for the better.

"If 50 people suddenly showed up at your front door and you had to take care of them, it would be overwhelming and would certainly take time to make necessary adjustments," said Murdock. "That was the situation in March. It is not the situation six months later."

On his first day in El Paso, Murdock recalls watching a pair of families give themselves up to U.S. Customs and Border Patrol agents after crossing the Rio Grande River from Mexico into the United States.

"Forty-five minutes later we encountered the Honduran mother and her three children at a processing center," Murdock said. "As we passed, they smiled and waved."

Murdock said that his perceptions going into the week aligned predominantly with those he had seen in the news last March — highly publicized scenes of terrible conditions and disorganization. Six months later, Murdock says that the facility they visited seemed much more organized; those seeking asylum spent no more than 30 to 36 hours in a holding facility before being turned back to Mexico to await an appearance before a U.S. judge who would determine the result of their request for asylum.

During their visit, the task force members encountered a group of unaccompanied children detained at the Border Patrol station at Del Norte crossing. According to Murdock, the children, ages 3 to 16, slept on portable beds and some watched cartoons as agents cared for them. The ability to provide food and clothing to detained youth marks a substantial improvement to the conditions that Murdock had seen in the media months earlier.

"There is still trauma that people are experiencing," said Murdock. "But that trauma is not a result of the conditions of

See Border, Page A8

Out of the darkness

Dozens gather Saturday in Pendleton to bring topic of suicide into the light

By KATHY ANEY
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Kevin Hines, one of the few to survive a suicidal leap off the Golden Gate Bridge, said he wouldn't have jumped if only one person had tried to stop him.

As he stood on the bridge crying, a woman approached. Hines remembered feeling hope that he wouldn't have to go through with it, but she only asked him to take her picture. Afterward, Hines took a running start and leapt off the bridge.

Once he cleared the rail, he felt instant regret.

"I realized I didn't want to die at all," Hines recalled during a 2016 phone interview with the *East Oregonian*. "I thought, 'What have I done? I don't want to die. God, please save me.'"

Now, he speaks to groups telling them to check in with their friends and loved ones. If you think someone is considering suicide, ask them.

The message that suicidal people often won't go through with the act if someone expresses concern was top of mind Saturday at the Out of the Darkness walk in



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Two walkers participate in Saturday's Out of the Darkness suicide awareness event starting at Roy Raley Park. The teal necklace indicates support for the cause, and purple means they lost a family member or friend to suicide.

Pendleton. Dozens of people gathered at Roy Raley Park to bring the topic of suicide into the light, away from that dark place where taboo subjects sometimes linger.

Many walked for family members or

See Suicide, Page A8

SUICIDE PREVENTION

This story discusses suicide. If you or people you know are at risk of self-harm, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline provides 24-hour support at 1-800-273-8255.

Oregon takes soft approach in campaign probes

By ROB DAVIS
The Oregonian

SALEM — Imagine what would happen if someone tipped off the police that you possibly committed a felony.

Perhaps you'd find detectives at your door, notebooks in hand. Or a subpoena compelling you to hand over text messages, emails, phone records and bank statements.

Now imagine that instead, the authorities wait four months after getting the tip, then send you a letter that asks: Did you commit a crime? You write back: No, I did not. And rather than asking more questions, the authorities take you at your word and close the case.

That's what happens when Oregon election watchdogs investigate



Hass



McLeod-Skinner

potential violations of campaign laws — the rules that govern the running of races and the spending of tens of millions of dollars seeking to wield influence.

The state's election overseers have the power to issue subpoenas, but they never use it.

They could send someone to ask questions in person. Instead they send questions in a polite letter.

The Oregon State Elections Division, which employs 20 people

and maintains a \$6.8 million annual budget, doesn't dig deep.

The latest example came in August, when the division closed an investigation into former Rep. Deborah Boone, D-Cannon Beach. She had previously told *The Oregonian*/OregonLive that she funneled a campaign contribution to another candidate at a donor's request, masking the true source of the money. But she told the Elections Division in writing that she didn't know what the money was for.

Case closed.

Ann Ravel, the former chairwoman of California's Fair Political Practices Commission and an Obama-era appointee to the Federal Election Commission, said she was stunned by what she described as Oregon's lackadaisical handling of

Boone's case.

"What is the good of having an enforcement system if there isn't going to be an actually valid investigation?" Ravel said.

Boone did not respond to a request for comment.

Steve Trout, the Oregon elections director, defended the state's oversight of campaign finance laws.

"Is it 100% rock solid? No," Trout said. "Is it close? Yeah. We have to make decisions based on resources and priorities on how close to 100% we get."

Two candidates for Oregon secretary of state in 2020 — state Sen. Mark Hass, D-Beaverton, and Jamie McLeod-Skinner, a Democrat from Terrebonne — said the

See Campaign, Page A8

