

Suicides:

Continued from Page A1

Health officials also said that call volumes to Lines for Life, a regional substance abuse and suicide prevention nonprofit that operates several crisis helplines, has increased annually since 2016. Of the crisis calls staff answered, roughly the same percent of callers reported thinking about suicide in 2020 as in 2019.

The officials said it is also important to note that the number of youth suicide deaths in 2021 did not decrease in every county in Oregon. Last week, Lane County Public Health declared a public health emergency due to an increase in youth suicides since November 2021. In response to this increase, additional resources and supports are being made available to Lane County schools, health care providers, and community members.

Oregon Health Authority responds

OHA works together with other state agencies, counties, Tribal partners, communities and advocacy groups across the state to prevent suicide in Oregon. State health officials said that since March 2020, Oregon's suicide prevention team has met weekly to analyze data, plan prevention efforts, and bolster the state's ability to respond to emerging needs.

ARE YOU IN CRISIS?

Additional mental health resources include:

- 24/7 Suicide Prevention National Lifeline number: 1-800-273-8255.
- 24/7 Spanish Lifeline: 1-888-628-9454.
- 24/7 Crisis Text Line: Text "OREGON" to 741741.
- 24/7 Crisis Line for Veterans: 1-800-273-8255 and Press "1" or text 838255.
- Senior Loneliness Line: 503-200-1633.
- YouthLine for teen-to-teen crisis help. A phone line and a texting support line are offered through Lines for Life. Trained teens respond from 4 to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday, PDT. Adults are also available 24/7. Call 1-877-968-8491 or text teen2teen to 839863.

OHA has invested heavily in several suicide prevention, intervention, treatment, and "postvention" programs, collectively referred to as Big River programming. Each of the programs is available statewide, has a coordinator to support local efforts, and has seen robust growth since they became available in 2020.

State health officials have also:

- Launched the Remote Suicide Risk Assessment and Safety Planning phone line and created a tool to support school administrators, school counselors and other school based mental health services.
- Created the Oregon Behavioral Health Support Line, which offers live support.
- Developed the Youth Suicide Assessment in Virtual Environments (YouthSAVE) training, created specifically for mental health profession-

als who serve youth. This training equips school- and community-based mental health professionals to use virtual tools to reach youth who have thoughts of suicide. More than 700 youth-serving providers in Oregon have taken YouthSAVE since its launch in December 2020.

In collaboration with the Oregon Department of Education, set up a School Suicide Prevention and Wellness team to provide support to school districts for suicide prevention planning and implementation.

Before then, Oregon launched the Safe + Strong Helpline and website at the beginning of the pandemic to provide support for those struggling with the loss of loved ones and lifestyle changes. The Safe + Strong Helpline, 800-923-4357 (HELP), is available 24/7. More help and resources are available in multiple languages on the Safe + Strong website.

Challenges:

Continued from Page A1

Search and Rescue Foundation received a \$5,000 donation last week in his name from the Blue Mountain Insurance Professionals presented at the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners meeting. Joined by Watson's mother and grandmother, Scott Sager, of BMIP, spoke to the commissioners about Watson.

"Cody was a sergeant with the National Guard," Sager said. "He was a very inquisitive, inspiring and motivated individual. He was on his way to a dream of being a military pilot. He died that night on that mountain."

Watson's mother, Holli Hill, presented the \$5,000 check to three SAR members in attendance who wrapped her in a hug. The money likely will go to the county's new SAR foundation to help purchase a light-weight rope system to help with extractions in steep terrain like the ravine on West Birch Creek.

Aftermath of the fall

After falling, Postma remembers landing in shallow water and a rocky creek bed, Watson hit nearby and Carter fell into deeper water on his stomach with his head submerged. He appeared unconscious. When Postma flipped him over, he felt relieved as Carter took a breath.

The trio attempted to make sense of what had just happened.

"We were dazed and confused," Postma said. "There was so much adrenaline."

They took stock. Carter had two collapsed lungs and his glasses were gone. Postma had a broken right leg and pelvis. A bone stuck out of his arm. Watson had the most injuries.

"His leg was completely shattered," Carter said.

Postma and Watson, both members of the Oregon Army National Guard, started thinking strategically. Watson needed a tourniquet on his leg. They decided that Carter should hike out.

Before leaving, Carter used his shoelaces and a stick to splint Watson's leg and fashion a tourniquet. He stared up at the sheer rock walls and decided to head down the creek to find a better way up and out of the ravine. He planned to



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian
Holli Hill, mother of Cody Watson, receives a hug March 16, 2022, after presenting a \$5,000 check to representatives of the Umatilla County Search and Rescue at a Umatilla County Board of Commissioners meeting in Pendleton.



Dwight Johnson/Contributed Photo
A National Guard Black Hawk helicopter hovers July 2, 2021, during a rescue operation to save three men injured in a fall near Big Falls on West Birch Creek near Pilot Rock. One man, Cody Watson, 21, died, but rescuers saved his friends, Braydon Postma and Kyler Carter, who were transported to St. Charles Medical Center in Bend and have since recovered.

hike back to the pickup, get his cellphone and call 911. As twilight faded into inky blackness, he realized that this wouldn't be easy. As he walked, carefully avoiding the edge, he remembers feeling lost. Finally he opted to wait until dawn to get his bearings. He worried about his friends down in that hole since they were likely cold with the mist of the waterfall constantly blowing over them. After dawn, he made it to the pickup.

He grabbed a rock and broke the window of the pickup, found his cellphone and called 911, telling the operator that he and his friends had fallen off a waterfall and had serious injuries. The next call went to his mother, who spread the word to the families.

Search and rescue operation begins

A little after 9 a.m., SAR supervisor Sgt. Dwight Johnson got a call at home that three men had fallen about 50 feet into a deep, brushy canyon. One had hiked out and two lay injured at the bottom, one with a tourniquet on his leg. Johnson began gathering resources.

"Our unit is all volun-

teer," he said. "Our key rope guy wasn't available so my next call was to Union County for mutual aid. They have more rope-trained people than we do."

Johnson activated Umatilla County's SAR unit, then requested a Black Hawk helicopter from the National Guard with the ability to hoist people from narrow, hard-to-reach places.

"We knew a litter pack out would be difficult (in that terrain)," Johnson said. "It's one of the hardest things to do. All the helicopters (crews) were off on a holiday."

It would probably take five hours. Johnson ordered the flight anyway. The helicopter soon would head to Pilot Rock from Salem.

The list of responders grew. LifeFlight, Pilot Rock Fire Protection District, Umatilla County Fire District No. 1 Chief Scott Stanton who ran the operation along with Johnson and the Union County rope team.

In the canyon, sleep evaded Postma and Watson. They spent the night trying to stay warm, talking about family and friends and wondering if this would be their last conversation.

Forum:

Continued from Page A1

Like former Gov. Vic Atiyeh, Hess said he was a Republican from the Portland metro area, which would give him an advantage in trying to break the GOP's losing streak in gubernatorial elections.

"I know it sucks to think about a Portland person, but a Portland person is how we get somebody who's conservative elected," he said.

McQuisten used her opening remarks to remind the audience she helped pass a Baker City resolution that criticized Brown and her COVID-19 restrictions.

"I wrote a resolution you may have heard of that told Kate Brown to pound sand," she said.

McQuisten said moderates such as Pierce and Knute Buehler couldn't win the general election, but she, as a "staunch conservative," could.

Nonaffiliated voters recently surpassed Democrats as the largest group of voters in the state, and Merritt said Republicans needed to win those voters if they were going to win general elections and govern effectively.

He also criticized Drazen for allowing a gun control bill to pass so Republicans could get a seat at the table for redistricting only for Democrats to gerrymander anyway.

"Compromise is never an option," he said.

Richardson said she was intentionally running her campaign frugally, adding she had only spent \$3,000 on her campaign.

She also compared herself to former President Donald Trump, saying she was unpredictable and was able to successfully evade the state's attempts to censor her.

"The state doesn't know



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian
Oregon Republican gubernatorial candidate Reed Christiansen addresses the audience during a forum Thursday, March 24, 2022, at the Pendleton Convention Center.



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian
Oregon Republican gubernatorial candidate Bridget Barton addresses the audience during a forum Thursday, March 24, 2022, at the Pendleton Convention Center.

what I'm going to do next," she said. "Every time I try to do something, they never know what to expect."

Sizemore owns a painting business, but he might be best known for passing multiple ballot measures that limited property taxes in the 1990s. He also ran for governor in 1996, but lost to Gov. John Kitzhaber in a landslide.

Sizemore leaned on his experience passing ballot measures and fighting with public employee unions,

skills he thought would help him reform Salem.

Thielman touted his time as a "man of action" in Alsea, where he and the school board passed a resolution making face masks optional before the state lifted its own mandate.

He said the state should require schools to teach gun safety courses in fifth, eighth and 10th grade. As governor, he also would have the state arrest Multnomah County District Attorney Mike Schmidt.

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