

# Group for LGBTQ teens reflects a 'shift' in the mental health field, according to facilitator

BY JON STINNETT  
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

The facilitator of a local group for teens that may be questioning their sexuality said the formation of the group comes about as part of a shift in thinking throughout the mental health field regarding sexual orientation.

Jen Donovan and Rene Schiller of South Lane Mental Health will facilitate the group for those ages 13-19 who are queer, questioning or transgender beginning this Thursday, April 7 from 4-5:30 p.m. and continuing each Thursday through June 9. The group aims to be a "safe place for teens to build community, explore and develop identity, answer questions, develop confidence and find positive role models," according to a recent press release.

According to Donovan, such an approach has not long been common with regard to issues of sexuality.

"Up until the 1970s, homosexuality was listed as a mental

## LGBTQIA Teen Group

For those ages 12-19 who are queer, questioning or trans. Begins Thursday, April 7 and continues each week until June 9.

disorder," she said, adding that "conversion therapy" tactics that attempt to turn individuals away from homosexuality are still legal in many states.

"We're working to not pathologize people who identify as something different from the norm," Donovan said. "It's a real shift in the mental health field that is still shifting to this day."

Donovan said that kids who have come to a conclusion that they are not straight often have no positive role models through which to learn about their place in society.

"They wonder if they're going to die alone, 'Am I ever going to find someone like me?' 'What kind of community is out there?'" she said. "These feelings can be very isolating, especially in a rural environment."

The process that finds one questioning their sexuality can also have other negative outcomes, and the National Alliance for Mental Illness pointed out that suicide is one of the leading causes of death for LGBTQ youth ages 10-24. Also, according to Healthline.com, young adults who experienced high levels of parental rejection as adolescents are three times as likely to use illegal drugs as their heterosexual peers; three times as likely to engage in unprotected and risky sex and eight times as likely to attempt suicide.

The group will attempt to teach teens that there are other individuals like them and communities where they can feel included, Donovan said. She said the experience can be different for each teen, depending on how

accepting that person's community and family is ready to be.

"There is an active gay-straight alliance at Cottage Grove High School, which is awesome," she said. "But overall, there aren't a lot of resources for these kids."

South Lane Mental Health offers therapeutic services in several South Lane School District schools including at Lincoln Middle School, and at Al Kennedy and Cottage Grove High Schools. In the past, resources such as mental health facilities often dealt with issues of sexuality much differently, Donovan said. "People often don't know, 'If I go to therapy, are they going to try and convert me?'" she said. "At South Lane Mental Health, we welcome all people of all beliefs. This is an issue that people are still dying over."

Those interested in setting up an intake appointment or learning more about the group can contact Donovan at 541-767-4231 or [Jennifer.donovan@slmh.org](mailto:Jennifer.donovan@slmh.org). To learn more about South Lane Mental Health, visit [www.slmh.org](http://www.slmh.org).

## LORANE COUNTRY NEWS

BY LIL THOMPSON  
For the Sentinel

On Sunday, over 50 people enjoyed an hour of incredible talent by 11 different entertainers at the talent show. There were people from Sutherlin, Elmira, Eugene, Triangle Lake, Cottage Grove, Crow and Lorane who came to share their talent. BJ even demonstrated a note on a didgeridoo she purchased in Australia. Afterward, everyone visited over refreshments in the Grange kitchen.

Prior to the performances, Markay Wilson, Jim Bailor, Jeri Porter, Effie Hughes, Carol Morehead and the Rural Art Center received Outstanding Community Service Awards from Lorane Grange for their contributions to the community last year.

Tomorrow, Thursday, April 7, Lorane Grange meets at 7:30 p.m. The next spaghetti dinner and bingo evening is Saturday, April 16 with dinner at 5:30 p.m. and bingo at 6:30 p.m. This will be the last one until



courtesy photo

**Cooper Morris and Mckayla Nicholas perform together at Sunday's talent show.**

September.

This Sunday evening, April 10, there will be a movie night at Lorane Christian Church. Come out at 4:30 p.m. for "hot dogs and fixins" prior to the movie at 5:30 p.m. I hear popcorn may also be available.

Exciting news! Activities and events for the CAL School District may now be accessed on the district website at <http://www.cal.k12.or.us/>. Apparently, it is also possible to obtain the information on a mobile device by following the instructions on the website.

Softball, baseball, and track have all started, so check out the site for event times and days.

An important meeting for all eighth-grade parents in which their input will be sought is scheduled Wednesday, April 13 at 6:30 p.m.

Attention, those have a Crow High School student who will be 16 or older by June 2017 — there is a meeting for parents/guardians of these students interested in traveling to Europe in June 2017 for a 12-day European adventure to Greece, Italy and Spain. Parents are asked to join the Thursday, April 7 meeting at 6 p.m. Those who are unable to attend or have questions can contact Ms. Smith at [asmith@cal.k12.or.us](mailto:asmith@cal.k12.or.us).

# Cow Creek Umpqua Indian Foundation supports Latino foods project

For the third year in a row, the Cow Creek Umpqua Indian Foundation has been the major donor to Community Sharing Program's "Latino Food Box Project," the first program of its kind in the entire state of Oregon. Families who sign up for the special food boxes receive foods appropriate to Mexican and Central American cultural traditions, such as corn masa flour, dried chili peppers, beans, rice and tortillas. These raw materials help participating families cook nutritious meals for their families that are not only healthier for them, but also help preserve cultural traditions.

With the support of Cow Creek, this program has grown from a holiday special to a year-round fixture at Community Sharing's food pantry.

"We've conducted surveys, and nine out of 10 of the Latino families who use the food bank prefer these culturally-appropriate foods," says Lise Colgan, Latino Family Advocate. "They don't use a lot of the things that

most American families count as staples, like peanut butter, jelly, canned vegetables, canned soups and stew. So they were getting less food than many of our non-Latino patrons. Now, they get foods that they are used to cooking, and that are usually better for them, too."

Colgan said without the funding provided by Cow Creek, the program never could have

gotten off the ground. These are not inexpensive foods," she says, "and they aren't items we can get regularly from FOOD for Lane County, so we have to buy them specially."

The Cow Creek grants over the last three years have allowed the program to offer more variety to more families, including a rapidly growing community of indigenous Mayan people from

northern Guatemala.

The Cow Creek Umpqua Indian Foundation is funded through revenues from the Seven Feathers Casino complex in Canyonville and provides support to nonprofits in seven southwestern counties of Oregon.

"It's been a great partnership, and a project that both partners can take real pride in," says Mike Fleck, Executive Director.

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