

Suicide *from A1*

to evaluate Kegler. The worker allegedly determined Kegler was not a danger to himself nor in need of emergency care and around 6 a.m. Kegler was discharged from the hospital.

Twelve hours later, police responded to concerned calls from Kegler's neighbors to find the man dead in his apartment.

The case raises questions about the state of mental health care in Cottage Grove and whether enough quality resources are available to deal with such situations. For those left behind in the wake of Kegler's suicide, there is clearly work to be done.

This July, a lawsuit was filed in Multnomah County Circuit Court by attorney Chad Stavley on behalf of Kegler's family, listing PeaceHealth and South Lane Mental Health as defendants in a \$2.5 million case.

The lawsuit faults the health organizations with ignoring warning signs and describes the South Lane Mental Health worker as an "unlicensed intern."

Executive Director of South Lane Mental Health Damien Sands declined to comment on the details of the case, but clarified that the term "intern" is a bit of a misnomer as it applies to the mental health field.

"There's a misunderstanding about how licensure occurs," Sands said. "It

reads like this is a person who's still going through school, but nothing could be further from the truth. This was a qualified mental health professional who was very skilled."

PeaceHealth released a statement in response to the lawsuit.

"PeaceHealth extends its sincerest sympathy and condolences to the family and loved ones of Matthew Kegler," it said in the statement. "Due to the pending litigation, we respectfully refrain from further comment."

While the lawsuit seeks to prove culpability, the final ruling will ultimately be unsatisfactory insight into the state of Cottage Grove's mental health needs and services, particularly as they apply to suicide, and the defendants in the case will continue to play a vital role in the community's quest to define those parameters.

Nationally, suicide is the tenth leading cause of death with more than 47,000 occurring in 2017. This means that for every murder in the United States, there are about three suicides and 75 suicide attempts.

The relationship between suicide and mental health is not clear-cut and an ambiguity exists between the two phenomena. Suicidal thoughts do not necessarily indicate that one is living with a mental illness and, conversely, having a mental health issue does not imply that one may be

suicidal.

Many risk factors contribute to suicide (access to lethal means, substance abuse, a history of trauma or chronic pain) and the Centers for Disease Control estimates that 46 percent of people who die by suicide had a known mental health condition.

Among mental health conditions, depression is often associated with suicidal thoughts and the American Academy of Suicidology estimates that about two-thirds of people who commit suicide are depressed at the time of their death.

The National Institute of Mental Health defines depressive episodes as "a period of two weeks or longer during which there is either depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure, and at least four other symptoms that reflect a change in functioning, such as problems with sleep, eating, energy, concentration and self-image."

In addition to chronic depression, many psychiatric conditions including psychosis, substance abuse, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia are linked to suicide.

For any community, access to mental health services which can identify and recommend treatment for this wide variety of conditions is a substantial step toward minimizing suicide risk.

Need for Care

The need for these ser-

vices is apparent in Cottage Grove, a city which has twice the suicide rate of Lane County.

In 2018, the Department of Health and Human Services reported that Lane County had been exceeding the national average of suicides for the past 30 years. The county is currently hovering around 80 suicides per year on average and that number has reliably been trending upward.

Other small cities Florence and Junction City were also reported to have rates double that of the county, which squares with statistics reporting rural communities to have much higher suicide risk simply because of a greater prevalence of gun ownership.

From a mental health perspective, part of the trouble in rural areas may lie in having services which address the bottom rung of human needs.

For the youth-oriented nonprofit Looking Glass, the goal is to help youths meet basic needs so that the process of addressing mental health can even make it onto the radar.

"A lot of the youth that we see aren't really even focused on mental health because they don't know where their next meal is coming from," said Amanda Hampton, program supervisor of the Looking Glass rural program. "Or if you're sleeping outside in the pouring rain without a tent or a tarp, going to therapy or seeking counseling services — even if it's

something you know you need - isn't a number one priority."

Cottage Grove has its share of unhoused or hungry denizens with mental health needs, but it is not always the case that providing mental health services is the magic bullet for the situation. For the segments of this population who find themselves disadvantaged due to their mental health challenges, the need to address basic shelter and food stability finds priority over the very condition which landed them in their current station.

By this standard, the degree of need in the commu-

nity can also be measured by the robustness of a safety net which allows for that basic stability.

"If those needs are being met, then we can focus on seeking mental health services or counseling or whatever that looks like to help with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder)," Hampton said.

For first responders in the Cottage Grove Police Department, the problem on the ground is all too apparent.

"I think it's fair to say that our country — and Cottage Grove is not an

See PTSD 11A



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ALLIGATOR AUCTION

SATURDAY - September 28 10AM-3PM

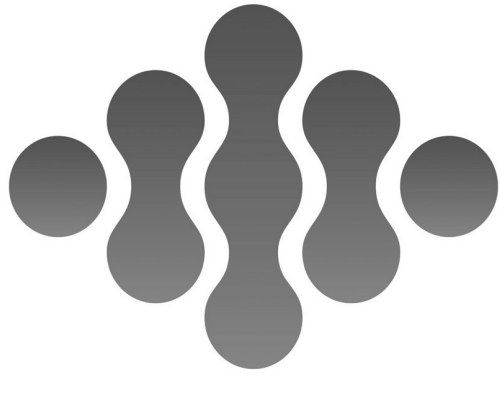
KNND's fall alligator Auction will be coming up this Saturday, sep 28, from 10 am-3 PM. We have over 40 participating businesses with items ranging from food, lodging, furniture, to electronics, home decor, and more. This spectacular event is a wonderful way to get a jump on your holiday shopping. To get your bidder number call KNND at 541-942-2468!

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Worship Directory

COTTAGE GROVE: 6th & Gibbs Church of Christ 195 N. 6th St. • 541-942-3822 10:00am Christian Education: Pre-K through 5th www.6thandgibbs.com	First Presbyterian Church 3rd and Adams St 541-942-4479 Rev.: Karen Hill Worship: 10:00am Sunday School: 10:00am fpcgrove.com	St. Philip Benizi, Creswell 552 Holbrook Lane Sunday 8:30 AM
Calvary Baptist Church 77873 S 6th St • 541-942-4290 Pastor: Riley Hendricks Sunday School: 9:45am Worship: 11:00am The Journey: Sunday 5:00pm Praying Thru Life: Wednesday 6:00pm	Hope Fellowship United Pentecostal Church 100 S. Gateway Blvd. 541-942-2061 Pastor: Dave Bragg Worship: 11:00am Sunday Bible Study: 7:00pm Wednesday www.hopefellowshipupc.com	St. Andrews Episcopal Church 1301 W. Main • 541-767-9050 Rev. Lawrence Crumb "Church with the flags." Worship: Sunday 10:30am All Welcome
Church of Christ 420 Monroe St • 541-942-8565 Sunday Service: 10:30am	Cottage Grove Bible Church 1200 East Quincy Avenue 541-942-4771 Pastor: Bob Singer Worship 11am Sunday School: 9:45am AWANA age 3-8th Grade, Wednesdays Sept-May, 6:30pm www.cgbible.org	Seventh-day Adventist Church 820 South 10th Street 541-942-5213 Pastor: Kevin Miller Bible Study: Saturday, 9:15 am Worship Service: Saturday, 10:40 Mid-week Service: Wednesday, 1:00
Cottage Grove Faith Center 33761 Row River Rd. 541-942-4851 Lead Pastor: Kevin Pruett www.cg4.tv Full Children's Ministry available Services: 9:00am & 10:45am	Non-Denominational Church of Christ 1041 Pennoyer Ave 541-942-8928 Preacher: Tony Martin Sunday Bible Study: 10:00am Sunday Worship: 10:50am & 5:30pm www.pennoyeravecoc.com	Trinity Lutheran Church 6th & Quincy • 541-942-2373 Pastor: James L. Markus Sunday School & Adult Education 9:15am Sunday Worship 10:30 am Comm. Kitchen Free Meal Tue & Thur 5:00pm TLC Groups tlccg.com
Delight Valley Church of Christ 33087 Saginaw Rd. East 541-942-7711 • Pastor: Bob Friend Two Services: 9am - Classic in the Chapel 10:30am - Contemporary in the Auditorium	Old Time Gospel Fellowship 103 S. 5th St. • 541-942-4999 Pastor: Jim Edwards Sunday Service: 10:00am Join in Traditional Christian Worship	United Methodist Church 334 Washington 541-942-3033 New Pastor Craig Pesti-Strobel Worship 10:30am umcgrove.org
First Baptist Church 301 S. 6th st • 541-942-8242 Pastor: David Chhantle Sunday School 9:30am Worship Service 10:30am Youth Wednesday 6:30pm cgfirstbaptist.com	Our Lady of Perpetual Help and St. Philip Benizi Catholic Churches 1025 N. 19th St. 541-942-3420 Father John J. Boyle Holy Mass: Saturday Vigil – 5:30 PM Sunday – 10:30 PM For weekday and Holy Day of Obligation schedule see website OLPHCG.net Confession: 4 PM to 5 PM Saturdays or by appointment	"VICTORY" Country Church 913 S. 6th Street • 541-942-5913 Pastor: Barbara Dockery Worship Service: 10:00am Message: "WE BELIEVE IN MIRACLES"
		CRESWELL: Creswell Presbyterian Church 75 S 4th S • 541-895-3419 Rev. Seth Wheeler Adult Sunday School 9:15am Sunday Worship Service 10:30 am website www.creswellpres.org

Our Worship Directory is a weekly feature in this newspaper. If your congregation would like to be a part of this directory, contact us today!



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