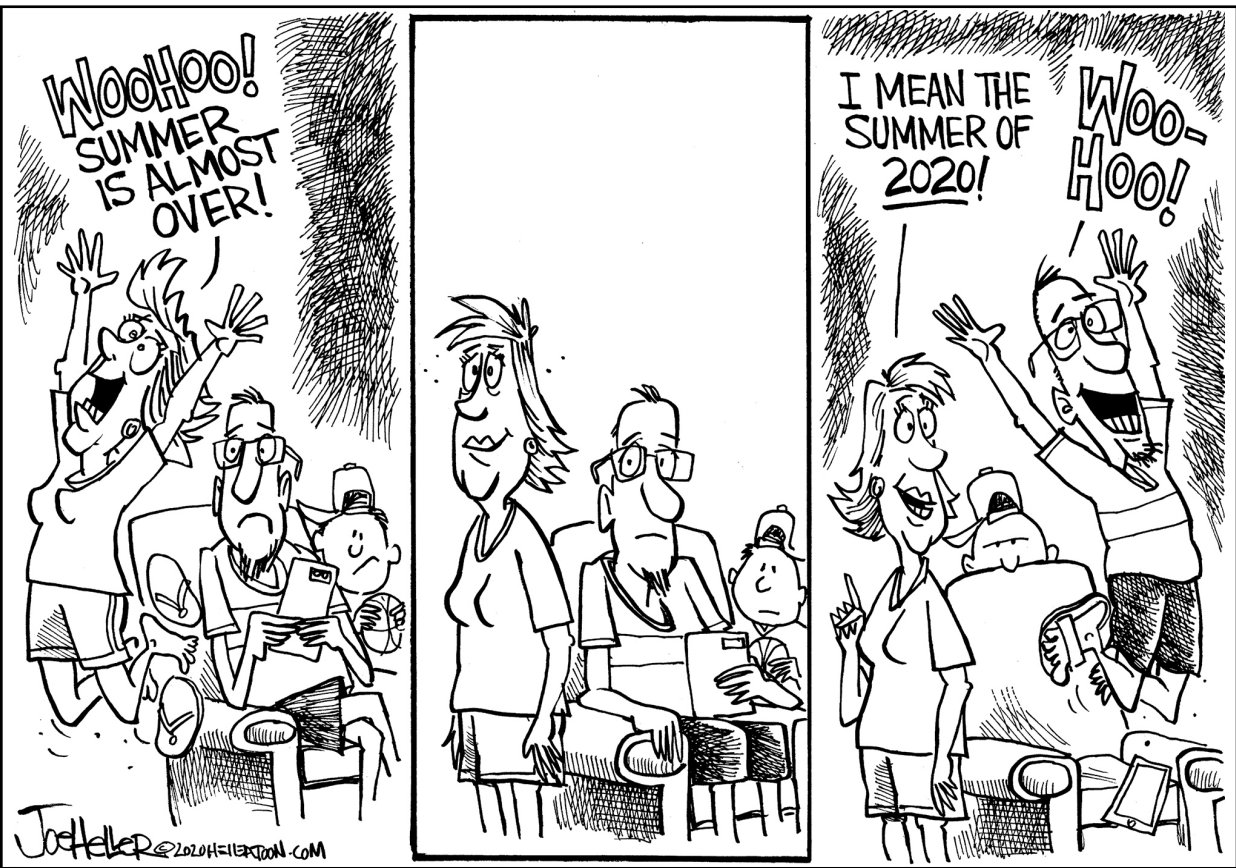


Cottage Grove Sentinel
116 N. Sixth St.
Cottage Grove, Ore. 97424

Opinion

The First Amendment
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

“I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend.” —Thomas Jefferson (1800)



Continuing the conversation to prevent suicides

(Editor’s Note: Viewpoint submissions on this and other topics are always welcome as part of our goal to encourage community discussion and exchange of perspectives.)

Cottage Grove feels familiar to me and has since I moved to Eugene. Having been raised in a small town outside of a larger college city — Boulder, Colo. — I know what it means to be the place people zip into and out of, often on their way to someplace else.

In Cottage Grove, I would suppose that might be people who want to see the place “Animal House” disassembled, or maybe the starting point for a tour of covered bridges.

(For my part, I remember people coming to rural Boulder County to hit the liquor stores as Boulder was a dry city. Yes, it was a while ago.)

Maybe that’s why I have no problem driving a few miles specifically for dinner at someplace like the Axe & Fiddle: I know a small town can be a destination, too — especially if you like live music with your garlic cheese fries.

What I also know from living in a small town, however, is that the broader problems of American life don’t disappear when the roads drop down to just two lanes. In fact, they may get worse, as National Suicide Prevention Week, Sept. 6 to 12, forces us to acknowledge.

The problem of suicide is creeping into every corner of Lane County’s 4,722 square

miles; our suicide rate is 50 percent higher than the national average.

I know these sad facts as the volunteer training coordinator for the Suicide Prevention Coal-

ition of Lane County. I also know who is most at risk: men more than women, middle-aged and older more than the young.

And then came the pandemic. Every workshop I’d scheduled, I had to cancel.

What did not stop, however, was the desire to stop suicide, so we moved QPR training online.

Since April, we have trained hundreds of people across Lane County on how to recognize those at risk for suicide. Our ability to help any person provide hope to suicidal people remains unchanged.

I wish I could say this was a perfect substitute for in-person training. I’d much rather be sniffing garlic at the Axe & Fiddle than “Zooming” across the county. Someday, I promise, I’ll bring in-person training to Cottage Grove.

In the meantime, however, lives are still being lost to suicide every day — and you can still help change that.

So, whether it’s during National Suicide Prevention Week, Sept. 6 to 12, or in the near future, we invite you to join us in helping in Lane County.

Below, you’ll find on how to enroll in an upcoming online QPR training, and how you can become the face of hope for someone who needs help.

We can do this, and I hope you’ll join me — no matter what two-lane road you call home.

To register for QPR training, go to suicidepreventlane.org or the Lane County Public Health Suicide Prevention Program at (541) 682-8731.

GUEST VIEWPOINT By Dr. Bethany Grace Howe Suicide Prevention Coalition of Lane County

tion of Lane County. I also know who is most at risk: men more than women, middle-aged and older more than the young.

And while I could break down deaths by suicide on a town-by-town basis, simply know I’ve heard the tragic and personal stories from every part of rural Lane County.

That’s why last December I hit the road and visited each of our rural communities: I wanted to bring the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Lane County to all of Lane County. And by February we were doing just that: offering QPR — Question, Persuade, Refer — suicide prevention training to any person that wanted it, in local coffee shops and restaurants, where people could feel comfortable learning how to protect the people they care about.

In just 90 minutes, we were teaching people how to recognize the people in their life that might be at risk for suicide.

Showing people how to deliver hope to their communities, no matter how dark today might be — and where to build on that hope in the future. Indeed, in early March I was planning

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Letters to the Editor Policy

The Sentinel welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received.

Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or without documentation will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside The Sentinel readership area will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

Political/Election Letters:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large.

Letters must: 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanship and campaign-style rhetoric.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this constitutes paid political advertising.

As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any letter that doesn’t follow the above criteria.

Send letters to:
nhickson@cgsentinel.com

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR REPS

Oregon state representatives

- **Sen. Floyd Prozanski**
District 4 State Senator
PO Box 11511
Eugene, Ore. 97440
Phone: 541-342-2447
Email: sen.floydprozanski@state.or.us
- **Rep. Cedric Hayden**
Republican District 7 State Representative
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Ore. 97301
Phone: 503-986-1407
Website: www.leg.state.or.us/hayden
Email: rep.cedrichayden@state.or.us

Oregon federal representatives

- **Rep. Peter DeFazio**
(House of Representatives)
405 East 8th Ave.
#2030
Eugene, Ore. 97401
Email: defazio.house.gov/contact/email-peter
Phone: 541-465-6732
- **Sen. Ron Wyden**
405 East 8th Ave., Suite 2020
Eugene, Ore. 97401
Email: wyden.senate.gov
Phone: (541) 431-0229
- **Sen. Jeff Merkley**
Email: merkley.senate.gov
Phone: 541-465-6750

Cottage Grove Sentinel

541-942-3325

Administration

Jenna Bartlett, Group Publisher

Gary Manly, General Manager... Ext. 1207
gmanly@cgsentinel.com

Gerald Santana, Multi-Media Sales Consultant... Ext. 1216
gsantana@cgsentinel.com

Carla Skeel, Inside Multi-Media Sales Consultant... Ext. 1203
csummers@cgsentinel.com

Editorial

Ned Hickson, Managing Editor... 541-902-3520
nhickson@cgsentinel.com

Damien Sherwood, Lead Reporter... Ext. 1212
dsherwood@cgsentinel.com

Nick Snyder, Sports/Community News Reporter... Ext. 1204
nsnyder@cgsentinel.com

Customer Service

Meg Fringer, Office Manager, Legals, Classifieds... Ext. 1200
mfringer@cgsentinel.com

Production

Ron Annis, Production Supervisor... Ext.1215
graphics@cgsentinel.com

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