

JOSHUA

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Ash said the jail staff's top priorities are always to ensure that inmates and employees are safe.

Monitoring inmates who have mental disorders, and who can at times be violent, is a major challenge.

"It's very taxing on the deputies," Ash said. "There are safety concerns, for the adults in custody and the deputies. If an adult in custody needs to be in the state hospital, they shouldn't be in jail. But it does happen, and it does become frustrating."

In a Nov. 11 letter to Judge Shirtcliff signed by Melissa, her husband, Darren, and Joshua's sister, Hannah, Melissa wrote: "We are thankful for staff at the jail for taking care of him. However Jail is not a place for an 18 yr old with an onset of mental illness! He needs so much more."

In the letter, Melissa also expressed her frustration about the lack of an alternative other than the jail or the state hospital, which has campuses in Salem and Junction City — for instance, a secure facility in Eastern Oregon staffed by psychologists or others trained to treat people with mental illness.

Ash said he shares Melissa's frustration, because there is no such facility in the area where people with mental disorders, who are also charged with crimes, as Joshua is, can be confined until there is space available in the state hospital system.

Although inmates in isolation cells generally aren't allowed to have visitors, Ash said he will make exceptions if, for instance, the inmate agrees to talk with a counselor or a member of the clergy.

Melissa said Joshua has met with a member of the clergy a few times in the jail.

The pastor told her that Joshua was very confused and didn't understand his legal situation, including a plea agreement offer that could have resulted in him being released from jail.

Baker County District Attorney Greg Baxter said he has talked with Melissa about Joshua.

Baxter said he has also discussed the situation with Ash.

"I agree with the sheriff that (Joshua) has serious mental health issues and requires a professional diagnosis," Baxter said.

'He said a really odd thing'

The Fulfers moved from Seattle to Baker City seven years ago.

Melissa said Joshua had a normal childhood. He was a junior at Baker High School when the pandemic started in March 2020 and classes switched from in-person to online.

She said Joshua, who turned 17 in May 2020, didn't adjust well to that change. He eventually transferred to Eagle Cap Innovative High School, an alternative to BHS that's also operated by the Baker School District.

Melissa said the first indication that something wasn't right with Joshua happened during the same family photo appointment, before Christmas 2020, that yielded the photo she scrolled to on her phone.

"He said a really odd thing," Melissa recalls.

Joshua talked about people who were going to give him "red jumpsuits in Wyoming," Melissa said. He also spoke of moving to that state to become a rap star.

He also started laughing to himself.

In March of 2021, when Joshua was 17, he was arrested after fighting with his parents at their home. He was sent to a juvenile detention facility in The Dalles but then returned to Baker City. He turned 18 on May 15.

After graduating from high school in June, Joshua moved to Utah where he lived with Melissa's parents and got a job at Kentucky Fried Chicken.

He didn't show up for his first day of work.

Not long after, Melissa got a phone call from a woman at a gas station in Laramie, Wyoming.

Joshua was there, the woman told Melissa. He was crying and confused, not sure how he had ended up in Wyoming, even though he had driven there, Melissa said.

Joshua returned to Baker City.

Melissa said she called a physician assistant who had treated Joshua. She believed her son needed a referral for a mental health evaluation.

But Melissa said she couldn't force Joshua, who at age 18 was legally an adult, to undergo an evaluation.

Joshua told her he heard voices — "20 demons in his brain," she said.

She said the physician assistant prescribed two drugs for bipolar disorder, which Joshua took "sporadically."

On July 7, 2021, he was arrested for stealing a 20-pack of Coors beer from the Maverik convenience store in Baker City. Joshua was also cited for interfering with a peace officer, for allegedly refusing to stop when a police officer told him to do so.



Melissa Fulfer/Contributed Photo

Joshua Fulfer, left, several years ago with his brother, Johnny Fulfer.

"I'm willing to be transparent so changes can occur. We can do better. I don't want to see this happen to anybody else's kid."

— Melissa Fulfer

Joshua was released from jail the next day and ordered to appear in Baker County Circuit Court on July 22.

But on the day he was supposed to be in court on the theft charge, Joshua got into a fight with another man. He was also charged with assaulting a police officer — Melissa said Joshua tried to run past an officer during the incident.

Melissa said her son was offered a plea deal in which he would serve 30 days in jail and sentenced to probation for one year.

But she said he didn't understand the offer.

She said he seemed convinced that he would be in jail for five years based on a maximum sentence on one of the charges.

Melissa said she believes Joshua's failure to recognize why he should take the plea deal is evidence of his mental disorder.

She also wonders whether, if he had taken the medications prescribed for bipolar disorder, that he might have understood his legal situation.

Lt. Ben Wray, who supervises the jail, said that when inmates are admitted to the jail, employees ask them a series of questions about their health, including whether they are taking any prescription medications.

Inmates who have prescriptions are offered those medications as prescribed,

but Wray said he can't force inmates to take those medications.

Melissa said that when she spoke to Joshua during a visit to the jail before he was placed in an isolation cell, he told her "mom, it's like I have 20 demons in my head talking to me."

She said she visited with him on weekends early in his incarceration and that he seemed OK, despite being confused about his legal options. Then visiting was restricted due to the surge in COVID-19 cases.

Melissa raised the issue of Joshua's mental capacity in a Sept. 26 email to Joshua's court-appointed attorney, Kyra Rohner of Baker City.

Melissa wrote that "it seems he is just not communicating and resigned to being in there five years that is not good for him in the long run."

Melissa's email also mentions another factor that has frustrated her at times — that Joshua, since turning 18 on May 15, is legally an adult, which means Melissa often can't get information about her son since she is no longer his legal guardian.

In the email to Rohner, Melissa asks about whether she could gain power of attorney for her son due to his mental issues.

On Sept. 28, Rohner filed a motion seeking a court order that Joshua's fitness

to proceed in the case be determined.

That same day Shirtcliff signed an order that Joshua be taken to the state hospital in Salem for evaluation.

Melissa said Joshua participated in that hearing remotely, from the jail, and when she saw him on the monitor he was "flinching and growling."

"It was deeply disturbing," she said.

Shirtcliff amended the Sept. 28 order on Oct. 21, stating that Joshua could be kept at the state hospital for up to 30 days for the evaluation.

Melissa said the evaluation didn't happen because Joshua was out of control when he was taken to Salem.

He was returned to the Baker County Jail.

A month later, Shirtcliff signed the order committing Joshua to the state hospital not for an evaluation, but for what's known as "restoration" — an attempt to get Joshua to the point where he can assist in defense against the charges from the July 22 incident.

Joshua's older brother, Johnny Fulfer, also wrote a letter to Shirtcliff, dated Nov. 17.

Johnny Fulfer wrote that Joshua stayed with him in Spokane, Washington, for more than a week in the late spring of 2021, more than a month before Joshua's July arrest.

During that visit, Joshua "demonstrated signs of mental illness," Johnny wrote. "I believe he was having serious Satanic delusions and spoke to himself or another imaginary person. I am extremely concerned about Joshua, and I would really like to see him get the help he needs."

Five days later, Shirtcliff signed the order to send Joshua to the state hospital for treatment.

'The greater good is happening'

Melissa said the experiences over the past year, since Joshua made that strange comment during the Christmas photo session, have been traumatic for her family.

In addition to the images that invade her thoughts — scenes of her son in a cell, hearing voices — Melissa also confronts daily the reality of Joshua's bedroom, just as it was not so long ago.

"What the heck do I do with my kid's bedroom?" she asks, her eyes closed. "I always envisioned him moving out when he was 18, but not like this. It's not what you envision when you have kids."

Melissa said she and her husband discussed the possibility of bailing out Joshua, and bringing him home.

But she said that wasn't a viable option.

Melissa said she worried about being responsible for what Joshua, who she described as a "whole different person" now, might do if he wasn't confined.

"How safe would he be?" she asks, almost as if she's speaking to herself. "What if he goes out and hurts someone? How could you live with something like that? It's a very hard choice."

With Christmas looming, Melissa is glad that Joshua will be in Salem, supervised by mental health professionals.

She hopes she'll be able to visit him there before the end of the year.

"I feel like it has worked out, he's going to get actual treatment," she said. "The greater good is happening."

Melissa said she decided to share Joshua's story, and her family's ordeal, because she hopes that their experience can contribute to improving the legal system, and in particular the options available for inmates who have mental health issues.

"I'm willing to be transparent so changes can occur," she said. "We can do better. I don't want to see this happen to anybody else's kid."

WOLVES

Continued from A1

In April, the USFWS submitted its examination reports with findings consistent with poisoning as the cause of death for all six wolves, the skunk and two magpies. Lab results also indicated the suspected evidence confirmed a poisonous substance.

It is unlikely that the two magpies or the skunk died from consuming flesh from the poisoned wolves, according to OSP's Stephanie Bigman, who is captain of

government and media relations.

"I don't believe they died from eating the wolves. They probably died from eating the poison," she said, adding that she knows information about the case she cannot share with the public.

Two more collared wolves were found dead in Union County after the initial incidents. In April, a deceased adult male wolf from the Five Points Pack was located west of Elgin, and in July, a young female wolf from the Clark Creek Pack was located northeast of La Grande.

In both cases, the cause of death was not readily apparent. Toxicology reports confirmed the presence of poison in each wolf.

Bigman said the wolf from the Five Points Pack died from a poison not similar to the type which killed the seven other wolves.

"It is different enough that it could be a different incident," she said.

ODFW spokeswoman Michelle Dennehy said the poisonings are "terrible news," and the agency hopes someone from the public will come forward with information to

help solve the case.

"The poisoning of an entire pack is significant," she said. "We'll have a clearer picture on how that affects the overall (wolf) population after we complete our winter surveys this year."

There were 173 known wolves in Oregon at the end

of 2020.

ODFW killed eight wolves from the Lookout Mountain pack in eastern Baker County over the summer and fall. Wolves from that pack killed at least seven head of cattle and injured three others from July through October.

Anyone with information

about the poisonings is asked to contact OSP through the Turn-In Poachers Hotline at 1-800-452-7888, or email TIP@state.or.us referencing case number SP21-033033.

— Capital Press reporter
George Plaven contributed to this report.

OBITUARIES

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Brenda and Ken are members of Christian Life Center in Bend.

Brenda is survived by her husband, Ken Kroener; her parents, Robert and Gayle Stanton; her sister, Sue Kristine Stanton Stout; her brother-in-law, Doug Stout; and her faithful dog, Freedom.

She was preceded in death by her grandparents, Sam and Hazel Stanton and Roy and

Lillian Johnson.

For those who would like to make a memorial gift in memory of Brenda, the family suggests the Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch (a ranch for horses to be loved on by children who need to be loved and to share their love) through Tami's Pine Valley Funeral Home & Cremation Services, P.O. Box 543, Halfway, OR 97834.

NEWS OF RECORD

DEATHS

William L. 'Bill' Taylor: 79, of Baker City, died Nov. 29, 2021, at Settler's Park. At his request, cremation took place. A graveside service will be scheduled in the spring of 2022. Services are under the direction of Coles Tribute Center, 1950 Place St. To light a candle in Bill's memory, go to www.colestributecenter.com.

POLICE LOG

Baker County Sheriff's Office Arrests, citations
CONTEMPT OF COURT, FAILURE TO APPEAR (Baker County warrants): Robert Wayne Jarboe, 46, Huntington, 6:32 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 2 in Huntington; jailed.

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Holiday open house
for the month of December!

Receive 30% off of all retail in stock and on hand. We thank you for choosing us for your beauty needs, and appreciate your support.

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