

Man charged with domestic violence and kidnapping

By Kyle Spurr
Blue Mountain Eagle

A Mt. Vernon man is being charged with multiple counts of domestic violence, including kidnapping, strangulation and assault.

Matthew Eric Sagaser, 31, appeared in Grant County Circuit Court Friday for a hearing on a grand jury indictment.

He was indicted on 29 counts of domestic violence. The charges are second-degree kidnapping, five counts of coercion, nine counts of fourth-degree assault, strangulation, four counts of menacing and nine counts of recklessly endangering another person.

The alleged abuse occurred since July against the same

woman in different locations around Grant County such as Dog Creek, John Day Fossil Beds National Monument and Sagaser's home.

In addition, Sagaser was indicted Friday in a separate case for unlawful possession of methamphetamine, criminal forfeiture and felon in possession of a restricted weapon — metal knuckles.

He was arrested last week in Canyon City, after the Grant County Sheriff's Office and John Day Police Department worked together to investigate the reported incidents.

According to the indictment, Sagaser allegedly kidnapped the woman by secretly confining her in a place where she was not likely to be found.

He reportedly committed coercion by threatening the woman to not leave an area, not tell hospital staff about the nature of her injuries and not tell a third-party about the cause of her injuries.

The woman was injured by Sagaser allegedly strangling her, striking her head against concrete, head-butting, kicking and elbowing her and shooting at her with a CO2 airsoft gun from within five feet.

Sagaser is due back in court next month for a plea hearing. He will either plead not guilty and a trial date will be set, enter a guilty plea and settle the case or waive his right to a speedy trial and set another hearing.

He remains in custody on \$85,000 bail.

Patient escapes mental health facility

By Kyle Spurr
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — A convicted sex offender from Jackson County was found by police in a ditch near Dog Creek off Highway 26 Sunday evening after he escaped from the Juniper Ridge Acute Care Facility.

Dusty Brian Korner, 31, Central Point, broke through the fence at the facility on Ford Road just after 6 p.m., Saturday. John Day Police and employees at the facility searched for Korner and could not find him.

Oregon State Police eventually located him at 7:20 p.m., Sunday.

"He escaped and we believed he just camped out in the woods by the Dog Creek area on Highway 26," John Day Police Sgt. Damon Rand said. "Nothing has been reported broken into or stolen."

The escape is the third known incident since the facility opened in 2013.

The facility holds 11 rooms for patients experiencing varying levels of mental crisis. The patients are either court-mandated to be there or voluntarily check-in.

Korner, who escaped over the weekend for more than 24 hours, was admitted to the facility by court order. Grant County District Attorney Jim Carpenter is reviewing the case for possible charges.

The last escape occurred in January when a 25-year-old man also broke through the fence, through a flaw in its design.

Kimberly Lindsay, executive director of Community Counseling Solutions, the company that operates Juniper Ridge Acute Care Facility, said the facility has been in the process of designing and building a new fence. A purchase order was submitted in early August and the new fence was supposed to be installed in September, but the contractor said it was backlogged and unable to be put in until late October or early November.



Dusty Brian Korner

"It was just sickening because had the fence went in in September, this would not have happened," Lindsay said.

The current fence is flawed because it was built on non-compacted ground. Portions of the fence are leaning and weakened.

Community Counseling Solutions recently filed a lawsuit against Baarstad's General Contracting, the Pendleton-based general contractor who built the facility, for failing to property compact the soil under the fence. The \$125,000 lawsuit claims Baarstad's breached the contract and was negligent.

Korner likely slid through a broken part of the fence, or put some leverage on the fence and broke it to escape. Unlike a prison yard, Lindsay said, staff does not always supervise the patients.

When the staff confirmed Korner had escaped, they immediately contacted the police, checked the safety of the other patients and notified Korner's family.

"We are so sick of making these phone calls to the family," Lindsay said. "It's embarrass-

ing. The family worked pretty hard to get this person in, and you feel like in that moment you failed."

Korner was convicted of sex abuse in 2002 in Jackson County. In 2011, he was charged with failing to report as a sex offender. His criminal record also shows charges of interfering with a peace officer in 2003 and disorderly conduct in 2010.

Lindsay said she understands the local community's concerns. She admits she cannot defend her decision to let months pass before having the fence replaced, or explain why there have been multiple escapes in the facility's three years of operation.

"I wish I had the ability to convey the sadness, understanding and wanting the community's trust and their faith," Lindsay said. "While we do a lot of great things and while we have these moments where we take steps back, we are working in overdrive to address this and we just feel horrible."

Local law enforcement is taking the escapes seriously because they can pose a public safety risk.

The police and facility are continually working to better handle such incidents.

"That is something we are trying to get figured out," Sgt. Rand said. "It is a public safety concern."

COPS & COURTS

Arrests and citations in the Blue Mountain Eagle are taken from the logs of law enforcement agencies. Every effort is made to report the court disposition of arrest cases.

Circuit Court

CANYON CITY — The Grant County Circuit Court reported the following fines and judgments:

- Andrew Franklin Wedding, 29, pleaded guilty to driving under the influence of intoxicants. He was sentenced to jail for 15 days, bench probation for 18 months and 40 hours community service, and fined \$1,800. His driver's license was suspended for three years. The court dismissed one count of criminal driving while suspended or revoked.

- Darren Allen Swogger, 48, pleaded guilty to fourth-degree assault. He was sentenced to jail for one day, bench probation for 18 months and 50 hours community service. He was fined \$400 and ordered to have no contact with the victim. The court dismissed counts for strangulation and harassment.

Grant County Sheriff

CANYON CITY — The Grant County Sheriff's Office reported the following for the week of Oct. 2-8:

- Concealed handgun licenses: 7
- Average inmates: 13
- Bookings: 7
- Releases: 5
- Arrests: 1
- Citations: 2
- Fingerprints: 6
- Civil papers: 8
- Warrants processed: 6
- Asst./welfare check: 5
- Search and Rescue: 2
- Terrence Moon, 24, Canyon City, cited for failure to carry proof of insurance.
- Joseph Wegner, 59, Gold Beach, cited for failure to perform the duties of driver.

Grant County enforcing foreclosures

By Kyle Spurr
Blue Mountain Eagle

For the first time in more than a decade, the Grant County District Attorney's Office is assisting the Tax Assessor's Office in collecting owed property taxes throughout the county.

There are about 48 accounts on the 2015 tax foreclosure list. The delinquent taxes for those accounts are about \$400,000.

The names of the people on the foreclosure list will be published in the Oct. 21 edition of the *Blue Mountain Eagle*. Once the names are published, District Attorney Jim Carpenter will decide if he will file judgments against the people, resulting in foreclosure.

After a judgment is filed in Grant County Circuit Court, the homeowner has two years to redeem the property before it is foreclosed on.

County assessor Lane Burton said there has not been a district attorney will-

ing to help the assessor's office in a while.

Since Carpenter was elected last year, he indicated he would be willing to help.

"I'm not an attorney. I can't go before the judge," Burton said. "We have to have the district attorney as our legal counsel for the foreclosure process."

Carpenter said he has previously practiced civil law and is comfortable reviewing the cases.

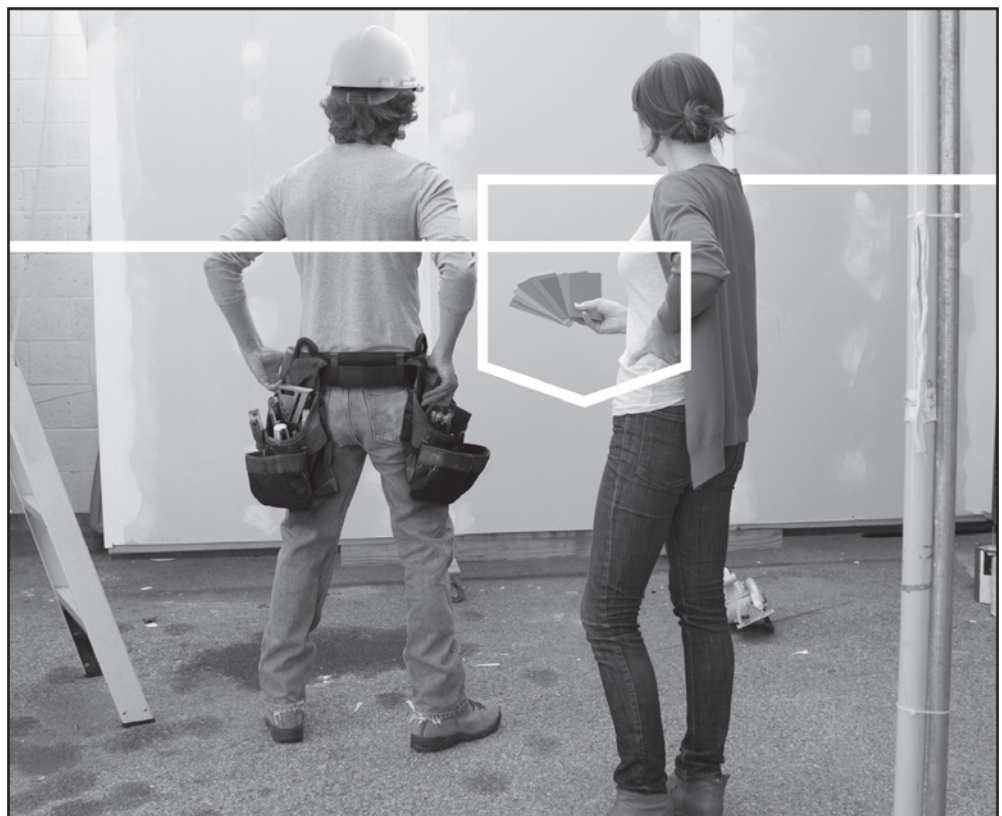
Previous district attorneys may not have had the civil law experience, he said.

Multiple notices have been sent to those who owe property taxes, according to the assessor's office. When names publicly appear next week in the newspaper, Burton said, it should not come as a surprise. If people do not pay before Oct. 21, a 5 percent extra tax will be added to the owed amount.

"We have been warning folks for a long time," Burton said.

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