

Details emerge in Hermiston murder-suicide investigation

By Phil Wright
EO Media Group

Jason Huston fired three rounds from a 9 mm Glock pistol Thursday into his life-long friend Ken Valdez at his Hermiston home, killing him. Huston also shot Andria Bye once and, in the end, shot and killed himself.

Bye was taken to the hospital after telling police what had transpired, though she didn't know the whereabouts of her son, 14-year-old James "JJ" Hurtado.

Perhaps no more than an hour before, Huston is believed to have shot and killed Hurtado, to whom he was something of a father figure, with the same pistol.



EO Media Group/E.J. Harris

Police investigate the scene of a shooting that left two dead and one injured at the corner of Northwest 11th Street and West Madrona Avenue on Thursday in Hermiston.

Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston and County Sheriff Terry Rowan Umatilla revealed more on Monday

about one of the most violent crimes in Hermiston's history.

Huston and Valdez, both 45, had known each other as far back as high school and had coached wrestling together since 2013, and Huston and Bye had previously been in a relationship. Edmiston held off discussing a motive, calling it premature while the investigation continues.

Hurtado had last been seen Thursday at 10 a.m. when Huston picked him up in Umatilla and said they were going to play disc golf at McNary Park, according to Edmiston.

Police around 11:18 a.m. responded to calls about a

shooting at Southwest 11th Street and Hermiston Avenue. They found the door open at Valdez's home at 130 N.W. 11th St., and inside found Bye and the bodies of Valdez and Huston.

Edmiston said Bye gave a detailed statement to police, but Huston had not told her he shot her son. Bye was released from the hospital over the weekend.

Detectives at a debriefing talked about their search for Hurtado that began soon after they arrived at Valdez's home, Edmiston said, and also came up with a "to do" list, including more places to check for the teen. They soon learned of two places Huston was

known to go shooting recreationally.

"When we got that, it was starting to get dark," Edmiston said, "so we had to hurry."

Detectives went to both sites, he said, and found the boy's body off Country Lane about two miles outside the Hermiston city limits.

Police found a pickup that belonged to Huston on Bridge Road, which is near Country Lane, but Edmiston said Huston drove another pickup into town and parked it at Foxwood Apartments near Valdez's home.

Valdez had a roommate, Edmiston said, but that person was at work during the shooting.

Washington county authorizes action against wolves

WDFW stops 'partial pack removal' at 2

By Don Jenkins
EO Media Group

Ferry County commissioners unanimously passed a resolution Friday authorizing the sheriff's office to kill the remaining nine members of a wolf pack in the northeastern Washington county, if state wildlife officials don't resume shooting wolves.

"That pack of wolves

needs to be gone," Commissioner Mike Blankenship said. "I feel the sheriff has that power and that obligation as much as he would with a wild dog out there."

The Department of Fish and Wildlife halted the search Thursday for the Profanity Peak pack 13 days after shooting two adult female wolves from a helicopter. Four adults and five pups survive.

WDFW initiated lethal removal Aug. 3 after the pack killed at least four calves and one cow in less than a month. The pack probably was responsible for at least three

other depredations, according to WDFW.

Blankenship said WDFW ended the culling of the pack prematurely. County officials have pressed the department to eliminate the entire pack since 2014, citing concerns for humans, pets and livestock.

County commissioners held a special meeting Friday afternoon at which they approved giving Sheriff Ray Maycumber the resources to lethally remove the pack.

It may not be necessary. WDFW says it will resume hunting for the Profanity Peak

pack if more depredations occur, which is a strong possibility, Blankenship said.

"An operator has been losing an animal a day since their animals were put on the range," he said. "Should Fish and Wildlife fail to, we're prepared to step up and finish that job."

If the county targets wolves, it would test WDFW's jurisdiction over the state's wildlife.

"Maybe that would get challenged and maybe we need to have conversation. I'm sure it would be a fairly mind-blowing case," Blankenship said.

The two wolves that were shot included the breeding female. WDFW officials say they can't identify different pack members from a helicopter. After the shootings, the pack withdrew to heavy timber in the Kettle River Range Mountains and became increasingly difficult to track, even though two wolves wore GPS radio collars, according to WDFW.

WDFW also suggested in a press release that shooting the two wolves had been effective in stopping depredations.

"The goal of removing some wolves from the pack was to stop wolf attacks on area cattle herds," WDFW wolf policy coordinator Donny Martorello said in a written statement. "The last confirmed depredation by the pack was two weeks ago, but we are prepared to resume operations to remove wolves if monitoring efforts confirm new attacks."

Efforts to reach the ranch suffering the most losses were unsuccessful. But others in contact with the producer said livestock remains continue to be found. In some cases, too little remains of the carcass to identify whether the animal was killed by a wolf.



EO Media Group/E.J. Harris

A pristine gym in the newly finished Washington Elementary School in Pendleton. The new building provides the district with a facility making it easier to comply with the state's physical education mandate.

Schools seek delay in Oregon's P.E. requirement

Lack of facilities, teachers hamper districts' progress

By Paris Achen
Capital Bureau

With less than 10 percent of Oregon's K-8 schools providing the minimum number of weekly physical education minutes mandated by the Legislature nine years ago, districts want lawmakers to extend the fall 2017 compliance deadline.

Rather than inching towards meeting the requirement, the number of compliant schools has actually declined, according to public records reviewed by the Pamplin Media Group/EO Media Group Capital Bureau.

House Bill 3141, approved by state lawmakers in 2007, made Oregon the first state in the nation to require minimum physical education instructional minutes for elementary and middle school pupils, according to the American Heart Association.

The law calls for a minimum of 150 minutes of physical education instruction per week for grades K-5 and 225 minutes for grades 6-8. Schools are required to meet that standard by fall 2017.

Most schools are so far from fulfilling the requirement that their advocacy groups are now asking lawmakers to either push back the deadline or allow for a phase-in. They also want other tweaks to the law, such as prorating the standard to account for professional de-

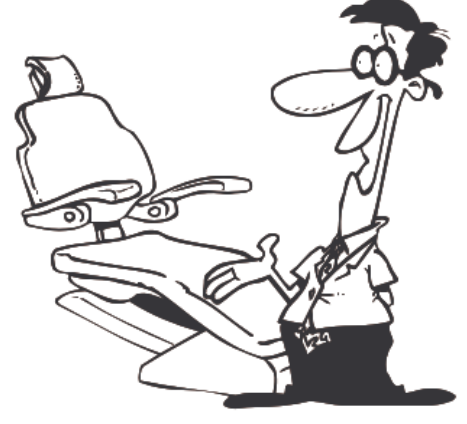
velopment days and inclement weather, and to add more flexibility in how physical education may be defined.

"Everybody recognizes the pinch we find ourselves in," said Jim Green, deputy executive director of the Oregon School Boards Association. "There are not enough P.E. teachers. Some of the facilities are inadequate in order to be able to provide that level of instruction, and it is going to take a lot to ramp up to that."

Out of 1,080 public schools with some or all grades in K-8, only 97 schools in 2014-15 provided the minimum number of weekly minutes outlined in HB 3141, according to the Oregon Department of Education's most recent count. That's a decline from the 102 schools in 2013-14 that met the minimum.

Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, championed the law in 2007 as a way to address childhood obesity and boost pupils' academic skills. Along with the minimum instructional time, the bill offered schools special grants, known as PEEK-8, or Physical Education Expansion K-8, to help hire P.E. teachers or give existing teachers professional development in physical education. The grants provided about \$4 million to schools in the last four years.

"I started this some 10 years ago because physical education had disappeared from our schools," Courtney said. "I understand resources are an issue, and every school is different. I just hope that together we can find a way to continue to move forward."



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