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LIFTING THE VEIL OVER SUICIDE

Community screening could reduce county numbers

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Editor's note: This is the first in a three-part series about suicide. higher-than-average suicide rate in Grant County has mental health officials and community leaders looking for answers.

Representatives from the Grant County Education Service District, the Grant County School District, the district attorney's office and the probation office met with staff from Community Counseling Solutions for a prevention and round-table meeting on Feb. 15 as members of Grant County's Youth Suicide Response Team.

"It was a brainstorming session — what are we doing now, what more can we do," CCS Clinical Director Thad Labhart said. The team reached consensus that the community needs to do a better job of community screening, he said.

"One of the hardest problems is that, if we don't know, we can't help," he said. "We can help them once they're in the door."

Tracking the data

In 2014, the Oregon Legislature enacted a law calling for a five-year Youth Suicide Intervention and Prevention Plan to be in place by 2015. The goal was to improve access to mental health intervention, treatment and support for depressed and suicidal youths.

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Suicide prevention resources

• Community Counseling Solutions in John Day, 541-575-1466

• David Romprey Oregon Warm Line, 1-800-698-2392

• Oregon Youth Line, 1-877-968-8491, text 839863, youthL@linesfor-life.org

• National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 1-800-273-TALK

• Spanish Language National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-888-628-9454

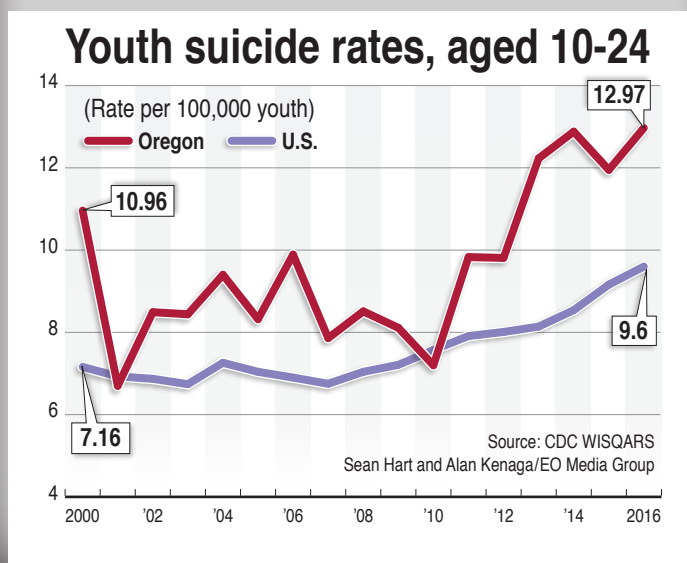
• Crisis Text Line: 741741

• Military Helpline: 888-457-4838 or text MIL1 to 839863

• Alcohol and Drug Helpline: 800-923-4357 or text RecoveryNow to 839863

• Suicide Prevention Resource Center, sprc.org

• SafeOregon reporting line: 844-472-3367 or tip@safeoregon.com



Chester's expansion means more jobs

Variety department planned for former King's store

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Good news for the John Day economy: Chester's Thriftway plans to expand into the former King's Discount Store next door and open up a variety department.

Six to eight jobs will be created, according to Bill Wyllie, operational manager for the

three Chester's stores in Oregon, and a wide variety of consumer goods locals have been asking for will be available.

"People tell me they miss some things," he said. "We initially felt someone else would fill that role."

Wyllie said Chester's was also concerned about the empty stores in the John Day Plaza — King's, the former

Mountains Department Store and the closing Muzzy's 123 Dollar Store — and how that could affect their business. A lifelong resident of John Day, Wyllie said he was also concerned about how the community could be impacted.

"King's being closed was a company-wide closure," he said. "The location in John Day was actually one of their

best locations for product movement. This means that King's was a needed store in John Day, and it is a negative impact to Grant County losing this resource."

At this point, the plan is to punch an opening through the common wall near the back of Chester's, linking the two stores. The door to the parking lot at the former King's

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Operations Manager Bill Wyllie poses for a photo in Chester's Thriftway. The store plans to expand to provide a variety department.

Longtime publisher leaving the Eagle

Hart will serve as general manager and editor

Blue Mountain Eagle

After 14 years with the Blue Mountain Eagle, Publisher Marissa Williams is leaving the company for an executive position at Silvies Valley Ranch.

Williams, who most recently served EO Media Group as publisher of the Eagle and the Wallowa County Chieftain and regional ad director for the East Orego-

nian and Hermiston Herald, has accepted a position as vice president of the Retreat & Links at Silvies Valley Ranch.

"I have enjoyed working for EO Media Group and the Blue Mountain Eagle for past the 14 years. I appreciate having had this wonderful opportunity to work within Grant County," Williams said. "I have been fortunate to share many of those years with the great staff at the Eagle and am confident the paper will continue to be a strong piece to our communities."

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Legislators to consider protecting retailers who raise gun purchase age to 21

By Paris Achen
Capital Bureau

Oregon legislative leaders say they are willing to change Oregon law to protect retailers that voluntarily restrict gun and ammunition sales to customers 21 and older.

Under state and federal law, Oregonians 18 and older can buy rifles and shotguns and the ammunition for those firearms. A person must be at least 21 to buy a handgun and handgun ammunition.

Oregon Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian has concluded gun retailers that have stopped selling to customers younger than 21 in the wake

of recent mass shootings could be violating the state's anti-discrimination laws.

The decision could be challenged at the Bureau of Labor and Industries or in a civil court complaint. Oregon law has made exemptions to the anti-discrimination law for the sales of alcohol and marijuana, in which case retailers are required to refuse to sell those products to people younger than 21. In order to raise the minimum age to buy firearms, state lawmakers would need to enact an exemption in the next legislative session.

"The retailers' policies to deny gun sales to those

under 21 represents a common-sense effort to make public places safer," Avakian wrote in a March 6 letter to state legislative leaders.

BOLI employees plan to submit a bill for the 2019 legislative session to make the exemption for firearms.

During an interview on KATU.com Thursday, Senate President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, and Republican Leader Rep. Mike McLane of Powell Butte said they would support legislation to raise the minimum age to buy guns to 21 or to pass a law that allows retailers to decide.

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