

# SUICIDE

Continued from Page A1

The plan mandated more training for medical and behavioral health providers, more collaboration among schools and school-based clinics, taking a look at laws governing confidentiality, developing responses by schools and communities following a youth suicide, using more social media and using best practices to identify and intervene with youths who are depressed, suicidal or at risk of self-injury.

According to the Oregon Health Authority, county governments acting as the local mental health authority would “take a leadership role in their communities to form collaborative partnerships for responding to youth suicides and reducing the risk of contagion.”

Information to be collected about a confirmed suicide could include whether a youth was in custody of the police, if the suicide occurred in a public place, whether a note was left, if there was evidence of bullying, if social media was involved, whether other suicides by children or adults had occurred in the past year and if any traumatic events had recently occurred.

Collection of that data raised privacy concerns, and the Oregon Health Authority encouraged counties to seek legal advice. Labhart drafted the plan for Grant County.

“Privacy issues have been fully vetted by the state,” he said.

In 2016, the suicide rate per 100,000 youths aged 10-24 was 12.97 in Oregon, compared to 9.6 nationwide. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 10- to 24-year-olds in Oregon.

## Proactive steps

Oregon Healthy Teens Surveys from 2017 show that statewide 16.9 percent of eighth-graders and 18.2 percent of 11th-graders reported seriously considered



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

Community Counseling Solutions Clinical Director Thad Labhart said help is available for people who seek it.

attempting suicide in the past 12 months — and 8.7 percent of eighth-graders and 6.8 percent of 11th-graders actually attempted suicide.

In 2017 in Grant, Lake and Harney counties, 21.2 percent of eighth-graders and 18.9 percent of 11th-graders seriously considered suicide — and 9.4 percent of eighth-graders and 6.6 percent of 11th-graders actually attempted suicide.

For all age groups, about 70 percent of suicide victims in Oregon already suffered from a diagnosed mental disorder, an alcohol or substance-abuse problem or were in a depressed

mood at the time of death.

Nearly three-quarters of the reported mental disorders were categorized as depression, while 15 percent were bipolar and another 15 percent were anxiety disorders. Diagnosed mental disorders for suicide victims were more common among women than men, while criminal legal problems were more common among men.

More than a third of suicide victims told others of their intentions, while another third left a note. About 20 percent had a history of suicide attempts. Nearly a quarter were

believed to have consumed alcohol in the hours before their deaths.

If a suicide risk is determined to be serious, a person can be placed in custody under a mental health hold, Labhart said. A civil commitment hearing must be held within five business days, he said.

“We hold about four or five hearings a year in Grant County,” Labhart said.

If a CCS client makes suicidal statements, a safety plan could be implemented or medicine prescribed, but unless the client is under a civil commitment, it must be voluntary, he

said. “It’s a case-by-case basis,” he said.

CCS has about 250 active clients in Grant County. About 20 percent have alcohol- or drug-related issues. Of the remaining 200 or so clients, about 15 percent say something about suicide.

“It’s not that uncommon,” he said, noting that mental health providers need to recognize a specific intent as opposed to someone saying, “I just want to die.”

About 70 percent of Grant County suicide victims were not active mental health pa-

tients, although they may have been in the past, Labhart said. That’s why family members, friends or co-workers who hear something should contact CCS during business hours or call 911 if it’s an emergency or late at night.

“We receive referrals weekly,” Labhart said. “I guarantee you, we’ve saved lives.”

But some people, he noted, just don’t want anything to do with mental health providers.

“It’s that ‘mind your own business’ mentality,” he said.

The next installment, “Suicide by the numbers,” will be published next week.

# CHESTER’S

Continued from Page A1

store will not be used by customers who will pay for their items at Chester’s checkout counters, Wyllie said.

This will be Chester’s first variety department, Wyllie said. The company is finalizing the purchase of the former King’s store and has made arrangements with Variety Distributors Inc. to help set up the merchandise on the shelves. VDI will continue in its role as a supplier to Chester’s, Wyllie said.

“VDI offers 20,000 everyday available items and another 20,000 seasonal items,” Wyllie said.

Items similar to what King’s offered will include gift wrap, art and craft supplies, toys and games, books, seasonal decorations, picture frames and art, office supplies, bath and kitchen



The Eagle/Richard Hanners

The Chester’s Thriftway store in John Day plans to expand into the adjacent King’s Discount Store to create a variety department.

linens and fabric and sewing supplies.

In the future, possibly with VDI’s assistance, the new

department could offer basic clothing items like jeans, T-shirts, sweatshirts and socks, along with basic shoe

offerings and garden items, Wyllie said.

The expansion will also allow Chester’s to expand

its current offerings in dog food, paper towels and bath tissue, grab-and-go food and drinks for travelers, bulk

food and produce space for melons and fruits of the season.

“The vision of this project is to positively impact the community by providing more of the items we need without having to travel out of town or wait for it to arrive in the mail,” Wyllie said. “This will also bolster the community’s recent job losses by providing six to eight new jobs for our residents.”

Wyllie said the expansion will create a new manager position at \$17 to \$22 per hour, two supervisor positions at \$13 to \$15 per hour and several other positions.

There’s a lot of work to do — remodeling includes matching the decor in Chester’s and hanging new LED lighting — but the plan is to have the variety department open for customers by early June, Wyllie said.

**SAMANTHA WORKMAN**

**School:** Prairie City  
**Grade:** 9  
**Parent:** Sam Workman  
**Sport:** Basketball  
**Position:** Guard

**What I like best about my sport:** “It’s a fun sport, and it’s fun to play with the team.”

**Coach’s Comment:**  
 “She is a good all-around kid, and she strives to make herself a better player and a person.”

-Coach Bo Workman

**PROUD SPONSOR OF GRANT COUNTY ATHLETES**

**100 E. Main • Stoplight in John Day**  
**541-792-0425**

# GUNS

Continued from Page A1

“We found out there’s a problem with our laws, so I do expect if we are going to allow our businesses to say we do not want to sell you guns unless you’re 21, we’re probably going to have to help out in the next session,” Courtney said. “... If that’s the case, I see that as an opportunity, not one party but together, to do something.”

McLane said he also thought Republicans and Democrats could reach consensus on how to authorize stores to raise the minimum age.

But Rep. Chuck Thomson, R-Hood River, said he would prefer to see such legislation orchestrated at the national level.

“That way you don’t have different states around the country with different laws all over the place. I would rather see them do some stuff at the federal level that we could mirror,” he said.

Walmart, the world’s largest retailer, and Dick’s



EO Media Group

Retailers that restrict long gun sales to customers 21 or older could be violating Oregon’s anti-discrimination laws. Legislative leaders say they will consider legislation that would either shield retailers that choose to restrict gun sales, or raise the age for all gun purchases to 21.

Sporting Goods announced they will raise the minimum age to buy firearms and ammunition, in the wake of the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, Feb. 14. Other national

department and sporting goods stores made similar decisions.

Willamette Week first reported that the age limitations could violate the state’s anti-discrimination laws, citing an opinion from a retired Lane County judge.

# EAGLE

Continued from Page A1

Kathryn Brown, publisher the East Oregonian and Hermiston Herald, will become the Eagle’s interim publisher. Brown, an owner of EO Media Group, has served on the board since 1997.

Sean Hart, who joined the Eagle as editor in 2015, will serve as the Eagle’s general manager and editor. Hart began working in journalism in 2007 and has worked for four Eastern Oregon newspapers.

“I look forward to building on the strong foundation left by Marissa to continue to tell the stories of our community,” Hart said. “Marissa put together a great team, and we will continue to deliver the credible news our community needs to make informed decisions. We will miss her, but we wish her all the best.”

During her tenure, Williams oversaw the Eagle’s Pulitzer Prize nomination for coverage of the Aryan Nation and its failed attempt to establish a headquarters in Grant County and the creation of the Eagle’s social media presence, which now has more than 8,500 followers.

Today is Williams’ last day with EO Media Group.