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Shining the light on child abuse

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Recent child abuse statistics in Grant County may show a slight improvement over the previous year, but the county still ranks near the bottom in Oregon.

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month and was recognized by the Grant County Court in an April 10 proclamation. The county has seen a shrinking population and declining economy, and those conditions could be related to child abuse or other social conditions.

According to figures from the Children First for Oregon nonprofit, Grant County saw 21.9 abuse and neglect victims ages 0-17 per 1,000 in 2018, which was down from 32.1 in 2017. But the county still ranked 25th out of 36 counties.

The percentage of children in foster care increased slightly from 2.5 in 2017 to 2.7 in 2018, and Grant County ranked 30th in the state. The percentage of children in poverty fell slightly from 26.4 to 24.6, leaving the county ranked 28th in the state.

Tracey Blood, a prevention advocate and Grant-Harney County CASA volunteer, attributes the unfavorable figures to social determinants of health, which include economic factors such as local job opportunities and pay scales.

Child abuse is defined by the state through statute and a 2016 senate bill. By statute, child abuse includes negligent treatment or maltreatment, physical abuse other than reasonable discipline, sexual abuse or exploitation, mental injury caused by cruelty, threat of harm, exposure to controlled substances, buying or selling of children and permitting a child to enter or remain in a place where methamphetamine is being manufactured.

Senate Bill 1515 expands on this definition for children residing in or receiving services from a child-caring agency by adding involuntary seclusion, verbal abuse, wrongful use of a physical or chemical

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Tracey Blood



The Eagle/Richard Hanners Alea King and Casey Myers paddle a canoe on the pond that formed at the former Oregon Pine mill site on April 11.

AFTER THE FLOOD

State highway crews anticipate flood repair work

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Rivers and creeks running over onto state highways were obvious to travelers in Grant County on April 8-10, but the real damage was taking place sight-unseen beneath the surface.

Oregon Department of Transportation crews will be busy inspecting and repairing stream banks, bridge abutments and highway shoulders scoured or

undercut by fast-moving streams during the recent flood, Assistant District Manager Jeff Berry told the Eagle.

Crews were aware of shoulder rock missing along Highway 26 in Picture Gorge, which remained closed until Thursday afternoon. The highway reopened to one lane with a pilot car and then later to two-lane travel.

ODOT was concerned water from the John Day River got

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Canyon City, Grant Union deal with flood impacts

By Richard Hanners
Blue Mountain Eagle

Ground zero for flooding concerns in Grant County April 8-9 was Canyon City and Grant Union Junior-Senior High School.

Canyon Creek, confined within a man-made channel left by gold miners and fed with runoff from lands burned during the 2015 Canyon Creek Complex fire, roared like a fire hose through Canyon City and

right along the boundary of the school complex.

The flow was so intense that the gauge at Adam Road was removed to prevent it from being damaged, Grant County Emergency Management Coordinator Ted Williams told the Eagle. The Canyon Creek channel is expected to safely handle 850 cubic feet per second, but a manual measurement upstream from Adam Road determined

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Contributed photo/Dennis Reasoner Flood waters from the John Day River surround farm buildings and a residence at a ranch east of Dayville on April 8-9.

Vogt sentenced to jail, probation after kidnapping charge dropped

Judge: Case not 'horror story' police originally believed

By Tommy Simmons
Idaho Press

A judge last week sentenced Andy Vogt of Mt. Vernon to 15 years of probation — with prison time possible — after he admitted to meeting a 15-year-old Eagle, Idaho, girl online and taking her back to his home last fall.

Idaho's Fourth District Court Judge Jonathan Medema acknowledged the case against Vogt, 48, was not the "horror story of charges" police and prosecutors once believed it was. Initially, police believed Vogt in October contacted the girl online,



Andy Vogt

felony charges, including kidnapping, which carries a possibility of up to life in prison.

Yet as Tanner Stellmon, the case's prosecutor, said in court April 10, police were unable to corroborate that story. Instead, as Vogt's attorney Charles Peterson pointed out, they learned the girl, who lives with schizophrenia and has a prescription for antipsychotic medication, claimed to be 19 years old online when she messaged Vogt. She sneaked away from her parents'

home at about 8 p.m. that night, met up with Vogt and went to Oregon voluntarily, Peterson explained.

The kidnapping charge has since been dismissed, and he instead pleaded guilty to lewd conduct with a child younger than 16.

"She portrayed herself as a young woman from Eagle, Idaho, who lived here but was looking for dates and was, in fact, 19 years old," Peterson said.

Nevertheless, Peterson acknowledged Vogt should have known the girl was not 19 years old. As the adult, he said, Vogt still bore the responsibility in the situation; Stellmon agreed.

"The defendant was more concerned in this case with the victim's willingness to engage with him sexually than he was with her age,"

Stellmon said. "She was willing and that was enough for him."

Despite that, neither Vogt nor the girl claimed they engaged sexually during the days they spent at his home. They said they watched old movies and played video games.

Deputies from the Ada County Sheriff's Office worked to find the girl once her father reported her missing, and they worked with the Grant County Sheriff's Office, the Oregon State Police and the FBI to trace her to his home.

"It turns out she comes to the door and suddenly she's not 19. ... It turns out she's 15 and she wants to go home and he tells detectives, 'I didn't know that,'" Peterson said.

Medema, too, said the charge Vogt

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