



STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY

Eastern Oregon Prescription Drug Overdose Prevention Coordinator Mike Stensrud, of Umatilla County Public Health, holds an overdose kit containing naloxone, under the brand name Narcan. Umatilla County Sheriff's deputies will start using Narcan to reverse overdoses from prescription painkillers, heroin and fentanyl.

## Police to carry anti-overdose drug

### Naloxone reverses effects of opioid overdose

By KATHY ANEY  
STAFF WRITER

Umatilla County Sheriff's deputies will start carrying anti-overdose drugs.

The medication naloxone saves lives by reversing overdoses of prescription painkillers, heroin and the synthetic painkiller fentanyl. The law enforcement agency received 60 doses Friday from the Umatilla County Health Department to use over the next two years.

Eastern Oregon Prevention Drug Coordinator Mike Stensrud, of Umatilla County Public Health, will train officers on the use of naloxone (with the brand name of Narcan). Funding from Purdue Pharma to the National Sheriff's Association helped bring the kits to

Umatilla County and various other law enforcement agencies across the county at no cost to taxpayers.

Local ambulance crews already carry the drug. Last year, emergency medical service workers administered naloxone 177 times in Umatilla County. But, the earlier the drug is administered the better chance the person will recover.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 42,249 people died in opioid-related deaths in 2016. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Oregon ranks sixth nationally for non-medical use of prescription pain relievers like Percocet and OxyContin.

One reason to use naloxone is a recent shift away from spot testing drugs found during traffic stops so that officers won't be exposed to the potent synthetic painkiller fentanyl which comes in both pill and powder form. A small

amount of the drug, which is 50-100 times more powerful than morphine, can trigger an overdose. An Ohio law enforcement officer overdosed in May after he got deadly fentanyl powder on his uniform.

"It's a big concern," Stensrud said. "Simply touching or inhaling extraordinarily small quantities of fentanyl can cause an overdose. By equipping our sheriff's officers with this life saving drug, they can respond to emergencies with less apprehension and risk of a contact overdose."

The officers would have the ability to respond before the arrival of ambulance crews.

One beauty of nasally administered naloxone is its lack of side effects.

"There are no adverse effects," he said. "Within three to five minutes, if there is no improvement, you can administer another dose."

He said the drug even works with police drug dogs that inhale drugs in

powder form.

Besides administering naloxone, officers will provide overdose data to a nationwide network using an application they pull up on phones or computers.

"Officers have enough to do without additional paperwork," Stensrud said.

"They can pull up the program on their patrol phone in their cruisers. This program allows us to track overdose events in real time."

Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan praised the National Sheriff's Association and Purdue Pharma for giving officers another tool to fight heroin and opioid abuse.

"We are grateful for the national support," Rowan said. "Solving this crisis will take the collective effort of our entire community."

Jonathan Thompson, CEO of the National Sheriff's Association, said the program has saved 120 lives since it was launched at the end of 2015.

## Umatilla's Downtown framework plan wins national award

By JADE MCDOWELL  
STAFF WRITER

Umatilla's downtown framework plan is now a national award-winner.

The plan, titled Umatilla Together and available on the city's website in both English and Spanish, was put together by Portland State University students in the Master of Urban and Regional Planning program. It won the 2018 American Institute of Certified Planners Student Project Award.

"It's just really exciting to have that group recognized," said Tamra Mabbott, community development director for Umatilla.

She said the other award-winners for the year were from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). She plans to go down to the National Planning Conference in New Orleans on April 24 when the students officially receive their award.

The Umatilla Together framework was put together in 2017 by students Amber Ayers, Laura Voss, Nate Miller, Samuel Roberts, Carlos Callava and Belen Herrera. They made multiple trips from Portland to Umatilla to engage with citizens, business leaders, city staff and elected officials during meetings, focus groups, mixers and a community open house.

The resulting document outlined suggestions for the revitalizing Umatilla's downtown core and increasing the community's livability. Since being hired in the city's brand-

new community development director position, Mabbott said much of her work has revolved around working to implement those suggestions, such as identifying gaps in the community's network of trails and searching for funding to connect those trails. Councilors and other city staff are also using the plan as a framework.

"The credit goes to the students, who engaged people over and over again," she said.

When Sen. Bill Hansell of Athena visited Umatilla on Feb. 1 to meet with city councilors and tour city projects, Mabbott said the Umatilla Together plan was shared with him too, and he told them he was impressed with where the city was headed.

In a news release from PSU, planning student Amber Ayers said it feels "impossible to capture the depth of our appreciation" for the city of Umatilla and others who made the project and the resulting award possible.

"This is not an award just for us, but for the entire city of Umatilla," Ayers said. "The community members of Umatilla provided guidance, enthusiasm and devotion. We sincerely feel we lucked out having the opportunity of work with a city and a community as rich as Umatilla."

The students also won a statewide award for the project in the fall from the Oregon chapter of the American Planning Association.



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Winter seemed to have returned to the region on February 20 after snowfall covered the hills in Pendleton.

## Strangulation bill aims to stop abuse

By JADE MCDOWELL  
STAFF WRITER

A bill passed by the Oregon Legislature last week will put domestic abusers who strangle their victims behind bars for longer.

Senate Bill 1562, passed unanimously by the Senate and the House of Representatives in the waning days of the short session, will upgrade strangulation from a Class A misdemeanor punishable by up to 364 days in jail to a Class C felony punishable by up to five years in prison when it involves a relative, household member or intimate partner. It also expands the definition of strangulation to include knowingly halting a person's breathing by applying pressure to their chest.

Advocates for domestic violence survivors applaud the bill's message.

"It makes a statement about what will not be tolerated," said Kathryn Chaney, director of Domestic Violence Services in Umatilla County. "Hopefully it could be a deterrent."

She cited a 2008 study published in the Journal of Emergency Medicine, which found that abusers who have escalated to strangulation are 750 percent more likely to eventually kill their victims. The act of cutting off a victim's air supply — using methods ranging from squeezing the neck to covering the mouth and nose — is a huge red flag for "potential lethality" Chaney said.

"Preventing someone being able to breathe is saying, 'I'm thinking of killing you,'" she said.

In her line of work Chaney has met many victims of strangulation by a family member or significant other, who are often "absolutely terrified." Even when the incident convinces the person to face that fear and leave their abuser, post-traumatic stress disorder can linger for a long time.

Physical trauma can linger, too. Although strangulation can cause instant death, Chaney said one of the most sinister things about that particular act of violence is sometimes the effects can kill victims days or even months later. They may look undamaged from the outside but experience internal swelling, damage to the spinal cord, permanent brain damage, vision loss, vocal cord damage, seizures or fluid in the lungs causing pneumonia. Strangulation can cause blood clots that later lead to death by a stroke, or can damage the carotid body in a way that later causes a heart attack.

Sometimes loved ones of those being abused imagine that if their friend or family members were being strangled they would have visible bruising on their neck, but Chaney said sometimes no bruising ever emerges.

Umatilla County is not immune to strangulation as a form of domestic violence. Hermiston Police Chief Jason Edmiston said in Hermiston last year there were 36 cases of aggravated assault, of which 36 percent involved strangulation. Fifty-eight percent of the assaults were domestic, and of the domestic assaults 57 percent included

strangulation.

He said the department did a "deep dive" into the assault data, analyzing everything from time of day to race and gender, to look for preventive measures.

"What we're looking for is patterns, trends," he said. "Is there something we can do?"

In more than half the cases, it was verified that a controlled substance was involved, but Edmiston said recent drug decriminalization laws in Oregon aren't helpful there. He said adding another officer to the department to bring back a dedicated street team would help sweep up abusers who have warrants. Alert citizens who call the police when something is off can help too.

"Go with your gut," Edmiston said. "Make the phone call and we'll respond and maybe intervene before the situation gets out of hand."

As for Senate Bill 1562, Edmiston said while he believes in holding perpetrators of abuse, including strangulation, accountable, he feels skeptical that the longer sentence will act as a deterrent in the moment. He said he has seen shocking cases of "just pure rage" in domestic violence that didn't necessarily seem to fit the commonly-held narrative that strangulation comes as part of an escalating pattern over time.

Senate Bill 1562 would provide up to five years in prison for strangulation in domestic violence cases and leave the perpetrator with a felony record. Sen. Bill Hansell of Athena sponsored a similar bill in 2015

which would have made all strangulation a felony and also added a number of other protections for domestic abuse victims, including justifying the use of physical force against an abuser who had previously assaulted the person and seemed in imminent danger of doing so again. The bill never got out of committee, which Hansell said was due to concerns by the committee chair about making all strangulation on the same level in the sentencing guidelines instead of treating certain cases, such as strangulation in the presence of a minor on a higher level.

This time, Hansell said, thanks to agreements on making some strangulation circumstances a higher level on the sentencing guidelines, the bill that Hansell signed onto as a co-sponsor got the support to pass the Senate unanimously and move onto the House, which will hold its third reading and vote on the bill Friday.

"Everyone was very pleased," he said. "We're getting to where we wanted to be a few years ago."

Hansell said he became passionate about domestic violence-related legislation in his early days as a state senator after being invited to a meeting of domestic violence advocates in Pendleton. He said strangulation is "almost without fail" part of the pattern in cases of fatal domestic violence and for that reason he thinks getting perpetrators into prison for longer will help protect victims.

"It's going to save lives," he said.

## Snowpack fills in, still below average

By GEORGE PAVLEN  
EO MEDIA GROUP

February was a tale of two seasons for Oregon's snow-starved mountains and river basins.

The first half of the month saw warm and dry weather carry over from December and January, with total snowpack languishing around 40 percent of normal levels statewide. But winter has come roaring back over the last few weeks, doubling the amount of snow on the ground across some areas, especially in the northern Oregon Cascades.

Julie Koeberle, snow survey hydrologist for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in Portland, said the amount of snow at Mount Hood rose from 53 inches on Feb. 11 to 118 inches, showing an impressive turnaround.

"It's been really interesting," Koeberle said. "What we waited all season to get, we pretty much got in the last two weeks."

While conditions are much improved, Koeberle cautions snowfall is still lagging behind on average.

"We still need quite a bit more if we're going to catch up to normal," she said.

Portions of southern Oregon are in particularly

dire straits, with the Klamath and Owyhee basins still registering below 50 percent of normal snowpack. Klamath County commissioners have already declared a drought emergency, and farmers are bracing for a painful year.

The U.S. Drought Monitor shows virtually all of central and Eastern Oregon in some type of drought designation, from "abnormally dry" to "moderate drought." Koeberle said she would not be surprised to see more drought declarations as summer nears.

"In a perfect world, we will continue to get snow, but we can't count on that," she said.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center, the next three months should bring colder weather to northern Oregon and an equal chance of normal precipitation throughout the state. The lower temperatures should at least bode well for sustaining the current snowpack, Koeberle said, which in turn will help sustain streams longer into the season.

The NRCS will soon release its monthly streamflow forecast for March, which Koeberle said will reflect the latest gains in snowpack.