

Could second care group hinder local nonprofits?

SEEN FROM SEASIDE
R.J. MARX



The potential for a second coordinated care organization in Clatsop County could diminish the ability of some nonprofits to serve the needs of the community, Helping Hands Re-entry and Outreach Centers Executive Director Alan Evans said.

Along with the Columbia Pacific Coordinated Care Organization, Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc. and the insurer Moda Inc. have partnered and are seeking a contract.

Coordinated care organizations, through a contract with the Oregon Health Authority, determine eligibility for the Oregon Health Plan to provide quality physical, oral and behavioral health care to low-income and disabled patients.

“We’ve had this relationship for a long time,” Evans said of the partnership between Helping Hands and Columbia Pacific CCO. “A change in that with another person or agency coming in could mean the difference between us surviving in the role we’re taking now. It’s a scary thought that we would have to start from scratch with anyone else.”

Jonathan Nicholas, a spokesman for Moda, declined to comment. “We are not able to make any public comments at this time,” he wrote in an email.

How county’s CCO works

At the introduction of the coordinated care organization model in 2012, there was “a recognition that the health care system was broken,” Columbia Pacific CCO’s chief executive officer Mimi Haley said in a phone interview. “We convene the local conversations, local leaders, for us to have a unified discussion: What people need, and how we come together so we can bring those funds to the people who need them.”

The goal, she said, is to recognize the needs of the “whole person.” “To improve health, you need more than health care providers, you need to wrap services around people like Alan provides to help them get their basic needs met,” Haley said. “If you don’t have housing, food, a job, how can you be healthy? That was really the intent: to be locally governed to address local needs, for local issues, with local leadership.”

Helping Hands and other local providers receive funds through the CCO for a crisis worker, who can provide an evaluation without requiring admittance into the emergency room.

Crisis workers enable Helping Hands to sign people for the Oregon Health Plan right at the door.

The triage can save taxpayers and providers millions by determining need



Columbia Pacific CCO
Alan Evans, executive director of Helping Hands Re-entry Outreach Centers.



Columbia Pacific CCO
Mimi Haley, CEO of Columbia Pacific CCO.

‘GETTING OUT OF THE HOLE’

“Because we’re an organization that every agency in the community sends people to if they are unsheltered, we have the ability to find out who is in need and who is not,” Helping Hands Re-entry Outreach Centers Executive Director Alan Evans said. “The partnership with the CCO allows us to have that communication

so we can bring them the best services we basically can.”

The goal, he said, is to help individuals avoid the cycle of debt and medical bills that can mount from poverty.

Evans himself knows of what he speaks — formerly homeless himself, he said

he is “just getting out of the hole” after hundreds of thousands of dollars in medical bills. “I’m 17 years off the streets, and just last year paid of the last of my medical bills,” Evans said. “I bought a home. I couldn’t have done that with that money chasing me around. All of the costs were medical bills.”

New contracts

Earlier this year, insurers notified the state of their intent to apply for contracts as a coordinated care organization. People served by CCOs receive Oregon Health Plan coverage, a taxpayer-funded program for Medicaid.

This year, the state began accepting applications for a new five-year contract. Haley is “quite confident” Columbia Pacific CCO will receive another contract with the state.

Two CCOs in the county could have “half of the impact” and add unnecessary complexity to an already complicated process, Evans added.

“We have a system in place that works very, very well, that we’ve worked hard to get to,” he said. “When we have to shift our energy internally to change things the way we’ve done them before, that impact has a ripple effect through our organization. We do it on a shoestring budget now. To have any of those funding streams potentially cut in half or even worse — that’s scary for us.”

For Evans, his biggest concern is the lack of a voice in the process.

“From an agency’s point of view, it’s somebody else having a say-so thinking that they know what’s best for us. That’s a hard place to be.”

before heading to the hospital’s emergency room.

An email is automatically generated to an assistor who “meets them at the door the next day at 8 a.m. to provide them with that service,” Evans said. “We educate them on our partnership with the CCO and all the services that come with that health coverage.”

The crisis worker conducts an evaluation that can flag mental health issues, post-traumatic stress disorder and addiction, he said.

In the first six months of 2014, there were 64 calls to the Seaside Police Department for crisis situations, Evans said.

The average cost — two officers, one mental health worker and an emergency room visit — was estimated at \$1,832 per call.

After hiring a crisis/behavioral health manager in mid-June, in the last six months of 2014 there were a total of eight crisis calls — an 87% reduction in calls with an estimated savings to the hospitals and taxpayers of over \$100,000k.

“While we can’t assume that our crisis manager thwarted exactly 56 crisis calls, it is evidence that there was a significant impact and our clients received immediate triage services that prevented crisis escalation,” Evans said.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Seaside schools expensive

Seaside School District voters have chosen their leadership, and I congratulate Sandra Gomez on her election. I hope that the main goal will be improving the results being achieved by our underperforming school district.

It is interesting that voters never made an issue of the high cost of the new hillside campus. Our community is building a school facility that ranks among the top 10 most expensive school projects on a per-pupil-served basis in the U.S.

When discussing my alternative project, the school architect said that he never considered alternatives. The head of the county planning commission said that reducing costs by \$80 million is not important.

Do voters really expect this lack of interest in cost can continue? Do elected leaders not understand that the greatest contributor to the rising cost of housing is increased property taxes? Do leaders not understand that we cannot keep shuffling off the financing of our communities on increasing visitor bed taxes?

The second home owners who can’t vote in our elections — and who provide the bulk of the tax revenues for our schools and local government — will eventually seek less-costly vacation options.

So our mayor is correct: I am too analytical. But keep your eyes peeled, because I now intend to pursue the formation of a public utility district for our area which will reduce our electric bills by 30 percent, provide renewable power and survive a Cascadia event.

JOHN DUNZER
Seaside

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Tuesday, June 4

Community Center Commission meeting, 10:30 a.m., Bob Chisholm Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside.

Seaside Library Board, 4:30 p.m., Seaside Public Library, 1131 Broadway.

Seaside Planning Commission, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Wednesday, June 5

Seaside Improvement Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Gearhart City Council, 7 p.m., City

Hall, 698 Pacific Way.

Thursday, June 6

Seaside Parks Advisory Committee, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Monday, June 10

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Thursday, June 13

Convention Center Commission, 5 p.m., Seaside Civic and Convention Center, 415 First Ave.

Gearhart Planning Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 698 Pacific Way.

Tuesday, June 18

Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District, Bob Chisholm Community Center, 5:15 p.m., 1225 Avenue A, Seaside.

Seaside School District Board of Directors, 6 p.m., 1801 S. Franklin.

Seaside Planning Commission, work session, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Wednesday, June 19

Seaside Tourism Advisory Committee, 3 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Thursday, June 20

Seaside Transportation Advisory Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Monday, June 24

Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Tuesday, July 2

Community Center Commission meeting, 10:30 a.m., Bob Chisholm Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside.

Seaside Library Board, 4:30 p.m., Seaside Public Library, 1131 Broadway.

Saving lives at the border

VIEW FROM THE PORCH

EVE MARX



A few months ago a friend told me about a camping trip that took her near the Arizona border. She and her husband were in Ajo, which is about 50 miles from the U.S. border, not far from Oregon Pipe Cactus National Monument, a 530-square-mile park and UNESCO biosphere reserve currently enjoying a boom in tourism. My friend and her husband were passing through Ajo on their way to Puerto Penasco, Mexico. Their intention was to cross at the Lukeville Border Crossing in Arizona. Puerto Penasco is a small coastal community built around shrimping and fishing.

This was the third time my friend and her husband had passed through Ajo. This time they intended to learn more about the Ajo Samaritans providing humanitarian aid at the border.

My friend shared with me what she learned.

According to documentation from the Pima County office of the medical examiner, for the past 10 years migration has moved further into the western desert.

This means people are crossing through areas further from established roads where temperatures are hotter and water resources scarce.

Spring and summer are the primary times of year for migrant crossing. It’s hot in the desert, so death by dehydration is a risk.

Eighty percent of migrant desert crossing deaths happen just outside of Ajo. Last year, 58 bodies were found in the Ajo adjacent desert.

The medical examiner’s office said those deaths were from starvation, dehydration, and exposure. One of the bodies found last year was that of a 15-year-old female.

“It’s legal to provide humanitarian aid,” my friend said. “Food, water, and emergency medical attention, but that’s it.” She said through Ajo Samaritans, she learned the migrants used to be mostly agricultural workers, mostly adult males. Now it’s refugees from Central and South America and they are all ages and male and female.

At some locations along the border local authorities have tried to discourage humanitarian efforts, labeling food and water as ‘litter.’ Some humanitarian aid workers in Ajo have been arrested and charged with littering. This spring, already five human bodies have been found in the Oregon Pipe National Monument. Some people might describe human remains as litter. What’s worse, water bottles or human bodies? I guess it depends on whom you ask.

Feeling humanitarian? Should you be camping this summer in the Ajo area, you can connect with the Ajo Samaritans to offer your skills even for a few days as a first responder, Spanish speaker, cook, paralegal or attorney, bookkeeper, grant writer, caregiver, or artist.

All that’s required is you be a person of good intention and conscience.

Even if you never leave Seaside, you can donate sturdy shoes, boots, smaller size men’s pants, and cash to the Ajo Samaritan effort.

“These people are real people and they are coming,” my friend said. The Ajo Samaritans are allied with other humanitarian groups including Tucson Samaritans, Border Angels, No More Deaths, Humane Borders, and The Florence Project. For more information about the Ajo Samaritans, call 360-910-2543 or 520-428-9207, or check out their Facebook page, Ajo Samaritans.

Immigration is a complex issue, but decency is not.



Ajo Samaritans aim to provide humanitarian relief.

Seaside Signal

The Seaside Signal is published every other week by EO Media Group, 1555 N. Roosevelt, Seaside, OR 97138. 503-738-5561
seasidesignal.com
Copyright 2019 © Seaside Signal. Nothing can be reprinted or copied without consent of the owners.

Letter policy

The Seaside Signal welcomes letters to the editor. The deadline is noon Monday prior to publication. Letters must be 400 words or less and must be signed by the author and include a phone number for verification. We also request that submissions be limited to one letter per month. Send to 1555 N. Roosevelt Drive, Seaside, OR 97138, drop them off at 1555 N. Roosevelt Drive or fax to 503-738-9285, or email rmarx@seasidesignal.com

Subscriptions

Annually: \$40.50 in county • \$58.00 in and out of county • e-Edition: only \$30.00

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Seaside Signal, P.O. Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103. Postage Paid at Seaside, OR, 97138 and at additional mailing offices. Copyright 2019 © by the Seaside Signal. No portion of this newspaper may be reproduced without written permission. All rights reserved.