

# Teen suicide prevention effort needed

National, state-wide and local efforts are being made to turn around the decades long trend of rising suicide rates. The United States Surgeon General, Dr. David Satcher, has declared suicide a serious health concern and issued a call to action for states to develop suicide prevention strategies. Efforts to reduce the suicide rate show the greatest success when multiple strategies are employed simultaneously. Many risk factors associated with suicide attempts are known. Educating the public, the school and medical community about recognizing, and seeking help for, troubled teens is the goal of the Oregon Youth Suicide Prevention plan which outlines 15 strategies to coordinate long-term, system wide changes.

According to the Oregon Health Department (OHD), Oregonians in every age group die by suicide but the upward trend in rates over the past few decades has been driven principally by suicide among adolescents and young adults. The grim facts speak for themselves:

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among Oregonian's aged 10 to 24.

Oregon's 1997 suicide rate among youth was 17th in the nation.

In 1999, 16% of Oregon youth surveyed reported seriously considering suicide.

The rate of suicides among youth aged 15 to 19 increased nearly five-fold between 1960 and 1995.

Translated, this means that in every classroom of 30 students roughly five of them have considered suicide in the last year. Dr. Kirk Wolfe writes that adolescents who die by suicide are most likely to be clinically depressed when they complete suicide. Girls are twice as likely to be affected by depression as boys and are more than three times as likely to attempt suicide. However, boys are three times more likely to die by suicide, in part because boys tend to use more lethal means (e.g. guns). A key element of the Oregon plan is an effort to educate many people about the warning signs of depression in youth and offer simple, but effective, ways of discussing suicidal thoughts.

Banks, Forest Grove and

Gaston school district have banded together to be part of the solution. Counselors and teachers recognized at an introductory program in February that the three adjacent districts could band together to serve the needs of western Washington County. The district's combined their efforts to train members of the ten-member team last spring. Known as SAFE: Teen (Suicide Prevention For Everyone) will be taught to staff members during November and also offered to the community at two evening programs, November 13 and December 3 (in Banks).

The SAFE:Teen program offers everyone information about talking to teens. A simple pamphlet outlining a number of basic strategies (what to look for, what to say and what to do when talking to teens) will be distributed along with an extensive list of resources at the local level, in the school and more broadly available. The OHD site <www.ohd.hr.state.or.us> has the full text of the Oregon prevention plan, Dr. Wolfe's article about recognizing teen depression and "Five Minutes Can Save a Life". This is a three-step intervention that can be easily used by anyone who may come into contact with a suicidal individual, particularly youth.

**Inform the parents that the person is at risk for suicide and why you think so.** For example, if someone you know seems suicidal, has expressed intent to suicide, or has a plan for completing suicide, it is important to share your observation and concerns with the individual's parents, school counselor, or coach.

**Tell parents that they can**

**reduce the risk of suicide by removing firearms and other lethal means from the house.** Research shows that the risk of suicide doubles if a firearm is in the house, even if the firearm is locked up. Most suicide deaths in Oregon are completed with a firearm. Be aware that access to lethal means may be readily available at the home of other family members, friends, or neighbors.

**Discuss ways to limit access to firearms if they are in the home.** Police department are willing to inform the public about the best means of securing firearms. If parents are reluctant to involve law enforcement removal of firearms and storage in a secure location elsewhere is advised by OHD.

## 47J board works on homecoming, policies

**From page 10**  
the board that Matt Blair, high school boys basketball head coach, worked with her to interview and select coaches for the junior high boys basketball program. She said that Justin Ward's commitment to kids, both in the classroom and on the court was commendable. Ward will be head coach for the junior high program and will work with the seventh grade team. Jeff Cheney, formerly head boy's basketball coach at VHS, will assist Ward and coach the eighth grade team.

**Homecoming Issues**  
Scholl told the board that he was meeting with a group of parents to discuss issues about homecoming. He formed the group after hearing rumors that some parents and/or community members were displeased with some aspects of homecoming activities. He told the board that he had not received any phone calls, nor had any-

## Freecycle: How to turn today's trash into tomorrow's treasure

Freecycle Washington County has announced the launch of a new web site, as well as the inauguration of an accompanying message board, FreecycleWashCountyOregon. Based on the adage that "one person's trash is another person's treasure," Freecycle's goal is to connect people who wish to get rid of their old junk with those who just want free stuff. Anyone looking to discard or acquire an item is welcome at Freecycle Washington County, Oregon, where all items listed are absolutely free!

Established in November 2003, and hosted by Yahoo Groups, the Freecycle Washington County board serves the greater Washington Coun-

ty, Oregon area. Signing up for the group is simple, with instructions at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/freecycle-washcountyoregon>.

Freecycle Washington County is modeled after the Tucson Freecycle Network, founded in March 2003 and recently profiled in the September/October 2003 issue of Utne magazine. Created by the non-profit group "Downtown Don't Waste It", the Tucson Freecycle Network has sparked a worldwide "freecycling" revolution, with groups in several dozen cities and countries thus far. To see grassroots at its best, visit the home of the "freecycling" movement at <www.freecycle.org.>

one come to him with complaints. He strongly urged the public to bring comments to him in the future.

### Policy Revisions

Due to many changes at both state and national levels, many district policies must be updated over the next few months, so a streamlined process has been developed. Funderburg explained that he would present the board with several new or revised policies as information items each month; they will then be moved to the consent agenda for approval the following month. There is no discussion of items on the consent agenda and board members will contact Funderburg if they want to discuss any particular policy,

which will then be removed from the consent agenda and placed on the regular agenda as a business item for discussion. Asked if there was any way for members of the public to have impact on policy decisions, Funderburg said that patrons must contact a board member because only a board member can ask to have an item removed from the consent agenda. Policies presented this month dealt primarily with modifications of board and budget matters.

In other business the board:  
• Announced two openings on the budget committee. Applications are available at the district office.

• Agreed to offer for sale district property on Timber Road.

**Clint Vandehey**  
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