

Crisis/suicide phone line reports large increase

Calls to the state's 24-hour crisis and suicide prevention lines run by Oregon Partnership (OP) are coming in at a rate of about 50 percent higher than a year ago. And the economy is a major reason.

"It's been this way since September of last year," said Leslie Storm, Director of OP's Crisis Line Program. "It stands to reason that when the unemployment rate goes up and people are hurting financially, so does the tension level for more Oregonians."

OP reports a slight increase of calls in March 2009 compared to February 2009. Last month, 1,584 calls came in to LifeLine (OP's suicide prevention line) and 1,111 calls came into HelpLine (OP's alcohol and drug crisis line).

In January 2009, the lines received 71 percent more calls than it did the previous January.

"I wish I could say that with spring, we'll see fewer calls," says Storm. "But people are always surprised to learn that normally, we see an upsurge in deaths by suicide in April. Those suffering from depression, for example, are energized to take action."

Psychologists point out that someone deeply depressed often lacks the energy to plan and follow through with a suicide attempt, but once a depressed person starts to come out of his or her depression a bit, there's enough energy to

make a plan.

Storm adds that intervention is often sufficient for people to look for safe options and be available for those thinking of suicide.

OP's Suicide Prevention Line (1-800-273-TALK) is the state's only suicide crisis hotline certified by the American Association of Suicidology and is part of the National LifeLine Network.

Oregon Partnership's HelpLine (1-800-923-HELP) provides crisis intervention, including confidential alcohol and drug crisis counseling and treatment referral.

Operated by experienced staff and approximately 75 volunteers, who undergo 56 hours of crisis line skills training, the four lines – including The YouthLine and Linea de Ayuda – are the lifeblood for those in crisis and feel they have nowhere else to turn.

For this past fiscal year, more than 25,000 people received immediate assistance from this efficient and cost effective operation.

Oregon Partnership is a statewide nonprofit that has worked to promote healthy kids and communities for well over a decade, by raising awareness about drug and alcohol issues, providing prevention education in classrooms, and 24-hour crisis lines for people needing help. To learn more, visit www.orphnership.org.

Oregon obesity a public health crisis

The Task Force for a Comprehensive Obesity Prevention Initiative, created by the 2007 Legislature, released a report on March 31 showing that obesity among Oregon adults and children is increasing at alarming rates and calling for investments in science-based prevention programs.

"One in five Oregon children today is overweight or obese," said Bruce Goldberg, M.D., task force chairman and director of the Oregon Department of Human Services. "This is a public health crisis, and there is no time to lose in taking action."

In Oregon today, six of every 10 adults is overweight or obese – 1.7 million of Oregon's total adult population of 2.9 million. These adults have a higher risk of cancer, diabetes, heart disease and stroke, as well as high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

Every year, another 43,500 Oregon adults become obese. The proportion of obese adults has more than doubled in the past 18 years and the proportion of obese children has tripled in the past 20. Treating diseases related to obesity

costs Oregon \$781 million per year.

"The health care costs are staggering, but we cannot simply treat our way out of the problem," Goldberg said. "What we need, and the work of the task force supports this, is a comprehensive focus on preventing obesity."

"Obesity is not a problem of willower or personal character. People are not all that different than they were 30 years ago. What has changed is how and where we live," said Mary Lou Heinrich, MS, BUN, a member of the task force and executive director of Community Health Partnership: Oregon's Public Health Institute. "It is too easy to find high-calorie, low-nutrition food and way too easy to be sedentary at work and at home. We need to get to work and make healthy choices the easy choices."

Changing the environments where Oregonians live, work, study and play is a high priority of the task force. The report states that for Oregon to even begin to stem the tide of obesity, we must invest in a comprehensive prevention and educa-

tion program, bring physical activity and nutritious food back into our schools and our daily lives and make the healthy choices the easy choices.

The report also recommended policy changes in the areas of land use and transportation, and changes in school, work site and health care settings. "Choices about how active we are and what we eat are embedded in our social, cultural and physical environments. Changes in these environments caused the obesity epidemic. Changes in these environments are critical to ending the obesity epidemic."

The task force, formed by the 2007 Oregon Legislature, studied the epidemic and developed funding and policy recommendations. Among the recommendations:

- Invest an initial \$10 million per year in a statewide, science-based obesity prevention and education program

- Invest an initial \$3.5 million per biennium to support physical education in schools.

Link to report on Web: www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/copi/

How to practice non-toxic lawn care

Like many moms, Michelle Franz a Southeast Portland mother is worried about her daughter's health. That's one reason why she's encouraging mothers across the state to use a website sponsored by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to help her keep her lawn healthy to protect her child.

"Children are more sensitive to chemicals and contaminants when they are young and are

much more likely to get into them when they are crawling around on the grass," says Franz.

Michelle is featured on a video on the Healthy Lawns, Healthy Families website, www.healthylawns.org. On the site, people tell stories about how they successfully use natural methods to create healthy, attractive lawns without chemicals to protect their children and pets.

DEQ created this website to provide information about how to have a great-looking lawn without chemical fertilizers and

weed killers. Natural lawn care can actually produce a healthier lawn. Healthy grass can help keep weed populations down.

Misuse and overuse of pesticides and chemical fertilizers on the lawn can lead to lawn problems. Rain or irrigation often washes the chemicals off the lawn and into storm drains and ultimately to rivers and streams. Once in the water, the chemicals can cause problems for fish including birth defects and reproductive sterilization. In addition, this pollution builds up in the tissues of fish and

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Free talk on women's heart health

Women and Heart Disease will be the topic of a free 90-minute presentation on Thursday, May 14, at 6:00 p.m. at the Tuality Health Education Center at 334 SE 8th Ave., Hillsboro.

Nearly 39 percent of all female deaths in America occur from cardiovascular disease

(CVD). Yet, there are still misperceptions that CVD is not a real problem for women.

Learn what steps women can take to maintain and improve their heart health.

If you plan to attend, please call 503-681-1700 so they can plan for the correct number of attendees.

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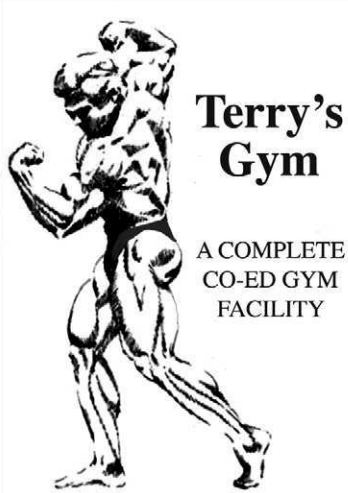
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