Sprague's Wyatt Connolly leads with arm and bat

SPORTS, 1B

Statesman Journal

THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2022 | STATESMANJOURNAL.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN OREGON

Report: more could be done to reduce risk

Claire Withycombe
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

The breach of the Oregon Capitol days before Christmas in 2020 and the hours-long standoff with police capped a year of heightened politically-motivated violence, auditors said Wednesday.

In an advisory report released Wednesday, auditors say the state could do more to prevent these events from happening and improve coordination between levels of government and different agencies fighting the threat of extremist acts.

Oregon ranks 27th among states in population, but came in sixth among states for violent extremist attacks between 2011 and 2020, auditors said, citing data from the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Earlier this month, the Southern Poverty Law Center reported there were 10 active hate groups in Oregon, and that extremist ideas were moving further into mainstream politics.

These threats have "become increasingly complex and volatile," auditors wrote Wednesday, with people using social media and websites to propagate "extremist narratives and activity."

State law doesn't define or criminalize domestic violent extremism. Auditors suggested Oregon consider looking to other states that define domestic violent extremism or "terroristic acts" in their laws and which can mean the state can charge offenders if federal standards aren't met.

Federal law defines domestic terrorism as "acts dangerous to human life" that are illegal, primarily take place on US soil and appear to intend to influence a government or intimidate people.

Auditors also said that domestic acts of terror can target key infrastructure, like water systems, or hospitals.

"Domestic terrorists draw from many

See EXTREMISM, Page 6A

Leading the effort

Kloi Spencer is president of Backbone, a group of youth working to find solutions to youth homelessness.
PHOTOS BY ABIGAIL DOLLINS/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Local kids offer plan to eliminate youth homelessness

Dianne Lugo
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

To eliminate youth homelessness in the Marion-Polk region, the community must better identify at-risk and unaccompanied youth, expand prevention strategies and entry processes to link youth to services, and urgently needs more permanent and transitional housing.

That's what dozens of community partners and homeless youth have determined after six months of drafting the Coordinated Community Plan, which they have submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for approval.

HUD awarded the Marion-Polk region a $3.7 million grant to help combat a growing crisis of youth and young

See HOMELESSNESS, Page 6A

HOME Youth Services offers a safe space for youth ages 11 to 18.

Four killed in crash at homeless encampment remembered

Dianne Lugo
and Whitney Woodworth
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

A makeshift memorial with flowers rests where an alleged drunk driver ran off the road and crashed into an encampment in Salem early Sunday, killing four people and seriously injuring two others.

The victims killed were Jowand Beck, 24, Luke Kagey, 21, Joe Posada III, 54, and Rochelle Zamacona, 29.

Two other people were injured and remain hospitalized: Derrick Hart, age 43; and Savannah Miller, age 18.

The man behind the wheel, Enrique Rodriguez Jr., 24, is facing manslaughter, reckless driving and DUI charges.

Those slain in the crash are remembered as parents, beloved children and friends.

Luke Kagey

The mother of Luke Kagey's newborn daughter, Kristina McGill, described Kagey as a funny and energetic young man. He had turned 21 just days before the crash. His daughter was born March 5.

Kagey

McGill met Kagey when they were assigned to carpool together in middle school at Horizon Christian in Tualatin where he was on the track and field team and in the robotics club. They began dating in March of 2021 but were no longer together when he was killed.

"He had a big heart," she said. "He was funny and energetic, always ready for an adventure."

She learned that he had died when Kagey's mom called her Sunday morning.

"We were just beginning the process of setting something up for them (Luke and his daughter) to hang out and to figure out custody agreements,"

See CRASH, Page 4A

USA TODAY

Refugees top 4M: Tally exceeds U.N.'s highest prediction as Ukrainians continue to flee from war. **10A**

South Salem development

Contentious Meyer Farm subdivision plan approved, with some changes. **3A**

Weather

High 56° ▮ Low 36°
Mostly cloudy.
Forecast, **12A**

Volume 170 | No. 346
Home delivery pricing inside
Subscribe 800-452-2511
©2022
$2.00

0 40901 07401 4

CDC drops cruise ship COVID-19 health warning

David Koenig
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Federal health officials are dropping the warning they have attached to cruising since the beginning of the pandemic, leaving it up to vacationers to decide whether they feel safe getting on a ship.

Cruise-ship operators welcomed Wednesday's announcement, which came as many people are thinking about summer vacation plans.

An industry trade group said the move by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention validated measures that ship owners have taken, including requiring crew members and most passengers to be vaccinated.

The CDC removed the COVID-19 "cruise ship travel health notice" that was first imposed in March 2020 after virus outbreaks on several ships around the world.

However, the agency expressed reservations about cruising.

"While cruising will always pose some risk of COVID-19 transmission,

Cruise operators welcomed Wednesday's announcement, which came as many people are mulling summer vacation plans. MIC SMITH/AP FILE

travelers will make their own risk assessment when choosing to travel on a cruise ship, much like they do in all other travel settings," CDC spokesperson Dave Daigle said in an email.

Daigle said the CDC's decision was based on "the current state of the pandemic and decreases in COVID-19 cases onboard cruise ships over the past several weeks."

COVID-19 cases in the United States have been falling since mid-January, although the decline has slowed in recent weeks, and the current seven-day rolling average for daily new cases in the U.S. is roughly unchanged from two weeks ago, according to figures from Johns Hopkins University. States have rolled back mask mandates.

Outbreaks continue to be reported on cruise ships, which conduct random testing before the end of voyages.

On Sunday, a Princess Cruises ship returning from the Panama Canal had "multiple" passengers who had tested positive for the virus. Princess Cruises said all the affected passengers showed mild symptoms or none at all, and that all crew members and passengers had been vaccinated. About a dozen passengers tested positive before the same boat docked in San Francisco in January.

Operators are required to tell the CDC about virus cases on board ships. The agency has a color-coded system to classify ships based on the percentage of passengers who test positive. The CDC said that system remains in place.

Cruise-ship operators have complained since the start of the pandemic that their industry has been singled out for a shutdown and then tighter COVID-19 restrictions than others, including airlines.

The Cruise Lines International Association said in a statement that the CDC's decision to remove its health warning "recognizes the effective public health measures in place on cruise ships and begins to level the playing field between cruise and similarly situated venues on land."

Colleen McDaniel, editor in chief of Cruise Critic, a site that publishes review of trips, called the CDC decision big news.

"Symbolically, it's a notice of winds of change when it comes to cruising," she said. "I do think it can convince some of the doubters. What the CDC says does matter to cruisers."

Extremism

Continued from Page 1A

philosophies and worldviews to justify illegal acts," they wrote.

Their report pointed to Oregon's "history of violent extremism" – ranging from the 1984 contamination of a salad bar in The Dalles by the followers of the spiritual leader Rajneesh, which sickened more than 700 people, to the occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Harney County in 2016. Oregon saw a "spike" in these incidents in 2020, including the breach of the state Capitol and the shooting of a protestor by another protestor in Portland.

That history means the state must focus more on ways to diminish the risk that extremist activities pose, auditors said.

"Attacks on the Oregon state capitol and the U.S. capitol over the last couple years clearly demonstrated the risk to public safety and the high cost on public resources resulting from domestic terrorism and violent extremism," said Audits Division Director Kip Memmott. "Our report notes that Oregon is especially at high risk for this type of violence."

The report also suggested the state's homeland security council come up with a statewide strategy that includes "specific, measurable outcomes" to counter extremist activities, and that the state revise its plan to protect critical infrastructure like hospitals and power plants with the "latest information" on threats of domestic violent extremism.

Different agencies on different levels of government have overlapping jurisdiction over extremist acts, which could be inefficient and can lead to "confusion and miscommunication," auditors said. Formal working agreements between levels of government could mean that time-sensitive information could flow more efficiently between parties.

The report also recommended the state should look for more federal money to support its efforts to mitigate the risk of domestic extremism, and that more training for police and state employees could mean the state could do a better job "identifying potential threats," auditors said.

And they said the state should have a system for being transparent about domestic extremism because policymakers have a hard time understanding the "nature and extent of the threat" because public information is so limited. Neither Oregon nor the feds publish reports on terror plots or incidents, but auditors said they should be reported to the public when the information doesn't compromise privacy or security. They said the state should boost awareness of extremism, and how extremist groups recruit and target people online.

The state's Department of Justice and the Oregon State Police are responsible for preventing and responding to crimes that could meet the definition of domestic terrorism or violent extremism.

"Oregon must be an inclusive place where everyone is and feels safe," Secretary of State Shemia Fagan said in a statement. "The rise in domestic terrorism is an immediate threat to Oregonians and we cannot simply wait for the next incident to occur. We can and must take immediate steps to prevent individuals at risk from being radicalized and becoming violent."

State Rep. Paul Evans, D-Monmouth, who sits on the Oregon Homeland Security Council, said the report "underscores the critical nature of the work we still haven't finished."

"We must become more focused upon strengthening our statewide security posture against cyber and physical attacks upon our people and place," Evans said in a statement. "...I look forward to working with stakeholders to build upon the reforms we have made over these past few years."

Claire Withycombe is the state government reporter for the Statesman Journal. She can be reached at cwithycombe@statesmanjournal.com or 503-910-3821.

Homelessness

Continued from Page 1A

adults experiencing homelessness.

If the proposal for spending that money is approved, community partners could soon begin funding projects designed to fulfill the outlined recommendation.

The Youth Homeless Demonstration Program grant was awarded to 33 communities across the nation in this round. It was the first time Marion and Polk counties were successful in getting the funding.

For the past six months, the Youth Action Board, also known as Backbone, has led the effort to determine how the region should spend the funds. The board is made up of 18 youth members who have all experienced homelessness.

The name of the group, Backbone, acknowledges how the circumstances of homelessness forced members to grow a backbone very young and also reflects the group's commitment to using their now-strong backbones to make a difference, said Marianne Bradshaw, a Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance consultant who led the planning process.

Thousands in need

The goal is to provide additional assistance to the 5,800 youth at risk of homelessness in Marion County. They make up 14% of the county's total youth population. There are an additional estimated 1,100 at-risk youth in Polk County.

And then there are about 1,540 youth ages 13-24 already experiencing homelessness in the region, according to data and research from local government and advocacy groups.

Youth of color are over-represented among those experiencing homelessness, according to the report.

According to 2020 Census data, the total population in Marion and Polk counties is 25% Hispanic/Latinx, 22% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 0.8% Black or African American, 0.4% Pacific Islander or Hawaiian Native, and 10.6% two or more races. But youth experiencing homelessness were 34.4% Hispanic/Latinx, 3.6% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 5.5% Black or African American, 0.8% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 10.1% Other (often multiracial).

The plan also outlines an effort to direct additional action to youth and young adults that are members of the LGBTQ community. Using data from a 2019 Oregon community college survey, the report estimates 20-25% of young adults in the region identify as a part of the LGBTQ community. In the survey, 27% of bisexual students and 23% of gay and lesbian students reported experiencing homelessness in the past year. About 18% of heterosexual respondents reported experiencing homelessness.

Other special populations identified in the report include survivors of sex trafficking and exploitation, youth in the justice system, and youth in the child welfare or foster care system.

Youth-led plan

Bradshaw emphasized that the plan was youth-led.

The planning team began meeting in December and met every Thursday, taking the big picture vision and values and creating a solid community plan, said Kloi Spencer, President of Backbone.

"We had an original vision and mission statement and as the youth action board revised it, we edited it to what we really wanted to see in the community," Spencer said.

The adults like Bradshaw or Tricia Frizzell, Program Director at Community Action Agency's Home Youth Services, helped the youth meet deadlines and plan agendas but the youth "are doing the thing," Spencer said.

There are youth as young as 11 on the board and as old as 25 and each person contributed to the plan, she said.

"It's not just an outside consultant saying, you know, here's a top priority, let's do this or let's put money here," Bradshaw said. "It's youth and young adults who have walked that walk saying, 'This is what will be most helpful.'"

The $3.7 million is not "remotely enough" for all the needs in the system but it is a starting place, she said.

Spencer, President of Backbone, said she is blown away by the progress youth have been able to lead. She also has an 'elevator pitch' ready to go about Backbone and the grant for anyone willing to listen.

"I usually tell people, 'There's a Youth Action Board here in the community of youth and young adults who've experienced homelessness and our job is to end youth homelessness in Marion and Polk County. We recently just got funding from the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program which is a $3.69 million grant to help end youth homelessness here in our community," Spencer said.

Key goals

More than 170 people representing 72 agencies and organizations participated in the development of the "Mid-Willamette Valley Coordinated Community Plan to End Youth Homelessness."

The group's shared vision is: Every youth and young adult has a safe and stable place in their community to live, sleep, connect and thrive, where each unique individual feels valued being their authentic self and has supported opportunities to become confidently self-sufficient.

"Kids need a place to stay but also a place where they can thrive and connect with other people," Spencer explained.

The 58-page plan submitted to HUD this week outlines the goals to reach that vision:

- Identify all unaccompanied youth.
- Use prevention and diversion strategies whenever possible.
- Use coordinated entry processes to effectively link all youth experiencing homelessness to housing and services solutions that are tailored to their needs.
- Swiftly assist youth to move into permanent or non-time-limited housing options with appropriate services and support.
- Have resources, plans and system capacity in place to continue to prevent and quickly end future experiences of homelessness among youth.
- Have a comprehensive youth homelessness system that ensures equity in access, experiences while seeking and receiving services, and outcomes for all across the geographic region.

Proposed projects to reach those goals include expanding sites where youth experiencing homelessness can access information about housing and services. Currently, sites for coordinated entry are based in Salem, but the plan recommends partner sites in Dallas, Santiam Canyon, Silverton and Woodburn. The plan also suggests creating youth-identified ways to access the coordinated entry process such as developing an app to self-refer or request an assessment. The community also needs to adopt a coordinated entry assessment tool for youth younger than 18.

Additional objectives include building out youth and young adult pathways to permanent and non-time limited housing options such as replicating the Host Homes model where families volunteer to host homeless youth, adding a lottery system to the Salem Public Housing Authority plan for 18-24-year-olds, and increasing long-term housing options designed for youth.

The hope and vision are more than just having shelters and more than just having the necessities, Bradshaw said.

"Our hope is to go beyond that, where each person can connect then thrive regardless of your identity or regardless of where you are geographically," she said.

Once approved by HUD, they can begin the Request for Proposal process where community organizations will be able to submit proposals for funding. A committee would be formed to review proposals to ensure that projects receiving funding match the priorities outlined in the coordinated community plan.

That committee will be made up of 50% youth and young adults with lived experience with homelessness, Bradshaw said, to continue elevating youth leadership.