

### The Behavioral Health Unit (BHU) News

Goodbye winter, Hello spring. The BHU is looking forward to more mild weather and the sights and smells of spring.

## ECIT AND PATROL OFFICERS ASSIST RESIDENTIAL FACILITY

BHU recently received an email from an administrator and therapist at the Centennial House expressing appreciation for the way East Precinct handled a call at their facility. ECIT Officer Hristov, Officer Dick, Officer Scott, and Sergeant Steinbronn responded to this call.

Facility staff had written a directors hold on one of the residents who refused to go to the hospital and locked himself in his room. Officers spent over an hour talking to the resident through his door and were able to locate the resident's psychiatrist. Working with the resident, psychiatrist, and facility staff, officers were able to develop a plan that allowed the resident to avoid a trip to the hospital and remain at the facility. Facility staff appreciated that the officers listened and took their concerns seriously.

The administrator in her email said, "The psychiatrist and I were both very impressed with the patience and professionalism shown by the officers. Thank you for all you do and for balancing safety and compassion in your response to individuals with mental illnesses."

## UPCOMING NAMI WALK

On Sunday, May 21, 2017 PPB and BHU will be participating in the 15th annual NAMI Walk on the Eastbank Esplanade in Portland, Oregon. Please come join us for this event. People from all around Oregon and Southwest Washington walk to make a statement that mental health matters, that recovery is possible and that no one should be ashamed or embarrassed to ask for help.

[www.namiwalks.org](http://www.namiwalks.org)



## Service Coordination Team



Wyndham McNair

Central City Concern

Housing Rapid Response

SCT Case Manager

On July 17, 2014, I landed in jail facing almost 6 years in prison for Measure 11. I was very scared and did not know what to do. I knew the incident was a direct result of my addiction. I was hanging out at the wrong places, with the wrong people, doing the wrong things. At that point, I thought my life was over and was ready to give up on being successful in life. Luckily, this program offered me a chance to prove that I was different by affording me the opportunity for another chance at being successful in my youth. I also feel I was spared from being institutionalized.

When I enrolled in the program, I came in with the desire to do something different. The “game plan,” was surprisingly simple: stay clean, go to outpatient treatment and don’t break the law. I was so grateful, I did my best to do everything I was supposed to do. Along the way, I was surprised by the fact that there was a huge amount of support. When I got to the program, I was an emotional wreck. The program staff made me feel like I mattered, that I was worth the effort and last, but not least, they supplied me with the one thing that I needed most - HOPE!

I was able to process my thoughts and emotions with every staff person. By, “everyone,” I mean *everyone*. One of the biggest surprises was the Portland Police Officers who were very supportive. I remember wondering, “How did I become so open-minded that I was willing to give an officer a chance?” Officer Sean Christian and Officer Billy Kemmer would eat meals with us, listen to our stories and ask how we were doing. I felt they respected me and were supporting my decision to change my life. I no longer felt as if they were waiting for me to mess up and lock me up.

After a month in the program, I was getting stable in recovery, engaged in treatment moved to the second phase of the program. I completed community service, found employment and was involved in 12 step recovery program, in which I am still involved to this day. For the first time in my life, I was fully applying the skills I was learning in treatment and the program, and it was beginning to show. I was feeling good about myself and the progress I was making. I felt like a real human being again.

I stayed in the program for over a year. I got my driver’s license back, became employed full time, found a sponsor, began working the 12 steps and built healthy relationships with men who went through the program and are still clean to this very day.

I’m currently a Case Manager, working directly for the same program I graduated from. I get to come to work every day and inspire other addicts from similar backgrounds to get clean and live a happy, productive life like I do today. I could not be more happy.

I plan on getting my counseling license back and continue my story with the program. This program has saved my life and there isn’t a day that goes by where I don’t think how *eternally* grateful I am that the program was here when I needed it. My goal is to give back by spreading hope to the addict that still suffers.

## ECIT OFFICERS TALK JUMPER OFF OF OVERPASS

On March 20th, 2017 Officers Hall and Matica were called to the area of SW Columbia St. and 13th Ave. on the report of a suicidal subject who wanted to jump off the SW Columbia Street overpass. The individual was standing on the wrong side of the safety railing, and was surrounded by bystanders.

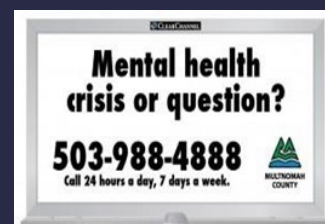
When the officers arrived they could clearly see the individual in crisis and that he was barely hanging on the wrong side of the railing, approximately 35-50 feet over the interstate. More officers arrived to help and the Northbound lanes of I-405 off ramp to SW 14th Avenue and SW Salmon street were shut down. AMR was also requested to respond.

ECIT Officer Hall engaged the individual in a conversation while Officer Matica directed bystanders to move aside. Officer Hall quickly learned that the individual was going through a crisis as the result of breaking up with his girlfriend. Over the next 10 minutes or so, Officer Hall and Officer Matica took turns building rapport. The individual told the officers that he wanted to jump and kill himself. His mood was constantly changing from being angry and delusional, to quiet and looking down at the off ramp. The individual said he wanted to kill himself because he got in a fight with his girlfriend and he could not reach her by phone.

The officers offered to assist the individual by helping him contact his girlfriend. Officer Matica said that he would allow the individual to use his phone, but that he needed to get on the right side of the railing first. Officer Hall calmly explained to the individual that he was not in any trouble, they were only there to help him.

After another 10 minutes, the individual moved over the railing and walked with the officer to the parking lot. Officer Matica kept his promise allowing the individual to use his phone. The officers also learned that the individual had a diagnosed mental illness and had not been taking his medication.

The individual was taken to the hospital and placed on a police hold due to his actions. He asked if the officers would be able to give his girlfriend a ride to the hospital to be with him, and the officers were able to do so.



## POLICE HELP FAMILY MEMBERS AND AN ARMED INDIVIDUAL IN CRISIS

On February 19, 2017, Portland Police responded to a Southeast Portland home to help rescue residents from their family member who was armed with multiple firearms, including an AK-47, and in crisis. At the time of the incident, the 911 caller told police he was worried that his brother's escalating psychotic condition and aggression could result in harm to the family. Police learned that the man in crisis believed that people were actively trying to break in and hurt him. The caller was hiding from his brother in the basement, and their 83-year-old mother was in another part of the house.

An ECIT officer, sergeants, and other officers formed and executed a plan to safely evacuate the frightened caller and his 83-year-old mother from the home. The man in crisis eventually came outside in search of the people whom he perceived were attacking him. Sergeant Hughes communicated with the man at a safe distance with a loud speaker. The man followed directions and was taken into custody with the help of ECIT Officer Stephen Jack's de-escalation skills. The man was transported to an area hospital where he received treatment and care. Sixteen firearms were consensually removed from the home for safekeeping.

## CRISIS NEGOTIATION TEAM AWARD



Congratulations to our Crisis Negotiations Team. They recently took 2nd place, only missing 1st by a small fraction of a percentage point, in a competition with teams from North America. They placed 1st in this same competition in 2015. In the past four years, they have placed 1st in multiple competitions around the United States. Amazing accomplishments by the best Crisis Negotiation Team in the U.S.!

## BHU Welcomes Lindsey Higginson



**Lindsey Higginson**  
Clinician

Lindsey Higginson joined the Behavioral Health Unit full time as one of the clinicians assigned to work on a Behavioral Health Response Team (BHRT). She comes from Project Respond Cascadia where she worked for a year. Prior to that, Lindsey had 14 years of social service experience including working for Jackson County Mental Health, the VA Hospital in San Antonio, University of Arizona, Central Arizona Shelter Services, Maricopa Associations of Governments, and USVets Phoenix.

Lindsey received her undergraduate degree from Arizona State University and her master's degree at the University of Texas, Austin. She has extensive training and experience in crisis intervention, risk assessment, safety planning, mental health and substance use assessment, case management, and coordination of care.

Lindsey is excited about her role in BHU and being able to “help people in mental health crisis; connecting them, as well as their support system and the community, with resources that will mitigate risk and improve their well-being”.

---

### Editor's Note:

As I was editing this edition of our newsletter I noted one of the stories included a Bureau member who passed away after a tragic accident. Officer Devonna Dick was a 23 year veteran of the Police Bureau and will be remembered for her compassionate service to our community.

---