When a tragedy hits, a community responds

We came together after the events at Umpqua Community College

ct. 1, 2015, was a day that rocked our world and broke our hearts. The mass shooting at Umpqua Community College was so personal, so local, so much about us. The kind of tragedy that we somehow thought only could happen in other communities, or in other schools, actually happened to us — in Roseburg, Oregon, a town of 22,000 residents.

We needed to cry, help the victims, and put in place a community response to the crisis — all at the same time.

Oct. 1 was also the day we discovered the resilience and capacity of the Douglas County community. We saw first responders performing beyond all expectations. We saw people from all walks of the community come together in extemporaneous acts of sharing and kindness. Organizations stepped up to support the college’s capable leadership. People dropped everything and came from across the state — across the country — to help out.

Telling the stories

We are devoting this issue of Community Vitality to telling these stories. If anything good is to come from this event, we need to look at what happened, examine our response and identify what worked, and equally as important, what did not work.

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OCTOBER 1, 2015

Nonstop demands test leaders

The events of Oct. 1, 2015, spun Umpqua Community College into a whirlwind that demanded much more of college leadership than anyone ever would have anticipated. Multiple, competing demands came nonstop: evacuating the campus, coordinating with law enforcement, supporting victims and the campus population, handling the voracious media, and making plans for the college reopening.

UGC’s two top leaders weren’t even in Roseburg on the morning of the shootings. Rita Cavin, the college’s interim president, was on her way to Grants Pass for a meeting when her phones, both work and personal, started ringing nonstop. “I pulled over and, as soon as I saw the first message, I called the college, turned on the radio, then started back,” she remembers.

Vanessa Becker, chair of the UCC board of trustees, was more than three hours away in Brookings on business when she saw notices on Facebook. One of her first calls was to UCC’s director of community relations, Lee Salter, in her Snyder Hall office. Salter, who was taking shelter under her desk, told Becker she thought the shooting had stopped in the classroom next door. “I’ll be there as soon as I can,” Becker told her.

Upon Cavin’s return to Roseburg, she went through police barricades to meet with the college’s head of security, who was organizing buses for evacuating the campus. That afternoon, Cavin and Becker met at the Douglas County Fairgrounds, which was serving as a reunification center for students and families.

Becker immediately went into what she calls “director mode,” finding out what services were available, what was happening, and how to support people right away. She helped arrange for the University of Oregon crisis team to come to Roseburg through a Department of Justice contact. She called mental health contacts to mobilize a response, and she helped set up support for families and staff at the fairgrounds.

Media demands immediately became a concern. Within minutes of the first reports, both Cavin and Becker were besieged by calls from national media. “We were still evacuating, and the whole time my phone was ringing with calls. MSNBC, Fox, CNN—the phone just kept ringing,” Cavin said.

“The Wolf Blitzer show and CNN were calling me within 25 minutes of it happening,” Becker said. “I don’t even know how they got my cell phone number!”

Cavin figures she spoke at three press conferences that first night, with Becker by her side. She also talked at an emotional candlelight vigil at Stewart Park attended by hundreds. When Becker got home, she took off her comfortable turquoise jacket and threw it in the trash. “I didn’t want to see it again,” she said. “I was on all those newscasts, people had cried on it all day. I found out later that quite a few women had done that. We didn’t give them to Goodwill, we just threw them out.”

Friday, Oct. 2, 2015

The next day turned into a blur. Outside help from the Oregon Community College Association and the University of Oregon (see page 10) began to arrive. Cavin started the day with interviews at 8 a.m. The college cabinet met at 9 a.m. to sort through everything that needed to be done. Becker arrived at the meeting thinking, “This is too much,” but Becker remembers the mood at the press conference as local leaders prepared to meet the media. “That was really rough. It was the first time we had seen the names of the nine victims, and the energy in the room quickly evaporated,” she said. “We all stood up, squared our shoulders and said, ‘Let’s do this.’”

They walked into what Becker describes as a “crazy, insane media circus.” “I’ve done a lot of media stuff before, but not like that,” she said. “All I could think was, please, don’t puke.”

When it was her turn, Becker, who held her composure, mentioned the victims and talked about when the campus would reopen.

Over the next few days, the UCC management team met several times daily for up to three hours each time, assigning tasks, leaving to take action, and then coming back a few hours later to build a new list. Cavin began giving eulogies at funerals, and the management continued to work around the clock. Becker remembers the mood at the press conference as local leaders prepared to meet the media. “That was really rough. It was the first time we had seen the names of the nine victims, and the energy in the room quickly evaporated,” she said. “We all stood up, squared our shoulders and said, ‘Let’s do this.’”

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Most giving happens within the first 90 days; balance short- and long-term needs of victims

Douglas County has become a member of a club no one wants to join — the group of communities faced with unimaginable calamity. As other agencies played their parts in the aftermath of the Umpqua Community College shootings, Greater Douglas United Way in Roseburg was clear about its role.

Executive Director Bryan Trenkle’s immediate goal was to establish a system to accept donations to aid victims. He and his office manager, Annette Rummel, knew they also needed to ensure contributions were monitored responsibly.

One of Trenkle’s first actions was to call Umpqua Bank. Cheryl Martin, vice president and store manager of the bank’s Sutherlin branch, opened the account with a personal deposit of $20; the bank itself quickly followed with a $25,000 donation.

Meanwhile, UCC Foundation Executive Director Dennis O’Neill was considering similar action. Within 24 hours, O’Neill and Trenkle met to discuss combining their efforts. Keavy Cook, director of Children, Youth and Families at The Ford Family Foundation, brought technical expertise to the meeting. The result of their collaboration would become one fund called “UCC Strong.”

Both GDUW and the UCC Foundation quickly modified their online donation buttons to allow direct contributions to UCC Strong.

Ninety days

The swift action was justified. Traditionally, 90 percent of donations for disaster relief are made within 90 days of the event, with few donations being made after that, according to Bob Ottenhoff, president of the Center for Disaster Philanthropy.

With the mechanics in place to accept donations, Trenkle next made calls to United Way offices in states that had also experienced mass shootings. The most fruitful connection emerged from Blacksburg, Virginia.

Kymn Davidson-Hamley, executive director of the United Way of Montgomery, Radford and Floyd, was on vacation when Trenkle reached her office. Even so, she was on the phone within the hour, expressing her condolences.

“She and her office started to send me resources they basically created from scratch after the Virginia Tech massacre in 2007,” Trenkle said.

Virginia visitors

It was soon clear to him that a visit from Davidson-Hamley would be invaluable. A grant paid for her and a volunteer to come to Roseburg for five days starting Oct. 12.

Nancy Straw, director of Community Economic Development at The Ford Family Foundation, said Davidson-Hamley brought a rational voice to the table. She shared expertise, forms, thought processes and pitfalls.

“Kymn helped us figure out how to distribute funds in an equitable manner in a short period of time,” Straw said. “We had to put a priority not only on the victims who had died, but also the victims who were injured, and people who were in the classroom when it happened or in adjoining rooms.”

Using the Virginia-based United Way’s system as a blueprint, organizers crafted a process to fit local needs.

Initial distribution

Within weeks of the shooting, UCC Strong made an initial distribution of $145,000 to victims, their families and the Salvation Army, which had stepped up to help with immediate financial needs.

Within six months, UCC Strong received nearly $1.3 million with donations coming from around the world and all 50 states. By February 2016, three phases of distributions had been made. About half of the fund had been granted.

Trenkle said it was crucial to give funding decisions to a committee with broad community representation. “We realized that United Way can be an umbrella of the fund, but shouldn’t make decisions for the fund.”

Today’s 11-member UCC Strong committee consists of respected leaders from local business, nonprofit groups, families at The Ford Family Foundation quickly modified its role.

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Lucas Eibel

A lover of animals who was also a ‘wizard of wit’ and a ‘prince of prose’

Lucas Eibel loved animals. People who knew the 18-year-old described him as thoughtful and kind, with an unexpectedly wicked sense of humor. One of his siblings in a tight-knit family, he was by all accounts the quietest one of a set of fraternal quadruplets, three brothers and a sister. But not always. “Once you got him out of his shell and once you got him talking, he could explain it to them, by doing anything bad, he was just kind.”

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Lucas Eibel, 1997 - 2015

Lucas was also a recipient of a Ford Sons & Daughters scholarship, and when The Ford Family Foundation sent out test messages on Oct. 1 checking scholarship, and when The Ford Family Foundation sent out test messages on Oct. 1, checking future needs.

Lucas Eibel was a ‘wizard of wit’ and a ‘prince of prose’

Lucas Eibel (right) with his father and four siblings on a family hiking trip near Mt. Hood in 2014.

Lucas Eibel

In remembrance:

Lucero Alcaraz, Roseburg, 19. Lucero, who had received a full tuition scholarship from UCC, was studying to be a pediatric doctor or nurse.

Trevon Anspach, Suther- lin, 20. Trevon, a basketball player on the UCC Riverhawks team, was described as a quiet leader who brought out the best in those around him.

Rebecka Carnes, Myrtle Creek, 18. Rebecka, a UC scholarship student, had plans to become a dental assistant and had just started her first job.

Quinn Cooper, Roseburg, 18. Quinn enjoyed video acting, playing online games with his older brother, and practicing mixed martial arts.

Kim Saltmarsh Dietz, Roseburg, 59, Kim, a native of England, had returned to college to pursue a bachelor’s degree in science.

Lucas Eibel, Roseburg, 18, Lucas, a Ford Family scholar- ship recipient, loved animals and was studying chemistry.

Jason Johnson, Winston, 33, Jason had just started col- lege in search of a fresh start, after getting his GED about six months earlier.

Lawrence Levin, Glode, 62, The English professor was also a fly-fishing guide on the North Umpqua River.

Sarena Moore, Myrtle Creek, 44. Sarena was attending UCC to further her dream of starting a therapeutic horse ranch for people with disabilities.

Donations

Continued from page 5

and representatives from UCC staff, UCC students and the UCC Foundation. Other committee members are from county government, mental health, and first-responder and faith-based sectors. The fund also has a diverse panel of non-voting advisors. While a 51% voting majority is required for awarding funds, all the awards to date have been unanimous.

Such strictures are designed to stand up to public scrutiny. Rumel said the Greater Douglas United Way is not charging administrative fees for its role in managing UCC Strong, in part because of scandals that have plagued other nonprofit groups nationally. Straw said a reason people watch disaster donation funds so closely is because when tragedy strikes, they respond quickly and with emotion. And they are firm about wanting their contributions to go directly to the cause, rather than paying an agency’s bills.

Long haul

If structure, vigilance and oversight are all watchwords for relief fund managers, so is the need to dig in for the long haul. According to Treven, one of his most valuable lessons came from Davidson-Hamley, as she talked about how, once the initial adrenaline fades and immediate needs are met, fund organizers must pull back and think long term. “Kymn told us we had to remember the process is not a sprint. It’s a marathon.”

The Greater Douglas United Way collaborated with the UCC Foundation to create one fund, UCC Strong.
How a foundation can help

Unusual circumstances require an unusual philanthropic response

By Anne C. Kubisch
President
The Ford Family Foundation

The Ford Family Foundation was one of many organizations that stepped up to help support Umpqua Community College and the community. One small bit of good luck — if it can be called that — was that this horrific mass murder occurred in the hometown of a major foundation, and we found ourselves playing a role that went beyond traditional philanthropy. Our board of directors approved a flexible response, and they supported staff decisions to commit our resources in unusual ways.

Use your connections for first-hand advice from other communities. Our staff immediately connected with regional and national philanthropic partners. The Center for Disaster Philanthropy shared strategies with us, and put us in touch with foundations that had responded to tragedies in their communities.

An early discussion with the head of the Oklahoma City Community Foundation advised us to think about long-term recovery from Day One. Twenty years after the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, one of the many personal connections that needed help, we were able to advise our generous peers foundations about where grant funds were needed.

Help set up a mechanism for receiving funds right away. Within hours, generous people from around the world wanted to donate to aid victims. In some communities, a local foundation can be the vehicle for receiving funds. In our case, people were seeking ways to donate directly to the college and to local charities. Our staff provided charitable-giving expertise to guide the establishment of such a fund. We advocated for a single fund, and our staff helped the college and the local United Way collaborate to establish UCC Strong (see page 4). Within days, the boards of both organizations voted to give official approval for the single-donation vehicle.

Be prepared to use financial supports flexibly. We had ready access to financial resources that no other organization had.

Our involvement in UCC Strong for the single-donation vehicle was perfect places for grieving and respite.

We opened our building for all of those uses for three weeks, and we made sure that there was always fresh food available.

Capture the story and lessons learned in real time. People are so overwhelmed that they don’t have time to record their own stories. Talking about what happened is a first step to healing. We encouraged people to use their cell phones to record voice memos on a daily basis.

We have stayed in close touch with the other 38 students, offering counseling, comfort food, and other supports.

In addition, our staff lost family members and friends. We tried to give them strength, went to funerals and participated in community tributes. We still grieve for all of them.

Though we wanted to do everything possible to help our community, we also had many personal connections that needed care and respect.”

— Anne Kubisch

The Ford Family Foundation building became a site for counseling and a meeting place for organizations involved in the recovery efforts.

Unforgettable memories for healing and Recovery Team (see page 20), which has been the venue for the community to plan for the future.

Remember that this affects you personally. Though we wanted to do everything possible to help our community, we also had many personal connections that needed care and respect. We had 39 students on our scholarship programs at UCC, and our staff sent out text messages of concern to all of them right away. In the end, we heard back from all but one student, and we came to realize that Lucas Eibel had lost his life. His family reported how much it meant to them that they saw messages from us on his cell phone when they recovered it.

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Incident Command System

University of Oregon team helps bring order

A t the University of Oregon, Andre Le Duc and his incident management team are trained to bring order out of the chaos that inevitably results from catastrophic situations. The team is able to quickly implement command and control infrastructure. They help belea- guered agencies manage the myriad issues — logistical, fiscal, planning, operational, safety and campus-related — prompted by a major incident.

The team would face its biggest challenge when they responded to the shooting at Umpqua Community College. The university, 70 miles north of Roseburg in Eugene, is connected to an information network that notified organizations statewide as soon as the incident became public.

Le Duc, who serves as the associate vice president and chief resilience officer for the university’s Emergency Management & Continuity Department, went through state channels to offer up his team, but it was an informal channel that resulted in the invitation by Rita Cavin, UCC’s interim president.

“We only come when asked,” Le Duc said. “Less than 24 hours in addition to Le Duc, the team included Krista Dillon, a UO director of emergency management and fire prevention; Julie Brown, a UO director of campus security and public information officer; and Sheryl Eyster, UO associate dean of students. They arrived in Roseburg less than 24 hours after the incident and joined UCC leadership, who were coordinating the community response. They spent five days in Roseburg providing a critical bridge between the initial incident response and the short-term recovery.

“Law enforcement and fire have an elaborate structure for who is in charge of communica- tion, logistics, water and food, mental health. Campus communities don’t,” said Vanessa Becker, chair of the UCC board of truste- es. “The UO team brought that structure, along with trained staff, that was incredible support.”

Andre and his team made it clear that they were there to support the UCC leadership,” said Nora Vitzi Harrison, a commu- nications consultant to The Ford Family Foundation, who also assisted in the command center. “UCC administrators were victims, too. Andre gave them breathing room to get back on their feet.”

The systems set up by the UO team allowed community representatives to do strategic planning in a tight timeline. “We would meet, set goals, review progress, agree on how to apply resources, then go take action,” said Harrison. “Then, a few hours later, we’d meet again to start the process over. A giant to-do list kept everybody on task.”

“Property reunification” was one of the first tasks the group coordinated. When law enforce- ment evacuated UCC staff and students from campus, they left behind purses, credit cards, cell phones, house keys, computers, and cars. Making sure the right stuff was returned to the right person proved complicated.

Also on the giant to-do list: meeting mental-health needs, restoring the building where the shooting occurred, getting the campus business office opera- tional, preparing to restart classes, writing press releases, arranging press conferences, and monitoring social media.

Keeping track

To keep track of it all, the UO team uses the Incident Command System, a standardized, on-scene structure developed by the U.S. Forest Service to deal with wild- fires and now used around the world for disasters of all kinds.

“With a well-trained team, we could make sure that when the investigation was concluded, the transfer back to campus was as seamless as possible,” Le Duc said.

And what of the effect of the emotionally charged incident on Le Duc and his team? “It changed me. It changed everyone on my staff,” he said. “There are things I will remember that I don’t want to remember. But it makes us ask: How do we operationalize what we have learned from this incident so we are better prepared to stop trauma as fast as we can?”

A need for more response teams

The incident management team at the University of Oregon is the only one of its kind at a higher education institution in Oregon, and Andre Le Duc would like to see that change. His vision is to develop a network of highly trained teams that would be available to help with an event anywhere in the state.

“We could use two or three teams like ours to adequately cover the state,” he said. “We’re also working on a structure so there is a clearer channel to self-deploy.”

Gaining traction

In the wake of the UCC incident, several efforts advancing timely emergency response have gained traction in Oregon. Le Duc is part of a national ini- tiative through the International Association of Emergency Man- agers Universities & Colleges Caucus. UCC is now a member, along with UO and Tillamook Community College.

The goal is for members to make connections, share train- ing and preparedness initiatives, and improve their capacity to respond to campus incidents. There is also a need for crisis- response teams for non cam- pus-based events.

Meanwhile, Le Duc is leading the effort to develop more capacity. “The goal is to lever- age resources that we have as a state to aid higher education in dealing with incidents like these,” Le Duc said.
Snapshots of support

As students return to classes on Oct. 12, 2015, community members line the road to the UCC campus to welcome them back.

The crowd erupts in support as a UCC banner is shown during a University of Oregon football game in Eugene on Oct. 10, 2015.

The Portland Trail Blazers wear UCC T-shirts to honor victims on Oct. 5, 2015, before a game in Portland.

Mercy Medical Center ER rises to the challenge

A disaster drill became real as the hospital dealt with mass casualties.

With all hospital emergency departments, Mercy Medical Center in Roseburg had drilled for a disaster, but never for an event involving multiple gun-shot victims.

Minutes after the Umpqua Community College shootings began, Mercy sounded the trauma team activation warning on its intercom, and the emergency room braced for up to 20 gun-shot victims.

Todd Luther, a registered nurse and director of the hospital’s emergency department, was about a mile away, preparing to leave the next day on a hunting trip. He arrived at the hospital before the first victims and helped organize the ER, which immediately filled with the entire staff of 25 nurses and physicians plus four surgeons and four additional physicians. The five operating rooms canceled all scheduled patients so they were available. An ER hallway with five adjoining rooms was cleared, and each room was staffed with a physician, nurses and staff.

The emergency workers faced enormous pressure. Some of them had family members attending UCC and did not know if they might see a loved one show up on a gurney.

David Price, who oversees the six-member team of hospital chaplains, said the event was “unprecedented.” The hospital, he said, could not have practiced for something of this magnitude.

The staff’s plan was to focus immediately on the first five patients and prepare for five more in additional available rooms with the goal of treating them all within 20 minutes. Luther said. They aimed to work fast, so they could quickly get to a second wave of 10 patients.

But in the end, only ten patients arrived. One died shortly after arriving, another was non-traumatic and the ER treated the other eight within an hour.

Four were admitted for surgery, and three were airlifted to the PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at Riverbend in Springfield.

Mercy’s ER response had been quick, efficient and effective. “It was surprising,” Luther said. “We always knew we could do it, but it was smoother than any drill we ever ran.”

Price said, “The clinical proficiency and trauma service coordination could only be described as miraculous.” As medical workers attended to victims, Price and his staff offered families spiritual comfort and psychological first aid.

“I spent time with families,” he said. “I spent time with some of the victims.”

Other mental health workers from Roseburg’s Community Health Alliance also came to the hospital to comfort victims and their families. A Eugene woman played her harp in the lobby, sending soothing tunes throughout the hospital.

After the ER completed its work with the UCC victims, the hospital’s trauma director led a short debriefing with the staff. Then everyone turned “back to our normal selves” and began treating other patients showing up in the ER.

But there was nothing normal about that morning, and workers took time in the break room to hug, shed tears, vent and come to grips with the tragedy engulfing all of Roseburg.

“Typically it is a sign of weakness to show emotions,” Luther said, “but we broke through that.”

He was skeptical when he heard people wanted to bring in three golden retriever therapy dogs, but the “dogs were amazing” in providing comfort to the ER staff, he said.

Five months later, the Mercy Medical Center staff is still healing and not yet 100% back to normal, according to Luther. But the ER doctors, nurses and staff are working with more confidence. “What we learned is, when we need to, we can step up and deal with a situation like that. That was the real takeaway for our staff and community.”

Medical facilities: LESSONS LEARNED

Disaster training pays off. Even though Mercy Medical Center had never drilled specifically for a mass shooting, its disaster training meant staff knew what to do.

Provide recovery time for staff. After their work was done, the hospital staff took time to connect with each other. Mental health needs may need to be addressed.

Over prepare. Staff were ready to accept 20 victims. Only 10 patients arrived. Three were airlifted to PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at Riverbend, about 70 miles away in Springfield.
An advocate for the victims

Kelly Wright matches needs with resources

Kelly Wright, victim services director at the Douglas County District Attorney’s office, normally assists victims of felony crimes with the judicial process. She provides them with referrals and resources, attends hearings and helps them prepare for trial.

But when she was called to the Umpqua Community College campus after the shooting, her regular job description evaporated.

“When 15 minutes I was on campus,” Wright said. “I lived at the police station for the first week, and for the next four months, I was pretty much out of commission with my regular job.”

In the hours after the shootings, Wright became the main contact for the families of the nine deceased, a number that quickly grew to include families of injured survivors and witnesses. She made difficult decisions about how to share highly confidential personal information about the victims, comforted families and survivors and, that evening, she was the one telling the families that their loved ones were dead.

During the coming months, she was in every victim’s home at least six times and had repeated contacts with other affected people, helping them fill out victim compensation forms and connect with needed resources.

Funds for crime victims

One of the main resources Wright helped victims access is the Oregon Crime Victim’s Compensation Fund. In addition to psychological and physical trauma, victims and their families often incur medical and counseling costs, funeral expenses and loss of income.

The fund helps victims cover these costs.

When Wright left her office on Oct. 1, she didn’t know she would be gone for months. The District Attorney’s office could have asked the governor for an emergency administrator and the federal government for an interim position, but in the end the office handled it internally.

Wright credited a supportive team at her office for making it all work. “I had amazing support from the get-go,” she said. “It really helps to have an office manager who can take over anybody’s job.”

Douglas County District Attorney Rick Wentzen had played a community leadership role and supported her as she responded to victims’ needs.

One of the first issues Wright tackled was how to put victims in touch with the community groups that wanted to help them.

She had to have them sign releases, so she could share their information with the agencies that would be a financial or food resource.

“I was very wary about sharing information and stalled a long time,” she said.

Ideally, Wright said, she would have had a plan that specified a procedure for obtaining release forms and disseminating information in the first 72 hours.

Most of Wright’s work revolved around meeting with a long list of victims, getting to know their needs, and matching them with financial and other resources.

The sheer volume of contact was daunting. Eventually, she would have direct contact with more than 100 people, many of them more than once.

She found a partner when she began working with Bryan Trelle, Greater Douglas United Way’s executive director, a few days after the incident. Together, they visited families and distributed assistance funds.

Bryan and I worked together beautifully,” she said. It was important to have a trusted partner when meeting the families, so the responsibilities could be shared. “If either of us needed a break, we knew we had backup.”

Compassion fatigue

Wright normally helps victims while operating with clear personal boundaries that protect open investigations and prosecution efforts. “The boundary line got fuzzy,” she said. Since the shooter was dead and there would be no trial, Wright didn’t have to keep her distance from victims’ families. That closeness and intensity, in addition to the duration of the UCC incident, inevitably contributed to what Wright described as compassion fatigue, a hazard of her profession.

“When I got so tired that you start to prioritize people’s level of trauma,” she said. “It was hard hearing other people’s needs when it felt like the only priorities were those from the shooting.”

Wright’s solution was to go to an out-of-town training in January, which allowed her to shift her perspective. “I went to Eugene every day, and it was very helpful in getting re-inspired. I realized: I am good at this; I’m not burned out; I’m just very tired.

“It was a perfect way to transition, and I came into my office for the first time after that.”

Victims advocacy: Lessons learned

During the hours following the UCC incident, Kelly Wright discovered the importance of simple things.

Keep business cards current.

Wright, who had gotten married in August, didn’t have her new name or her correct contact number on the cards. “I couldn’t pass out cards during the entire incident,” she said.

Take care of yourself.

“I didn’t eat for days — I’m not kidding,” she said. “The day it happened, at the reunification center, we were so busy dealing with the victims’ families I couldn’t eat a felt awful.”

Prepare a Go Kit. If she has to leave in a hurry again, Wright has prepared a kit with updated business cards, emergency forms for victim relief, an electronic tablet so people can apply electronically or online, release forms, pens, emergency pamphlets, and energy bars.

“Within 15 minutes I was on campus. I lived at the police station for the first week.”

— Kelly Wright

Victim Services Director, Douglas County District Attorney’s office

Crisis intervention begins with psychological first aid

One night shortly after the Umpqua Community College shooting, Mary Dooley, a volunteer counselor, and some colleagues waited for more than an hour for their dinner at a Roseburg restaurant.

The waitress had forgotten their order. She apologized and noted that earlier in the day she had been back at the UCC campus for the first time since the shooting. Her distress was characteristic of someone who has been close to a traumatic event, which is true for just about everyone in Roseburg, said Dooley, a retired licensed social worker from Bend who volunteers for the Red Cross disaster mental health team.

“This was so deeply personal for everybody who lived in Roseburg,” Dooley said.

The first objective in mental health crisis intervention after a violent event like the shooting is to ensure the patient’s emotional and psychological first aid, experts say. People involved in trauma experience a disturbance in the balance between thinking and emotion and find their usual coping mechanisms fail, according to a report published by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc.

Counselors can help people see they are having normal reactions to abnormal events, and restore their adaptive functions so that they don’t descend into post traumatic stress disorder, depression, or drug and alcohol abuse.

The most important, or downstream portion of the human brain is wired to go into a fight, flight or freeze state when people encounter trauma, Dooley said. The downstairs brain takes full control while the upstairs portion, which provides judgment, logic, and executive functions, largely goes away.

People then act like the forgetful waitress. They are jumpy, forgetful and have trouble concentrating. A nursing student from UCC told Dooley that “I can’t stop thinking about it.” Some people can’t stop watching television news. Some students and teachers said they could not return to campus.

Turn off the television

Mental health workers can immediately help people regain at least some functions of the upstairs part of their brain, Dooley said. They can tell them their reactions are normal and help them deal with their feelings. They can urge them to turn off the television and take care of themselves. And they can direct them to do things that might be part of their routine, such as go jogging or shopping, talk with a friend or play the piano.

Counselors need to be sensitive to the differences in people, she said. Some people want to talk about it; others don’t. Some benefit from gathering with others who went through the same trauma, but not everyone.

For some, an event such as the UCC shooting triggers old wounds.

These people, she said, as well as those close to the violence or actual victims of it, may need more extensive therapy.

Local, state and federal mental health professionals provided plenty of psychological first aid in the days following the UCC tragedy. More care will be needed in the days to come.
The need for counseling encompassed the entire community

Janet Holland, head of Community Health Alliance in Roseburg, was speaking in Astoria before a group of 40 county mental health professionals in a hotel meeting room when she got the call on the morning of Oct. 1. She had told her staff that if there was an emergency to call her cell phone three times. When she felt her phone buzzing the third time, she stopped her presentation and told her audience she needed to take the call. Her operations director was on the phone. First, the director said her own daughter and Holland’s son, students at Umpqua Community College, were all right. Then she described the shootings.

Holland asked the mental health group she had been speaking to, Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc., to prepare to send counselors and asked two of them to return to Roseburg. Then she jumped in her car and began the nearly five-hour drive to her home, now a stunned and wounded community in need of her agency’s help.

Initially, the demand seemed overwhelming. There was not a single counselor on the UCC campus. The college recently had seen its only two counselors leave for other jobs. Just two weeks before the shootings, the college had signed a contract with Holland’s agency to provide counseling.

Now, her staff suddenly was faced with providing crisis counseling to UCC students and others throughout the tight-knit town.

Their immediate priority would be to help grieving and shaken students and staff and their families regain a sense of normalcy and safety as they processed the tragedy. Counselors also would be on the lookout for anyone needing more intense, long-term help.

Holland would soon learn one of her biggest challenges as the health alliance’s executive director would not be finding enough mental health volunteers, but rather organizing and vetting the flood of volunteers who arrived from across the state and country.

She also recognized the need to coordinate their efforts with work underway by police, ambulance services, hospitals and college officials, including professionals from elsewhere in the state and country. She learned firsthand the importance of having a predetermined line of communication and joint command structure.

Still, Holland was able to organize her staff by cell phone as she rushed back to Roseburg in a car driven by the health alliance’s board chair, Dr. Christine Seals. Holland directed her counselors to cancel non-emergency appointments and head to Mercy Medical Center, where shooting victims were treated, and to the Douglas County Fairgrounds, where surviving students and staff were bused from campus.

At the fairgrounds, her staff and other mental health volunteers passed out water, provided cell-phone chargers and listened to students and staff who wanted to talk.

“People just pitched in,” said Holland. “The first 48 hours were just a blur.”

In the aftermath of the traumatic event like the UCC shootings, mental health workers provide psychological first aid, helping people regain their emotional balance, experts say.

Witnesses may be restless, jumpy, forgetful, sleepless and depressed. Counselors can help them see these reactions are typical and steer them to routines that will help them regain a sense of normalcy.

When Holland reached the fairgrounds on the Thursday evening of the shooting, students, staff and their families were gone, but her staff was still there finding ways to help by picking up pizza boxes, water bottles and other litter.

“They cleaned up the whole area,” she said. “No one asked them to do it.”

Help pours in

More help poured into the community that evening and the next two days. The American Red Cross dispatched a group of disaster mental health volunteers. So did the U.S. Public Health Service, the VA Roseburg Health Care System, Community Mental Health Program agencies and the State of Oregon. The governor’s office, the University of Oregon and other organizations also sent people to help.

About 16 highly trained and experienced trauma clinicians from the U.S. Public Health Service arrived Friday night from all over the country — Oklahoma, Texas, Alaska, Virginia and other places. Dressed in blue jump suits, they helped local professionals organize a mental health response plan.

Holland said the federal workers wisely advised her and her team to first make use of all of the out-of-town volunteers so they could save their local staff for the long haul.

One challenge was to make sure that the mental health volunteers, who included local pastors and people with therapy dogs, were licensed and qualified to be providing aid, Holland said. One man said he was a psychiatrist with Oregon Health & Science University, which could provide help, but didn’t have any business cards. His identity had to be verified with another psychiatrist employed by CHA.

One group even wanted to bring therapy ponies onto the UCC campus. The therapy dogs were allowed at UCC and Mercy Medical Center, but the un-vetted volunteers were told to stand by, Holland said.

They were turned down.

The mental health groups established drop-in counseling centers on the UCC campus and around town.

Provide security. The national media, on a hunt for stories, followed some victims — even as they were seeking counseling. Counseling locations for the most vulnerable victims were kept private. Security monitored who was allowed in.

Reach out to first responders. Active shooter events, perhaps the most common, impose extreme stress on responding police officers, according to a report by the Police Executive Research Forum in Washington, D.C. First responders and health-care providers often feel that asking for help is a sign of weakness.

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Flood of mental health volunteers brought help and challenges

“Had interactions with people who were very close to what happened, who went through unimaginable things.” — Mary Dooley, American Red Cross

On Oct. 2, the day after the shooting, UCC students, faculty and staff arrived at the Douglas County Fairgrounds where they were offered grief counseling and a bus ride back to campus to pick up their possessions and vehicles.

Mental health: LESSONS LEARNED

Develop an emergency plan before you need it. Precious time wasted as organizers figured out how to coordinate the response. A predetermined line of communication and joint command structure will allow for an immediate, coordinated response.

Tap outside resources first. Community Health Alliance first deployed all of the out-of-town volunteers so it could save its local staff for the long haul.

Prepare to vet volunteers. Volunteers willing to help flooded the community, but it wasn’t always clear if they were qualified. Many were turned down.

Rely on pre-vetted help. Qualified disaster mental-health volunteers arrived from the American Red Cross, the U.S. Public Health Service, the VA Roseburg Health Care System and the State of Oregon. They were quickly deployed.

Provide counseling throughout the community. Make it as easy as possible for people to find help. The mental health groups established drop-in counseling centers on the UCC campus and around town.

Develop an emergency plan before you need it. A predetermined line of communication and joint command structure will allow for an immediate, coordinated response.

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Brief trauma can bring lasting stress

Responding officers had to be ready to fight, and they did.

Six minutes after the 911 call about a shooter on the Umpqua Community College campus, two nearby Roseburg Police Department detectives rushed out to the scene. They immediately confronted the shooter, who fired on them as they fired back before he retreated into a breezeway and shot himself.

Within minutes, more police, ambulances and other first responders flooded the scene with care for the wounded and survivors. The scene was personal for responders, especially those who had family members at UCC. One of the students who died was Treven Anspach, 20, son of a Roseburg fire chief.

The swift response by police, emergency medical teams and others undoubtedly saved lives. But what they saw and experienced in those first adrenaline-filled minutes could leave first responders with weeks, months, even years of psychological wounds and traumatic stress.

The Roseburg Police and other first responders were not available for interviews because of ongoing investigations. But the police response to the UCC shooting reflected modern practices, said Lt. David Okada of the Salem Police Department, who teaches classes on stress, trauma and psychological survival in law enforcement.

The first goal of police confronting an active shooter event is to "stop the shooter and make everyone as safe as possible whatever that means," he said.

It often means putting officers in more dangerous and stressful situations that can have long-term psychological effects.

Lessons from Columbine

Not so long ago, law enforcement agencies commonly followed the protocol of confronting active shooters only with special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams. But that all changed after the 1999 tragedy at Columbine High School in Colorado, where police waited with police either killing or handling multiple homicides or multiple fatal injuries. Recognizing those pressures, the Oregon Legislature in 2007 passed a law, Senate Bill 111, requiring every county to develop a plan for police who use deadly force. The plans must require that involved officers get at least two sessions of mental health counseling and be restricted from active duty for at least three days.

First responders to mass shootings could also benefit from those standards, Okada said. Compared to the rest of society, "what we do every day as part of our normal duties is hugely abnormal."

When to seek professional help

Law enforcement respond to Umpqua Community College after reports of an active shooter on campus on Oct. 1, 2015. Active shooter events, perhaps more than any other type of crime, impose an extreme stress on responding police officers.

According to the Trauma Center at the Justice Resource Institute, a first responder (or anyone who has experienced a traumatic event) who is still feeling the following symptoms a month after the event should seek professional help.

Hyper-arousal: increases in heart rate, respiration and blood pressure; physical symptoms, difficulty sleeping, anxiety, fear, irritability or anger.

Avoidance: avoiding exposure to the trauma, avoiding talking about it, thinking about it, visiting the place where it occurred or seeing people who shared the experience of it; withdrawing from friends and family; being unable to go back to work if it was an on-the-job trauma.

Intrusions: intrusive thoughts or memories of the traumatic event; flashbacks, in which people feel as though they are reliving the event with great intensity; and nightmares.

Psychic numbing: a sense of emotional numbness; a sense of uneasiness; “spacing out”; and using substances to “numb out.”

You are in tactical fight or flight mode. You are acting on tactical inputs and you are working to survive. Once that is done, it takes a while for your body and nervous system to get back to normal.

Lt. David Okada
Salem Police Department

"Working to survive"

The initial confrontation in an active shooter event typically is resolved within minutes with police either killing or subduing the attacker or with the attacker’s suicide. But the adrenaline continues to surge as police officers and first responders for hours as they work to secure the crime scene, treat the wounded and ensure there are no other threats to survivors, Okada said.

"You are in tactical fight or flight mode," Okada said. "You are acting on tactical inputs and you are working to survive. Once that is done, it takes a while for your body and nervous system to get back to normal."

"Police and firefighters usually go through a process of going through what is the worst-case scenario," Okada said. "But with the UCC shooting, it was a real-life situation."
When the spotlight fades

Community leaders set up a structure to help build long-term recovery

Community members gather at Stewart Park in Roseburg on Oct. 1, 2015. What happens after the candlelight vigils are over, the crime tape comes down, and the media moves on? The media turned its attention to the community. It includes UCC employees and students, nonprofit representatives, business-people and members of the public.

Community leaders set up a structure to help build long-term recovery. The Community Healing and Response Team (CHART) was formed just days after the incident.

In the immediate aftermath of the UCC crisis, a group of people recognized this hard fact and stepped up to begin the work of long-term community recovery. The Community Healing and Response Team (CHART) was formed just days after the incident.

"We weren’t trying to build things back to where they were before Oct. 1, but rather orient ourselves to a new and better community," says Meredith Bliss, who serves as facilitator of the group. "It’s all about how to take community and use it as a catalyst to create something even stronger than before."

The team represents a cross-section of the community. It includes UCC employees and students, nonprofit representatives, business-people and members of the public.

For the first several months after the shooting the group met frequently to share information on what was happening throughout the county and strategize on how best to aid in recovery.

An evolving role

As needs changed, so did the group’s role. "We met weekly in the immediate aftermath, then biweekly, and now monthly," Bliss says. "The group became an information-sharing and convening space. There is a real role and real value for that."

Today, as the role of CHART lessens, a leadership committee established with the support of the Governor’s Office is taking point on community recovery. Many members of the UCC community were told they were free to leave work; many of them back saw valuable information on how to prevent similar occurrences, and how to react if it occurs.

Emergency management plans give organizations the ability to respond to crises in a calm and systematic manner, with staff who are trained and practiced. They allow for streamlined communication inside and outside the organization.

Emergency management planners recognize that there are three stages of crisis. The immediate stage is focused on managing the crisis: setting up communications, establishing channels between first responders, and helping victims.

The second stage, lasting a short time, looks ahead a few days. In Roseburg, that meant accepting help from outside sources, making plans to reopen the campus, and providing continuing help for victims.

The last stage — long-term recovery — is, in many ways, the most difficult. Outside help has gone home, and it’s up to the community to identify and accomplish the steps in the recovery process.

CHART steps up

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Roseburg Forest Products’ emergency response to the shooting at Umpqua Community College was a response that had literally been tried by fire — one year earlier, when a wildfire burned through the town of Weed, Calif., heavily damaging the Roseburg veneer facility there.

"Our approach was refined during the Weed fire incident," said Kellye Wise, Roseburg’s senior vice president of human resources. The experience showed Wise that HR was a natural hub. "Human resources collects the information, and disseminates it back out as confirmed or relevant or both," he said.

When word of the shooting at Umpqua Community College reached the plant, the human resources department took point on the company response, emailing managers and directors and posting updates on the company intranet. They responded to the blizzard of media phone calls with composure and concern, while protecting the privacy and identities of employees swept up in the tragedy.

Connecting families

Employees with family at UCC were told they were free to leave work; many of them back saw valuable information on how to prevent similar occurrences, and how to react if it occurs.

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Communications needs

Information flies fast: It's a daunting task to keep it accurate, timely

Every group involved in the response to the UCC shooting had overwhelming communication needs. Plans were being made quickly — from evacuations of the campus to locations for counseling.

“The information flew, and it was a daunting task to keep it accurate and timely,” said Nora Vitz Harrison, a communications consultant to The Ford Family Foundation who assisted in the UCC command center. “No one public information officer could have handled the load.”

Accept help, was one of the lessons Harrison took away from the experience. An army of communication professionals from across the state and from various agencies cycled through the command center. They wrote press releases, drafted question-and-answer sheets, and prepared press-briefing notes for officials. Harrison offered other lessons:

• Build resilient and redundant websites. UCC’s website, the place where most people looked to get information, became overloaded and crashed as the incident became an international story. The problem was made worse as the passwords to access the site were kept in Synder Hall, the scene of the shooting.

• Beware the national media circus. The national media descended en masse, filling the hotels and clogging the roads around the college, the hospital and sites of the funerals. They were relentless in their pursuit of stories. A male reporter followed Vanessa Becker, chair of the UCC board of trustees, into a restroom trying to get an interview. Other reporters stalked out the counseling centers hoping to talk with victims. A college administrator said she was asked questions clearly designed to make her cry on camera.

• A community member reported that her neighbors set up lawn chairs across both ends of the street on which a victim’s family lived. The family had no desire to talk to anyone. Neighbors took turns sitting in the chairs to create a human barricade and to protect the family from the onslaught of reporters.

• Use all communication channels. Press briefings are just the start. Post to websites, Facebook, Twitter, and any other means of sharing information.

• Monitor social media. Facebook helped families and authorities alike account for possible victims.

Know that some will try to politicize the event. While the overwhelming majority of the community focused on ways to help the victims, a few grabbed the spotlight to highlight their agendas. The media were quick to give them a microphone. Gun-rights protesters (for and against), many from out of town, used the moment to promote their views. Others led demonstrations against President Obama, who came to offer condolences to the victims’ families. The media did not differentiate between locals and outsiders, nor did they check credentials for people who held out their opinions as representatives of elected officials. The result was a misrepresentation of the community, which was difficult to correct.

Stay focused. Don’t worry about things over which you have no control. The work in the command center needs your full attention.

Take care of your basic needs. Like food and sleep. Make sure someone is charged with keeping healthy food and drinks available at the command centers.

Cycle out. The atmosphere is intense and exhausting. Understand your limits and hand over to others when your effectiveness wanes.

When the spotlight fades

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Tattoo artists in Roseburg offered Roseburg- and UCC-themed tattoos for a donation to aid victims.

Many acts of kindness

Continued from back cover

Oregon Serigraphics kept its hand-operated T-shirt screening equipment going deep into the night. They eventually produced 4,500 “I am UCC” shirts, which were given to volunteers and UCC students when they returned to campus.

Today, the community has moved into the difficult phase of long-term recovery. The feelings of support we had and acted on should help make that transition easier. Tragedy can bring out the best of the human spirit and strengthen the bonds of community.

The “I am UCC” billboard is still near the freeway. A new one has gone up nearby: UCC Strong.
Many acts of kindness

The community came together in ways that were patient, kind and compassionate

By Nora Vitz Harrison
Editor, Community Vitality

The billboard off the interstate near Roseburg boldly proclaims “I am UCC” next to a graphic of a Riverhawk, the college mascot. For a jarring moment I wondered, How was that billboard put up so quickly? I was driving into Roseburg to help, just hours after the shooting at Umpqua Community College.

Then, I remembered: The billboard was part of UCC’s recruiting campaign. It had been there for months.

But at that moment, I felt the slogan spoke directly to me. Others who saw the billboard experienced the same connection. All of us that day were UCC.

We felt the pain of victims and their families, and the pain of a community that was deeply shaken. But we also felt the kindness of a community that had come together around the senseless loss of life. People were extraordinarily patient, kind, and compassionate in the following days.

Hundreds waited in long lines to donate at a local blood drive. Roseburg residents were joined by others from across the state. A teacher came from Silverton, two hours away, to donate. “I took the day off because I felt it was the right thing to do,” he said to a television reporter.

Reader boards for local businesses transformed from advertising messages to messages of support for the victims, their families and the college.

Tattoo parlors offered UCC- and Roseburg-themed tattoos for a donation to help victims. Tattoo artist James Walls inked more than 40 people with “Roseburg Strong” tattoos in one day.

“I just wanted to help,” Walls said. “I just wanted to do something positive and help the community, bring more people together.”

Justin Troxel, a graduate of the welding program at Umpqua Community College, responded by creating metal signs in the shape of Oregon. A cut-out heart marked the spot where Roseburg would be. He planned to make about 50 signs, sell them for $10 and donate the proceeds to the UCC Strong fund.

But the project quickly expanded. Propelled by social media, neighbors and strangers came to help produce the signs. Within a week, he had

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