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Family says personal demons haunted Linn veteran

CASUALTY OF WAR



Samuel Huxford, pictured here during active duty in Afghanistan, came home from his Army service with a traumatic brain injury and 70 percent hearing loss, according to his mother.

BY ANNEMARIE KNEPPER
ALBANY DEMOCRAT-HERALD

SWEET HOME — He rode a full-grown bull at 8 years old. He did the world's best Arnold Schwarzenegger impression. He was the uncle to beat all uncles. The kids — Chloe, Olivia, Jocelyn, Triston and Sevin — adored him.

But most important, his family says, Samuel Huxford was a casualty of war, outside of combat.

"Hux" — as his Army buddies called him — was haunted by the trauma of war and tried to drown his demons in alcohol, according to family members.

His mother said he came home from Afghanistan with a traumatic brain injury and 70 percent hearing loss. He received a Purple Heart.

She said the Army didn't teach her son the coping skills needed to deal with the horrors of war, instead plying him with

"sheets of Valium."

Huxford was born in Albany but moved around a lot, said his mother, Geneva, who didn't want her last name used due to a past abusive relationship.

"We spent a lot of time in the women's underground," she said, trying to stay away from Sam's father.

Huxford attended Hawthorne Elementary School in Sweet Home for grades four through six.

He graduated from high school through the Gateway Learning Center in Springfield — a year early, his mother says, so he could join the Army.

After boot camp, he had to wait a week in casual status, until he turned 18.

He served in the 172nd Airborne Division as a first response medic, pathfinder and .50-caliber machine-gunner, his mother said.

He swapped his Christmas leave time

with another soldier so he could be there for the Caesarean-section birth of his niece Jocelyn, now 3.

"He was off again 30 hours later," said his sister Sarah Fairchild, Jocelyn's mom.

When Huxford came home for good, there had been a change in him.

"You could tell he was very tortured inside," his mother said.

Huxford and his then-girlfriend had a baby, Hazel Lynn, now 14 months old. The couple married but later divorced.

His family said Huxford sought help in October through Veterans Affairs but was told there were no hospital beds available.

On the night of April 14, Huxford went for a drive with his girlfriend, Jessica Magee, and a friend. He lost control of the car, which struck several mailboxes

See **CASUALTY** on A5

Tokers' lounge opens in Albany

Marijuana-themed businesses sprouting around the mid-valley

BY BENNETT HALL
CORVALLIS GAZETTE-TIMES

After years of hiding in the shadows, medical marijuana is suddenly stepping out into plain view in the mid-valley — and prescription pot advocates say there's no turning back now. "Here we are," proclaimed Sheri Levit, executive director of the Linn-Benton Oregon Medical Marijuana Program Patient Resource Center, which opened its doors this week on the outskirts of Albany. "We're not going anywhere."

Modeled after Portland's Cannabis Cafe, the Patient Resource Center is a kind of social club for Oregon Medical Marijuana Program cardholders, who can buy snacks and soft drinks, relax in the game room or belly up to the "vapor bar" for a lungful of vaporized marijuana fumes.

Housed in a nondescript industrial building at 30943 Ehlen Road, near the intersection of Oakville Road and Highway 34, the nonprofit enterprise introduced itself to the community with an open house and barbecue that began at 4:20 p.m. on Wednesday. The time and the date — 4/20 — are both winking allusions to stoner slang for smoking dope.

Despite the lighthearted atmosphere, Levit and her partner, Kathy Srp, insist that marijuana is serious medicine. Levit, a registered patient, uses cannabis to ease the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis, migraines and degenerative disk disease in her back. Srp, a licensed caregiver, grows the weed for her husband, who also has degenerative disk disease.

Card-holding patients will be able to bring their own marijuana to the Patient Resource Center to "self-medicate," or they can partake of donated pot. Cash contributions are encouraged, but no actual buying or selling is allowed.

"We are not a dispensary," Levit said. "That's not legal in Oregon — yet."

The lack of dispensaries creates problems for Oregon's 39,000 medical

See **MARIJUANA** on A4



Scobel Wiggins/Corvallis Gazette-Times

A current Oregon Medical Marijuana Program registration card is a requirement to get into the Linn-Benton Patient Resource Center when patients are using marijuana.

Playhouse for a princess

Volunteers pitch in to make cancer-stricken girl's dream come true

BY EMILY GILLESPIE
CORVALLIS GAZETTE-TIMES

Standing 3 feet tall, Lilli Trippe pranced through her playhouse wearing a purple Rapunzel dress.

The playhouse is fit for a princess: The walls are painted pink, cupcake curtains hang from the window and three chairs small enough for a 3-year-old sit on the

floor boasting Hello Kitty upholstery.

"She loves her playhouse," said Lilli's mom, Kristin Trippe of Kings Valley.

For Kristin Trippe and her husband, Aaron, the playhouse is yet another sign of how their community has come together to offer support for their daughter, who was diagnosed with leukemia at 8 months.

"You go through life and you don't see the support network until something like this happens," she said. "It just blossoms. It doesn't make it go away, but it makes it so

much better."

Since her diagnosis, Lilli has had two bone-marrow transplants, survived two cardiac arrests and endured countless hours of chemotherapy and blood transfusions. Her diagnosis is terminal. She is currently on an experimental treatment.

Despite the looming worries of cancer cells, Lilli continues to dress up as a princess and enjoys each moment of every day.

"She finds happiness everywhere she goes," Kristin Trippe

See **PRINCESS** on A5



Scobel Wiggins/Corvallis Gazette-Times

After spending so much time in hospitals, Lilli Trippe's favorite thing to do is pretend to be a doctor and cure all her stuffed animals and dolls. "All better," she said after she gave "a pokey" to her stuffed dog named Coleman.

Easter treasures

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13th year
No. 34



The Weather Beaver says

Boy, that sun was nice. Just keep saying that over and over/D6