

Dear Friends —

This year is the 25th anniversary of being South Lane Mental Health's Executive Director. I have decided, after two and a half decades leading this agency, that it is time to retire. In order to ensure a smooth transition, I am committed to staying on through April 2018.

As I contemplate what my next chapter will look like, I can't help but reflect on all of the incredible things we've accomplished since I joined South Lane Mental Health in 1992. At that time, there were only 5 paid staff helping about 50 people a year in Cottage Grove. Today, we have more than 90 staff members working not only throughout South Lane County, but also in multiple communities (including Oakridge, Mapleton, and Eugene-Springfield) seeing more than 2,600 children and adults a year. Today:

- We own not one, but two, buildings of our own.
- We have therapists in every school in South Lane, Creswell, and Pleasant Hill School Districts.
- We offer a comprehensive range of mental health services — many of them truly model programs statewide — for families, for children, and for adults with persistent mental illness.
- We are among the top 10 largest employers in Cottage Grove, adding to our community's economic vitality.
- We have formed meaningful and what I see as enduring partnerships to benefit our community with:
 - ✓ Organizations that include the First Presbyterian Church, City of Cottage Grove, and South Lane School District, as well as non-profits such as Cottage Grove Hospital, Head Start, Parent Partnership, Family Relief Nursery, Community Sharing, and Sustainable Cottage Grove;
 - ✓ Collaborations including Be Your Best, 90 by 30, 100% Health, and the South Lane Family Support Network; and
 - ✓ Funders such as: Baker Family Foundation, Chambers Family Foundation, Children's Trust Fund of Oregon, Cottage Grove Community Foundation, Doyle & Donna Shepherd Foundation, Lane County, Meyer Memorial Trust, Northwest Health Foundation, Oregon Community Foundation, PacificSource Foundation for Health Improvement, Pacific Power & Light Foundation, Safeway Foundation, Siuslaw Bank, Spirit Mountain Community Fund, The Collins Foundation, The Ford Family Foundation, The Woodard Family Foundation, The Faye & Lucille Stewart Foundation, Three Rivers Foundation, Taubert Memorial Foundation, Tykeson Family Charitable Trust, United Way of Lane County, and Wal-Mart Foundation.

If you had told me back in 1992 that this was what South Lane Mental Health would look like, I would never have believed it. I am proud and in awe of what we've done together. And I am especially pleased that through all these years, we've been able to consistently meet our mission of ensuring services for people regardless of their insurance status or financial resources. There aren't too many other non-profit mental health organizations that can say this.

Nevertheless, there are definitely challenges on the horizon including impending changes of some kind to the Affordable Care Act, a nearly \$2 billion anticipated shortfall in the state budget, and organizational uncertainty with our key funder, Trillium/Centene.

While it is difficult to predict how these challenges will play out, I remain confident that SLMH — with its knowledgeable and dedicated staff, committed and capable Board, and amazing community partnerships — will continue to be a vital organization well into the future.

The Board, led by Jim Harrison and Rob Dickinson, has launched an executive recruitment effort to search for my successor. I have confidence in their leadership and process, and urge anyone with questions, concerns, or thoughts to please share those with either Jim or Rob in whatever format feels most comfortable.

As for my retirement, I plan on remaining in Cottage Grove and I look forward to having the time and energy to enjoy things like walking on the Rails to Trails, listening to live music, and hopefully volunteering.

But in the meantime, we all still have work to do. I remain committed to that work, and to being available to staff, the Board, clients, and stakeholders as things unfold over the next 12 months.

Thank you and I look forward to finishing my run on a high note.

Tom