

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Ann Katzenbach with local news and commentary for today, July 29, 2022.

Today's news is early today so that KPTZ can bring you live coverage of Centrum's noon concert at Fort Worden

The last item on the agenda of Wednesday's Jefferson Hospital board of commissioners' meeting was the decision whether or not to ask citizens to vote this fall on a bond issue for the proposed replacement and expansion of the hospital. Mike Glenn, CEO of Jefferson Health Care, outlined the difference between a ballot measure that would have to be approved by voters who would pay higher taxes to fund a nearly 90 million dollar project – versus borrowing the money to build a smaller but quite adequate addition for approximately \$71 million dollars. The board voted unanimously not to put the expansion project on the ballot and to move ahead with more modest plans.

After the vote, Commissioner Bruce McComas commented that this does not seem like a good time to ask for more and added that his background as a businessman made him comfortable with getting loans and alternative sources of funding which Glenn had made clear, could be repaid from hospital revenues over the coming years. Going into the meeting, commissioner Kees Kolff told the *Leader*, “It costs about \$1,450 per square foot to build hospitals today. And, therefore, we've been trying to figure out how we can do what the community needs with less, and with less money.”

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline which was activated on July 16 is a national network of local crisis centers in all 50 states that provides confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The Lifeline is committed to improving crisis services and advancing suicide prevention by empowering individuals, advancing professional best practices, and building awareness. The Lifeline website (<https://www.crisisconnections.org/24-hour-crisis-line/>) stresses that suicide is not a normal response to stress. Suicidal thoughts or actions are a sign of extreme distress and should not be ignored. If these warning signs apply to you or someone you know, get help as soon as possible.

In the past, the majority of people experiencing a mental health emergency ended up dialing 911, but 911 was never set up to address mental health needs. Either callers ended up in a frenetic emergency room, waiting for hours and sometimes days to get care, or they found themselves interacting with law enforcement, which can lead to tragedy or trauma. Last year more than 2 million people with serious mental illness were booked into jail.

Now the suicide and crisis lifeline can listen, advise and refer people to local support. Counselors are trained to help all ages for whatever reason and more and more there are reasons. The number of suicides has grown by 30% in this century. Knowing the warning signs for suicide and how to get help can help save lives. Mental health advocates hope that 988 will become a widely known, safer and more effective alternative to 911.

Alfonso Gonzalez, Jr., a sixth-grade math and science teacher at Chimacum Elementary School, has received the Presidential Award for Environmental Educators from the Environmental Protection Agency. According to the *Leader*, Gonzalez says he is motivated by the question, “Would you want to be a student in your own class?” The answer, insofar as his students are concerned is “Yes!” Student involvement comes easily in a class

that is often held outdoors planting trees or investigating the water quality and inhabitants of Chimacum Creek. Research and questions of sustainability on all levels – buildings, plants, animals, people – are couched as games, and much of their work is hands-on building, recording, observing. With 30 years of experience, Gonzalez has put a lot of thought into his profession and the Presidential Award is just one indication of his ability to inspire kids.

From 5am to 5pm, Monday through Friday, August 1-5, travelers can expect delays of at least 15 minutes on US 101 between Old Gardiner Road in Discovery Bay and Gardiner Cemetery Road.

And that's it for today's news. As always, there's lots of music, movies and markets happening throughout the county this weekend with a special concert by the Port Townsend Summer Band at 3pm at Pope Marine Plaza on Sunday.

91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and five pm, Monday through Friday and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us through news at KPTZ.org. I'm Ann Katzenbach. Thanks for listening. Have a great weekend and stay safe.