

This is KPTZ 91.9FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Nigel O'Shea bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, July 23, 2025.

On Tuesday, July 15 at approximately 2:10pm, flames were reported in a structure northeast of Brinnon. The flames rapidly spread, requiring local residents to evacuate immediately. The fire was officially extinguished at 10am on Thursday, July 17, thanks to the quick work and cooperation of multiple agencies bringing support from Jefferson and surrounding counties and the state.

Brinnon Fire Chief Tim Manly acknowledges that Brinnon has seen more large-scale fires in the last two years than normal, but doesn't believe they are part of a pattern, saying that events like these come in waves. He believes that some of the issues behind these fires stem from lack of effective forest management in regions that have been previously clear-cut. With this summer being drier than most, Manly also estimated that south County is about three weeks ahead of where it would normally be in terms of dryness, leading to the possibility of more fires in that region before the fall rains arrive.

Glass is again recyclable within Jefferson County. The Seattle-based Sibelco's new owners are once again accepting glass, though it will not be processed there. Instead, it will be sent for out-of-state recycling. Glass collection and drop off resumed on July 15. To help prevent cross-contamination, there are currently only two drop-off locations: the County transfer station located off Jacob Miller Road and the Quilcene Rural Drop Box, situated just south of the US Forest Service Ranger Station on Highway 101.

There is a crucial need for youth mental health support. Jefferson County youth face higher rates of adverse circumstances such as poverty, food and housing insecurity, and childhood trauma than their peers elsewhere in Washington, increasing their risk for mental health crises. With suicide as the second-leading cause of death for young people ages 12 to 24, according to the Centers for Disease Control, the US Surgeon General has declared the youth mental health crisis "the defining public health crisis of our time." Urgent action to support young people is a must.

In 2023, Jefferson County's 10th graders participated in the Healthy Youth Survey. The results showed 68% reporting feeling anxious, 59% unable to control or stop worrying, 34% experiencing depressive feelings that stopped them from doing their usual activities, and 17% made a suicide plan in the past year. 12% attempted suicide, demonstrating the high cost of overlooking and not engaging our youth. Unable to know exactly what nuances surround a person's mental health, we can see through statistics the impacts those living rurally can experience. Jefferson County, in comparison to the rest of Washington, is suffering measurably more.

Our community has 63.7% of single-mother families living in poverty, the highest of any county in the state. 30% of those under 18 in Jefferson County live in poverty, more than double the state average of 12%. According to Feeding America, 26% of our children are food insecure vs. 15.7% statewide. Jefferson County school districts reported in October 2023 that more than 130 students were either homeless or transient.

In the statewide Healthy Youth Survey, 27% of Jefferson County 10th graders reported having four or more ACEs (adverse childhood experiences), compared to the state average of 16%. ACEs include abuse, neglect, and other deeply stressful circumstances. Having four or more predicts a likelihood of an individual being in chronic "fight or flight" mode, unable to engage the parasympathetic nervous system to return to "rest and

digest”. This correlates to long-lasting negative physical and mental health impacts, including higher rates of depression and anxiety, with reduced coping skills and resilience.

In light of the July 17, 2025 Federal shutdown of the 988 LGBTQI+ Youth Subnetwork, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) will make firm efforts for the state’s 988 crisis counselors to be trained to support LGBTQIA2S+ youth and young adults. People who contact the 988 Lifeline can still get free, confidential, and specialized services available 24/7/365 days from Veterans Crisis Line, Spanish Subnetwork – for Spanish-speaking individuals, and Native & Strong Lifeline – available in Washington for Native and Indigenous people. All links and further local context and reporting by Angela Downs is in this week’s edition of the *Beacon*.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5 Tuesday through Thursday, partnering on Wednesday to bring you stories from the Jefferson County *Beacon*. This is Nigel O’Shea. Thank you for listening.