

THE DEATH OF BOBBIE KOLADA, Part 1: ‘Did somebody do this to her?’

Published 3:50 am Thursday, May 25, 2023

By **BUFFY POLLOCK**

Rogue Valley Times (<https://rv-times.com/author/newsroomrvtimes/>)



A photo sent to OSHA by PCL shows the room where "pools of blood" were found after the apparent attack on Bobbie Kolada.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is Part 1 in a five-day series about the death of Bobbie Kolada, a caregiver at a Medford group home for the developmentally disabled who was fatally injured by a man she cared for — and the Rogue Valley Times investigation that shows Kolada is far from the only caregiver to face brutal violence at the hands of those they tend.

When Camaryn LaRaut showed up Feb. 20 for his night shift at a group home on Ruth Drive in Medford, the 23-year-old found pools of blood in the living room.

His co-worker, Bobbie Kolada, was crying in pain, slumped over in a bathroom at the other end of the house, unable to lift her head. A resident of the home — an autistic, nonverbal giant of a man in his mid-30s who weighed close to 300 pounds and had a history of violent outbursts — was in the bathroom with her.

A 5-foot-4, 66-year-old grandmother, Kolada had a broken neck and was bleeding profusely from a gash on her forehead. She was fading in and out of consciousness. Until LaRaut arrived, she had been the lone caregiver in the home for hours. Bobbie Kolada died March 27 from her injuries.

She had told family members and doctors that her last memory before blacking out was that the resident in the bathroom with her had become angry when she was helping him connect his computer to Wi-Fi.

A caregiver for Monmouth-based Partnerships in Community Living, Kolada worked for a decade in group homes the company runs for developmentally disabled individuals.

For most of her tenure with PCL, Kolada worked at a nondescript house with a dying lawn near St. Mary's School in Medford. The man who apparently attacked Kolada that night had previously sent Kolada and other caregivers to the hospital.

Two weeks before the injuries that led to Kolada's death, the man had thrown Kolada across a room, co-workers said. Family and friends said the Feb. 20 tragedy was just one in a series of violent episodes Kolada had suffered over the past decade at the hands of this client and others with violent behavioral patterns whose care plans require two staff to be on hand to administer certain types of holds or restraints.

"I'm honestly not sure exactly what happened," LaRaut told a 911 dispatcher that night, according to a recording of the call obtained by the Rogue Valley Times. "I just came in to work. My co-worker has a big cut on her head and she's bleeding in the bathroom. Looks like she might have fallen. She says she got a big cut. Can't lift her head. Can't really breathe."

When the dispatcher asked LaRaut whether Kolada fell, Kolada is heard in the background loudly declaring, "No!" "Are you able to speak freely with me?" the dispatcher asked LaRaut. After a long pause, she asked, "Uh ... did somebody do this to her?"

'Four weeks of hell'

After the attack, Kolada spent five weeks in the hospital on life support, in a brace, unable to move. She was conscious for just three days during that time.

While a police report was not filed initially, Kolada's daughter, Jessica Bandy, contacted Medford police the last week in April to ask for an investigation. Deputy Chief Darrell Graham confirmed May 4 that an investigation had been opened into Kolada's death.

Pull Quote

"I personally had told her many times to leave the job. She would have bruises on her arms. She would get punched and thrown and bit. ... She'd have bite marks everywhere."

— Jessica Bandy, Bobbie Kolada's daughter

Following the 911 call, police were dispatched to escort paramedics, but the incident was treated as a medical call from a potential fall, not a violent attack. Bandy said PCL insisted her mother fell or fainted.

Even before Feb. 20, Bandy worried about her mom's work environment, she said.

"I personally had told her many times to leave the job. She would have bruises on her arms. She would get punched and thrown and bit. ... She'd have bite marks everywhere," said the daughter.

After Kolada died, Bandy found at least 10 workers' compensation claims in her mother's files, for injuries at work ranging from serious bites to facial wounds from being head-butted.

"She didn't say a lot," Bandy noted. "I think she knew we worried."

Bandy, who lives near Portland, said her mom called "like clockwork" every Sunday and would usually video chat with her two grandchildren.

"She got punched in the face one time by this same patient so badly she couldn't do Facetime with my children on a Sunday because she didn't want to scare them."

Bandy said she could not have imagined her weekly Sunday phone call, the day before her mother was fatally injured, would be their last.

"I woke up Tuesday morning and had nine missed calls from my mother's phone. ... I remember thinking, 'What is Mom doing?' But then there was a voicemail from Mom's roommate and best friend saying what had happened, that she had broken her neck and hit her head at work," Bandy said.

"The big thing was she had completely shattered her C1 and C2 vertebrae, which the doctor said hold your head to your body. I couldn't stop thinking about how he said they had been 'shattered.' — Not broken. Shattered."

Bandy said she immediately got into her car and drove to Medford, where she found her mother at Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center "awake and still talking at that point. She had a serious injury, but she was still there. I thought, 'OK, we can get through this.' I still had my mom."

Bandy said Kolada was chatty and resolved to recover, but doctors struggled to stabilize her head injury, which they needed to do before her shattered vertebrae could be addressed.

"I got there on a Tuesday and left Friday morning. The whole time I was there, she was still awake but under really close watch by the doctors and nurses," Bandy recalled.

By Friday, four days after paramedics responded to the call for help on Ruth Drive, Bandy kissed her mother goodbye.

"She was awake the 21st, 22nd and 23rd. On the 23rd, she had been so chatty. Doctors were initially focused on fixing the neck. She still had some bleeding on the brain, but the neck was the primary goal. They had planned surgery for Feb. 27. They were maybe going to try to fuse her vertebrae, so she'd still have pain but likely be able to still move," she said.

"At that point, she was immobilized. It took four people to adjust her in her bed. I remember saying, 'Mom, I'm really sad I can't be here for your surgery. She was like, 'I'll be OK. Go be with our babies. It's OK.'"

Bandy returned to the hospital Friday morning.

"She was sleeping. I went to say goodbye before I left. I think the sad part was I was really glad she was sleeping. I remember thinking, 'Oh, this is good. She's healing,'" said the daughter.

"It was a sunny day. It had snowed. It was just a beautiful drive home. I listened to her favorite music, and I just had this hope she was going to recover. I got home to see my children, and I was putting my kids down for bed, and I got a call around 8:30 p.m. that night," Bandy remembers, choking back tears.

"They said, 'Your mom needs emergency brain surgery because the blood on her brain had become so significant, they had to relieve the pressure. She only had a 50-50 chance of survival, and no chance if they didn't do something fast. I just said, 'OK, please go save my mom.'"

Pull Quote

"She got punched in the face one time by this same patient so badly she couldn't do Facetime with my children on a Sunday because she didn't want to scare them."

— Bobbie Kolada's daughter, Jessica Bandy

Kolada never regained consciousness after her surgery.

“She had head surgery on the 24th and never made it to the other surgery. From Feb. 24, until the day she passed, it was all about, ‘Is she still in there? Can she recover?’ She had seizures they were managing with medicine and adjusting her other meds, trying to get her to wake up,” Bandy said.

Friends and family sat with Kolada around the clock, playing her favorite music and talking to her.

“She wasn’t responding to pain stimulus. She had survived the surgery to relieve pressure on her brain. ... I think they were shocked she survived, but she wasn’t making progress. She had a feeding tube, a tracheotomy. ... They were doing a litany of tests and procedures, trying to get her to a comfortable place, trying to get things stabilized so they could deal with her neck,” Bandy said.

After “four weeks of hell,” Kolada showed no sign of regaining consciousness. “I remember they had to shave her head to put electrodes, to try to stimulate brain activity, and I just thought, ‘Mom’s gonna be so mad we shaved her head,’” Bandy recalled.

“But she was kind of frozen. They kept trying to do things for her ... she’d open her eyes but would never connect to someone. ... Finally, a social worker called and said we’d like to set up a family meeting. And they told us it’s not good. We don’t think she’s coming back.”

Bandy returned immediately to Medford. Kolada was taken off life support Friday, March 24.

“They unplugged everything. I was there with her for two-and-a-half days in her room. I remember they woke me up and said her breathing is really slowed. ... I was there with her as she took her last breath.”

Coming Monday — Part 2: Who is investigating the death of Bobbie Kolada?

Part 1: ‘Did somebody do this to her?’

Part 2: [Who is investigating Bobbie Kolada’s death?](https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-2-who-is-investigating-her-death/article_ab8a6e80-ead3-11ed-b247-bfecf8da675a.html) (https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-2-who-is-investigating-her-death/article_ab8a6e80-ead3-11ed-b247-bfecf8da675a.html).

Part 3: [‘I remember thinking I was going to die’](https://www.rv-times.com/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-3-i-remember-thinking-i-was-going-to-die/article_342b1172-eb6a-11ed-a0e7-1366bee3ad34.html) (https://www.rv-times.com/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-3-i-remember-thinking-i-was-going-to-die/article_342b1172-eb6a-11ed-a0e7-1366bee3ad34.html).

Part 4: [‘Culture of disregard for employees’](https://www.rv-times.com/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-4-culture-of-allowing-abuse/article_dcac24f0-ef64-11ed-9c27-93641efa39ec.html) (https://www.rv-times.com/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-4-culture-of-allowing-abuse/article_dcac24f0-ef64-11ed-9c27-93641efa39ec.html).

Part 5: [‘I don’t want her to have died in vain’](https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-5-i-don-t-want-her-to-have-died/article_9357cb48-f2f6-11ed-ba5f-dff0c637691d.html) (https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-5-i-don-t-want-her-to-have-died/article_9357cb48-f2f6-11ed-ba5f-dff0c637691d.html).

Marketplace

THE DEATH OF BOBBIE KOLADA, Part 2: Who is investigating her death?

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By **BUFFY POLLOCK**

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Barbara "Bobbie" Kolada wears an apron at work during happier times.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Part 2 of a five-part series.

It was almost as though Bobbie Kolada's death hadn't happened.

When the Rogue Valley Times learned that a caregiver had died March 27 after an apparent attack by a developmentally disabled man she cared for in Medford, the paper began searching for records of the incident to help piece together the circumstances.

No records could be found.

A month after Kolada's death, the Medford Police Department said no police report had been filed because the 911 call that summoned emergency crews had been treated as a medical call for an accident victim. The person who reportedly attacked her still lives in the house.

When the Times contacted the Office of Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS) — the state agency that oversees residential services for the developmentally disabled — the agency said it had no record of the incident. A spokesman directed the paper to Jackson County, which it said should have received a report of the incident from Partnerships in Community Living, the company that runs the group home where Kolada worked.

Jackson County, through a letter from legal Counsel Joel Benton, said the county had no records of the tragedy.

Rastrelli

"If nothing got put on paper, it would never come up the ladder to us. This is the sort of thing that we would need to be preventing. If they never reported it, we wouldn't have anything to even look at."

— Tom Mayhall Rastrelli, ODDS

In the weeks after the attack that killed Kolada, the only evidence of her death was the dried blood that still hadn't been entirely scrubbed away on the living room floor of the east Medford group home, according to employees who spoke off the record out of fear of being fired.

In late April, when word reached PCL that the Rogue Valley Times was investigating Kolada's death, PCL employees told the paper they had been warned not to talk to the media.

When ODDS was informed of the incident by the Times, agency spokesman Tom Mayhall Rastrelli said he was surprised such an incident could have occurred and his agency not been informed by county officials.

"The way it works, if there's a report made, if something happens, it would start at the level of PCL. They would make an incident report. That report gets sent to the county, and the county report goes into our system we have called the Centralized Abuse Management system," Rastrelli said.

"If nothing got put on paper, it would never come up the ladder to us. This is the sort of thing that we would need to be preventing. If they never reported it, we wouldn't have anything to even look at."

Rastrelli confirmed May 4 that his agency has now opened an investigation into Kolada's death, after learning about it from Elisa A. Williams, spokesperson for the Oregon Department of Human Services, who was informed of the case by the Rogue Valley Times.

Kolada's daughter, Jessica Bandy, said she contacted Medford police the last week in April to ask for an investigation. Deputy Chief Darrell Graham confirmed May 4 that an investigation had been opened.

PCL responds

Joanne Fuhrman, co-CEO of PCL, declined to discuss specifics of the incident that led to Kolada's hospitalization and death but said she was saddened by the loss.

Fuhrman

“What I can say is that we meet all the required staffing patterns that are required through our Office of Developmental Disabilities.”

— Joanne Fuhrman, co-CEO, Partnerships in Community Living

“We’re all really sad about Bobbie. She was a really dedicated, long-term team member, and we’re all sad for her and her family and her teammates and the people that she worked with,” Fuhrman said in early May.

“We’re really in the middle of cooperating with all the state entities that manage these things. There’s a lot of good oversight around these things that will come in when there’s injuries and deaths to review the situation, so we’re cooperating with OSHA and ODDS and worker’s comp.”

Asked whether Kolada’s injuries were related to staffing shortages, Fuhrman emphatically said they were not.

“We are required, regardless of what’s happening, to meet staffing guidelines. What I can say is that we meet all the required staffing patterns that are required through our Office of Developmental Disabilities. We follow those guidelines to make sure people are well supported and our staff are well trained,” Fuhrman said.

“We support about (300) people across the state, and each individual person that we support ... has individual support plans, individual assessments and individual teams that outline the support needs that they have. And we follow those individual plans for each person that we support, and that includes providing great training for the staff because, of course, the health and well-being of our staff as well as the people we support is essential to us,” Fuhrman said.

“Obviously, I can’t speak to people’s confidential information. I can just assure you that we do go through all the necessary steps to make sure people have the training and the support that they need to provide support to the people that we serve.”

Bobbie Kolada had been injured many times before

After Kolada died, Bandy found paperwork in her mother’s files for at least 10 workers’ compensation claims for injuries ranging from serious bites to facial wounds from being head-butted — including injuries caused by the man who apparently attacked her Feb. 20, as well as by other developmentally disabled residents she cared for.

Aaron Corvin, spokesperson for Oregon OSHA, said OSHA learned about Kolada’s death April 7 from a confidential report from an unnamed source.

“We opened the inspection on April 14,” Corvin said, noting that results of the completed inspection will be made public once the process is completed.

“What I would say is that, generally speaking, when we do an inspection, we can certainly take a look at, and we do examine, all past incidents. We’ll kind of give an examination of what happened before at the same site,” Corvin said.

“I can say, on the confidentially filed complaint, generally speaking, the allegations in that complaint are related to workplace violence,” Corvin said.

After OSHA opened its investigation, it asked PCL for information about what happened the night Kolada was attacked. Aldrich

In talking with staff, the house supervisor, and reviewing the photos taken after the incident, I have not been able to find any environmental hazards that could have caused this injury. ... It is my opinion that the cause of this fall was something other than environmental. Could have been medical or behavioral on the part of the (resident).”

— Keith Aldrich, safety operations coordinator for PCL

According to a report sent to OSHA by Keith Aldrich, safety operations coordinator for PCL, Kolada told her daughter she had been helping the resident connect his computer to Wi-Fi, but it “was taking a long time” and the client became upset and repeatedly pinched her. Kolada said she told the resident not to hurt her and repeated herself several times, then she told the man she was leaving the room.

The last thing Kolada remembered was the client “behind her, out of the corner of her eye.”

The report, which listed Kolada’s injuries as “head trauma, brain bleeding, broken neck vertebrae,” goes on to state, “In talking with staff, the house supervisor, and reviewing the photos taken after the incident, I have not been able to find any environmental hazards that could have caused this injury. ... It is my opinion that the cause of this fall was something other than environmental. Could have been medical or behavioral on the part of the person supported.”

Coming Tuesday: Part 3 — Bobbie Kolada wasn’t the only caregiver injured by those in their care.

Part 1: [‘Did somebody do this to her?’](https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-1-did-somebody-do-this-to-her/article_13e06080-e934-11ed-944d-b711dcee8c15.html) (https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-1-did-somebody-do-this-to-her/article_13e06080-e934-11ed-944d-b711dcee8c15.html)

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Marketplace

THE DEATH OF BOBBIE KOLADA, Part 3: ‘I remember thinking I was going to die’

Published 5:30 am Thursday, May 25, 2023

By **BUFFY POLLOCK**

Rogue Valley Times (<https://rv-times.com/author/newsroomrvtimes/>)

NEW INJURY

Patient Name: Valina Isadora Rivera

Chief Complaint: Work Related Injury (Head and Neck, Pt was in an altercation with an individual who became sexually and physically aggressive. States that he was hitting, punching, and groping her. Was seen at providence with imaging.

Head Injury

The incident occurred more than 1 week ago. The injury mechanism was a fall and a direct blow.

Mechanism of Injury: The patient presents today for initial outpatient office with complaints of head trauma neck pain after being assaulted in the workplace on 8/19/2020. She reports that one of her clients with mental deficits was very agitated and went into at times uncontrollable rage. She reports that during the course of this interaction she was struck multiple times in the head as well as being pushed backwards. She states when she was pushed backwards she was also choked and struck the back of her head on the wall as she fell.

Scan 2 Caregiver NEW

EDITOR’S NOTE: Part 3 of a five-part series.

When Jacksonville resident Valina Rivera-Schaefer learned that caregiver Bobbie Kolada had died in March as a result of an apparent attack by a resident at a Medford group home for developmentally disabled adults, she could hardly catch her breath.

The news brought a tidal wave of dark memories for the 35-year-old, from a painful miscarriage after one of many violent attacks she endured as a caregiver to a slew of on-the-job injuries and recurring nightmares about conditions in which she and others like Kolada worked.

Some of the injuries Rivera-Schaefer suffered occurred at the same house where Kolada was fatally injured, while others happened at different homes.

Kolada and Rivera-Schaefer both worked for Partnerships in Community Living, a Monmouth-based nonprofit that operates the group home in east Medford where Kolada was injured, as well as others around the state.

Kolada was critically injured Feb. 20 by a man for whom she provided care. She suffered several crushed vertebrae and a serious head injury, from which she never recovered.

Valina

“She grabbed the remote out of my hand and started beating me in the face with it and chasing me around the house. I’m bleeding and crying, and she wouldn’t stop. No help was coming. ... I remember thinking I was going to die.”

— Valina Rivera-Schaefer, former PCL caregiver

After learning that Kolada died March 27 after five weeks in the intensive care unit at Rogue Regional Medical Center, the Rogue Valley Times reached out to past and present employees of PCL about their experiences in the company’s group homes. Several said work-related injuries — ranging from bites to concussions and dislocated limbs — are common.

Employees said they work long hours, even double shifts, in stressful, understaffed situations and are often left alone with residents whose behaviors call for restraint measures requiring two trained staff members to administer.

Still struggling with health issues from her time at PCL, Rivera-Schaefer remembers going to work despite fearing she might not come home to her family.

Getting hurt at work became the norm

Hired in January 2021 to work as a house manager and occasional caregiver, Rivera-Schaefer said she was sent into her first group home — a home for developmentally disabled minors on Canyon Avenue in east Medford — before her training was complete.

“Three days into training, they were like, ‘How would you feel about going into a house? We’re short-handed.’ ... They didn’t introduce me to the individual or let me go to the house first. They were just like, ‘We need someone now. It has to be tonight.’ I was like, ‘Uh, OK, I’ll try it out,’” she recalled.

“It was supposed to be overnight. They said the residents would be asleep already and, if they wake up, you just turn on the television. They always would try to sell you on, basically, how you’d be ‘all set’ for the night. They tell you people are close by, that you have an on-call available if you need help. ... But you literally have no idea what you’re walking into.”

To mitigate challenging or dangerous situations in residential settings, caregivers receive mandatory training under the Oregon Intervention System, which outlines de-escalation techniques ranging from calming tactics to restraint, some of which require two people to administer.

But Rivera-Schaefer said caregivers almost always worked alone, regardless of an individual’s known behaviors.

“Two o’clock a.m. rolls around, and this girl comes out, she’s banging on the door. I’m doing everything I can to de-escalate her. I’m giving her a snack and trying the other things it says in her plan,” she said of her first night in the house.

“I called the person who was on call. I said, ‘She’s becoming escalated. She said, ‘Just go turn on the television.’ And I try to joke around about this, but it was awful. They didn’t tell me how to turn on the satellite — or that it hadn’t been working for a couple days. So, I’m trying to find her show, and it just made her madder. I couldn’t get Mickey Mouse. I couldn’t get cartoons. All that would come on was Reba. And she ... did not like Reba,’ Rivera-Schaefer recalled.

“She grabbed the remote out of my hand and started beating me in the face with it and chasing me around the house. I’m bleeding and crying, and she wouldn’t stop. No help was coming. Two hours of being assaulted, and the entire time I’m making calls to the on-call, begging for somebody to help me. ... I remember thinking I was going to die.”

Valina2

“I was on a computer doing a Zoom meeting with people from Portland and Eugene, and they were like, ‘What’s going on?’ They could hear him in the background yelling, ‘I’m gonna f–k her, I’m gonna kill her, I’m gonna f–k her, I’m gonna kill her!’”

— Valina Rivera-Schaefer, former PCL caregiver

After two hours of being kicked and “thrown around” — Rivera-Schaefer later filed an injury claim for a head injury, broken teeth, dislocated jaw and a hip injury — an on-call employee finally called back, just as Rivera was ready to call 911.

“She said, ‘Do not call 911. You don’t need to call 911. You don’t need to be dramatic about it.’

“The next day there’s a team meeting on video, and they made me get on this meeting, literally the day after I got my a–beat. All these people were like, ‘Wow, we heard what happened and you’re back here today? You’re a trooper.’ I felt like I’d survived something crazy. They were building me up. I felt like Rocky.”

Still dealing with a head injury — and despite doctors ordering light duty — she said PCL sent her back to the house with “the girl who didn’t like Reba,” as well as others. Getting hurt at work became the norm, she said.

When Life Gives You Lemons, Make Lemonade

A 17-year-old resident at a PCL group home for developmentally disabled minors on Edwina Avenue in Central Point was the second client to send Rivera-Schaefer to the hospital.

“I’m three or four months pregnant, and one night he’s escalating because he wants chicken nuggets and “Finding Nemo” at 3 a.m. I’m telling him no and trying to calm him down, so he’s kicking me in the shins and in the abdomen. He got a running start and kicks me directly in the knee, and I swear he almost broke my kneecap. I go to the hospital and I’m spotting (bleeding), worried I’m about to lose the baby,” she said, fighting back tears.

Before she went to the hospital, Rivera-Schaefer said, a PCL employee asked her to sign a release of liability.

“The next day, I lost the baby,” she said. “We had to schedule a (dilation and curettage) because I couldn’t pass everything on my own. As I was going into surgery, I got a phone call from my boss asking when I would be back at work.”

Rivera-Schaefer said PCL responded to her miscarriage by giving her \$1,000 and a lemon-themed gift basket with a tag that read, “When Life Gives You Lemons, Make Lemonade.” She remembers telling co-workers what had happened, including Kolada, who cried with her over the loss of her unborn son.

After being denied Workers’ Compensation following the miscarriage, Rivera-Schaefer was assigned to a PCL house on Bristol Road where, she said, she was punched, choked and sexually assaulted by a resident known to escalate on female caregivers.

“He escalated every day I worked with him, but they wouldn’t let me out of this house. It was like being trapped inside a horror movie,” she said.

Rivera-Schaefer said the male client’s behaviors were predatory, including habitual masturbating as well as ripping clothing from, and cornering and choking, caregivers. He once threw her to the ground and sat on her while ejaculating. During another incident, she said, the man “almost broke my neck.”

“He would sit outside my room, throwing things at the door. He threw hot coffee on me. He would clog toilets so I’d have to come out of the office. He’d take off his clothes because he knew that was a way that I’d have to touch him, to get his clothes back on. He would scratch out the poop from his behind and eat it and then try to scratch you with his

nails,” she said.

“I was on a computer doing a Zoom meeting with people from Portland and Eugene, and they were like, ‘What’s going on?’ They could hear him in the background yelling, ‘I’m gonna f–k her, I’m gonna kill her, I’m gonna f–k her, I’m gonna kill her!’”

She was really devoted to the job

Rivera-Schaefer’s husband, Jeremy Schaefer-Rivera, who went to work for PCL in May 2021, remembers an overwhelming sense of dread when his wife left for work. Schaefer-Rivera said he was attacked, as well, including one resident who bit him hard enough to nearly tear a vein from his arm.

“Whenever you would get hurt, PCL’s only focus was how they needed you to get back in there. They play mind games with you and say, ‘These people need you.’ A person who is violent and can’t get in trouble for hurting or killing someone, and you’re the only one who can help them,” he said.

“Valina was at a house with (a resident) who lived alone because he beat all his housemates so badly he had his own house. I requested to go cover her, to be support staff, so I could keep her safe. The director told me they would take care of it. It felt like they wanted me to put the job over my own family. ... And their idea of backup was they told her to put a chair under the doorknob to keep him inside. She was trying to do laundry, and he came out and was choking her and pushing her over the washing machine, punching her in the face.”

“The kid that kicked our baby out of my wife was supposed to have two people at all times, and he didn’t even have a half a person. A lot of times there would be four kids in a house with one, maybe two, (staff),” he said.

“There needs to be change. People need to be protected when they do this job. There needs to be justice for Bobbie. Valina warned PCL years before this happened that it was not safe. She warned them that somebody was going to be severely injured or killed.”

Schaefer-Rivera choked up when he learned of Kolada’s death.

“She was a great woman who just wanted to take care of her boys. Bobbie worked 9-to-7 when I worked 8-to-5. I had a lot of interactions with her,” he said.

“She was really devoted to the job. I still have her number saved in my phone under ‘PCL Bobbie.’”

Coming Wednesday — Part 4: Caregivers describe “culture of allowing abuse”

Part 1: [‘Did somebody do this to her?’](https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-1-did-somebody-do-this-to-her/article_13e06080-e934-11ed-944d-b711dcee8c15.html) (https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-1-did-somebody-do-this-to-her/article_13e06080-e934-11ed-944d-b711dcee8c15.html)

Part 2: [Who is investigating Bobbie Kolada’s death?](https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-2-who-is-investigating-her-death/article_ab8a6e80-ead3-11ed-b247-bfecf8da675a.html) (https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-2-who-is-investigating-her-death/article_ab8a6e80-ead3-11ed-b247-bfecf8da675a.html)

Part 3: [I remember thinking I was going to die](https://www.rv-times.com/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-3-i-remember-thinking-i-was-going-to-die/article_342b1172-eb6a-11ed-a0e7-1366bee3ad34.html) (https://www.rv-times.com/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-3-i-remember-thinking-i-was-going-to-die/article_342b1172-eb6a-11ed-a0e7-1366bee3ad34.html)

Part 4: [‘Culture of disregard for employees’](https://www.rv-times.com/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-4-culture-of-allowing-abuse/article_dcac24f0-ef64-11ed-9c27-93641efa39ec.html) (https://www.rv-times.com/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-4-culture-of-allowing-abuse/article_dcac24f0-ef64-11ed-9c27-93641efa39ec.html)

Part 5: [I don’t want her to have died in vain](https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-5-i-don-t-want-her-to-have-died/article_9357cb48-f2f6-11ed-ba5f-dff0c637691d.html) (https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-5-i-don-t-want-her-to-have-died/article_9357cb48-f2f6-11ed-ba5f-dff0c637691d.html)

Marketplace

THE DEATH OF BOBBIE KOLADA, Part 4: ‘Culture of allowing abuse’

Published 5:35 am Thursday, May 25, 2023

By **BUFFY POLLOCK**

Rogue Valley Times (<https://rv-times.com/author/newsroomrvtimes/>)

CONGRATULATIONS

**STAFF
OF THE
MONTH
DECEMBER**

**BOBBIE
KOLADA**



Bobbie Kolada was named employee of the month at PCL more than once.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Part 4 of a five-part series.

Grants Pass resident Liana Duffield said she witnessed “shockingly high staff turnover” in the year she spent as a regional HR manager at Partnerships in Community Living.

The Monmouth-based nonprofit operates a series of group homes for developmentally disabled minors and adults in Oregon — including the Medford home where caregiver Bobbie Kolada was fatally injured Feb. 20.

For a second year at PCL, Duffield worked as a house manager, and that’s when she learned why caregiver turnover was so high.

Duffield is one of nearly a dozen former and current PCL employees interviewed by the Rogue Valley Times following the March 27 death of Kolada, a 66-year-old grandmother who was seriously injured in an apparent attack by a developmentally disabled resident in the group home where she worked.

Kolada, who suffered a broken neck and a severe head trauma, succumbed to her injuries after a five-week fight for her life. The man blamed for her injuries has a history of violent behavior and still lives in the house.

High employee turnover, Duffield said, stemmed from “newbie” employees being assigned to houses known for being dangerous. Those who stayed were often forced to work double shifts that too often turned into days-long shifts when relief staff failed to show up. Duffield said she once worked five months of mostly 18- to 20-hour days.

“They don’t hire the right staff most of time, and when they do hire the right staff, they push them out because that staff starts holding them accountable,” Duffield said.

State licensing officials once found a resident’s care had not been documented for 85 days, she said. Duffield worked at a home for developmentally disabled teen boys on Edwina Avenue in Central Point, the home where Duffield’s colleague, Valina Rivera-Schaefer, was injured so severely by a 17-year-old boy that she suffered a miscarriage.

“One of (PCL’s) tactics is, ‘If you don’t work out here, we can move you. But when you ask to be moved, it can take a couple months. Meanwhile, (the residents are) beating the s**t out of you,” she said.

“I came in at the end of June, and by September, we had literally had 20 (staff) in and out of that house. There was a ton of physical abuse happening there, between residents and caregivers.”

Duffield said she was attacked four times by two different residents. In addition, she witnessed — and in some cases helped intercede in — more than a half-dozen violent attacks on other employees. Duffield said it’s common for staff to work alone with individuals whose care plans require more than one staff, but caregivers often feel devoted to the care of the residents and feel obligated to try and “tough it out.”

Both Kolada, a former PCL employee of the month, and Rivera-Schaefer were working alone when they were injured, said Duffield.

“With Bobbie, I wonder if she had a chance to call for help. ... (The resident) that hurt Bobbie had a violent history. I was scared s**tless when I walked into that house for the first time. A second person would have been able to take the situation down a notch. There’s a chance Bobbie would still be alive,” she added.

PCL responds

PCL co-owner Joanne Fuhrman, in an email to the Rogue Valley Times this week, said, “The care plans for these two individuals (in the house where Kolada was injured) do not require two staff to be present. Each individual we work with has a care plan that includes specific, approved intervention plans in cases where one caregiver is present and in cases where two caregivers are present. The care plan for the individuals in the home at the time the incident occurred does not require two caregivers to be present.”

On an Accident/Fatality Intake Form PCL submitted to Oregon OSHA Feb. 21, the day after Kolada was hurt, and again March 27, when Kolada died, PCL maintained that Kolada was an “accident victim.”

“Currently the mechanism of injury is unknown,” PCL wrote on the form sent to OSHA Feb. 21. “The employee was found unconscious and bleeding from the head by co-workers during a shift change. No one is known to have witnessed the accident,” PCL said.

On the day Kolada died, PCL updated its report with the sentence, “Oregon OSHA was notified accident victim had passed away as of the morning of 3/27/2023.”

This week, Fuhrman reiterated that there’s no proof that Kolada was hurt by a resident.

“As far as PCL is aware, there has not been a medical or legal conclusion that Bobbie was injured by a resident,”

Fuhrman said Tuesday in an email to Rogue Valley Times.

‘I warned them time and time again’

White City resident Ken Monk, a former behavior support coordinator for PCL, said he and others repeatedly warned PCL about staffing levels for group homes where residents requiring higher levels of support were housed.

Monk, who counted Kolada as a close friend when they worked together, said his heart sank when he learned this week of Kolada’s death. Monk was responsible for assessing residents and writing Positive Behavior Support Plans, which determine de-escalation techniques as well as physical intervention methods permitted for each resident.

Monk said he regularly worked with the man believed to have fatally injured Kolada.

“I was livid. And for it to have happened to Bobbie ...,” he said Monday, taking a slow breath and wringing his hands.

Monk, who worked in the disabilities field since 1998, said he became a thorn in the side of PCL and ultimately left because of his concerns over unsafe conditions, which he said put both caregivers and residents at a disadvantage, were ignored.

“The guy who killed Bobbie — and I have no doubt he hurt Bobbie, as I’ve been beat up by him before — is what we call a Tier 5 and 6, which is related to the level of support he required. I worked with Bobbie during many of the times that she got hurt. And she got hurt a lot,” he said.

“She was concussed several times by him, but she was a trooper and she loved those boys. ... I would not have kept her there. As a behavior specialist, I knew that it was not a good situation, and I told PCL that many times.”

Monk said he felt bad for the resident for being left in a situation where his needs, such as staffing levels or behavioral assessments, were “not likely being met.”

“It’s one of those cases where — 99% of the time — they can be great. The other part of the time, things can go catastrophically wrong,” he added, noting that the resident believed to have injured Kolada was moved from another home in Medford in order to be in a more secure setting — with securable doors — to permit one staff, instead of two, to staff the home overnight.

“What I saw, and one of the reasons I left, was the level of risk the staff is being put under and the constant lack of adequate staffing. ... I had become a thorn in their side because I warned them time and time again. It was never a matter of if, but when,” he added.

“There are a lot of people that have been expecting something like this to occur for a long time. This coming to light was like a scab that needed to be ripped off.”

‘I was scared to death’

Former PCL employee Kim Demar, house manager for the group home where Kolada was injured, said violent attacks by residents in the home were common. Demar was in charge of the house the night Kolada was fatally injured.

“(Bobbie) was my employee. ... I was at home the night it happened, and we had been communicating via text around 7:30 that evening, about her filling a shift for one of the other employees,” Demar said. “I eventually went to bed and woke up to a phone call at 8:30 the next morning from the individual who found her.”

Demar said she was outraged at the lack of an investigation into Kolada’s injuries, and that PCL told employees that Kolada had likely fainted or fallen. When the company told Kolada’s daughter, Jessica Bandy, that evidence of a previous injury Kolada suffered just weeks before the Feb. 20 incident that led to her death didn’t exist, Demar sent proof that it did.

Fuhrman, PCL’s co-owner, refused to discuss specifics of the attack that led to Kolada’s death, and denied that staffing was a factor.

“We meet all the required staffing patterns that are required through our Office of Developmental Disabilities. We follow those guidelines to make sure people are well supported and our staff are well trained,” Fuhrman told the Rogue Valley Times in an interview.

Demar said she was injured twice by the same resident who attacked Kolada — a bite injury to her right bicep Jan. 11, and a bite to her left forearm Feb. 21, the day after 911 was dispatched to the house for Kolada.

“The day after her accident, I had to cover her shift ... from 3 p.m. to 10 p.m. That was the last time he attacked me. I was sitting on the couch and he came out of the bedroom and threw his body on top of me. He had his mouth open and was trying to bite any part of my body he could get a hold of.”

When she was able to get out of the man’s grasp, Demar said, she crawled away and tried to utilize her Oregon Intervention System training.

“He’s so quick and so maliciously intended ... he was going to hurt me. He reached out and grabbed my arm and wailed a bite onto it. ... I don’t know what was going on in his mind. I just know that he wanted to hurt me. ... After that second time, I would hide from him while he escalated. ... I was scared to death.”

Demar quit working at PCL March 27, the day Kolada died.

“I planned to leave because I felt I was not safe and protected by the company with the level of dysfunction of the residents. The final straw for me was that the last day I worked, I received notification from the company that they had completed their investigation — and I say investigation, but they didn’t even come to the house. They did it all by phone. They basically said they could not find any cause (for Kolada’s injuries).”

‘She probably didn’t even put up a fight’

Katherine Colwell, a Merlin resident, worked for PCL between 2017 and 2020. She remembers long shifts and frequent injuries in what seemed like a culture of disregard for employees. A kind co-worker named Bobbie Kolada urged her to be careful.

“Bobbie actually trained me. And I worked in the house she was injured at. I was also hurt on the job, and they made me finish my shift while my face was bleeding because they told me they couldn’t find coverage,” Colwell said.

“I got bit in the face by the same gentleman” who hurt Kolada, she said.

Colwell said she was heartbroken to learn that Kolada had died.

“Bobbie, when she trained me, she told me, ‘If it becomes overwhelming, whatever you do, just don’t show your emotions, because he will attack you and he will hurt you,’” Colwell said.

“I felt like I was prepared for it, but when I would see him pouncing around her — and then he bit her one of the times I was there — I remember feeling like, ‘What the hell have I gotten myself into?’ What sucks the most was knowing Bobbie, and the kind of heart she had. He had been targeting her for a while, and PCL knew it.”

Colwell said PCL should acknowledge what happened to Kolada.

“The company knows damn good and well what happened to Bobbie. And all the employees know damn good and well.

“Bobbie gave her heart to the company. No matter what hell they put her through, she never said anything negative about PCL. She saw everything — the ups and downs — and she ended up giving her life. Literally,” she added, fighting back tears.

“It just breaks my heart because I knew her and who she was ... and she probably didn’t even put up a fight. Because she wasn’t allowed to.”

Coming Thursday — Part 5: ‘I don’t want her to have died in vain’

Part 1: [‘Did somebody do this to her?’](https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-1-did-somebody-do-this-to-her/article_13e06080-e934-11ed-944d-b711dcee8c15.html) (https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-1-did-somebody-do-this-to-her/article_13e06080-e934-11ed-944d-b711dcee8c15.html)

Part 2: [Who is investigating Bobbie Kolada’s death?](https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-2-who-is-investigating-her-death/article_ab8a6e80-ead3-11ed-b247-bfecf8da675a.html) (https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-2-who-is-investigating-her-death/article_ab8a6e80-ead3-11ed-b247-bfecf8da675a.html)

Part 3: [‘I remember thinking I was going to die’](https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-3-i-remember-thinking-i-was-going-to-die/article_342b1172-eb6a-11ed-a0e7-1366bee3ad34.html) (https://www.rv-times.com/localstate/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-3-i-remember-thinking-i-was-going-to-die/article_342b1172-eb6a-11ed-a0e7-1366bee3ad34.html)

Part 4: [‘Culture of disregard for employees’](https://www.rv-times.com/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-4-culture-of-allowing-abuse/article_dcac24f0-ef64-11ed-9c27-93641efa39ec.html) (https://www.rv-times.com/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-4-culture-of-allowing-abuse/article_dcac24f0-ef64-11ed-9c27-93641efa39ec.html)

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OSHA reports: Five years of injuries

The Rogue Valley Times filed a public records request with Oregon OSHA for five years’ worth of inspections and complaints pertaining to PCL group homes in the Rogue Valley. The documents outlined a pre-existing concern for employee safety and, according to one report, “a culture” of allowing employee injuries to continue.

A summary of the reports include:

February 2019: A former employee described an unsafe situation where the complainant was bitten several times and said she and others feared being injured. In response to the complaint, PCL said residents of the home communicate via biting, hitting, kicking and pushing. PCL implied that employees had not properly worked to de-escalate the violent resident.

April 2019: An employee reported that a resident at a PCL group home was biting staff members deep enough to draw blood and that employees were not provided personal protective equipment. On several occasions, the resident head-butted staff members. In a response provided to OSHA, PCL stated that staff were encouraged to wear long sleeves to prevent the individual from fixating on protective Kevlar sleeves and that employees were encouraged, since the resident “had been known to bite in other places than just arms,” to utilize situational awareness and follow other procedures put in place.

January 2020: From the final week of December 2019 and through January 2020, 10 violent incidents were reported, according to documents provided to the Rogue Valley Times by Oregon OSHA officials.

April 2022: A letter from PCL attorneys acknowledged five employee injuries in a six-month window, prior to April 2022. In a November incident, the caregiver ended up in the emergency room after an extensive beating by a resident, during which “he grabbed my neck with both hands and head-butted me” and went on to kick, bite and hit the caregiver.

December 2022: A complaint was filed with OSHA stating staff of PCL were “routinely attacked by the clients, with ineffectual corrective actions taken by the company.” The complainant stated that PCL “has a culture of allowing abuse of their direct support staff by individuals being supported,” and “does not effectively change practices to reduce danger.”

In a stack of reports from the PCL Safety Committee, numerous injuries were detailed over the past five years. Examples included:

- In May 2018, employees reported being struck by a chair and an individual who had their hair grabbed while being pinched
- In May 2019, an employee missed 15 days of work after being kicked in the stomach and ribs by the resident for whom they were providing support
- In June 2021, an employee missed seven days of work after multiple “impacts” across their body from closed fists and from being pushed into various objects
- In November 2021, three injured employees reported situations of “bites to both arms,” “struck on left side of neck and shoulder” and “head-butt to the forehead”
- In January 2022, an employee was kicked and hit in the head with closed fists
- In March 2022, two caregivers were injured by a resident using a piece of wood containing staples. That same month, other caregivers were “choked with a sweatshirt hood,” “kicked in the left side of the face,” and an employee suffered “impact to knee, thigh, shin, chest and face” while a co-worker had impacts and bites to their face, arm and legs.
- In April 2022, an injury was reported to state officials after a caregiver was “poisoned by another person with cleaning chemicals.”

Marketplace

THE DEATH OF BOBBIE KOLADA, Part 5: ‘I don’t want her to have died in vain’

Published 5:42 am Thursday, May 25, 2023

By **BUFFY POLLOCK**

Rogue Valley Times (<https://rv-times.com/author/newsroomrvtimes/>)



Oregon OSHA
A Division of the Department of Consumer and Business Services

Notice of Alleged Safety or Health Hazards

Intake Date: Monday, May 23, 2022 11:16 AM Complaint No: 209460833

EDS/Employer Name: PARTNERSHIPS IN COMMUNITY LIVING INC	Emp No: 7406994
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HAZARD DESCRIPTION:

Item No: 1

Staff are routinely attacked by the clients with ineffectual corrective actions taken by the company.

Scan 5 Caregiver

EDITOR’S NOTE: Final of a five-part series.

In the two months since 66-year-old caregiver Bobbie Kolada died of injuries suffered on the job, little has changed at the group home in east Medford where she was hurt.

The developmentally disabled man accused of sending her to intensive care still lives there. Kolada’s co-workers continue to provide for the man’s care. And the same is true of other residents who have hurt other caregivers at group homes operated by Partnerships in Community Living, current and former employees say.

Kolada was injured Feb. 20. Working alone and caring for two residents at a PCL group home, the 5-foot-4 grandmother sustained crushed cervical vertebrae and a massive head injury, which led to her death five weeks later at Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center. The cause of death listed on her death certificate was a subdural bleed, a head trauma resulting in a brain bleed that compresses brain tissue.

The resident who apparently injured Kolada has hurt at least one other caregiver since that night. The resident had injured Kolada and others previously, according to Kolada's co-workers, who say drastic changes are needed to protect employees from aggressive and violent residents housed by PCL.

Group homes like those operated by PCL provide care for people with severe developmental and intellectual disabilities whose families cannot care for them.

Unable to aid in their own defense

Throughout the early 1900s, many in Oregon with intellectual disabilities lived in institutions such as the Fairview Training Center in Salem, established in 1907 as the State Institution for the Feeble-Minded.

Most of the first patients at Fairview were transferred from the Oregon State Hospital for the Insane. Fairview residents were referred to as "inmates," and for decades just about anyone leaving the institution faced compulsory sterilization before returning to the community, according to a history of Fairview produced in 2020 by Oregon Public Broadcasting. By the 1980s, Fairview was overcrowded and poorly staffed. In 1985, a U.S. Justice Department investigation determined Fairview residents faced life-threatening conditions. Following a federal civil rights lawsuit, Fairview closed in 2000, with most remaining residents moving into the community, including group homes like those operated by PCL. While residential settings work well for a majority of developmentally disabled people, caregivers and others who work in the mental health field say more needs to be done to protect employees from residents with violent tendencies, who often face no consequences for their behavior.

Jackson County District Attorney Beth Heckert said that people with severe developmental disabilities are often unable to aid in their own defense, making it difficult to press charges for violent acts that otherwise would be prosecuted as a crime.

In Kolada's case, police who responded to the 911 call were told Kolada had fallen, and no police report was filed. Medford police have since opened an investigation. Heckert said crimes such as violence against caregivers are handled differently when committed by a developmentally disabled person, but they must be addressed regardless.

"For low-level crimes, we might get a guardian who can place them someplace or do something so we can feel like, 'OK, somebody in the community is kind of watching over this situation where we can't really leave them out in the community unsupervised,'" Heckert said.

"There would be a separate process for dealing with a dangerous offender. If somebody committed a really serious crime but could never aid and assist (in their own defense), you can commit them to the state hospital as a dangerous offender. ... State statute says if they can't aid and assist, the court has to dismiss the case, but you could civilly commit somebody ... saying they're dangerous out in the community, to themselves and others."

If no criminal charges are filed, residents who are a threat to themselves or others are typically dealt with through a housing change.

Stabilization and Crisis Unit

Group home residents with violent tendencies can be sent for assessment and care to a state Stabilization and Crisis Unit. Some 20 group homes between Eugene and Portland operate as SACU homes, where roughly 600 employees provide 24-hour care for up to 95 people. The SACU homes are deemed a higher level of care than regular group homes, focused on stabilizing the behavior of violent or distraught residents through drugs or other treatments, so they can be returned to a regular group home.

Individuals sent to SACU typically have intellectual and developmental disabilities, combined with co-occurring mental health issues, and caring for them is a difficult and potentially dangerous job. Employees in the unit report burnout from overwork and high staff shortages, according to a March 7 [story by Oregon Capital Chronicle](https://oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2023/03/07/state-caregivers-in-oregon-group-homes-reach-a-crisis/) (<https://oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2023/03/07/state-caregivers-in-oregon-group-homes-reach-a-crisis/>).

Some 301 staff worked 5,020 hours of mandatory overtime at SACU in July 2022, an average of about 16 hours per employee. Some 565 staff worked 19,471 hours of voluntary overtime the same month, with employees averaging 17- to nearly 24-hour days. In terms of injuries last year, 24 employees missed nearly 2,011 hours of work — 84 hours on average per employee — due to injuries suffered on the job.

No SACU homes exist in Southern Oregon, and those in the northern part of the state have long waiting lists. Oregon State Hospital is also short of beds.

Tom Mayhall Rastrelli, spokesperson for the Oregon Office of Developmental Disabilities Services, said in mid-May that 11 individuals were waiting for SACU beds to open up. When a bed is not available, residents remain in their current placement or must find temporary housing. In some cases, a resident could be housed in a hospital behavioral unit, in particular if they have been charged with a crime or created an unsafe situation for themselves or others.

Former Oregon State Hospital spokeswoman Aria Seligmann, in a November 2021 story by Oregon Public Broadcasting, acknowledged the hospital received more patient referrals than it has capacity to treat.

“Many of the people referred do not need extended hospital level of care but remain at the hospital longer than needed because their home counties lack sufficient treatment options,” Seligmann wrote. “The Oregon State Hospital cannot build and staff enough beds to solve the problem. The solution is for our partners to work together to expand beds and treatment services in the community and preserve the state’s limited hospital capacity for people who need hospital-level care.”

Ultimately the responsibility for group home residents falls on the shoulders of county case managers, said Rastrelli, adding that state officials, case managers and providers “work hard to be proactive in situations where an individual hurts other people who live with them or the employees who work with them.”

“People who experience disabilities are treated like anyone else if they hurt other people. If it’s a mental health crisis, they go to the hospital for evaluation. They may end up in the hospital or at the Oregon State Hospital on a temporary stay. If they have committed a crime, they may be prosecuted like anyone else. Having a disability doesn’t change these situations,” Rastrelli said.

“There are people in our communities that do not have disabilities that are a danger to themselves or others. The difference is that Oregon has a number of supports in place for people with (intellectual and developmental disabilities).” Rastrelli said placement in any type of setting is voluntary, and residents have the right to refuse services, meaning, “They might end up living with family or other people they know. They could end up houseless.”

An administrator of a Medford agency that deals with developmental disabilities, who asked that his name not be used, said PCL was “like the Fairview of Southern Oregon,” priding itself on taking the most difficult residents.

“Anybody who has been in this field for long enough knows about PCL and the kind of individuals they take on,” the administrator said.

A secure, long-term residential option for dangerous residents is sorely needed, he said.

“There are DD facilities and there are mental health facilities, but not too many places that do both. DD patients who have co-occurring mental disorders go to DD facilities, but there’s no facilities that deal with the super-violent ones.”

‘A job shouldn’t ... risk your life’

Kim Demar, a former supervisor for PCL who managed the house where Kolada was hurt, said it was “a huge mistake on PCL’s part not to honor and protect their staff.” The company told employees that Kolada had fainted or fallen, and did not acknowledge the apparent attack that led to her death, Demar said. Companies like PCL have a responsibility to protect both residents and caregivers, she added.

“We don’t want to see overly institutionalized individuals, but there are some who need that level of institutionalized care, because they are extremely violent. I don’t remember signing up for the fact that I wanted to be beat up on a regular basis, or that I had to fear for my life going to work,” Demar said.

“What I really would like to see is legislation that says we’ve got to do a better job of protecting our employees. Yes, I understand these individuals are intellectually and behaviorally challenged, but that doesn’t give them the right to hurt us either. ... I don’t think there’s a simple answer, but the lack of accountability for (Bobbie Kolada) and what happened to her is really why all of us are so terribly distraught.”

Kolada’s longtime roommate and former PCL employee Mechelle Leffingwell described the scene at the group home where Kolada was hurt as a house of horrors the night of Feb. 20. Kolada had asked her to go to the house to retrieve her purse. Leffingwell said she saw “blood everywhere” and remembers thinking, “A job shouldn’t be like this, it shouldn’t risk your life.”

Leffingwell, who worked at PCL from 2016 to 2021, said she witnessed frequent employee injuries, including a time when Kolada, who was working alone with four residents, was beat to the point her face was “swollen purple and black, top to bottom.”

“One of the clients, the one who actually killed Bobbie, he was big for me, and I’m 5-11. When they brought us down, in that house, from two staff to one staff, we asked if we could keep it at two, and they said no, they’re fine. One is fine.”

‘I want my mom to have a voice’

Jessica Bandy, Kolada’s daughter, wonders whether her mom could have survived her injuries if help had arrived sooner. Kolada was alone for as long as two-and-a-half hours after being injured, before the next shift arrived and called 911. Lack of acknowledgement of her mother’s injuries by PCL has been upsetting, but she takes solace in former and current PCL employees speaking out to share their own stories and report concerns to state agencies.

“There are a lot of people quietly fighting for my mom,” she said through tears.

“To know that they really cared for my mom means the world to me.”

Bandy said she didn’t fault the resident who apparently injured her mother, but felt both residents and employees of care facilities need more protections.

“I don’t want anyone else to go through what we’ve gone through. My mom had survived a lot in her life, and for it to end like this feels really wrong. She gave so much to others, and she literally died caring for others,” Bandy said.

“I don’t want her to have died in vain. I want to know what policies they’re changing as a result of this happening. I want her friends to be safe. ... I want my mom to have a voice.”

Part 1: [‘Did somebody do this to her?’](https://www.rv-times.com/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-1-did-somebody-do-this-to-her/article_13e06080-e934-11ed-944d-b711dcee8c15.html) (https://www.rv-times.com/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-1-did-somebody-do-this-to-her/article_13e06080-e934-11ed-944d-b711dcee8c15.html).

Part 2: [Who is investigating Bobbie Kolada’s death?](https://www.rv-times.com/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-2-who-is-investigating-her-death/article_ab8a6e80-ead3-11ed-b247-bfecf8da675a.html) (https://www.rv-times.com/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-2-who-is-investigating-her-death/article_ab8a6e80-ead3-11ed-b247-bfecf8da675a.html).

Part 3: [‘I remember thinking I was going to die’](https://www.rv-times.com/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-3-i-remember-thinking-i-was-going-to-die/article_342b1172-eb6a-11ed-a0e7-1366bee3ad34.html) (https://www.rv-times.com/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-3-i-remember-thinking-i-was-going-to-die/article_342b1172-eb6a-11ed-a0e7-1366bee3ad34.html).

Part 4: [‘Culture of disregard for employees’](https://www.rv-times.com/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-4-culture-of-allowing-abuse/article_dcac24f0-ef64-11ed-9c27-93641efa39ec.html) (https://www.rv-times.com/the-death-of-bobbie-kolada-part-4-culture-of-allowing-abuse/article_dcac24f0-ef64-11ed-9c27-93641efa39ec.html).

Part 5: ‘I don’t want her to have died in vain’

Study shows nearly all caregivers suffered injuries

In a 2014 study titled “Resident Aggression Toward Staff at a Center for the Developmentally Disabled,” published in Workplace Health & Safety, an interview of 21 direct-care workers and three nursing staff revealed all had been previously injured by residents.

Twenty (83%) reported being injured while engaged in the physical restraint of a resident. Twelve (50%) reported seeing health care providers for their injuries, and 11 (46%) said they requested time off work due to injuries.

When asked about factors that contributed to injuries from resident aggression, 10 staff (42%) reported that inadequate staff had responded to the event; 20 staff (83%) reported that managers lacked concern about their safety and would not respond to their suggestions about how to handle resident aggression.

Of staff interviewed, 20 (83%) reported working overtime on a regular basis, including 12 (50%) who reported working mandatory overtime. Additionally, 13 (54%) of the staff interviewed reported that they were not fully included in the residents’ care and treatment plans, including providing input to the health care provider about behavior that might warrant medication changes. Staff also reported that changes in medication seemed to result in resident aggression. Twelve (50%) of the staff expressed a need for more comprehensive training on handling resident aggression.

‘Justice for Bobbie’ vigil planned

Co-workers and friends of Bobbie Kolada plan to hold a “Justice for Bobbie” candlelight vigil at 7 p.m. Sunday, May 28. Jacksonville resident Valina Rivera-Schaefer, who is helping to organize the event, is a former PCL employee who said she sustained serious injuries, including a miscarriage, while working as a caregiver for the company.

Rivera-Schaefer said she hoped the event would offer a chance for anyone who cared about Kolada — or who shared similar experiences while working in the caregiving industry — to honor one of their own.

“We want to bring awareness to the industry — that we need more safety precautions in place to protect caregivers.

We’re hearing a lot of people are being told to hush about what happened to Bobbie, and it’s not right,” she said.

“We’re hoping there is a response when it comes to what caregivers are going through. We want the event to be healing and to be peaceful.”

The vigil will be held at the Asante Workers Health parking lot, 2596 E. Barnett Road in Medford, and will include a walk through the neighborhood where Kolada was fatally injured Feb. 20.

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