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THE VOICE OF THE KEY PENINSULA

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Crews installing Peninsul School District's new fiber optic cable marked everything "Not Copper" to prevent theft. *Tim Heitzman, KP News*

The Big Push for Broadband Equality on the KP

What will it take to provide broadband internet access to every home and business on the KP?

LISA BRYAN, KP NEWS

The Pierce County Council unanimously approved an appropriation of \$15 million from the county's 2020-2021 biennial budget to support partnerships, seed money and matching funds for grants to provide or improve broadband services in underserved areas of Pierce County at its July 6 meeting.

The funds came to Pierce County from the federal American Rescue Plan Act.

Pierce County Councilmember and Chair Derek Young (D-7th District, including Key Peninsula) said high speed broadband access has become a central part of today's economy. He co-sponsored the ordinance allocating the money from the county budget.

"We know how important it is to connect unserved parts of Pierce County," Young said. "Key Peninsula is certainly on top of that list. The county's investment, combined

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Local Man Arrested After Tensions Erupt in Home Neighborhood

Community members tried to resolve a long-simmering problem.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

Michael Kotas, 46, of Lakebay was arrested July 22 for second-degree assault on a Home community resident. A hearing Aug. 8 to determine whether Kotas is competent to stand trial was continued to Sept. 27 and he was ordered held in Pierce County Jail. He may go to trial or be sent to Western State Hospital for psychiatric treatment, according to the Pierce County Prosecutor's Office.

While Kotas is innocent of the assault charge until proven guilty in court, the Key Peninsula News is identifying him by name contrary to editorial policy because he is well-known in his community for erratic behavior, and because some of his neighbors agreed to speak to KP News on condition of anonymity about their efforts to help him before rising tensions over the last year erupted into violence in July.

According to court records, Kotas has been repeatedly arrested over the years for sexual assault, simple assault, and felony harassment. In 2005 he was convicted in King County of third-degree assault with sexual motivation on a female resident of a group home where the two were living. He is a registered level 3 sex offender; one rated most likely to reoffend.

"When he first started showing up, he would walk basically along A street or up and down the hill literally at a snail's pace, head down, and didn't really engage with anybody," said one resident. "At some point he was gone for a while. He might have been picked up and institutionalized. And when he came back, he was much more outgoing, much more communicative with people, active. One thing he'd do that was kind of intimidating, it was only with women, he'd circle them with his bike and start asking them questions, like what's your name."

In the summer of 2020, Kotas was accused of vandalizing a dock, stealing a



The peaceful community of Home was upset by erratic disturbances. *Lisa Bryan, KP News*

rowboat, and threatening residents with a knife. A warrant was issued for his arrest, and he was briefly institutionalized.

In October, Kotas approached a Home resident cutting up a fallen tree. "I don't want to scare anybody. I'm just looking

for some firewood," Kotas said.

The resident said, "I thought maybe if he had a nice warm

place to stay, he wouldn't be searching all over the neighborhood for firewood, so I took a load of wood over to him. After that he was almost every day at my house wanting to read a couple psalms out of the Bible and break some bread. One time he picked up my guitar and played this song he said he'd written. Blew me away."

Kotas asked the resident for help getting medication. "I said 'Oh yes, you definitely need that.' He was on meds at the time, just needed a renewal. He got out of the hospital at the end of September with no follow-up.

"I was astonished at how hard it is to fight that battle, and if you're incapacitated like Kotas there's no hope. It took us months to get a doctor's appointment and get him medication on a regular basis."

Kotas was living in a house owned by

a man who had willed it to him after his death in July 2020, another resident said. He showed him a stack of documents to that effect, and the resident helped him respond to an ongoing court challenge from the deceased owner's family about the property.

Kotas used to regularly ask another Home resident to fill water jugs he would carry back to his house because he had no electricity and therefore no running water. "When you see how he functions, he's essentially homeless. And he functions like that because of his significant mental health issues," the resident said.

Other neighbors assisted him with cashing his disability checks and got him an Electronic Benefits Transfer card from DSHS to buy food, "but he can't handle that.

He gave it to some guy to use and then had to wait until the end of the month to get more food," said one neighbor.

Kotas' behavior started to deteriorate in early spring, and a resident called the county Mobile Outreach Crisis Team.

"There was a social worker and a nurse who prescribed the meds. They came out in January without much success, and then again in April with a month's worth of meds and that got us through to the end of May. They explained 'This is it for us,

CONTINUED PAGE 3

"THE SITUATION FOR HIM IS PRETTY INHUMANE, AND NOT JUST FOR HIM."

for some firewood," Kotas said.

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TAKING CARE OF EACH OTHER

Here's What I Think About That

LISA BRYAN,
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

A few friends and I go swimming early in the morning in Von Geldern Cove. We'd done it a dozen times already this summer, I was getting acclimated to it and kind of proud of us for continuing a somewhat crazy-sounding ritual of the first settlers of Home.

When it was time to head back this last time, the boat ramp seemed like a long way away. I was swimming but going nowhere fast. I freaked myself out a bit, thinking I'd already been in the cold water for 20 minutes and needed to get to shore quickly. I could feel the adrenaline pumping, but I was like a car stuck in neutral: the engine was revving and going nowhere.

But I wasn't alone. My friends were close by. "Hey, I think I'm having a little trouble here." I hadn't wanted to acknowledge that I was struggling but knew I had to for my safety and for their own, and of course my friends were great. Their voices and presence made the anxiety I felt subside. I finally reached a place where I could stand and felt a huge sense of relief. But also embarrassment. And maybe even grief.

I wasn't the badass I thought I was. That's what this year has been like. For me, and for a lot of people I know.

My 80-year-old neighbor called the other day to say he is sick with Covid. And he was vaccinated. He went out one time to a local store without his mask, he said, and is now ill and in quarantine because someone else there wasn't vaccinated.

Another neighbor just told he knew one of the young Marines killed at the airport in Afghanistan Aug. 26, where he was working on the largest evacuation-airlift ever attempted.

With news of one unprecedented disaster after another, including the presence of the coronavirus delta variant spreading on the Key Peninsula, it is easy to fall into a state of despair.

And this is at a time when arguably the most proactive accomplishment on the

Key Peninsula in generations has been achieved: the new Evergreen Elementary School. In the middle of our troubles, there is reason to hope and endless possibilities for the future on the first day of school in the first new school built on the KP in decades.

Facing the front entrance for the first time left me speechless.

I was with new Peninsula School District Superintendent Krestin Bahr, Director of Facilities Patrick Gillespie and Director of Communication Aimee Gordon. But in my mind, I was my 7-year-old self in pigtails standing there in awe. The architecture alone inspires greatness and wonder.

Perhaps best of all, I thought to myself, is the undeniable evidence that the future of the Key Peninsula really matters. We matter. Our children matter. Our teachers matter. The construction of a beautiful new school here tells us so.

Standing there in silence delivered a powerful feeling I had nearly forgotten — civic pride.

Bahr comes from a rural community herself, where she and her husband live on 9 acres and have horses. She toured the school earlier with Evergreen Principal Hugh Maxwell and a few staff members and said she can feel the excitement.

"Looking at the natural elements of this building, all the details and the connection of outdoor and indoors — I'm terribly excited," Bahr said. A big advocate for both STEM and environmental education, as a superintendent Bahr also works for environmental sustainability at the national level.

"I love to help communities actualize the intersection between children and nature and play," she said. "I think it's even more important post-pandemic."

There have been many bright spots to find as the pandemic drags on. The Key Peninsula community has continued its steady progress toward the future while struggling against the coronavirus.

This is the direct result of many people working together toward achieving a common goal.

"The plan is to be in this building the first day of school," Gillespie said. "There are lots of people working hard, working weekends, to make it happen."

School starts Sept. 7 for most grades and Sept. 9 for kindergartners. All students are supposed to wear masks, except for medical and religious exceptions, and all staff are to be vaccinated, again except for those same exceptions.

In other words, we need to stay a little closer to shore, and if we can't do that, we need to remember to stick together. ■

ATTENTION:
CATS AND THEIR LOYAL SUBJECTSCat Royalty
Honored Here

To celebrate Halloween, the October issue will feature your royal feline friends.

With or without a costume, we'd like to see your special cats and kittens. Send a photo to editor@keypennews.org

BROADBAND FROM PAGE 1

with state and federal dollars, will be prioritized in those areas first. The request for proposals is going out shortly, so we'll have more details about the plan soon."

Russ Elliott, director of the Washington State Broadband Office, is no stranger to the challenges surrounding broadband equality in rural areas. He held the same post in Wyoming before his Washington appointment in

October 2019.

"The start of every brilliant conversation around broadband begins with, 'What can we do as a community and how do we support ourselves?'" Elliott said.

It was the same question the Key Peninsula Community Council asked itself.

Mark Cockerill is the broadband subcommittee chair for the community council and started gathering information before the pandemic. They developed and conducted their own online survey that received nearly 500 responses. The data was analyzed and shared with Hugh Taylor, principal policy analyst for the Pierce County Council, and added depth to the county analysis.

In a presentation Taylor made to the community council in July he said, "Dealing with the remote work and education has illustrated the need

to have good, fast and reliable internet connections to every home and business." The county's broadband study revealed

that two of the four unserved areas in large contiguous pieces in Pierce County are located on the Key Peninsula.

"We're all connecting and really communicating with each other now," Cockerill said. In a recent meeting initiated by Elliott, Cockerill told KP News he met with the state, the county and Fred Lutz of Wave Broadband, who expressed interest in possibly expanding portions of its existing network on the KP.

"It's a beginning," Cockerill said. "CenturyLink told us they had no interest in replacing its copper with fiber optic here. There's not enough money in it for them."

Chris Hagel, director of digital learning of Peninsula School District, said he couldn't agree more about the need for more accurate information about broadband service on both the Key and Gig Harbor peninsulas. The district is helping to lead an effort, along with others, encouraging residents to complete a survey developed by the Washington State Broadband Office from their homes.

"It's a two-minute test. We want everybody on both the Key Peninsula and the Gig Harbor peninsula to run that test so we can actually get good data to know what people's true broadband looks like in their homes," Hagel said.

PSD recently included links to the test in its enrollment system to encourage parents to complete the survey.

Hagel told KP News the district gave portable hotspots to over 600 families last year and will be doing it again for families who need them.

"We knew this before the pandemic but we really know it now that whether we're fully virtual or in a regular school year (which for most kids is the plan for this year), is kids still need access," he said. "It's an equity issue for every kid not to have access at home to get on the internet."

The hotspots worked for most but not all families. Hagel said there are places on the KP where there is no cell service. Some students went to YMCA Camp Seymour or the Red Barn to do their schoolwork when classes were all online.

There are some areas in the state where school districts, police, fire and park departments are teaming up and

building internet networks. PSD discussed options like that with the Key Peninsula Fire Department, but the area is limited by the lack of locations available for piggybacking.

"Even between all of our school district sites, the fire department sites and the park, the technology struggles through all the trees and over the hills," Hagel said.

Fiber optic cables are being strung along the KP Highway as part of a 38-mile PSD fiber optic network connecting its schools. At press time, that work was taking place between Key Peninsula Middle School and the new Evergreen Elementary School.

Hagel said the lines will come up to Key Center and split to head in one direction to Vaughn Elementary School and in the other to Minter Creek Elementary via Creviston Drive NW. From Minter Creek the fiber will go north into Kitsap County and back down to district headquarters in Purdy.

"We decided not to build the network over the Purdy Spit; there wasn't a good way to do it. The only other option was to go up and around the water," Hagel said. PSD will connect all the schools in Gig Harbor and is "hopeful to have the first

school up by the end of August, and that will be Swiftwater Elementary, our brand new school over by the Y in Gig Harbor."

PSD plans to bring Evergreen Elementary online next, Hagel said. "Luckily, we still have our connection through CenturyLink to Evergreen so the school can be run just in case the network doesn't get done in time for the beginning of the school year."

CenturyLink, owned by Lumen Technologies, is divesting itself from 20 states with the sale of its business assets to the private equity company Apollo Global Management in August. CenturyLink operations in Washington state and 15 other mostly western states and Florida were not included in the sale. What that means for future infrastructure investment in rural areas is uncertain.

Elliott recalled his time back in Wyoming when CenturyLink successfully relinquished its carrier of last resort responsibilities in Wyoming. "They turned everything over to HughesNet which, in the end, I thought was very short sighted and not a win for the citizens in rural Wyoming. Imagine that's your voice and your 911 service."

"I contend that Wave will be a player. Know that broadband doesn't build itself overnight," he said. "It takes some time, but this is the groundwork for what will be a successful outcome if we play our cards right here."

To take the Washington State Broadband Survey go to www.commerce.wa.gov or bit.ly/3zsyYXw ■

HOME FROM PAGE 1

we're done.' They had no recommendations for him."

In June and July, Kotas was in the neighborhood almost every day, riding his bike, trying to talk to people or silently watching them, entering private yards or sometimes homes. Residents frequently called 911, but with not much result.

"What I've heard from a couple of the deputies (who responded) is they're very familiar with Michael, but they also express a sense of frustration about their hands being tied,"

said one resident. "The system is not really addressing these kinds of situations because often people like Michael are out free again on the street and causing more harm."

Pierce County Councilmember and Chair Derek Young (D-7th District, which includes the KP) said he was glad to hear community members were trying to help Kotas, but that the state legislature needs "to change the laws to allow us more discretion to have people committed," and that the county "needs to build additional capacity

in order for them to have a place to go."

"The Behavioral Health Advisory Board that we appointed is working on that right now," he said. "We need to get people into what we call permanent supportive housing who have serious barriers to overcome. Getting them into the crisis part is one thing, but what do you do when they're released? They need a place to go where they can continue to have support and begin healing and that needs to be in a safe living environment."

Calling 911 is the best option for now, he said. If it's not a crisis, dial 211. "It's our catchall that we have developed over the last year for all human service needs," Young said. "If you just know someone that is obviously struggling and could use some help, getting them connected with 211 is not a bad idea."

"I can understand these events are frustrating," he said. "Both the state and the county are working on it and we're just digging ourselves out of this unbelievable (budget) hole, so it will take a while."

In the second week of July, Kotas allegedly attacked one of the residents who'd been trying to help him in recent months with a picket broken from his own fence.

The resident had asked him politely to leave his yard. "He turned and looked at me and it was like he didn't know me, and then he just took that wooden picket and swung it as hard as he could right at my head. I blocked it with my hand, and he dropped it and said, 'I'm going to get my knife.' I said 'Michael, I'm filming all this for the police. You need to leave,' and he did."

Over the next 10 days, Kotas allegedly threw a log at a passing car, got into an armed confrontation with two men at the Home boat ramp, was found hiding in neighbors' yards, and assaulted another resident without causing serious injury, before smashing their car windows.

He was arrested shortly afterward.

"I was trying to protect my neighbors," said one of the residents about his efforts to help Kotas. "Give him firewood, get

his medications, keep him safe. I just thought if this will keep him out of the neighborhood, I'm willing to do that for him."

Another resident said, "If you see how he lives, literally — and I don't mean this to be derogatory — it's like a wild animal. The situation for him is pretty inhumane, and not just for him; other people in the community are suffering as a result. If he comes back and starts that same pattern of behavior again someone is probably going to end up getting seriously hurt."

And it might be Kotas, he said. ■

TAKE THE SURVEY—IT'S FAST AND SAFE. GO TO bit.ly/3zsyYXw

THE COUNTY'S BROADBAND STUDY REVEALED TWO OF THE FOUR UNSERVED AREAS IN LARGE CONTIGUOUS PIECES IN PIERCE COUNTY ARE LOCATED ON THE KEY PENINSULA.

IF IT'S NOT A CRISIS, DIAL 211.

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Building an Elder-Friendly Key Peninsula



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Voters Approve 6-Year Fire Levy Lid Lift

The Key Peninsula voted yes for Fire District 16, allowing it to upgrade equipment and expand staff while considering a new headquarters in Key Center.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

A six-year Key Peninsula fire levy lid lift was approved in the Aug. 3 primary election vote by 62% to 38%, or 2,696 yes to 1,631 no votes in a typical 22% off-year summer voter turnout. The vote replaced the lid lift approved in 2015.

"We are beyond grateful for the continued support, for all of it, this community has just been phenomenal for us," said KP Fire Chief Dustin Morrow. "And while we don't sometimes always see things exactly the same, it is amazing that in 28 months this community has stepped forward three times to say we're with you fire district, and it feels great."

The lid lift will allow the KP fire department to collect the full amount of a previously approved fire levy rate of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value, which had fallen to about \$1.23 per \$1,000 as assessed values rose, according to Morrow.

Levy revenue falls as values rise because annual increases in levy revenue are restricted by a state property tax limit. The result is that most taxing district levy rates fall below the authorized level over time. A levy limit can be increased only by a lid lift.

Morrow said lifting the lid would generate about \$1 million a year for the department.

"We get the one-time opportunity to reset the rate at \$1.50 for the first year, and that's new money for us," he said. "Then as assessed value starts to go up, our rate declines (over the next five years)."

The average assessed value of a KP home in 2020 was approximately \$400,000, according to the Pierce County Assessor-Treasurer's Office. The lid lift increased taxes by approximately \$108 a year for a hypothetical \$400,000 home, restoring the original levy to \$600, or \$50 a month.

A few days before the election, campaign signs urging a "no" vote appeared on the KP along with posts on local social media complaining about rising taxes, including a claim that the department was trying to raise property taxes by 36% over six years.

The language in the ballot measure also included the phrase "(and) set the limit factor

at six percent (6%) for each of the succeeding five (5) years ..."

"I understand the concern," Morrow said.

"The 6% is not related to the 1.5% rate; it refers to the amount that has been collected that can be spent. It gives us authority to have the opportunity to raise the following year's budget 6% above the previous year's budget, and that's

how people are putting together those two figures."

One KP resident who observed the KPFD town hall

meetings promoting the lid lift said, "I was struggling with the business aspects of it." The resident, who declined to be identified, expressed a frustration with a lack of specifics.

"If you have a six-year plan, what do you think you're going to raise the budget by each year, what are you going to purchase and when? And when you do purchase it, when is it going to be implemented? I couldn't find that."

The board of fire commissioners has adopted a pay-as-you-go strategy, according to Morrow, to replace fire apparatus, for some facilities repair, and personnel expenses. The department has also been able to afford staffing the Wauna, Home and Longbranch stations for a year now, he said.

"Hopefully, this budget cycle, I know we won't be able to get another station staffed but we will be able to get an additional unit staffed for a portion of time and it's likely going to go up north to join the medic up there (in Wauna) because that's where most of the service demands are."

That would mean hiring more personnel.

"I think we're going to go after six immediately," Morrow said. "That will allow us to staff up to 11 per shift, which will be a big deal for us. We'd have two staffed engines,



Fire Commissioners Stan Moffett and Frank Grubaugh meet with the Chief.
Lisa Bryan, KP News

two staffed medics, a staffed battalion chief, and a duty chief at Station 46 (Key Center)."

The department is also studying the possibility of a new headquarters in Key Center to replace its current facility built in 1972 and has signed conditional purchase and sale agreements for three parcels in Key Center. Two parcels near Sunnycrest Nursery were secured with an offer of \$1.2 million and a third parcel including the former Reed's restaurant was secured for an offer of \$975,000.

The department has 180 days after the seller signs to perform its due diligence and decide whether to buy a parcel. No parcel has been purchased to date and no money, including earnest money, will change hands until the department makes a decision, according to Morrow.

Stan Moffett, chair of the KP fire commission, confirmed that the department has signed a promissory note for a low-interest loan to cover a purchase but that note can be returned without penalty. If a new building is feasible, that could mean a capital bond or other financing in coming years to pay for it, he said.

**THE DEPARTMENT HAS SIGNED
CONDITIONAL PURCHASE AND
SALE AGREEMENTS FOR THREE
PARCELS IN KEY CENTER.**

"The intention right now is to make sure that we are in a planning cycle, that we secure our future, hence the conver-

sations about property that are occurring," Morrow said. The department hired an architecture firm to determine whether and how a new facility — perhaps serving multiple community purposes — could be built and what is needed to maintain or upgrade existing stations.

"We are at the earliest a year or more away from understanding that landscape," Morrow said. "I think the earliest this community could see a conversation about a bond is probably 2023, and even that might be optimistic." ■



Circumnavigator's First Stop: Local Rower Aims for Oahu

The first leg of the voyage was marred by contrary seas and contrary bureaucracy.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

Wauna resident Erden Eruç, 60, is due to make landfall early in September after rowing from California to Hawaii in his attempt to row, pedal and climb around the world. At press time, he was approximately 600 nautical miles east northeast of the Hawaiian Islands. He plans to land at Waikiki on Oahu, weather permitting.

Eruç launched his custom-built sea-going, self-righting, solar-powered, 25-foot, 1,500-pound rowboat June 22 from Crescent City, Calif., with the help of friends and family and someone Eruç only called “Dan from Vaughn,” who drove down to help see him off with some hardboiled eggs.

Eruç is in the same boat he used to cross four oceans in his first circumnavigation in 2012 after 41,196 miles by rowboat, sea kayak, foot and bicycle, while climbing three of the world’s six highest mountains on three different continents along the way.

It was the first solo circumnavigation under human power and earned Eruç 15 Guinness World Records. (See “Wauna Man Goes Solo Around the World — Again,” KP News, April 2021.)

But Eruç has unfinished business out there.

Part of his first circumnavigation included plans to climb six of the seven tallest mountains on the globe, excluding Antarctica, to honor his legendary mountaineer friend Göran Kropp, who died in an accident during a climb with Eruç in 2002.

“I bypassed Everest and Elbrus for lack of funds,” he said in April. “The international financial crisis in 2008 did not help and we already had a six-figure budget, so I went straight across (the Indian Ocean from Australia) to Africa.”

This time out, Eruç intended a nonstop row across the Pacific to Hong Kong but was unable to get a visa to enter China before



Shabadrang (Christin) Khalsa aka Bam Bam shows off her skills. Tina McKail, KP News

launching because of Covid restrictions, necessitating a stop in Hawaii to try again.

“He already has a visa for Vietnam as backup,” said his wife, Nancy Board.

After arriving in Asia, Eruç plans to bicycle to Tibet and summit Mount Everest. He will then bike across the deserts and mountains of Xinjiang Province to Kyrgyzstan and around the Caspian Sea through Kazakhstan to Georgia to climb Mount Elbrus, the highest peak in Russia and Europe. From there he will pedal across Europe to the southwest corner of Portugal.

He then plans to get back in his boat and row across the Atlantic to Brazil, then bike and hike

his way to the Andes in Argentina to climb Aconcagua, the tallest mountain in South America. From there he will head back north, biking and kayaking his way up the west coast of the continents back to Crescent City.

“Erden always has a bit of a map sketched out in his head, but one of the things I’ve learned when he’s on expeditions is things change,” Board said. “Anything he might have projected out a year or more from now, it’s just going to be so hard to tell.

“It probably is hard for anybody to understand, but the expeditioners I know that do the sort of things he does are the same way,” she said “There’s always an expedition they haven’t done, an adventure they haven’t finished, a mountain they haven’t climbed. Things like that just kind of linger or hover over them and they say, ‘Well, it hasn’t been done and I think I can do it.’”

Eruç is rowing as an ambassador for the Ocean Recovery Alliance to educate students around the world on the need to reduce plastic pollution. He can communicate directly with classrooms from his boat by satellite phone and through his weekly blog posts.

His boat also flies flag No. 97 from the

historic Explorers Club because Eruç is towing a hydrophone across the Pacific, when conditions permit, to record the deep sea calls of rare beaked whales to chart their numbers and habitat for NOAA.

The voyage did not start well. Unseasonal northwest winds pushed Eruç south for weeks, keeping him too close to the coast to take advantage of cross ocean currents or trade winds.

“I had to stay on the oars to not lose any (westward progress) I had gained,” he wrote early on in his blog. “I covered 13.4 miles

overnight rowing with two-hour naps, then 45-minute naps before the conditions allowed

me to retire at 4 a.m.

“On July 1, my starboard cabin was slammed repeatedly by fast-moving waves that ride over the gentler swell. It made me think how many more of these the boat could take. ... When near the top of the wave, the rowboat gets a shove in the direction that it is leaning, then items in the cabin start sliding to the lee side. That includes the rower trying to sleep. It’s why I tie myself to four anchors when inside the cabin while in storm conditions.”

“There’s so much he enjoys about being out there but those first three weeks it was touch and go,” Board said. “He was 18 hours on the oars at a time. Do you have any idea what that means? These storms have been relentless — we’re up to the letter ‘M’ (for Tropical Storm Marty) — they haven’t caught him by surprise because he has incredible forecasting support from shore, but they’ve been a little more forceful, a little closer than anticipated, and it’s been a tougher ride out there.”

Things started to improve 400 miles off Point Conception, Calif.

“I received a refreshing 36-hour spell of east-northeast wind that set the seas in my

favor,” he wrote in his blog. “In addition, the wind came down from 20 knots to low teens, which reduced the swells. In fact, last night my rowboat traveled 22.5 NM in the right direction while I slept.”

Things have calmed down for Board as well.

“It’s like a tornado comes through the house while he’s preparing for an expedition and then once he’s gone, I take time to get everything back in order,” she said. “I’ve got plenty of work and lots of things to focus on.”

Board is a clinical services manager for the Washington State Employee Assistance Program, supervising counseling services, and runs her own global nonprofit organization, Global Women for Well-Being.

Eruç celebrated his 60th birthday in July, approximately 1,750 miles east of Waikiki.

“Years of challenging my mind to push myself physically has taught me that the human body is adaptable to endure great hardships,” he wrote. “When directed well on the path to a self-imposed challenge, a yardstick against which I may choose to measure myself, those hardships translate to accomplishments. When I set myself a goal so majestic as a circumnavigation by human power, 15 Guinness world records had to happen along the way. I had to become that person, grow into the one who could set those records.” He set a 16th record on day nine of this voyage, adding to his then career total of 937 days of ocean rowing. More records will be set as he continues.

Eruç took a break that evening for a few hours with a bottle of cognac friends gave him at the launch. “I will splash the first capful into the sea for all those who are still out there, who never returned to their loved ones,” he wrote.

Follow Erden Eruç at www.erdeneruc.com/tracking. Learn more about Global Well-Being for Women at www.gw4w.org. ■

Dan Clouse THE OTHER SIDE



Moonshine Reflections

The night sky above the Key Peninsula isn't always clear.

We enjoy about 140 nights a year that are partly cloudy or better. The rest remind us that the KP isn't West Texas and you won't find a McDonald Observatory here, although there is a two-seat UFO boarding gate on a Lackey Road rooftop.

Not taking clear skies for granted, we look up and admire the stars and the moon on nights whenever we can see them.

In winter, snuggled under the familiar wet blanket of low clouds, there's nothing to see other than the garish colors of city lights reflected down off them. Winter stargazing is a treat you don't get to enjoy every night, so when the north breeze is cold and dry enough to clear away the clouds, the surprise of seeing Orion in the southern sky is something to stand still for.

Our distant ancestors, who followed the paleo diet (not because they were food faddists, but because they had no pizza, chicken tenders or Twinkies), were knowledgeable astronomers. There is regular news of yet another prehistoric ruin oriented toward the celestial paths of the sun, moon and stars.

Not long ago, Scottish archaeologists unearthed a 10,000-year-old moon tracking installation in an Aberdeenshire field. Until someone finds a site even earlier than the mesolithic lunar observatory, it has the best claim to being the oldest human calendar.

Mount Rainier is visible from so much of our almost-island Arcadia that we can't help but notice it — unless you watch TV or argue with strangers on Facebook all day.

“The Mountain” has its role in sky-watching here since the sun and moon rise and set before, behind and below it.

Take sunrise, for example.

In early November, the sun rolls up Rainier's north shoulder like a gravity-defying boulder on fire. People from elsewhere are surprised to hear that sunrise is visible even on cloudy winter mornings because the clouds that blow up from Chehalis are slightly higher than the summit's 14,000 feet. Thus, the eye-popping purple cone of shadow across the bottom of the orange and red clouds just before dawn. So often in winter, those first five minutes of sunlight are the only time you'll see the sun all day.

A few weeks later, the sun appears as a beacon shining straight from the blasted-out top of the sleeping volcano.

Just before Christmas, the sun comes up over the Cascades south of The Mountain. Then it stops because it's the winter solstice, turns back, and appears under the clouds a little further north every day. Finally, on the longest day in June, the 5:15 sunrise is way around to the northeast, having traced an arc of 70 degrees on the compass in six months.

I may be a boomer from the Age of Aquarius, but no matter what Gen Z thinks, that doesn't automatically mean I'm from the Stoned Age. Even so, after a decades-long Rip Van Winkle nap, I think I'd be as able as the paleolithic hunter-gatherers to recognize the month of the year if someone aimed me at Mount Rainier around dawn.

It's the geographic equivalent of a sundial's gnomon.

And then there's the moon.

Is there anything at all like the speechless ecstasy of viewing a full moon with someone you love?

Every full moon is spectacular, and their traditional names are poetry: Snow Moon, Flower Moon, Strawberry Moon, Harvest Moon.

No doubt you admired the Sturgeon Moon Aug. 22. Its name may have filled you too that evening with nostalgic regret for a time not so long ago when that enormous prehistoric fish thrived in the clean waters of the Puyallup and the Nisqually rivers.

As the full moon gets higher in the sky on a still evening, its light marks a wide path across the flat water of the Sound. Moonglade is an old name for the swath of light on the water that connects us moonstruck people to the moon. The quaint word, like Sturgeon Moon, makes you notice time's steady passage. The moon rises and sets, generations are born and pass, fish return to spawning rivers, and although the light is there again on the Puget Sound every month, old words like moonglade are forgotten.

Traditional Japanese aesthetics teaches the appreciation of impermanence. Full moons come and go, and they can be overwhelming in the perfection of their circles. But on nights when the moon passes in and out of clouds or is viewed through a bough of cherry blossoms, we are invited to contemplate the beauty of visions that last only for a moment.

The 14th-century monk Kenkō asked pointedly: “Are we to look at cherry blossoms only in full bloom, the moon only when it is cloudless?”

From our vantage point here on the Key Peninsula, we nod in agreement at his response, “How incomparably lovely is the moon when seen through the tops of cedars or when it hides for a moment behind clustering clouds.”

Dan Clouse lives in Lakebay.

Carolyn Wiley DEVIL'S HEAD DIARY



Waiting

Recently I rediscovered a forgotten pleasure.

I have come to believe that waiting is one of life's under appreciated treasures. Unfortunately, societal norms have created the impression that waiting should be a source of frustration. Competition is rampant and “doing” and recognition for task completion are the gold standards. Wait-time is regarded as wasted time and a barrier to progress and personal fulfillment.

Looking back to times when there were children to shepherd through the day, wait-time was built in. As a parent, I waited for the end-times of swim team practice or piano lessons, track meets or dance rehearsals, and endless hours for the return of vehicles that carried our young charges off to out-of-town games, concerts and dances. Without these culturally imposed wait-times, I had forgotten the pleasure afforded by being too early.

In retrospect, I realize that I was deliberately eliminating wait-time. I loath to admit it but limiting wait-time seems to feed my egomaniacal tendencies. This is how it works. I cram a load of annoying little tasks (stuff that could be done anytime) into the pre-departure moments so that I can race in at the last minute — or a wee bit later — to meet friends at appointed times with hair-on-fire urgency. It is probably a subconscious desire to send the message that I am a very busy person with many important things to do and yet I am graciously and magnanimously making time just for you. “Now, don't you feel special?”

However, thanks to my current infatuation with the tai chi sword form I am on the road to recovery from this delusion of self-importance.

During the summer, a small group of practitioners have the opportunity to meet in a Tacoma waterfront park for sword practice with the teacher of teachers. Well, it is that travel time that spurred me to inaction. From my house to the Gig Harbor YMCA is a jaunt of about 40 minutes, and the foray over the Narrows bridge adds another 15 to 20. That two-hour round trip is one that I can almost make on one full charge of my hybrid vehicle and use virtually no gas. It simply does not make sense to go home after a session at the Y and contribute to carbon pollution problems by making a third and fourth trip the length of the Key Peninsula, so I hang around in Gig Harbor for several hours before heading over the

bridge. It is this period of idle, unstructured time that led me to rekindle my interest in and appreciation for wait-time.

This new indulgence created a quiet wait-time interval before the demand of doing. Yes, I could attend to those courtesy tasks of answering email and otherwise connecting with the world at large, but I find that I can very well fill that time with less reactive thought and engage in some proactive thinking. It took some doing to break the hold of the handheld message control demon that blinks and jangles and insidiously demands attention. My electronic responses may affirm my existence to the outside world but they do little to nurture my inner soul and creative instincts. Now I travel with notepad, sketchbook, pencils, pens, bits of fabric and needles and thread, and find delight in using these primitive tools.

I've also had time to think about the meaning of time and consider the possible positive benefits if people could just plan for more wait-time. Why not delve into the selfish realm of personal thought rather than scanning the latest electronic message and forwarding it without taking time to ponder, assess, explore balancing arguments, and commit brain power to observational analysis of that message. If the message is worthy, forward it but add personal reflective comments to justify filling another's mailbox.

Think of wait-time as the height of multi-tasking efficiency. Wait and read a book, write an essay, compose a poem, sketch a delicate leaf, drink in the colors of spring, feel the gentle pressure of a summer breeze, savor the crisp air of autumn, study the movement of light upon an incoming tide, listen to the world around you and to your innermost thoughts.

While mastering the art of waiting, watch people moving on their way to their next appointment. You may find yourself hoping they arrive with time to spare so they too can snatch a jeweled moment of wait-time.

It's there for the taking. Why waste it?

Award-winning humorist Carolyn Wiley lives in Longbranch.

The opinions expressed by writers are not necessarily those of the KP News. We neither endorse nor oppose issues or proposals discussed on these pages and present these views for public information. Letters to the editor must be signed and include a daytime phone number. Anonymous letters will not be published. Letters are used on a space-available basis and will be edited for length and clarity. Mail to P.O. Box 3, Vaughn WA 98394, or email to editor@keypennews.org.



MOVING WAS THE GREATEST DECISION OF OUR LIVES. WITHOUT MEANING TO, WE STARTED SOCIAL DISTANCING AHEAD OF THE CURVE! OUR FIRST DAYS HERE, AND LONG AFTERWARDS, WE WOULD JUST ERUPT OVER AND OVER WITH CRIES OF



José Alaniz

José Alaniz

WE LIVE HERE



Our New Columnist

We moved to the Key Peninsula from Seattle in 2019. We had and continue to have such vivid impressions of this place — so many stories, discoveries, wilderness encounters, new family members and rituals — that very early on I knew I had compelling material for a comics series. The title was easy too: “We Live Here,” because that’s what we kept joyfully shouting over and over when we first moved to Longbranch.

As a scholar and a maker of comics, I find this medium an ideal means to communicate by image and text a little of what it means to reside in our corner of heaven.

I grew up in the Rio Grande Valley along the border. I have been reading comics since I was 5; they helped me learn to read and write English. Almost as soon as I started reading them, I started making them. They rewired my young brain; they were an important step in my journey of assimilation — becoming someone with an identity separate from my first-generation immigrant mother and my working-class roots — though I’m still very proud of both.

I made comic strips for my high school newspaper, my college paper and for a small English-language newspaper in Moscow, Russia, when I lived there. After graduate school when I moved to Seattle to work at the University of Washington. I discovered a fabulous community of comics artists who would gather once a month at Café Racer to produce a collective comics zine called “Dune.” Last year (2020), I put out my first comics collection, “The Phantom Zone and Other Stories” from Amatl Comix. I’m working on my second book of comics now.

José Alaniz is a professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures and the Department of Cinema and Media Studies (adjunct) at UW. He lives blissfully with his wife and 25 animals in Longbranch.

Krisa Bruemmer

IRREVERENT MOM



Back to School

Before I was a mom, back when I used to see social media as fun rather than torture, I would roll my eyes at those captions accompanying photos of kids headed off to their first day of school.

“My baby is gone!” or “Where did my baby go?” followed by crying face emojis were the worst.

As a child in the 1980s, I loved school more than anything. My classroom was where I learned cool new things and saw my friends. Spelling and math came easy and I thrived on earning gold stars.

Back then, if my mom had expressed anything besides excitement about back-to-school time, I’m pretty sure I would’ve found her irritating. If she’d called me her baby, I would’ve wished she’d shut up and stop embarrassing me.

In 2015, when my little sister started posting about how sad she was that her daughter — her baby — was starting kindergarten, I said to my husband, “What’s the kid supposed to do, stay little forever?” and he shook his head right along with me. My due date was approaching and as I waddled around sweaty and judgmental in the early September heat, we swore we’d never be those parents.

On Sept. 10, my daughter Violet will start kindergarten. And now, with a mixture of shame and self-justification, I admit that I too have mixed emotions about my child going off to school.

For almost a year Violet has been saying, “I’m so excited for kindergarten, I can hardly wait!”

I never thought I’d feel the way I do now. I like to think of myself as someone who embraces new experiences and faces fears. At 17, I studied abroad in a country where I didn’t know the language. At 25, I jumped out of an airplane to fight my fears of flying and heights. To kill off the panicked heartbeat

and shaky voice that used to accompany the mere thought of public speaking, I became a roller derby announcer.

I expected to be a mom who encouraged bravery, not one whose eyes well up just thinking about my masked child walking through the school doors without me. My past and present selves have collided in my mind.

“What’s the kid supposed to do, stay little forever?”

I’ve been trying to hide my nerves. My own mother’s stress came off her in waves that splashed us all, and I always swore I’d never be that mom.

“How many days until kindergarten, Mom?!” Violet asks over breakfast one morning.

I force a smile, pull out the calendar and we count the days. My panicked heartbeat and shaky voice return as I say, “It’s almost time!”

Violet’s dad jokes that she and I are like E.T. and Elliot in the 1982 movie we all love, our moods and emotions connected by an invisible thread between her body and mine. I want to protect her, so when I’m feeling fragile, I turn on the shower and hide and let it all flow down the drain before returning to Violet with a smile.

“Mom,” Violet says with a sudden tremble. “I’m excited for kindergarten ...” She pauses. I wait.

She whispers, “I’m a little scared too.” Violet smiles, then frowns. As she lists her worries, her voice gets louder, more intense, then quiet again. I tell her the other kids feel the same way and she laughs.

“Other kids are excited and nervous too?”

When I confess that I’m a little nervous, Violet leaps out of her chair and hugs me. Her arms squeeze my neck a little too tight and I wonder if I’ve made a mistake trying too hard to protect her, to keep everything wrapped up in a giggle and a smile. Fears have a way of growing in isolation. Sharing them can take away their power, even make them sound silly when spoken out loud.

At the Key Peninsula Art Walk last month, Violet and I sat on the grass behind Blend with a group of kids at sunset. When I asked

if they were excited about school, a small girl admitted feeling scared. Rather than an autopilot reply “It’ll be so fun” or “School is the best,” I told them that all the kids in all the grades probably feel that way right now, and that everyone has heightened back-to-school nerves in a way that didn’t exist before the pandemic hit us all.

“I’m scared too!” Violet’s best friend said, her voice filled with glee and relief. One by one, they chimed in, reminding me that hard things feel easier when we’re not alone.

As darkness descended on Key Center, the children ate freshly picked blackberries and danced barefoot in the dark. Watching them together, one of the moms turned to me with a smile and said, “I think they’re going to be OK.”

Krisa Bruemmer lives in Vaughn.

Letters to the Editor

Editor’s note: This excerpt is from a letter delivered to the Peninsula School Board Aug. 26 signed by about 400 district residents. PSD school board resolution No. 21-28 can be found at www.psd401.net.

OUR SCHOOLS SHOULD SUPPORT DIVERSITY

As concerned citizens of the Peninsula School District, we are alarmed by the board’s passage of resolution No. 21-28 without public comment at its July 22 meeting, “Regarding State-Mandated Training for Staff and School Board,” which addressed the diversity, equity and inclusion training called for in Senate Bill 5044.

This resolution suggests the board is catering to partisan political pressure instead of standing up for the best educational practices our students and teachers deserve.

The board’s vague wording places our teachers and school staff in a position where any diversity, equity or inclusion resource they bring into the classroom could be attacked as a part of Critical Race Theory, an academic concept bogusly targeted by a national campaign of propagandists to

CONTINUED PAGE 9



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Letters to the Editor

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

whip up fear that learning about our nation's history of racial injustice is "reverse racism" and teaches white students they personally are "oppressors."

The resolution, which included language directly echoing anti-CRT talking points, sadly gives oxygen to the anti-CRT fringe in our community, which is very vocal but does not represent the majority of our community.

Meanwhile, the resolution failed to provide any clear definitions or endorse any resources for use by PSD teachers.

Let us be clear: Of course, no teacher should teach white students they are personally responsible for injustices perpetrated by their ancestors. But all students do need to be taught about the centuries-old systems of racial oppression in our history that continue to create injustice and inequality today. We are confident that our teachers — with the kind of diversity and equity training that Senate Bill 5044 supports — can teach our nation's history in a responsible and sensitive way.

The board should put the needs of our students first and not let political fear-mongering censor our teachers or curriculum.

James M. Albrecht, Meredith Browand, Thelma Brown, Lynn Jabs, Lisa Marcus, Jill Neumeister, Joy Stanford, Allison Sutcliffe, Barb Turecky

MORE ABOUT THAT AD

Regarding the "Save Peninsula Schools" ad in the July 2021 issue, your "About that Ad" editorial and the reader comments in the August 2021 issue: First and foremost, I'm proud to see your editorial. As retired military, I believe deeply in our constitutional rights and the rights of people to express their opinions and political viewpoints. This includes the other readers' responses, reflecting their freedom of speech and expression.

But to the core issue that raised the furor — the teaching of Critical Race Theory to children — it seems that mainstream parents want to know what is being taught (or what may be taught in the future) to their children. And parents decide what is age- and content-appropriate when they elect the school boards and government officials who serve us.

A candidate expressing where they stand on teaching certain theories gives us valuable information about them, negative or positive. And it's important and wonderful that publications such as the Key Peninsula News allow them to inform us of their positions, instead of being censored as

some platforms do.

Most parents expect children to be taught facts and how to evaluate information to develop their own sense of reason. Perhaps we can agree that what we were taught as children (reading, writing, arithmetic, science, geography, factual history, and civics), which allowed us to become who we are, is good for our kids as well.

Robert "Bob" Perry, Lakebay

OBITUARY



Janice McMillan

Longtime Key Peninsula resident Janice Lucille McMillan died Aug. 1 after a lengthy illness.

Janice was born at Tacoma General Hospital June 2, 1930, to Ella and Vernon Grosser. She graduated from Stadium High School and the University of Puget Sound, and married her college sweetheart, Hugh McMillan, in June 1952. She followed him around the world in his career as a United States diplomat, living for extended periods in Japan, India, Egypt, Greece and Turkey. The couple settled in the small town of Home on the Key Peninsula, where they lived together for the next 42 years.

Internationally acclaimed as "the hostess with the mostest," Janice was an engaging conversationalist who made guests feel welcome and put everyone at ease. She was an accomplished gourmet chef, Japanese ikebana flower arranger, seamstress and interior decorator. She enjoyed gardening and was a voracious reader. Everyone who visited the McMillan household delighted in the bottomless cookie jar, and the few special friends lucky enough to taste one of her apple or marionberry pies knew they had experienced a piece of perfection.

Devoted to community service, Janice was a volunteer for the U.S. Information Service and a fundraiser for English language libraries in Japan, India and Greece. She later served as a senior

member of the Key Peninsula Health Board and the Key Peninsula Orthopedics Guild, and volunteered at the Angel Guild in Key Center. However, she proudly maintained that her most significant accomplishments were as a homemaker and devoted mother of her two sons, Lance and Marshall. When her husband Hugh was recognized as Citizen of the Year by the Gig Harbor Chamber of Commerce, he remarked that "while some of you have jokingly said that I walk on water, it's only because my beloved wife, Janice, has always been there below the surface, holding me up so that it would look that way."

Janice is survived by her husband Hugh and son Lance. She will be deeply missed by her family and many close friends.

A celebration of life will be held at the KP Civic Center in Vaughn Oct. 3 at 3 p.m. In lieu of flowers the family requests donations be made to the Peninsula Schools Education Foundation or The Mustard Seed Project.

Obituaries are printed as a service to community members. Limit to 300 words and provide a high-resolution photograph. Submissions will be edited. Send to editor@keypennews.org.

News Brief

Two Fatal Accidents

STAFF REPORT

Two Key Peninsula residents died in separate accidents in July.

Pedestrian Colby Jake Pederson, 32, was hit and killed by a car July 28 on Wright Bliss Road NW just north of 109th St. Ct. NW at approximately 11 p.m. as he was walking to his nearby home.

The 63-year-old male driver said Pederson jumped in front of his car and that he couldn't stop in time, struck Pederson, and drove off the road. He sustained minor injuries and there was no indication of impairment, according to the Pierce County Sheriff's Department.

Joelle Alain Bloss, 52, died July 30 while swimming in Carney Lake off Wright Bliss Road north of SR-302 at approximately 4:30 p.m. She often swam there in the afternoon or evening, according to Information Officer Anne Nesbit of the KP Fire Department.

Bloss was swimming with her 5-year-old grandson, who was on an inflatable raft. He started calling for help when she went underwater and didn't resurface. KPFD and Pierce County Sheriff's deputies searched until late into the night. Her body was recovered the following day. ■

Where's the Community Calendar?

When Covid closed down public events in spring of 2020, we suspended the long-running and much-loved section in the center of the paper. There just wasn't anything to list.

We moved our attention to the online version at keypennews.org. Local nonprofit organizations are given free web listings, even with a color photo or logo. We added a dedicated editor at calendar@keypennews.org.

Until public gatherings are safe again, the calendar will be online only. Hope to see you there.

COLLECTORS' ALERT

John Wayne photo

to be raffled in September. \$1 tickets now

Since January
this year,
Angel Guild has
awarded \$21,472 to
local nonprofits



Open 10 to 4 Thur-Sat hours may change
Key Center Corral 253 884-9333

Fire Department Covid Vaccination Rate Exceeds Key Peninsula, County and State; Braces for Mandated Shots

The Key Peninsula has been spared the worst of the pandemic so far, but a fifth surge of cases means it's only getting tougher for the fire department.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

Most Key Peninsula Fire District 16 personnel have been vaccinated against COVID-19, according to Fire Chief Dustin Morrow.

Morrow was unable to provide specific numbers due to privacy policies governing employees and volunteers but said, "We have maybe half a dozen firefighters that are still waiting" to get a vaccine, and a similar number of other staff and volunteers.

With total personnel numbering 59, that puts the department's vaccination rate somewhere between 80% and 90%.

The next highest rate in the general population of the KP was in the census tract between Minter and Burley at 40.8% by mid-August. The Pierce County average was 46.6% and the state average was 70.7%, according to the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department.

"We were in the process early to get vaccines, being in the business that we're in," Morrow said. "But as with all other organizations we have a small group of individuals who — appropriately — because of their beliefs or the way they choose to live their life, are staying away from vaccinations."

Morrow said that he was vaccinated against COVID-19 despite his misgivings.

"I always get concerned when processes are quick, when they're not fully blessed by the authority with jurisdiction, but I felt it was appropriate for me to do it for several reasons. Not just for me but for my family and to demonstrate to individuals here that I think it's the right path to take, especially when we're being asked into community members' homes, in their space, sometimes in very close contact."

Speaking to KP News in early August, Morrow also said he knew of two individuals in the department who would get a vaccine once it is fully approved by the FDA. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine was fully approved Aug. 23 for two doses, three weeks apart, in people 16 and older. It remains under emergency use authorization for ages 12 to 15.

The Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines may be fully approved in December, according to the FDA.

Vaccination status at KPFD does not alter

individual responsibilities when responding to emergencies, Morrow said.

"The expectations in the organization of the use of personal protective equipment are unchanged and have nothing to do with whether you're vaccinated or not," he said. "We have a rigid protocol about what they're supposed to be wearing and it is layers of protection for them and for us that can allow a vaccinated person to be around an unvaccinated person.

"The reality is we're the ones going out to people, we are in the mixer of the disease, and our folks have done an excellent job of following the rules," he said.

The department has had only one member test positive for COVID-19, and that was after exposure off the job.

"We got direct access to testing right here early on," Morrow said. "In a moment's notice we could call our district physician,

carry out the test and get an answer in 24 hours. Now it's down to less than 15 minutes. We have to know immediately so we can take action on the individual, so we get them out of the system right away. Some places that were slower would lose a whole shift in quarantine. We can't afford that."

Now in a fifth surge of the pandemic, the two-week average of new COVID-19 cases in Pierce County rose from 63 per 100,000 people in June to 606 per 100,000 in late August, according to TPCHD,

roughly 98% of whom were unvaccinated. That level had not been seen since vaccinations first became available.

The county seven-day average hospitalization rate for Covid rose from 2 in June to 14 per 100,000 in late August, surpassing rates that triggered stay-at-home orders at the beginning of the pandemic. There have been 6,537 COVID-19 deaths in Washington at press time.

"Data show the delta variant likely makes up most of the cases in the county and the state," according to TPCHD. A July 28 state Department of Health report said delta made up 75.9% of cases identified from June 27 to July 10. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported July 29 that the delta variant is as contagious as chickenpox and more transmissible than the common cold.

Gov. Jay Inslee issued an order Aug. 9 requiring most state employees and all private medical and long-term health care workers to get vaccinated by Oct.

18 or face "nondisciplinary dismissal." Exemptions for religious or medical reasons will be considered but political or philosophical objections will not be, according to Inslee's office.

The order includes firefighters, but how it will affect KPFD is not yet known.

"There's a lot of strain coming into the system right now on this topic," Morrow said. "Any time we change the workplace environment, it's immediately a subject of (contract) bargaining. Our best position is

to come together as the Washington fire service and say, given this research, this information, this legal advice, this is the position we're taking, and that process is just starting."

One department member who chose not to get vaccinated against Covid, speaking on condition of anonymity, said while not objecting to vaccinations in general, their personal concerns and those of some other members included the accelerated development of the Covid vaccines, the lack of full FDA approval, and conflicting information from federal and state health authorities about the disease and the use of masks.

"We have been the front-line workers without a vaccine for over a year and now they're going to mandate that we take it?" the member said. "We've been doing our job, using our masks, our gloves, our sanitation and decontamination procedures, and we haven't lost anybody to Covid. Not a single death in our field (fire

service) in Pierce, King, Snohomish, Kitsap or Mason county. But now for some reason

they want to mandate that we get it or else we're fired?"

If the member still declined to get a fully FDA-approved shot when available, "They're going to have to fire me."

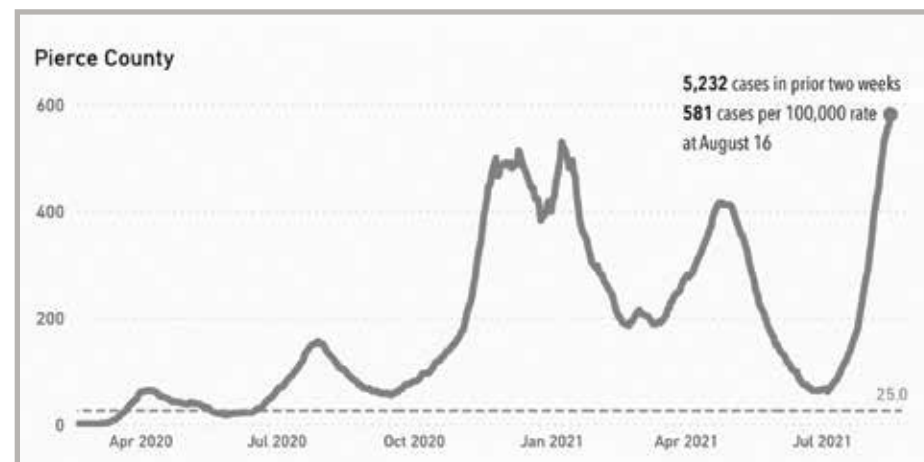
Firefighter/paramedic Lt. Doug Gelslichter, president of the KP firefighter union, said in an email to KP News: "IAFF Local 3152 (is) opposed to the proclamation requiring our members to be vaccinated and show proof of such vaccination by Oct. 18, 2021. ... The Washington State Council of Firefighters and the International Association of Firefighters have sent the governor's office a letter with alternative suggestions such as mandatory testing in lieu of mandatory vaccinations.

"With that being said, it is a mandate and in turn becomes law, and we will comply. The local and the fire district will work collaboratively to find areas of common ground to move this issue forward."

Morrow said, "I think it's important for the public to realize that the fire district is kind of like a little city and everything they experience, we experience in our fire family and we're trying to negotiate that reasonably, calmly and fairly." ■

THE CDC REPORTED JULY 29 THAT THE DELTA VARIANT IS AS CONTAGIOUS AS CHICKENPOX AND MORE TRANSMISSIBLE THAN THE COMMON COLD.

"THE REALITY IS ... OUR FOLKS HAVE DONE AN EXCELLENT JOB OF FOLLOWING THE RULES."



Rate of newly diagnosed confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents April through August 16. Data sources: Washington State Department of Health and Washington State Office of Financial Management



With the help of our friends, we're investing in the future of the Key Peninsula community.

Find out more at www.longbranchfoundation.org or visit our Facebook page.



Pirate Cats Wanted

Feature your Halloween matey in the October issue. Costumed or not, we'd like to see your special cats and kittens. Send a photo to editor@keypennews.org

Skate Night Ready to Roll Under New Management

The longest-running youth program on the KP is back.

KRISA BRUEMMER, KP NEWS

Skate Night returns to the Key Peninsula Civic Center Sept. 10 with roller skate rental and concessions available from 6 to 9 p.m. There is a new Skate Night management team on board eager to get the program back up and running.

The new Skate Night manager, Shabadrang Khalsa, who goes by the name Christin, brings a strong skating background to the position as a former president of the Juneau Rollergirls Roller Derby League, where she was known as Bam Bam No. 108.

"I started skating with Juneau Roller Girls to keep in shape and meet a good set of women who were powerful," she said. "It's one of those sports that I love because you get knocked down and you get beat up and you feel terrible, and then you just have to pick yourself back up and keep going and you feel amazing."

For kids who are new to roller skating, Khalsa said "Take your time. It's OK to fall. Everybody feels really scared and nervous and afraid to fall, and it's really nice if you get out on the floor and just do a practice fall and see how it feels, and then maybe it won't be so scary when you actually fall."

Khalsa has three young children who are not interested in skating yet, but she hopes Skate Night will change that. "My ultimate goal is to spread the love of skating by providing a safe and fun environment that welcomes everyone," she said.

Since the first Skate Night in the fall of 1976 and up until the pandemic closure, Skate Night's 40-plus year history makes it the longest running youth program on the KP (See "Skate Night Seeks New 'Rinkleader,'" KP News, June 2019). Many longtime locals, including the new Skate Night kitchen manager and lifelong KP resident Kathy Collins, have spent countless Friday nights at the civic center throughout the years.

"MY ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO SPREAD THE LOVE OF SKATING BY PROVIDING A SAFE AND FUN ENVIRONMENT THAT WELCOMES EVERYONE."



Shabadrang (Christin) Khalsa aka Bam Bam shows off her skills. *Tina McKail, KP News*

"The program is well designed for our local families and has such a history of fond memories, even for the parents and grandparents," said Skate Night Board Supervisor Claudia Jones. "I feel if we can get it rolling again it's best for our community."

Collins, who started going to Skate Night in 1979 and went regularly through middle school, said she loved being able to "hang out with kids my age away from school because there was very little to do on the Key Peninsula back then for kids, and there kind of still is very little for kids out here."

"I love being around kids. I love volunteering and helping out, so this is a perfect job for me," she said. "Having grown up out here, some of these kids are my classmates' children and grandchildren."

For the concessions menu, Collins, who is also a KPCC board member and former Skate Night volunteer, is considering hot dogs, nachos, taquitos, burgers and fries, and assorted candy and drinks. "I'm tweaking an older menu and trying to be cost effective," she said. "A lot of kids use change and it's tooth fairy money, or birthday money from grandma, allowance money and things like that."

The KPCC board and Skate Night's

management team are planning for the Skate Night reopening to look as similar as possible to past Skate Nights, with added precautions following Covid guidelines.

"My goal is to support the community and deliver a Skate Night that the community wants to attend, so I'm not changing very much," Khalsa said. "But if you're not vaccinated, we do require that you wear a mask." Capacity will be limited to 75 or less.

"Covid policies will be enforced if needed," board president Tim Kezele said. "We follow the policies of the Peninsula School District, Pierce County Health Department and the State of Washington."

Despite complications posed by the ongoing pandemic, the new management team is optimistic about the program's future and thrilled with their new positions. They hope more community members and high schoolers with volunteer requirements will sign up as Skate Night volunteers to work admissions, the skate room and skate floor, the kitchen and concessions. They are also looking for a Skate Night DJ.

"This is really a fun environment to volunteer in if you ask me," Khalsa said. "I'm so looking forward to spreading the love of skating. Skating has brought such happiness and joy to my life, and I just want to share that with the community."

For more information, visit www.kpciviccenter.org/skate-night.html ■



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Giant house spider.
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Naturalist's Notebook

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

ASK THE KP NATURE GUIDE: MOLES

Q: Why do moles want to be in my lawn?
— Tom Herron, Rocky Bay

A: It's pretty simple. Down below what you mow, a lawn is an expanse of damp and enriched soil. Moles love it because earthworms and other critters love it.

Our most common creator of lawn volcanoes, the Townsend's mole, is the largest mole species in North America. It has 44 teeth set in a long narrow snout, and beyond earthworms its diet includes slugs, snails, beetles, leatherjacket grubs, centipedes, crickets and pill bugs, all attracted to the oasis of an irrigated lawn.

Moles do their best tunneling — up to 15 feet per hour using their front claws like flippers — when soil is wet and workable. They create two types of tunnels. Winding surface tunnels, 1 to 4 inches deep, are used to find food and scout the terrain. They are often soon abandoned. Runway tunnels, 4 to 20 or more inches deep, are a mole's highway system and kept in good repair. Moles are solitary animals and only enter each other's burrow systems during mating season. The nest chamber is lined with a thick thatch of soft leaves and located at a medium depth so that it will not flood. Moles will bring wet vegetation into the nest chamber to provide heat as it decomposes.

Molehills are the excess dirt from a mole's excavations. Like earthworms, moles aerate soil. They keep other critters in check. And they aggravate lawn-mowers to no end.

A WORD ON SPIDERS

Now let's talk spiders. 'Tis the season.

First to level some persistent myths:

No, brown recluse spiders are not found in Washington. Their range doesn't even reach Colorado. Yes, black widow spiders can be found here. And yes, hobo spiders live here too. But no, neither are worthy of the great fear they inspire.

"Spider bite" is the knee-jerk diagnosis for any mysterious bump or lesion that appears on a human body, but professional arachnologists argue that in fact spiders are rarely to blame. Seldom is the "bite" witnessed or the spider recovered. Those who handle spiders often know that they only bite in extreme circumstances — when they are being crushed. The popular idea of spiders roaming at night looking to bite is a bogeyman story.

Black widows have a potent neurotoxic venom. Their bite causes intense pain that can remain localized around the bite or travel throughout the body, wracking the victim. Yet almost all victims recover in 24 to 48 hours without needing antivenin. Black widow venom is not intended for us. We are far larger than its prey. So why does the myth of their deadliness persist? Must the knowledge of possible pain morph, on the shiny back of a black creature, into a fear of death? Anyway, I often see black widow webs around my house and pay them no mind. Black widows are incredibly shy creatures. I simply refrain from jabbing my bare fingers into crevices.

The case of the hobo spider is stranger — and deadly. But only deadly, in the end, for the spider, and for the many other spiders beside that are smashed without reason. A study 30 years ago found that hobo bites cause necrosis in rabbit flesh. Within a decade, it was widely accepted

that hobos were right there with widows and recluses, and "hobo spider bite" was a regular diagnosis in the Northwest.

The only problem? There has not been a single case in which an injury can be directly attributed to a hobo spider. Observant doctors and scientists have lately recognized that what evidence has been presented by patients has always been circumstantial. More often, the spiders have been absent. Assumed. And it's not bad just for the spiders. Jumping to the "spider bite" diagnosis means that the real diagnosis is missed.

While hobos can be found in homes, there are dozens of other house spiders, including the commonly encountered and quite good-natured giant house spider, which looks quite similar. Over 800 species of spiders live in Washington. Except for the female black widow's red hourglass, their markings are not a great tool for identification. Many spiders look so similar that they can be fully identified only by an expert examining their genitalia under a microscope.

I am not sure I'll get to that level, but I'd like to continue covering spiders. Send me your photographs and stories. The black hole of fear around black widows and the like can distract us from a whole menagerie of other odd spiders nearby.

WAIT AND WATCH:

DOUGLAS FIRS IN DROUGHT

A symptom of heat and drought in Douglas firs is the browning and shedding of needles. A healthy tree might have four or five years' worth of evergreen needles. In the aftermath of June's extraordinary

heat wave, I noted that a number of Douglas firs in my neighborhood had a sere, copper-brown cast. On closer examination, I saw that the second-year and older needles had gone fully brown. This year's growth tips remained bright green.

Trees do have the ability to redistribute water and sugar for survival, and to cease transpiration when heat will wick them dry. When those systems fail, they can later recover from the die-back of their limbs and leaders. Yet the full damage done by drought does not often appear until the following spring or for several years beyond.

Will there be lasting damage? In which settings? Are there other factors at play? Coming out of a dry summer punctuated by extreme heat, I've got my eye on it and I'd encourage you to pay attention as well. ■

Mission for Kids: Pinecone Spiders

Well kids, you knew it was coming: a spider mission! So, the state's leading expert on spiders, Rod Crawford at the Burke Museum (look up his website; it's great), has discovered that certain small spiders like to live in a surprising habitat: fallen pinecones. If you turn a pinecone upside-down and tap it with a stick over a white cloth or piece of paper, you'll be treated to an encounter with whatever lives inside. Your mission is not only to find these incredible pinecone spiders, but to figure out if there is more than one kind and what type of pinecone they like best. Let me know what you find by emailing me at nature@keypennews.org.

September 2021

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A BUICK GMC DEALERSHIPPeninsula Light Co.
a mutual corporation since 1925For the latest news see www.keypenparks.com or Facebook pageTaralynn Perkins celebrates her graduation in June. *Family photo*

Homeless in High School

A young family lost their housing before the pandemic, which has made finding a new home harder than ever.

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

Two years ago, Taralynn Perkins, then 16, came home to a notice posted on her family's front door. It was around the Fourth of July. She, her father Todd and her brother James had been out enjoying a sunny day with friends. The notice informed them their lease would be terminated at the end of the month. If they had not left by then, they would be evicted.

They have been homeless ever since.

"I was really confused," Taralynn said. The small duplex near Wauna had been her father's home for 16 years. While she had sometimes lived with her mother during childhood, her father's place was consistent.

They had three weeks to pack up their lives. Her father did not hide anything. "My dad's a pretty emotional, sensitive guy. I know he was really angry at the landlord. Every little thing he could think of, he would talk to me about. Sometimes I didn't know what to say, so I just listened. I was confused. I was angry."

Todd, who works in maintenance at a golf club, said he had always had a typical relationship with the landlord. A few times he was late with rent, but he paid the late

fee. When something broke, he fixed it, and the landlord deducted it from his rent. His rent had never been raised and he expected to be able to tell the landlord that he understood if his rent had to go up. He would pay it. But the landlord never gave him an opportunity to have a conversation.

He chose not to fight the eviction. "I'm a big believer in karma," he said. "I didn't want to make any waves." And he did not want an eviction on his record.

Taralynn was entering her junior year at Peninsula High School. For a few weeks a sympathetic friend let them housesit. For a few months they lived with an uncle.

Then they landed in the house of a family friend and have been there ever since. Todd and James converted a shed into a bedroom. Taralynn sleeps in the living room.

They could not bring their dog or cat but Todd's boss lets the pets live in the maintenance yard. "The shop is now rat-free," Todd said.

Their host had just had back surgery when they moved in. Two babies were in the house, as well as a cousin in her twenties. Of Taralynn's grades, social life and

"I'VE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT MYSELF IN THIS PROCESS AND HOW I VIEW OTHER PEOPLE."

housework, her social life was the first to suffer. “It was stressful because I had to take on a mom role. I felt like that wasn’t my job, but I needed to do it.”

Taralynn wanted her own space. There is none of that when living in someone else’s house. “I’ve been more shut-off. I get easily irritated. I don’t try to be, but that’s just what has happened after so long.”

For his part, Todd credits his kids with keeping the family together. He said that when Taralynn and James were born it was a turning point in his life. He had struggled with anger and depression. Now he jokes with his friends, “The next best thing to God is Todd.” He knows he’s here for a reason. He sobered up for his kids, and they have been his rock throughout the last two years. “Without my kids,” he said, “I don’t know where I’d be.”

In school, only Taralynn’s closest friends knew what she was going through. They helped her pack and move her things and invited her over whenever she needed a break. Distance learning during the pandemic posed an extra challenge. She did well with the format, but she was often distracted. “There are little kids there. It’s not your house.

“I know that during Covid my emotions spiraled.” She tried to paint and do puzzles to pass time. She carried her camera outside and took pictures of everything: “The water, plants, people. I just find the world beautiful.”

At times she found herself pushing friends away. “You want to talk to them but sometimes you feel like it’s too much for them at once. You even have to ask yourself, ‘Am I myself prepared to say it?’ Because if you say it, it makes it real.” Often, she chose to say nothing.

An observant teacher noticed her grades slipping. After she broke down in class one day, he took her aside, offered her food and asked what was going on. She shared everything. He connected her with a school counselor that she met with throughout her senior year. She liked being able to talk with someone who understood how to help air her emotions and sort through them.

Now she wants to share her story: “I don’t know a lot of people, personally, who have gone through this same thing. I think it’s because people don’t like to talk about being homeless. I think it’s important to know that these things happen more frequently than you think or could be happening to someone, and you just don’t know because they don’t talk about it.”

Todd said that recently he and Taralynn came across a homeless man in the street. They stopped to buy the man lunch. Todd realized, “Wait a minute, I’m homeless too, and I’m buying lunch here.” But he still had a job.

“I learned how strong I can be, not only taking on my own emotions, but even my dad’s and brothers. I am their go-to person,” Taralynn said.

Whenever her father goes to look at an apartment or house, she goes with him. They have searched Gig Harbor, the Key Peninsula and Port Orchard for a new home. They want her brother to finish high school at Peninsula, and her father’s whole life is in the area. The flip side of the pandemic eviction moratorium is very low turnover in rental units, asking prices are much higher than in a normal market, and families like the Perkins are left out in the cold.

Todd said that one of the ironies of the situation is that the tenant who moved into his old duplex, on a lease twice as expensive as Todd’s, lost his job one month into the pandemic and has been living there rent-free ever since.

In the current rental market, they believe it makes more sense to buy. Yet home prices regularly jump by tens of thousands of dollars. Options for loans are complicated, as Todd has not had a credit card. He doesn’t have bad credit, Taralynn said, he has no credit. “It’s very confusing to me. How are we supposed to get a credit card to get credit if we can’t get approved for one because we have no credit?”

“I DIDN’T REALLY THINK ABOUT HOW THE BRAIN WORKS UNTIL WE GOT KICKED OUT,” SHE SAID. “I GOT TO EXPERIENCE MORE EMOTIONS FROM MYSELF AND OTHER PEOPLE. IT GOT ME INTRIGUED.”

“We’ve kind of just been stuck.”

This past summer brought some relief. Taralynn graduated with her classmates after going back to in-person learning

in March and playing a shortened softball season. The babies in the house moved on. This fall she starts at Western Washington University on a full-ride scholarship.

“It’s going to be hard on my dad, letting me go,” she said. Now that he is looking for a two- rather than a three-bedroom house, she hopes he can find one. “As soon as we put down that payment, a lot of his stress will just go away.”

In college she will share a suite of dorm rooms with five other students. While she loves children and always imagined being a teacher, she now plans to study psychology. Talking with her counselor played a big part in developing her fascination with the human brain and how it shapes a person’s feelings. ■

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- 9:03 Union 76 @SR 302/4 Corners
- 9:06 SR 302 @150th Ave/Lake Holiday bus shed
- 9:08 SR 302 @140th Ave/Lake of the Woods
- 9:10 SR 302 @Charboneau Construction
- 9:13 Lake Kathryn Village
- 9:19 Purdy Park & Ride

VAUGHN WEDNESDAY MORNING

- 9:50 Vaughn Elementary School
- 9:51 Wright Bliss Rd NW @Olson Dr NW
- 9:52 Wright Bliss Road @104th St Ct NW
- 9:54 Union 76 @SR 302/4 Corners
- 9:57 SR 302 @150th Ave/Lake Holiday bus shed
- 9:58 SR 302 @140th Ave/Lake of the Woods
- 10:00 SR 302 @Charboneau Construction
- 10:03 Lake Kathryn Village
- 10:09 Purdy Park & Ride

EVERGREEN TUE/THUR MORNING

- 8:50 Evergreen Elementary School
- 8:59 Palmer Lake public access 24th St SW
- 9:00 Palmer Lake 21st St SW @193rd Ave
- 9:05 KPCS Senior Center & Food Bank
- 9:06 Home Gas Station @KP Hwy N
- 9:09 167th Ave Ct NW @KP Hwy N
- 9:13 Food Market in Key Center
- 9:15 KP Hwy N @Minterwood Dr NW
- 9:21 Lake Kathryn Village
- 9:29 Purdy Park & Ride

EVERGREEN WEDNESDAY MORNING

- 9:50 Evergreen Elementary School
- 9:54 Palmer Lake public access 24th St SW
- 9:55 Palmer Lake 21st St SW @193rd Ave
- 10:00 KPCS Senior Center & Food Bank
- 10:01 Home Gas Station @KP Hwy N
- 10:04 167th Ave Ct NW @KP Hwy N
- 10:08 Food Market in Key Center
- 10:10 KP Hwy N @Minterwood Dr NW
- 10:16 Lake Kathryn Village
- 10:24 Purdy Park & Ride

TUE/WED/THUR AFTERNOON

- 4:42 Purdy Park & Ride
- 4:47 Lake Kathryn Village
- 4:50 SR 302 @Windermere Realty
- 4:52 SR 302 @140th Ave/Lake of the Woods
- 4:53 SR 302 @150th/Lake Holiday bus shed
- 4:55 4 Corners gas station @SR 302
- 4:57 Wright Bliss Road @104th St Ct
- 4:58 Wright Bliss Road @Olson Dr
- 5:00 Food Market in Key Center
- 5:01 KP Hwy @84th NW Red Barn
- 5:04 167th Ave Ct NW @KP Hwy N
- 5:08 Home Gas Station @KP Hwy N
- 5:10 KPCS Senior Center & Food Bank
- 5:13 Palmer Lake public access 24th St SW
- 5:14 Palmer Lake 21st St SW @193rd Ave
- 5:18 Evergreen Elementary School
- 5:29 KP Hwy @84th NW Red Barn
- 5:34 SR302 @140th NW Lake of the Woods
- 5:36 SR302 @150th Lake Holiday bus shed
- 5:48 Purdy Park & Ride



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In concert on the dock at Lakebay Marina July 16 *Chris Konieczny, KP News*

The Down Home Band Turns 30

From kazoos to piccolos to big bass drums, anyone that can play an instrument is welcome to help keep a Key Peninsula icon thriving.

CAROLYN WILEY, KP NEWS

In the early 1990s, Dr. William Roes resuscitated the idea of forming a traditional community band on the Key Peninsula. At the turn of the 20th century the historic Home Band Association had about 20 members. In keeping with tradition, the bass drum used by the latest band incarnation sports the same block lettering used by original.

Band leader Roes did some digging to verify the new band's 30-year history and identify some highlights.

"At first it was a kazoo band comprised of the kids of our medical office employees and others that played the kazoo," he said. "The band's first public performance was in the 1991 Pioneer Days Parade when we marched with about a dozen kids from Key Center to Vaughn."

That band was accompanied by Key Center dentist Dr. John Olsson on a bass drum from a Dr. Teeth and the Electric Mayhem drum set complete with "DR. TEETH" painted on the side. Roes played the snare.

"Then in 1992, the current band started with the Down Home Keep Clam Band complete with clowns with super soakers and marching clams, also with super soakers."

Since that auspicious beginning, the Down Home Band has been a must-see and must-hear experience in community celebrations. The band occasionally crosses the bridges to play at the Rhein Haus restaurant in Tacoma and other venues. After a COVID-19 interruption, the band resumed public performances at the Lakebay Marina Resort and at the TWAA Art Walk. They are slated to play during the KP Farm Tour in October.

Roes described some of the more memorable band events: The Down Home South of the Border Band featured a giant donkey piñata still on display in the office; The Down Home Slug Band featured a 20-foot inflated slug (made of garbage bags glued together); The Down Home

Pioneer Band appeared in the Pioneer Days Parade with "Vaughn or Bust" painted on a giant Conestoga wagon. However, Roes did not elaborate on what he called "the infamous Pirate Band."

Kathie Broderson, a piccolo player with the band since 2002, said, "I'm glad Dr. Roes does this for the community. It is great to get to play with professional musicians. I'm proud to be a part of it." She said the band is inclusive and listed several members she had recruited. "It's a blast. We are a tight group and are good for each other."

Broderson said the band had played a variety of venues, but for her the most memorable gig was playing for a crowd of 60,000 at the opening of the second Tacoma Narrows Bridge, July 15, 2007.

Longtime band member Edie Morgan said, "When Dr. Roes approached me, he really wanted Tom (her husband)."

At that time Tom Morgan was too busy playing with "Little Bill and the Blue Notes," so he showed Edie how to keep the snare drum going for marches and polkas.

She said she had grown up dancing to polka music played on the hi-fi and knew the music, so drumming was easier than it might have been.

Now retired, Tom has time to join Edie in the Home Band.

"It's been great fun, because Bill makes it great fun," she said. "He always has a light-hearted approach that makes community music-making unique and very, very special."

Tom Zim has enjoyed playing standup bass in the Down Home Band for 10 years. Zim has played in bands since he was a kid and even had to join a musician's union in junior high school. "The band is community music therapy for those in the band and those who get to listen," he said.

"The best part about the Down Home Band is Dr. Roes," Zim said. "You get only positive vibes from that guy. He is a wonderful band leader; no drama, fun without stress, and anyone who can play a band instrument is welcome." ■

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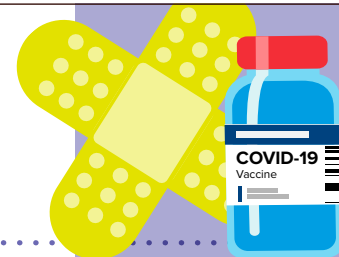
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Learn more at tpchd.org/septiccare



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FINDING A TEACHABLE MOMENT IN THE FACE OF FAILURE

Welcome Back Students, or ‘How to Survive in Your Native Land’ by James Herndon



Once fired for poor classroom management, teacher James Herndon became one of the most influential writers on education in the US.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

A school year unlike any other is upon us, fresh on the heels of two other school years unlike any others. Students are returning to their posts while administrators rearrange deck chairs and teachers watch for icebergs. Volunteers like me fill in the gaps, playing blackjack in the hall with first graders who hate math.

We are still grappling with what the pandemic, politics and polarization have done to us, including the classroom. How are we to steer this ship through these new problems while the old ones persist?

James Herndon addressed the same question in 1971 in his memoir after teaching in San Francisco’s public schools for 10 years in the 1960s, one of the most turbulent decades in American history.

He starts his answer, and his book, with the kind of resigned admiration instantly recognizable to any teacher: “I might as well begin with Piston.”

Piston was this screwup eighth grader who roamed the halls, smoked in the bathrooms, and gave the finger to the kids in Egypt class every day. Then he got stuck in this experimental classroom where the students determined what they were going to learn. It was so boring, there was nothing to do. Then some kid decided she wanted to build a kite, and then all the kids started building kites. Piston refused because Piston didn’t do what everyone else did because everyone hated Piston.

After all the other kids spent a week building their kites and decorating them and flying them while the kids stuck in Egypt class got jealous and gave them the finger through the windows, Piston started to build his kite. It was 20 feet long and made of heavy 1-by-2 lumber and yards of butcher paper he decorated with painted monsters. The teachers congratulated themselves on successfully engaging Piston in something, anything, other than giving the finger to Egypt class and smoking in the bathrooms. It wasn’t like this thing could ever fly, but it was proof they’d managed to connect with this screwup kid the whole school hated.

Then Piston somehow organized a bunch of kids to help him take the kite outside.

He tied a clothesline to it, and they ran across the playground hoisting it over their heads until the thing took off.

“It was terrifying — plunging and wheeling and lurching through the thin air, a ton of boards and heavy paper and ghouls and toothy vampires leering down at an amazed

lunchtime populace. ‘Jesus Christ, look out!’ yelled (the principal) just as the giant came hurtling down like a dead flying mountain ... When it crashed, everyone was seized with a madness and rushed to the kite, jumped on it, stomped it, tore it, murdered it (except the teachers, and we wanted to), and when it was over and the principal had everyone pulled off the scattered corpse of the kite and sitting down on benches and shut up there was nothing left of it but bits and pieces of painted butcher paper and 1-by-2 boards and clothesline rope.”

And there was Piston. “It flew, man,” he said.

Herndon started teaching when he was in his mid-30s after serving as a merchant marine in World War II and years living abroad. “Briefly, I had the idea that America needed me... Certainly I would be welcome as a teacher, if only as an antidote to the kinds of teachers I had known as a child.”

He was fired from his first job for poor classroom management, then went on to become one of America’s most influential writers on education.

When his own child developed what seemed to be a minor health problem that became overwhelming, Herndon began to see his students in a new way.

He and his teaching partner, Frank, decided to embark on a “voyage to the New World,” by assembling students of different abilities and outlooks and ages into a single experimental classroom where the kids would drive the curriculum. But the New World is by definition unknown territory, and the teachers and kids careen from boredom to exuberance to despair as they try to stay on the voyage by doing things the school doesn’t like while also meeting district standards.

Toward the end of the year. Herndon describes a meeting where one of his screwup kids is going to be expelled, and he and Frank are all for it.

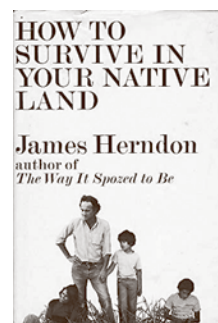
“One day the roof finally fell in on Greg and he reaped the rewards of his f..... around all year. The counselors, taking note of all his F’s and ‘Unsatisfactories for Citizenship,’ sent out forms to his teachers, asking them to comment.

Of course they all wrote that he was no damn good. There in the office, hearing all the teachers tell Greg’s parents that he wouldn’t do spelling, wouldn’t do science, wouldn’t do this and that (wouldn’t even do Shop, for Christ’s sake!), in the face of all those helpful, frowning adults, Frank and I suddenly saw that Greg was really OK... We remembered that he was usually around when something really needed to be done — in short, we all of a sudden realized that he was a pretty helpful, alert, responsible kid, and we said so. Everyone was astonished. Could he spell? Did he do Egypt? Did he make bookends? We left realizing that we had just realized that this f...-up kid who drove us crazy was really OK and that, far from the class being better if he was gotten rid of, he was actually needed... Frank and I came out of the meeting looking at each other strangely, wondering what had happened to us.”

Professionals call that a teachable moment. Or maybe recognizing your native land for the first time. Perhaps that’s how we find our way back there. ■

“How to Survive in Your Native Land” published by Simon & Schuster, 1971, 179 pages.

James Herndon wrote five books between 1968 and 1985 including three memoirs about his career as a teacher, which made him an influential figure in education. He died in 1990.



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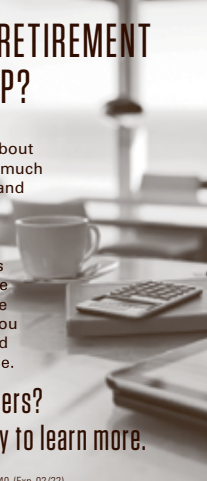
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The Ever-Exultant Watermelon Pickle

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BARBARA VAN BOGART

At a recent summer picnic, a friend and I were talking about all things food. He asked if I knew watermelon pickles were a real “thing.” Indeed, they are. While most of us relish the sweet red watermelon meat as a summertime treat, generations past didn’t waste much of this fruit, using the white rind to make delicious pickles.

Watermelon is said to have originated in northeastern Africa over 4,000 years ago, where it was domesticated for both food and water. Over the next 2,000 years, it migrated to Mediterranean lands. Historians tell us it was brought to America by some of the earliest European colonists sometime in the early 1600s. Mark Twain once said to taste a watermelon was “to know what the angels eat,” and most people would wholeheartedly agree. The first cookbook published in the United States in 1796, “American Cookery” by Amelia Simmons, contained a recipe for watermelon rind pickles.

While watermelon used to be available only in the summertime, now it is widely sold throughout the year. There are over 1,200 varieties grown in 96 countries. Seedless watermelons were developed about 50 years ago, thus making watermelon seed spitting contests (also a “thing” years ago)

a little more difficult to conduct. Seeded or seedless, mini (the personal size, smaller watermelons) or yellow and orange (lacking lycopene which gives red watermelon its deep color), this age-old fruit is indeed a treat for the senses.

While watermelon pickles haven’t been seen in grocery stores in recent years, they are easy to make and offer yet another taste treat for a buffet table, alongside your favorite sandwich or all by themselves.

The next time you are cubing watermelon for a salad or making melon balls, save the rind to make these pickles. If properly processed in a water bath, these pickles will keep for several months in the pantry.

Old Fashioned Watermelon Pickles

(adapted from “The Spruce Eats”)

Prep time 25 minutes

Soak time 8 hours

Cook 55 minutes

Total time 9+ hours

2 pounds watermelon rind

¼ cup pickling salt

4 cups water, divided

2 cups granulated sugar

1 cup white vinegar

1 tablespoon cinnamon stick, broken up

1½ teaspoons whole cloves

½ lemon, thinly sliced

5 maraschino cherries, halved (optional)

Trim the dark green and pink parts from the watermelon rind and discard. Cut the rind into 1-inch cubes and measure out seven cups.

Put the rinds in a large container with the pickling salt and 3 cups of the water. Add more water to cover the rinds, if necessary. Soak overnight. Drain and rinse watermelon rind in the morning.

Cover the rinds with cold water in a large saucepan. Simmer about 10 minutes until just tender.

Meanwhile, in a nonreactive 6-to-8-quart kettle or Dutch oven, combine the sugar, vinegar, cinnamon, whole cloves and remaining 1 cup water. Simmer the mixture for 10 minutes.

Add the drained rinds, lemon slices and maraschino cherries (if using) to the spiced syrup you’ve just made. Simmer the mixture until the watermelon rinds are translucent, about 30 minutes.

Fill sterilized half-pint jars with the hot watermelon rind and syrup mixture, leaving ½ inch of head space. Add the rings and lids, then process in a boiling water bath for five minutes. Remove jars, letting cool on a rack.

Serve and enjoy! ■

We'd love to feature a dish from your KP kitchen that friends and family ask for. Email the details to editor@keypennews.org with your phone number; we'll be in touch. PS: There's a printable, shareable pdf with the complete recipe on keypennews.org

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TWAA would like to extend a sincere **THANK YOU** to everyone who helped make the 2021 Art Walk such a huge success.



To our many amazing **Volunteers** and organizing committee, led by Susan Quigley, who gave their time and energy to put Art Walk together and run the event, we say

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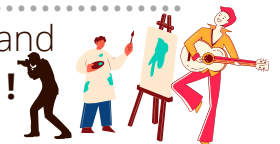


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helped make this event successful & possible, we say **THANK YOU!**



The **Art Walk Artist Art Show** continues through August with an exhibit at the Crandall Center and another at Blend Wine Shop.

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Scaredy Cats Welcome

Next month we'll celebrate Halloween with a collection of KP cats, especially the little dears and devils running your household.

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It takes a lot of talent and diligence to bring Key Peninsula News to your mailbox every month. A growing group of donors help pay the bills, loyal advertisers add a significant contribution and we receive underwriting from organizations like the Angel Guild and NewsMatch.

But it takes more than a printing press and check

book. Volunteers and staff generously give their time every month to manage, create, research, write, take photographs, edit, coordinate and deliver the KP News.

Over the next months, we will spotlight the people who give their talents to help create this newspaper. If you know them, tell 'em how much their contributions mean to you. And thank them for their generosity.



Joseph Pentheroudakis

Joseph came to the U.S. from Greece in 1968 to enroll as a pre-med undergraduate at the University of Chicago. To the dismay of his parents, counting on having a doctor in the family, he was lured away from medicine by archeology and then linguistics, which was where he parked for his undergraduate years and graduate school in Chicago.

Somewhere in there, Joseph discovered computational linguistics and spent the next three decades writing language-processing software. Another career followed, this time in the arts, primarily printmaking and drawing, which he studied at Pratt Fine Arts Center and Gage Academy in Seattle. He said he owns the largest collection of his work.

He's a frequent contributor to the paper as a journalist, editor, On The Wing columnist and historian. His research into the history of this place was so inspiring he's currently completing a book on Herron Island founders and settlers.

When he's not writing or combing archives, he works in his Herron Island studio and keeps a small garden, fenced against ever-voracious deer. In whatever time his dog Eva allows him to be away, he bikes the hills of the KP and paddles his kayak in Case Inlet.



Deanna Hunter

Since joining the KP News sales team in 2019, Deanna has met, worked and created friendships with most KP business owners. She helps create ideal ad schedules that help get the word out.

Her background wasn't in media sales but she's perfectly suited to use KP News advertising to help boost local business. As a member of the KPBA, she's working to market local businesses and nonprofits.

Deanna and husband Mark recently celebrated their 42nd wedding anniversary, explaining their young looks with "we married while in high school."

They have two mid-thirties married children, Kristin and Justin. When not taking care of four horses, Deanna and Mark are on the trails horse/bike riding, he on bicycle, she on horseback. She also enjoys adventures with family, digging in the vegetable garden and walking her beloved dog.

Even with a life so filled with activity and rewarding pleasures, Deanna always finds time to make sure every advertiser's needs are met and adds valuable insights to the News team.



Ed Johnson

Award-winning photos by Ed Johnson have appeared on the pages of KP News countless times since he joined the staff in 2010. After a couple of years "in the trenches" as he calls it, he became a member of the KP News Publishing Board and served as its president for three years.

Ed swears he hadn't paid much attention to taking photos until he retired from his career as a data communications specialist for Lynden Transport and Logistics. He is a self-taught photographer, "after being offered lessons by my dad."

Forever out and about capturing the beauty of Key Peninsula, he rarely leaves home without his camera. His photos have been featured in art shows, company calendars and covers of phone books. Ed loves taking scenic shots, flora and fauna, especially birds. A devoted sports fan, especially for baseball—his favorite subjects are his four grandchildren.

Around year-end, Ed's in the kitchen making batches of his famous peanut brittle. He shared his recipe in the December 2019 KP Cooks so if you're not among his long list of friends, you can still enjoy the nearly addictive treat.



Is your cat smart enough to send us a selfie?

To celebrate Halloween, we're featuring the bright and beautiful cats of the KP in the October issue and on keypennews.org.

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TOP LEFT Early morning swimmers meet on Von Geldern Cove. *Anna Brones* **TOP RIGHT** Fledgling cedar waxwing asks for "more please." *Tina McKail, KP News* **MID LEFT** Jennay Kirschner of Vaughn brightens the Aug. 4 Art Walk in Key Center. *Tina McKail, KP News* **MID RIGHT** Bumblebee feeding in cosmos bloom. *Tina McKail, KP News* **LOWER LEFT** Summer fires add drama to sunset over the Olympics. *Steve West* **LOWER RIGHT** Lunch is delivered to osprey nest at Herron Island ferry dock. *Ed Johnson, KP News*