

Veteran Educator is Key Peninsula Citizen of the Year 2019

The pandemic delayed the ceremony, so the 2019 winner received her award in 2023.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

Marcia Harris of Longbranch received the 36th Key Peninsula Lions Club Citizen of the Year Award during a ceremony and celebration at the KP Civic Center March 25 for her decades of service to the community in education and as a volunteer.

The original 2019 Citizen of the Year Award ceremony scheduled for March 2020 was delayed by pandemic restrictions. The Lions Club decided against presenting it in absentia or in a virtual format, since the nominees all deserved a night of celebration with the community, said club President Bill Jones.

Harris therefore became the 2019 winner of the — now formerly — annual award, selected by secret ballot of Lions Club members from a roster of 14 nominees.

“Anybody who lives on the peninsula, works on the peninsula or even owns property on the peninsula who makes whatever you feel is an outstanding contribution to society is eligible (for the award),” said Hal Wolverton, the club vice president. “It was designed for volunteers, but it’s not limited to volunteers because some people go way above and beyond.”

“I was just stunned,” Harris said. “I was sitting there thinking who of these nominees I picked would win, and I was so interested to see if I was right. It didn’t occur to me it would be me.”

“I have been so proud to work, to be part of this community. To be honored by this, by these people, by this event, it’s just unbelievable,” she said.

Harris’ work in education began in 1973 in the Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction as a financial analyst, during which time she earned an MBA. Her career took

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Softball Star Shares Her Struggles, Successes

Henderson Bay High School Senior Hailey Ruckle signed last month to play softball at Columbia Basin College. She plays softball on the PHS team, but the Lakebay resident wasn’t sure two years ago that college was even an option for her.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

Hailey Ruckle isn’t afraid to admit it: School isn’t easy for her. She has a tough time reading. Big classrooms make her nervous. She doesn’t like when people judge her. It’s hard for her to talk to new people.

“But when she puts on that uniform and gear, she transforms into something completely different,” said Hailey’s mom, Tara Ruckle. “She’s loud. She’s determined. She’s a leader. She’s a badass.”

Hailey has been grappling with her mental health and dyslexia from a young age. Though she claims she’s shy, she doesn’t shy away from talking about her struggles and what she’s doing to overcome the adversity.

“Softball is 100% my outlet,” said Hailey, a standout senior catcher on the Peninsula Seahawks softball team. “You can never think too far ahead to worry.”

To use a softball analogy, Hailey spent the last 15 months taking life one pitch at a time, but that wasn’t always the case. Her mental health battles came to a tipping point during her freshman year at PHS. She wasn’t surrounding herself with the best people and put other’s concerns before her own. Hailey’s learning wasn’t going well to begin with and challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic didn’t help. By the time her junior year came around in 2021, the idea of not graduating on time, or at all, was a possibility. She took the first part of that school year worrying less about what others thought and putting more effort toward prioritizing her own needs.

With guidance from Peninsula School District Success Coach Jennifer Buys over the years, Hailey decided in January 2022 to enroll at Henderson Bay High School to get a more personalized education than what she could get at PHS. Hailey and Tara give a lot of credit to Buys for not only helping to save Hailey’s education, but even her life.

“I truly believe if (Buys) wasn’t around, I wouldn’t be here,” Hailey said.

Hailey knows there’s a stigma that comes with attending an alternative high school and acknowledged that didn’t help with her nerves. The teachers and staff helped her regain a



PSD Success Coach Jennifer Buys (left) congratulates Henderson Bay High School senior Hailey Ruckle on signing a letter of intent to play softball at Columbia Basin College next year.

Jessica Ruckle

strong hold on her emotions and the smaller class sizes empowered her to take control of her learning. HBHS was the fresh start she was looking for.

“This school was a better option for her,”

said HBHS Principal Brian Tovey. “Hailey started building such a strong relationship with the staff, and she quickly found her

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Children's Home Society Continues to Support KP Families

Despite staff turnover, the family resource center says it is expanding services with four new full-time employees.

STAFF REPORT

Despite rumors of the opposite, the Seattle-based Children's Home Society of Washington maintains that the Key Peninsula Family Resource Center is expanding services to improve access to assistance for low-income families.

Perry Shaw, CHSW's director of family support and well-being said, "We're more committed to the Key Peninsula than we've ever been in the past. We're not only meeting the needs of the community, but increasing support for them."

The staff in Vaughn was made aware months ago that CHSW planned to make changes statewide with some restructuring and rebranding efforts ahead.

For the last two decades, the Vaughn office was led by managers who lived on or near the KP. The last full-time manager, Gina Cabiddu, resigned last fall to accept a new job working in children's healthcare in Tacoma.

Tami Miller-Bigelow, a part-time family support specialist employed at the CHSW KP Family Resource Center for over 20 years, said that walking into the office the morning of Feb. 21 was anything but normal.

Miller-Bigelow told KP News she arrived early that day and was directed to a computer to connect with the human resources department in Seattle. She was informed that her job had been eliminated in the restructuring, and she would be paid through the end of the month. She no longer had access to her computer, was told to relinquish her keys and company cell phone on the spot, and to collect her personal things before leaving the building.

"I was blown away by how abrupt it was," Miller-Bigelow said. "I've never been let go from a job before and this felt shocking. It was as if I was a criminal."

She said she had been thinking of retiring eventually. Miller-Bigelow managed the diaper bank program as well as the popular indoor playtime for toddlers held Tuesday and Thursday mornings in the gym at the KP Civic Center. After so many years in the position, she said the hardest part was not being able to reach out to her families, reassure them and say goodbye.

"Staffing has dwindled over the years," she said. "All I can hope is that they staff up soon because there are clients who rely on help from Children's Home



The office is located in the basement of the KP Civic Center in Vaughn. *Tina McKail, KP News*



Serving the Key Peninsula community since 1995, countless families have been helped after walking through this door.

Tina McKail, KP News

Society to have their basic needs met."

Rick Purcell, CHSW chief family support and well-being officer said, "The evolution of how we operate in our Key Peninsula community to focus only on full-time staff was not decided lightly and was a calculated structural shift with the objective of better serving families in all the unique ways they need.

"We know that change is hard and we are dealing with people's lives and livelihood which we took into consideration as well as we developed our plan. We very much appreciate the commitment of past employees and know that we will be better positioned for our future as a result of their efforts."

The center previously employed part-time social workers and support staff, but the nonprofit recently hired four full-time employees to replace them, including a new manager. CHSW also hired a full-time front desk administrator and two social workers,

one who is bilingual to be more accessible to Spanish-speaking families. CHSW refers to its social workers as "family navigators."

The organization also hired Rimi Afroze as the regional director for Northwest Washington. She'll be tasked with leading the day-to-day activity and growth of CHSW's three family resource centers in the Puget Sound region, including the KP. CHSW operates 18 centers in the state.

Shaw said she knows that transportation around the Key Peninsula is a challenge and said CHSW is looking to bring some of its services on the road, so to speak, with more mobile outreach opportunities.

The Key Peninsula Family Resource Center is focused on serving low-income families with early learning and family support opportunities. In addition to helping with referral services for financial aid, health care and employment, the organization can provide basic needs like diapers, clothing, utility assistance, school supplies and gas vouchers. It also offers social and emotional mentoring groups for middle school-aged students, and hosts the Indoor Park Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the Key Peninsula Civic Center. Indoor Park gives toddlers and preschoolers a chance to socialize before they start school.

The Key Peninsula Family Resource Center is located at 17010 South Vaughn Road and is open Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Learn more at www.childrenshomesociety.org ■

Executive Editor Lisa Bryan's "Here's What I Think About That" will return in June.

Can You Dig It? Rockhounding on the Key Peninsula

The socially-distant-but friend-making hobby garnered a lot of interest during the pandemic and certain special rocks found a good home.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

“What’s the beach offering today?” Shannon Fenton asked herself.

A recent storm had churned the water in Case Inlet. It was high tide and overcast on a late March morning, and Joemma Beach was littered with a fresh stock of quartz and jasper. Both types of stone are pretty easy to find on Key Peninsula beaches — if you have the eye for it.

“Come here at 4 p.m., and the tide is low, and the sun is shining, and this beach would be glowing,” said Fenton, a self-proclaimed “rockhound.”

Rockhounds are rock collectors and gem enthusiasts — some consider themselves amateur geologists. It’s a hobby that’s increased significantly across the state since the pandemic and, according to Fenton, it’s probably one of the easiest to get into.

Her advice for newbies is simple: “Start by picking up rocks that are pretty. Then start focusing on the ones you really like.” For Fenton, that’s picture jasper, but finding blue agates is her new obsession.

“Looking for a specific stone is like an Easter egg hunt,” she said. “Then when you find it, it’s like Christmas.”

Fenton’s affinity for the hobby has a more somber origin. She got into it as a way to cope with the death of her 19-year-old son in 2013.

“If I stayed home to grieve, I would’ve surely sunk to the bottom pits of depression,” she said. “I walk out into nature and can ‘ugly bawl’ my heart out. Nature isn’t offended by your tears. It offers sunshine for warmth and peace, wind as a hug and a push-forward, and rain to wash away your tears. Then nature shows you her beauty.”

In Fenton’s eyes, that beauty is in the form of crystals, jasper, opals and agates. She started a therapeutic rock garden, creating designs from the rocks she brings back to her Lakebay home. Each rock gathered serves as both a memorial and reminder to work at making peace with the death of her son, and seven years later the death of her 27-year-old nephew.

Occasionally during her excursions, Fenton finds rocks on local beaches she knows aren’t from around the area. She said she always wondered where these rocks came from.

That’s the work of 67-year-old Lakebay resident and 40-plus year rockhound, John Hubbard. Hubbard, a member of



Local beach combing kindled an outdoor pursuit for Shannon Fenton that entertains and inspires her to discover more about geology. *Tina McKail, KP News*

the Kitsap Mineral and Gem Society, has so many rocks in his collection that he spreads them on the beaches as a way to generate interest from potential new hounds. Recently retired from a career in retail sales, Hubbard is an “agate guy” who leads field trips for members of the society. He said he enjoys going on adventures to search for the stone and no matter how many he has, it’s still exciting. “You hunt, you dig, and when you find one, you just found buried treasure no one has ever seen before,” he said.

Hubbard also regularly donates buckets of agates and petrified wood to Wild Earth, a Key Peninsula rock and gift shop near SR 302 and 118th Avenue NW, to give out free to kids. At a time when a lot of small businesses were going to an online model, owners Dave and Jenny Weber decided to open the brick-and-mortar shop in November 2021 to develop a better connection with the

people in the community. Jenny is a long-time rockhound, spending summers as a kid collecting agates and sapphires in Montana, while Dave came in with limited knowledge about the rock and gem world.

“I’m not afraid to admit I glean a lot of information from our customers,” Dave said. “Part of the fun is being able to learn while meeting new people who obviously have a passion for this.”

Though Wild Earth features items like jewelry, paintings, greeting cards, bath products and books from local and Washington artists, they purposely don’t feature rocks customers can find around the KP. They encourage people to go find those stones on their own.

Social media trends spurred on by TikTok have driven up the popularity of certain rocks and minerals to a point where it’s tough for Wild Earth to keep them in stock.

“We had this stone called elite shungite sitting in a closet for over a year, and no



A fractured boulder in Longbranch revealed this chunk of fossilized bivalves.

Tina McKail, KP News

one asked about it,” Dave said. “Then all of the sudden five people wanted all of it.” Same goes for flower agate, moldavite and hematite.

Another rockhound taking advantage of social media is recent Herron Island transplant Kasey Lane Brooks. The lapidary artist and silversmith moved to the area from Steamboat Springs, Colorado, last summer and immediately began creating jewelry using the rocks she foraged on the beaches around the island. She uses Facebook and Instagram to drive followers to her Etsy site where she sells her handmade jewelry.

Brooks has such a following that 70% of her business is based on custom orders. Like Fenton, the former radio and TV host turned to rock hounding for therapeutic reasons. Her husband passed away 10 years ago from a form of lymphoma. “I learned the more time I spent in nature, the less anxiety I felt,” she said. “When I’m looking for stones, I have no time to worry. (Rockhounding) has been an actual live saver.”

All agree rock hounding is an affordable hobby for families to get into together. Hubbard said you can get a rock hammer and a few buckets for less than \$35. “If you’re a casual rockhound those tools can last you a lifetime,” he said. He also suggested starting out with a six-pound rock tumbler to polish the stones.

Most hounds keep their search sites a secret, but Fenton said part of the adventure is finding a place on your own. There are YouTube channels and websites like Mindat.org, the Washington Mineral Council and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, which show where digging and taking rocks is allowed.

“It’s the thrill of the hunt. Every time I go out I find at least one thing I think is cool; sometimes it’s a bucketful,” Fenton said. ■



Spencer Abersold's 21-year career as KGHP-FM station manager is coming to an end in June. He and 14 other Peninsula School District employees had their jobs eliminated due to budget cuts to help compensate for low enrollment. *Tina McKail, KP News*

KGHP's Future is Up in the Air as Station Manager is Laid Off

Spencer Abersold, known on-air as "The Walrus," will sign-off in June even as the station continues to broadcast, for now.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

KGHP-FM station manager Spencer Abersold saw the proverbial writing on the wall that his job was nearing an end.

He had been hearing rumblings that the 35-year-old Peninsula School District owned-and-operated radio station was on the chopping block. The demise of the local public radio stations started in 2020 when the district stopped offering a broadcasting class at PHS after longtime instructor Leland Smith retired.

But it was seeing the literal writing in newspapers the past two years about what the district was going to do with the radio station that really irked Abersold. There were discussions about how much the district could get for selling the station, and then there were questions about whether students were really interested in careers in media and broadcasting.

"But those discussions took place in another building and didn't include me," Abersold said. "We were on a path to make this station profitable, but consistent news coverage that the school district doesn't know what to do with the station didn't help me."

Abersold was one of 15 district employees,

all non-teaching positions, who were laid off as part of PSD's attempt to cut \$12 million from next school year's budget. He'll remain on staff through the end of the current school year.

"I actually handed in my keys expecting I was done (the day he was told by PSD Human Resources)," he said. "I walked in the studio an hour before that meeting and did what I thought was my last opportunity to play music."

Another 25 full-time equivalent classified and non-represented district and building staff are also affected in various ways. More details were to be provided at the PSD board of directors business meeting on April 27, after press time.

Other school districts in Western Washington are in a similar boat. Vashon Island (-\$1 million), South Kitsap (-\$9.5 million), Shoreline (-\$14 million), Olympia (-\$17 million) and Everett (-\$28 million) school districts are all facing budget shortfalls. Seattle Public Schools is looking at a nearly \$130 million setback. All citing declining enrollment as one of the main reasons, if not the main one.

Of the 15 laid-off employees, Abersold said his position was unique because he could help offset the costs with running

a station through support by commercial sales and community sponsors. The last few years the station has generated between \$35,000 and \$40,000, he said. His modest salary is the biggest expense for the station. Otherwise, it's run by student and adult volunteer DJs.

"I appreciate everyone who has offered support," said Abersold. "I've been fighting the fight as long as I can and don't know what more I could've done to change opinions."

Abersold wears two hats for KGHP. The bill-paying, schedule-making station manager and his on-air persona known as "The Walrus" — a nickname he picked up from college friends in the mid-1990s.

"The Walrus is an entity, a vehicle for entertainment," he said of himself. "But any of these students can be their version of The Walrus; it's an outlet for creativity."

But not a lot of people can be Spencer Abersold, a person who spent 21 years as head of the station, another four years as a volunteer, and who served as member of the Gig Harbor City Council from 2018-2022. Including his high school days — he's a 1992 graduate of the school — Abersold has spent nearly 29 years of his life in the PHS hallways.

What's next for KGHP is up in the air. From what he's been told, the station will go on without him. "Legally they couldn't just shut it down. We have to broadcast because of our (Federal Communications Commission) license." The district, in theory, could sell their non-commercial, educational license, but it would be difficult, according to Abersold, to find a suitor in the nonprofit or an organization in the educational world willing to fork over what the license would cost.

What's next for The Walrus is a little more black-and-white. He's done with radio. "I've had my 15 minutes of fame and I'm looking at going in a different direction." Early next year he'll publish his novel, "Curse of the Werewolf." Abersold has worked on it since the early days of the pandemic and already has ideas for a second and third book in a series. He also wants to parlay his love of traveling into a possible career as a truck driver.

"I'm going to miss serving the community," the life-long Gig Harbor resident said. "I feel at a loss for the people who aren't going to get the benefit of the service we provided."

KGHP-FM broadcasts at 89.3, 89.9 and 105.7 with online streaming available on kghp.org. ■

SOFTBALL FROM PAGE 1

footing and became a leader.”

Her newfound success in the classroom translated to the softball field. Henderson Bay doesn't offer a sports program, so Hailey got to play softball with the Peninsula High School Seahawks. Her team during her junior season was 22-3 overall and went undefeated as South Sound League champions. She batted .390 and was error-free as the team's catcher. This year's team, and Hailey, are enroute to another successful season.

“Watching her success on the field while learning the skills of life in the classroom is just what she needed,” Tara said.

Although Hailey has been on the varsity squad since her freshman season, PHS Seahawks coach Mike Paul was excited to see Hailey break out last season.

“She is extraordinarily talented,” Paul said.

“I knew Hailey could play like that, but I don't know if she knew she could. She's had a tough go, and I think she's at a really good spot in life.”

College, which wasn't even a possibility two years ago, is now a reality for Hailey. Last month, with a blue and white Henderson Bay High School Bulldogs banner hanging above her, and a green and white PHS Seahawks banner below her, the senior inked a full-ride scholarship with the Columbia Basin College Hawks softball program in Pasco. Tovey believes she is the first HBHS student to play college sports.

She's made a name for herself as a catcher, but Paul calls her “probably the best outfielder I've ever coached.” She'll play centerfield with Columbia Basin. Her high school teammates, Grace and Glory Estabrook, signed with Yakima Valley College and those two teams are in the same division in the Northwest

Athletic Conference. Hailey said it will be exciting to share the field with them, even if they're in separate dugouts.

Though she sports a Seahawk jersey on the field, she felt it was only right to show her appreciation to the HBHS community by having her signing day ceremony at the school in front of family, friends and school staff.

“It was an overwhelming moment with all the love in the room — you could feel it,” Hailey said. “There's a ton of people who've held my hand through it all and have supported me unconditionally.”

Tara said, “To see all the people who have connected with the light that I've seen in Hailey was very emotional. These are the people who have followed her through the darkest times to her lightest times.”

Paul thinks Hailey could easily play Division I softball in two years, but Hailey isn't looking that far ahead. She's taking it one

pitch at a time. Columbia Basin will give her the courses she needs to be a firefighter and emergency medical technician. She's been through a lot, and this is her way of helping others, she said.

For now, Hailey wants to be an advocate for mental wellness, hoping to help others.

“She's being a voice for other teens and adolescents to not be afraid to speak up about mental health,” Tara said. “Walking through the hard (times) and speaking your truth is something even adults have trouble with, but she's always been mature for her age.”

She still has anxiety. She is still shy around new people. She still doesn't like people judging her. She knows that now, but that's not stopping her.

“I never stopped. And when I wanted to stop I just kept going,” Hailey said. “I'm finally coming out of the clouds and thinking, ‘I did that, and I survived that.’” ■

CITIZEN FROM PAGE 1

her from Olympia to Yakima, Moses Lake, Chimacum and Shoreline, and twice to the Peninsula School District.

She and her husband, Jeff (the 2012 Citizen of the Year), came to the KP in 1995 when she was hired as deputy superintendent of Peninsula School District at a time of crisis. “They were in serious financial trouble; they'd had four levy failures,” she said. “There were 16 (state) audit findings, which was the worst any school district had ever experienced.”

The ship was righted by 2003 and the district passed a long overdue bond.

Harris retired in 2012 but within a month began a new career of volunteering for the KP. She served on the KP Community Council, the board of KP Community Services, oversaw the free KP Connects school bus service, remains an active member of the Gig Harbor Rotary Club and the Minerva Scholarship Fund, and is a volunteer master gardener.

In 2014, she started looking for someone to run for the Peninsula School Board. It ended up being her.

After one term and 41 years in education, Harris retired for the second time Dec. 12, 2019.

“I really did some soul-searching to decide whether I was going to run again,” she said. “It feels good to have passed a bond (in 2019).” The \$198.55 million bond built two new elementary schools, replaced two others, and remodeled two middle schools.

“I kind of grew up doing things and giving back,” she said. “My grandma said about volunteering, ‘Giving back is the rent you pay for the space you take up while you're on Earth.’”

Citizen of the Year Awards for the pandemic



Artist Chris Bronstad, left, with his portrait of Marcia Harris, center, and her husband, Jeff.

Tina McKail, KP News

CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS

- 2019 Marcia Harris
- 2018 Karen Jorgenson
- 2017 Dee Dee Kerkes
- 2016 Anne Nesbit
- 2015 Matthew Mills
- 2014 Jud Morris
- 2013 Danna Webster
- 2012 Jeff Harris
- 2011 Ed Robison
- 2010 John Biggs
- 2009 Mike Salatino
- 2008 Edie Morgan
- 2007 Chuck West
- 2006 Phil Bauer
- 2005 Tim Kezele
- 2004 Christi Watson
- 2003 Erlene Twidt
- 2002 Nancy Lind
- 2001 Marge Adams
- 2000 Tracy Manning
- 1999 Louis Aguilar
- 1998 Lulu Smith
- 1997 Irene Zimmer
- 1996 Fred and Mary Ramsdell
- 1995 Angel Guild group: Richard and Barb Hanna; Gerald and June Seich
- 1994 Cy and Eileen Young
- 1993 John Van de Brooke
- 1992 Ida Curl
- 1991 Tracey Manning and Cricket Stephenson
- 1990 Karla and Dick Crocker
- 1989 Ruth Bramhall
- 1988 Dale and Claudia Loy
- 1987 Marguerite Bussard
- 1986 Vicki Henschell and Laurette Jaggi
- 1985 Dr. William Roes
- 1984 Sally Cornman

2019 CITIZEN OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

(including three who died between nomination and the award ceremony)

- | | |
|--|--|
| Marilyn Brennan | Jill Peters and Sasha, her reading buddy |
| Stephanie Brooks | dog |
| Peggy Gablehouse | Victoria Schauer |
| Diane Gressley and David Starkweather (deceased) | Lulu Smith (deceased) |
| Marcia Harris | Thomas Smith |
| David Haycock | Alberta Stave |
| Tim Kezele | Ed Taylor (deceased) |
| | Don Zimmerman |

years will be devoted to honoring those who continued to serve their community during that time, such as first responders and essential

workers, according to Jones. The Lions Club will be seeking individual nominees for the 2023 award at the end of the year. ■

Meredith Browand

KEY ISSUES



The Village Way

Earlier this year my husband and I celebrated our 20th wedding anniversary at a resort in Fiji. Situated on an island in the Beqa Lagoon south of the Fijian mainland, the resort was an absolute paradise. It gave us an opportunity to escape and relax, but it also showcased stark differences between Fijian culture and what we have become so accustomed to in the United States.

Nearly 70% of the resort's staff live in nearby villages on Beqa Island. These villages are considered familial and almost everyone living within an individual village is related. Land is given to members as they age into adulthood and homes are passed on as family members move out or die. Life in the villages is communal, shared, and people depend on one another. This way of life was evident among the staff at the resort. I have never witnessed a group of people care for one another like they did. There was palpable joy in their work, attention to one another's needs and concern for how each person could better the group. I asked one of the bartenders about it after dinner one night and he told me that this is "just the way of Fiji." It was a literal breath of fresh air.

Upon arriving home from our trip, one of the first posts I came across in the Key Peninsula Facebook group had 107 comments arguing about residents in Los Angeles being "required to compost their food scraps." It felt like whiplash. It took me a few moments to process why this post was even in the group, and then why we were spending time arguing about it. As I scrolled further on in my social media and online news sites it was just one argument after another. People arguing about perceived wrongs, differences of opinions, failures to understand or ingrained biases and assumptions. I then logged in to help text bank for the Peninsula School District Levy vote. Many of the voters I contacted were supportive of the school district's financial needs, but many others were very, very angry. It was exhausting. I wanted to somehow escape back to the way of Fiji.

We hear a lot about American exceptionalism, but I think in many ways we have it all wrong. Our society is currently fractured along political, cultural and economic lines and until we can find ways to work together it is never going to improve. Instead of paying attention to one another's needs and having concern for how we could do

better for someone else, many of us are too busy searching for the next scapegoat to blame for everything that has gone wrong. I'm tired of the constant fighting and think we can do so much better.

While we were in Fiji my husband and I also had the opportunity to participate in a kava ceremony. Kava is a traditional drink used to welcome newcomers, encourage friendliness and camaraderie amongst families and friends, or settle disagreements. It has been used for generations as a social and cultural unifier. The taste was unremarkable, slightly earthy and peppery, but being a part of the traditional ceremony that connects people to the most important parts of the Fijian culture was more than memorable. Perhaps, in the United States, we need to find a cultural tradition similar to a kava ceremony that would help us connect to one another. I'm willing to try anything to stem the tide of arguing.

As Americans I think we could learn a lot from other cultures such as the Fijians who were so warm and hospitable to us. It was more than exceptional customer service; it was embodying a culture that prioritizes connection and community over anything else.

Meredith Browand is a mother and activist who lives in Purdy.

Jack Dunne

FROM THE CIDIOT DESK



Three Chords and the Truth

Harlan Howard gets credit for this summary of country western music, but its simple wisdom has been validated by many over the years, from Johnny Cash to Van Morrison.

Harlan knew what he was talking about. He wrote some of the classics; probably most popular was Patsy Cline's lament, "I Fall to Pieces," which you probably can't just say in your mind even now. You hear it, and it makes you stop and breathe while the guitar part trickles down.

If you play a little music, I'm not telling you anything you don't already know, but if the radio is your instrument, you may not have heard our little secret. Nearly all American music is kind of the same song, with variations (jazz is the very important American exception, and all of us musical hacks just wonder at its beautiful complexity). Folk, blues, rock, in all their glory, can often be boiled down to three chords.

Which chords depends on the key that you like to sing in, but the pattern is 1, 4, 5. If you want to sing in A, you can count

off on your fingers. If A is your thumb, then your index finger is B, next is C, ring finger is D and pinkie is E. The simple song is usually 1, 4, 5, in this case A, D and E. If you like to sing in C, count 'em off: thumb is C, then 4 and 5 is F and G. If you have any instrument handy, you'll hear the pattern clearly.

And then there is "the Truth" part of Harlan's claim about country music lyrics. Steve Goodman comically proposed that legitimate country music has to be about one of six things: divorce, drinking, mothers, prison, trucks or trains. He wrote "the perfect country song" that has all six. Go ahead, Google it, it's in your phone right now and it's pretty funny.

Country music is always familiar, and always feels true. Folk music, including the blues, also shares common themes of hardship or injustice, and when we listen we feel the truth flowing from the musician's heart. When Patsy cried that she was falling to pieces, we didn't doubt her. We didn't try to fix her up with another man, we didn't tell her she'll get over it, or that she needs to toughen up. We just nod and share her grief. When Dolly or Whitney wailed that they would always love me, I believed it, and cherished the belief. I am a slice of white bread soaking in a plate of milk, but when I sing along with Brother James, I got soul, huh, and I'm super bad. Our purple mountain's majesty deserves our hats off, and our shared commitment. If I had a hammer, I'd hammer in the morning too.

Great songs make us want to believe.

Why? Our world is struggling with the concept of belief and truth in ways I never anticipated. I'm not sure whether there is more lying or less integrity, but there is a lot more doubt, even angry disbelief. We need to understand how ideas flow from the world into our hearts.

Truths that have been proven over and over are valuable. Experience can be a great source of wisdom. The challenge arises when the world changes, and I think we can all agree that it's changing pretty fast. We can of course ignore or resist the changes, clinging to truths that have given us comfort. Many truths are simply timeless and continue to serve us.

But some "truths" are just wrong, and we need to find the courage to see them for archaic beliefs that are holding us back from recognizing and managing modern problems. Slavery used to be normal, women used to be worth less than men, the land used to be abundant and cry out for unlimited harvesting. How do we bring new truths into our common understanding without fear or folly?

Maybe we can sing it. Music has always

been a medium of expression, especially including expression of deep emotions and of new ideas. Maybe it's time to tune up our guitars, take those piano lessons we've been talking about for so many years. We need another language to talk about truth so that we can face our troubles together. Maybe it can be as simple as 1, 4, 5.

Jack Dunne lives gratefully in Lakebay.

Arrissan Nicole

LET'S REFRAME



Best Laid Plans

As I sat on the kitchen floor blinking back tears, I realized that the thing I had been working towards for the last three months wasn't going to happen. I was sweaty, I was in pain and I felt defeated. Life has a funny way of upending plans, no matter how hard you work, how much you care or how much you want it. We all experience this; for some it can feel like a daily occurrence. You may have saved some money only to have to drain your account because your car broke down. You planned an outside BBQ in July only to have it rain. Things happen outside of our control all the time.

How do you support yourself better when it hits the fan? How do you move forward without bringing along extra baggage?

I started training for my first marathon at the beginning of the year, running over 300 miles, in rain or pouring rain. I had uttered the phrase, "This is the longest I have ever run" multiple times. Every time I pushed myself further and hit a new milestone, my belief in my ability grew stronger. This was a mental game more than it was a physical game and I was winning.

So, when it became clear weeks before the race my feet were not just sore but injured, it was a hard pill to swallow. The pain was unbearable, and I knew pushing through it could cause more harm than good. At that moment, I could have easily given in to the negative thoughts that can creep into your mind. I could have told myself that I knew I wasn't capable of completing a marathon or that injuries always got in my way. But instead, I decided to approach the situation differently.

Pushing through the pain is easy for me, it's not completing something that's the challenge. I had to shift my mentality and look at this as an opportunity. I started by asking myself, "What is the lesson here?" and "What is inside my control and what is outside of my control?" This allowed me to

root back into my “Why” — why I started training for a marathon in the first place.

It’s easy to feel defeated when things don’t go as planned, but it’s important to not make the situation mean something about you personally. If you find yourself constantly having negative thoughts, like “I always mess things up” or “Why can’t I do this right?” try to reframe those thoughts with positive self-talk. Instead, say “I don’t have to have everything figured out right now” or “I deserve the grace and love I give to others.” Feel the emotions, but don’t let them consume you and don’t shame yourself for them either.

How can you give yourself more kindness and grace? Instead of closing off, look to those people you trust who can help you put things into perspective. I can dole out advice all day, logically understand how to tackle a problem, and still need someone to remind me to go easy on myself. Again and again.

Life happens, and you will be disappointed. There’s no avoiding that fact. What matters is how long you sit in that disappointment. It can only define you if you let it. Remember, not everything is within your control. When things don’t go as planned, ask yourself what aspects of the situation you can control and what you cannot.

It’s important to recognize the progress you’ve made, even if you didn’t achieve the end result you were hoping for. I mean, how amazing is it that I was able to run 18 miles? I don’t want to throw away that accomplishment just because it wasn’t more. Give yourself credit for the time and energy you invested and use that experience to inform your future goals and plans. Treat yourself like you would a friend.

Remember, when things don’t go as planned, it’s not a reflection of your worth or abilities. Take time to process

your emotions, surround yourself with supportive people and see it as an opportunity for growth and learning. And never forget to give yourself the kindness and grace you deserve along the way.

As for me, I am still planning on running a marathon. The goal line just shifted for me. It’s not a failure, just a change of plans. And that’s OK. Life is full of unexpected twists and turns, but it’s how we handle those moments that define us.

Arissan Nicole is a certified life coach and speaker specializing in women’s empowerment. She lives in Lakebay.



Sick

“Violet was out last week too, right?” the attendance secretary asks when I call Monday morning to report that my daughter is sick. Again.

Last week it was, “Violet’s been out a lot lately, hasn’t she?”

Every Monday for the past month. Most Tuesdays too.

My days off are Monday and Tuesday, so you can imagine how well-rested I’m feeling. Not very.

At least once a month Violet comes home saying someone vomited all over the lunch table or the playground. Her daily report always includes multiple kids being absent. When she and her best friend are at school on the same day, both feeling well enough to play at recess, it’s a cause for celebration.

Three Thursdays in a row, Violet visited her pediatrician. Three months in a row, we canceled her seventh birthday party

before giving up and rescheduling it for her eighth (See “Back to Work”, KP News, Sept. 2022).

“Let’s try for August,” I said the last time I called the civic center to report that Violet was, yet again, too sick to party. “Maybe things will go better before school starts.”

In our household this school year, we’ve had multiple rounds of “Is this norovirus, food poisoning or stomach flu?” and “Do we have allergies, a cold, RSV or pneumonia?” Not to mention Covid, extreme hives, pink eye (both Violet and the dog), and more.

I’ve always sworn I’d never be one of those people who show up at work or school with a cold, who wander around public places visibly sick, but this year has felt impossible. What are we to do when the stuffy noses never end, when the coughing goes on for weeks? Do we call in sick every day, all year long? And what difference will keeping our germs to ourselves make if someone’s always barfing at lunch, wiping boogers on chairs, or waving used tissues around?

You might think I’d be embarrassed or worried by this gauntlet of symptoms, but my experiences have been echoed all year long by every parent I know. After so much pandemic isolation, which for my family meant zero colds, not even a stuffy nose for a full two years, we are now in the thick of it, buried in germ-infested sheets and stuffed animals, drowning in phlegm. It’s so gross. I’m so over it. We all are.

When I went to my eye doctor for a new prescription, she looked at me sideways and asked, “Do you have a corneal abrasion?”

“What?”

“I’m seeing multiple scratches on both of your eyes.”

“On my eyeballs? Right now?”

“You don’t feel them?”

Violet’s Dad had been out of town the week before my appointment. While he was away, Violet and I had trudged onward through yet another vague illness, coughing through the nights, then waking with watery, itchy eyes to take our temps and Covid tests before reluctantly heading out into the world.

“It looks like the abrasions might’ve been caused by a mascara wand,” the optometrist said. “You really can’t feel these?”

It took a week of racking my brain and thrice daily eye drops before I realized what did it – these ridiculously long, swinging earrings I loved. Apparently, I don’t even have the energy to notice wounds on my eyeballs anymore, which perhaps perfectly encapsulates the experience of parenting a young child.

In the end, my scratched eyeballs healed up fine. I reluctantly threw my long, pretty, death trap earrings away and went back for another appointment I didn’t have time for, but at least I can see. And I can breathe.

Violet’s dad says I’ve probably had a cold layered on top of allergies, then got hit by another cold. I’ve never had allergies, but who cares at this point? Maybe this is just our life now, nastiness and exhaustion forever.

Or maybe not.

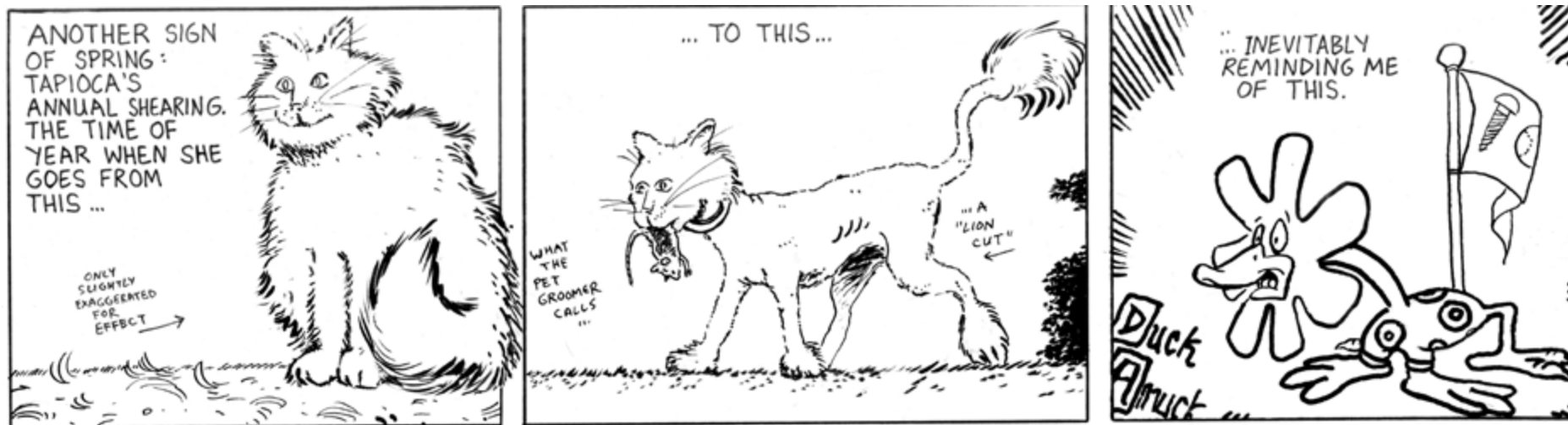
Today is a new Monday. A new month. Violet made it through breakfast without a single cough. I’m alone and the house is silent. Even the dog has ceased whining, allowing me the luxury of typing in peace.

There’s a ray of sunlight beaming through the clouds and a peek-a-boo of blue sky. The temperature is above 50. Summer is no longer a far off, unimaginable illusion.

It’s time to hang the hammock and set

CONTINUED PAGE 8

José Alaniz WE LIVE HERE: SHEARED



up the sprinklers. Get out your shorts, tank tops, swimsuits and flip flops. Warm days are coming; they're already on their way.

Krisa Bruemmer is an award-winning writer. She lives in Vaughn.

Joseph Pentheroudakis ON THE WING



See Bicycles

One thing you learn when you bike in the Northwest is that you won't get much riding done if you don't go out when it's cold, dark and wet. You just kit up in cold and wet weather gear, get some bright lights, pop fenders on the bike to avoid getting mud all over your back and in the faces of your riding buddies, grit your teeth and off you go. You may think that's not for the faint of heart but soon you discover that your heart isn't as faint as you thought, so you keep going winter after miserable winter, short days and all. And you're happy. Wet and cold, yes, but happy.

On the flip side, you also learn to heed the call of a dry day, especially if the sun is out, no matter how busy you are or how full your docket happens to be. Work and errands can wait; the bike can't. Clip on and before you know it the messy slog of winter riding is a fading memory, and all is forgiven.

I was in Tacoma on one of those exemplary days back in March, bike in tow. It was the first springlike day of the year. A bright, sunny Saturday morning, not a cloud in the sky, temps forecast to climb from the 40s in the morning to the 60s by noon. Perfect riding weather.

I was on the road by 8:30. "This is so great," I kept repeating to myself, "so great," like a broken record.

My route took me from downtown up the hill to westbound North 26th Street, a wide east-west thoroughfare with a generous bike lane. My destination was Point Defiance Park. I would ride a lap or two around the park and head back downtown on 26th. It was a Goldilocks ride: not too short, not too long.

Traffic was light, but as always I was on constant alert. I try to ride defensively, follow the rules of the road, stay on the right, signal, make eye contact with drivers as needed, bark a loud "Whoa!" if it looks like they hadn't seen me, the equivalent of honking. Those are survival skills I'd picked up in my years of commuting and going on team rides, and they have served me well.

I heard once that a cyclist will be in an

accident on average every 10,000 miles of riding. I've clocked several times that over the years, and I've been in three memorable accidents. Two involved a car whose driver hadn't seen me; in the third the bike slid on an oil slick I hadn't seen, flipping over and sending me on a short airborne trajectory to the pavement. I came away with a broken elbow and a few missing teeth. My helmet was trashed.

I was lucky. All three times I lived to ride another day. I've had friends who weren't and didn't.

I was lucky that day in Tacoma as well.

I was still headed west on 26th when I noticed a car coming out of a side street on the right. It looked like it was slowing down to stop at the stop sign, but just in case I tried to make eye contact with the driver and motioned them to stop. The driver's side window was up, so I barked my usual "Whoa!" to make sure they'd noticed me.

To my disbelief the car kept inching forward, slowly turning right onto 26th and showing no intention of yielding. I started swerving away but in the end I found myself flat against the driver's door. The bike rolled out from under me and I slid down, landing on my right side. The bike took out the car's side view mirror on its way down.

All that took no more than three seconds. Somehow I managed to spring right back up, in time to hear a string of foul obscenities come spewing out of my mouth. The driver rolled down his window, slack-jawed at the sight of a cyclist screaming at him five inches away from his face. "I didn't see you," he kept repeating, "I'm so sorry! Are you OK?"

I knew that my right side had taken a serious blow and that the pain would get worse once the adrenaline wore off, but I was still in one piece and I hadn't hit my head. I wasn't going to let this incident ruin a perfect day for riding. The bike was relatively unharmed, so once everyone had left it was time to continue with the ride, if for no other reason than to calm my nerves. I would deal with the pain and discomfort later.

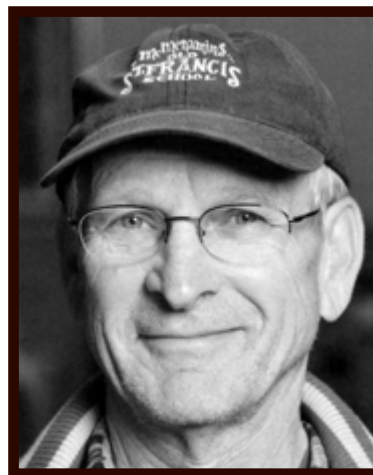
Ironically the driver claimed that he hadn't seen me when he looked my way because the sun behind me was too bright.

It's been three weeks since the crash as I write this. My doctor warned me that the pain from the contusion on my right side may take as long as two months to go away. I still haven't had a good night's sleep.

It could have been so much worse. For me but also for the driver.

Joseph Pentheroudakis is an artist, historian and avid birder who writes from Herron Island.

OBITUARIES



David Alan Starkweather

David Alan Starkweather of Longbranch died unexpectedly March 10 while on vacation in Manzanillo, Mexico. He was 77 years old.

David was the sixth child born to Guy William Starkweather and Helen Lucille (Arnold) Starkweather in Lincoln, Nebraska, Jan. 31, 1946. He graduated from Lincoln High School in 1964 and Chadron State College in 1969. He married Diane Louise Gressley Oct. 14, 2000, in Longbranch.

David is survived and missed by his loving wife Diane; son Gibson Marsh (Reyna) and grandson Ezra David of Lakewood; brothers Rodney, Robert (Bob), and Greg; sister LaVeta; and many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers Charles and Leonard; and sister Guina.

Theater was a love formed during David's time at Chadron where so many lifelong friendships were forged. He was involved in building the Post Playhouse at Fort Robinson in Crawford, Nebraska. His love of theater continued in Longbranch where plays were produced with David in the role of writer, director and actor. He collaborated with the Key Singers in 2000 and wrote a radio-style play called "America: The Last 100 Years."

David took on many passions. He loved nature — he was a true tree-hugger — and enjoyed working on his property and going for walks. He was a champion of environmental responsibility and advocated for the rights of all people. As a visual artist, he found joy in using found and recycled objects to express himself in his art. He used his artistic talents to run a successful decorative painting business called DAS Design while living in Tacoma. He retired from the position of maintenance supervisor at Rocky Bay Health Care in 2016.

He had a love of literature. The way words spoke to him influenced how he communicated with others. He was a non-boastful, sensitive individual who used his writing to express himself. He was a great debater, usually winning

He enjoyed small children and was a reading mentor at Evergreen Elementary School in the Little Eagles program as well as Minter Creek Elementary for many years.

David was a 30-year resident of Longbranch. He enjoyed doing puzzles, playing cribbage, playing gin with Diane and drinking beer with his friends. He was a loving father, grandfather, husband, brother and friend to many on the Key Peninsula and across the country. He will be greatly missed.

The family would like to thank kind Dr. Thomas Martinez of Manzanillo, the "family" at Villa Camino del Mar in Melaque, and friends Dan and May Wilson who opened their home and hearts when they were needed most.

There will be a celebration of David's life May 20 at 2 p.m. at the Longbranch Improvement Club.



Paula Raye Hinzman

Paula Raye (Mohnen) Hinzman died at home peacefully June 20, 2022, in Home. She was 75 years old.

Paula was a strong and caring soul with a terrific sense of humor. She will be remembered and missed by the many people she cared for over her 40-plus year career as a nurse, wife, mother, aunt, grandmother and friend.

She was born in rural South Dakota where she grew up on her family farm. Struck with polio early in life, a long hospital stay as a 6-year-old girl inspired her lifelong calling as a nurse. Once her training was complete, Paula had a taste for adventure. She and her dear friend Elva picked up stakes and moved to Tacoma.

It was here that Paula met Art Hinzman, whom she married in 1969 and with whom she enjoyed 53 years of marriage, raising daughter Beth and son Bill in Home, while she worked in nursing throughout Pierce and Kitsap counties.

She will be missed for her wisecracks, her beautiful baby quilts and sewing, her adventurous spirit, and her loving heart.

Paula is survived by her husband, Art; daughter, Beth Witecki; son, Bill Hinzman (Alicia); and her favorite people — five grandchildren: Jack, Julia, Leigha, Arthur and Brooks.

Keeping the Bees: Pollinators Thrive on the Key Peninsula

A growing business in native mason bees has discovered the Key Peninsula to be one of the most fertile landscapes for healthy bees.

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

For Jim Watts, spring means time on the road with hundreds of thousands of bees in his truck. One by one he visits an ever-growing list of home orchards, hobby farms, clearcuts and gardens. At each, in a modified tote suspended on posts, he deposits a wood block filled with holes and a box of dormant mason bees.

From his base in Bothell, Watts spreads bees from British Columbia to Eugene and into the Sierra foothills in California. The Key Peninsula has become a special terrain for him. His bees love it too.

“The peninsula has a lot of diversity of flowering trees and shrubs, which is ideal for bees,” he said, citing fruit trees, big-leaf maple, madrona — even Scotch broom. “And people are super nice out here.”

Watts’ company, Watts Solitary Bees, sells leafcutter and mason bees to commercial farms for pollination of crops. The totes scattered on private properties are his way of breeding the bees. There is no charge to the property owner, who gets the benefit of better pollination in their home garden. Watts returns in early summer to collect the blocks, by then full of mason bee pupae. His goal is to double his bees every year.

The species he uses, *Osmia lignaria*, known as the blue orchard bee, is native across the United States. Unlike honeybees, mason bees are solitary. The females roll the pollen and nectar they collect into balls which they hide in tubes, such as dead reeds. Each ball of pollen gets a single egg before it is walled off with mud. Visiting tens of thousands of flowers in its two-month lifespan, a female makes a series of these cells, up to a dozen in a single tube. The adult males live hardly two weeks. Their only job is to fertilize the females. The female decides if each egg will be female or male. It lays females deepest in the tubes.

By the first of June, the adults are dead. The eggs have hatched into larvae that have eaten the pollen and entered a ten-month pupation to wait for the next spring. In Bothell, Watts keeps millions of the pupae on a precise temperature regimen.

“We get above a 95% hatch rate every spring, so pretty healthy bees,” he said with the pride of a dog breeder.

Mason bees are active at 50 degrees, 10 degrees colder than honeybees, offering a



Jim Watts of Watts Solitary Bees places wooden blocks with predrilled holes inside totes for female mason bees to lay eggs.

Chris Rurik, KP News



These adult bees are still in their cocoons, ready to emerge as soon as temperatures warm.

Chris Rurik, KP News

big advantage for spring-flowering crops. Watts is a pioneer in this work, which began only 15 years ago. “It has so far to go, we’re hardly started,” he said.

His father Roger Watts, a schoolteacher in rural eastern Oregon, started the business in 1965 as a project to see if leafcutter bees, another native soli-

tary species, could be used to pollinate summer seed crops like alfalfa. It worked, and a hundred million leafcutter bees remain the heart of Watts Solitary Bees.

Jim Watts wanted nothing to do with bees by the time he went to college — he was a math major — and he started a construction business after. But in the

end it was too good a business to resist. The money for pollinators is excellent, he felt it was important work, and his dad, who has “forgotten more things than most people know about solitary bees,” put him far ahead of any competition.

They are up to 2,000 acres pollinated by mason bees, a sliver of the vast acreage of orchards in the West. Honeybees are the standard pollinator. “Nobody else is doing what we’re doing,” he said. “It looks pretty simple, but it’s actually pretty complicated to make it work.”

In commercial orchards, bees don’t reproduce well. Take California almond orchards, totaling over a million acres. An orchard, stretching for miles of bare dirt and almond trees, has nowhere for pollinators to turn when the trees stop blooming. So honeybee hives are trucked around the country throughout the growing season, moving from crop to crop. Viruses spread rapidly.

Watts provides some almond growers with mason bees. Previously, honeybees were stocked at two hives per acre: good

CONTINUED PAGE 13

KP Fire District 16 to Assess Options for Key Center Properties

The district purchased two real estate parcels in 2021 as part of a long-term improvement effort, and will be looking for input from the community.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

The Key Peninsula Fire District 16 board of fire commissioners will determine options for constructing a new headquarters facility in Key Center — or not — and renovations to existing stations after review of two independent reports due in May or early June, and present them to the public for feedback amid controversy over real estate purchases intended for that same new HQ.

The district hired Bremerton architecture firm Rice Fergus Miller to evaluate the condition of district facilities and pitch ideas for a new headquarters in August 2021. It also hired the financial consulting firm FCS Group of Redmond earlier this year to evaluate the financial health of the district and how to best manage its resources, including possibly paying for capital improvements or new construction, or selling off the new properties.

At the same time, the district underwent an examination by the Washington State Auditor's Office that determined there was no illegal use of funds in the years 2020 or 2021, when the Key Center properties — the Olson estate and Calahan property — were purchased, but made two strongly worded recommendations (see sidebar).

The conclusions of the architect and financial reports will guide the district's Capital Facilities Planning Committee on what to advise the board concerning new construction and renovation, and the future of the district, according to fire commission Chair Stan Moffett.

"The committee was originally made up of internal and a few external (to the district) people last year," he said. "But it was just too much — too many contradictions and too many different ideas — so, eventually this last fall, that committee was made an internal committee of fire district people. The district has to determine what its needs are, and that was the reason for doing that. What should a new facility, if it is built, look like?"

KPFD bought two properties in Key Center for \$2.125 million negotiated by then Fire Chief Dustin Morrow at the end of 2021 as possible locations for a new headquarters, training facility, community rooms and a health clinic, according to Moffett. Morrow subsequently left the district to run Central Pierce Fire & Rescue Dec. 1, 2021 (see sidebar).



KPFD owns the Olson estate home, part of the pasture behind it, and the former O'Callahan's property on the corner. *Apple Maps and KP News*

"I was apprised of what was going on and was involved in the final purchase price of those properties," Moffett said. "They are unique pieces of property, and the thing about property is you basically have only one opportunity, generally speaking. We felt strongly enough that to be located in Key Center and to have a headquarters was important enough for us to acquire those properties."

Once the Capital Facilities Planning Committee reviews the Rice Fergus plan, it will make recommendations to the board about new construction and repairing or improving existing facilities. After reviewing the financial forecast as well, the board may decide not to proceed at all. "There's no need for another clinic now, which is what we thought might go on the corner. Personally, I could see that property getting sold, and a new station on the Olson property," Moffett said.

The design work of Rice Fergus has cost \$84,281.81 from August 2021 to date.

The FCS Group has been paid \$6,148.75 so far, under an agreement not to exceed \$24,050.

Many KP residents have spoken up at the twice-monthly commissioner meetings to question or complain about district spending and the ongoing expense of the properties. One such resident, John Pat Kelly, was moved to join the Citizen's Advisory Panel in April 2022 and to apply to fill an open commissioner's position, which went to KP resident and Tukwila firefighter Ben Rasmussen Jan. 24, 2023.

"The board should have built up funds before committing taxpayers to a new facility that they haven't even proven that we need," Kelly said. Referring to purchasing the former Key Center restaurant property, he said, "The O'Callahan's fiasco is textbook on why local boards should not get into the real estate or restaurant business."

KPFD'S REAL ESTATE DEALS

The first Key Center parcel is called the Calahan property, site of the former O'Callahan's restaurant (aka Reed's and Buck's), including its kitchen equipment, located at the corner of KP Highway NW and 92nd Street NW. The second parcel is known as the Olson estate, which consists of two lots located across KP Highway from Station 46 headquarters, with a residence and a portion of the pasture behind it totaling 2.8 acres.

The Calahan property was not appraised or inspected before the purchase, but the Pierce County Assessor-Treasurer tax valuation was \$473,600. KPFD paid \$950,000 Nov. 8, 2021. The Olson estate was appraised at \$460,000; the district bought it for \$1.2 million on Dec. 15, 2021.

The district financed the deals with a private bond for \$2.125 million at 1.82%

New Assistant Chief Starts at Key Peninsula Fire District 16

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

Christopher Beswick, 52, began his first day on the job as assistant chief April 10, succeeding retiring KPFD Assistant Chief Hal Wolverton.

Beswick has been in the fire service 31 years. He spent the last four as fire chief of Nehalem Bay Fire and Rescue in Oregon, following 18 years as a captain and paramedic with Avondale Fire-Rescue in Arizona. He holds a national paramedic certification and has taught at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland, since 2011. He earned a Bachelor of Liberal Studies degree from Arizona State University and is a graduate of the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy.

Beswick has been married for 26 years and has three daughters and three grandchildren. Their oldest daughter lives in Tacoma with her family, and he and his wife wanted to be closer.

"I was looking for a change, something slightly more urban but with a rural feel,"

Beswick said. "In Tillamook County, we had five staff and 20 volunteers."

Beswick spoke to KP News on day three of his new job.

"Hal (Wolverton) did a great job of leaving me with a clean slate, but I know problems are going to pop up," he said.

"I'll be running the operation side, in charge of the battalion chiefs, who are in charge of the crews; working with the training officer to make sure training is up to speed; keeping the apparatus operational," he said. "One of my first tasks is to take over the committee specing new apparatus; we desperately need a new engine."

In his spare time, which he does not have at the moment, Beswick and his wife, who worked in the airline industry, like to travel. "For quite a few years I volunteered for Team Rubicon, which is a disaster relief organization," he said, noting that he plans to look into local relief agencies, such as Impact Northwest. "That's my idea of travel: Going to disasters." ■



Assistant Chief Christopher Beswick receives his badge April 11 from Fire Chief Nick Swinhart.

Anne Nesbit, KPFDF

KP FIRE DISTRICT FROM PAGE 10

Kelly pointed out that, in addition to paying for extensive repairs on the building, "Besides their ongoing fees, the property manager made an \$18,000 commission for lining up a tenant (for O'Callahan's) that had his deposit returned, plus expenses and another \$2,500 to not sue the district." (See sidebar.)

Randy Boss of Harborside Property Management, LLC, billed KPFDF an \$18,000 commission on the canceled O'Callahan's property lease in April 2022 and continued to hold those funds in the rental trust account. There is no provision for such a commission in the management contract, according to Moffett, and the district's attorney is attempting to reclaim that money. Boss did not reply to a request for comment on this article.

Fire Commissioner Shawn Jensen said acquiring the properties and funding studies about what to do with them is part of a years-long process to improve or replace existing district facilities.

"The Citizen's Advisory Panel recommended that we rebuild Station 46 (headquarters), and the preference was to keep a fire department presence in Key Center," he said. "It's something we have talked about for a long time, at least since 2015 when I was on the committee."

The existing headquarters was built in 1972 and has already undergone numerous remodels, but it's only one piece of the puzzle.

"Rice Fergus is pricing not just a headquarters station but all of the potential improvements we're looking at so we can establish a priority list," Jensen said. "Anything we do regarding a headquarters probably needs to include funds to address other needs within the next five plus years out."

Those needs include roof repairs, HVAC and seismic upgrades, and improvements to aging mechanical systems. Station 45 at the corner of Wright-Bliss Road and State Route 302 will undergo extensive foundation repairs for approximately \$150,000, all covered by insurance according to KPFDF.

"It's certainly not our intent to build some kind of fancy facility," Jensen said of the Key Center properties. "We're not Gig Harbor; we don't have the resources. But we still have stations that are aging and need to be maintained or replaced and how best to do that is the long process that we're undergoing right now. We're trying to gather all the background data to take to the community with some possible ideas on how to address them, and then we'll ask: What would you folks like to do?" ■

REAL ESTATE FROM PAGE 10

interest. Biannual debt service is interest only and began Dec. 1, 2021, at \$13,106.53 until Dec. 1, 2024, when principal and interest payments starting at \$129,337.50 will be due every six months until 2040.

The Olson house is rented and a lease for the former O'Callahan's was signed in April 2022 with the expectation that it would reopen as a new restaurant, but the building required extensive renovation and remained vacant. The department spent \$23,000 on repairs and estimated another \$50,000 would be needed to complete them. Instead of spending more, and after failing to reach an accommodation with the tenant, the department terminated the lease and refunded the tenant his \$6,000 deposit together with a \$2,500 "goodwill" gesture. The tenant indicated he would seek further reimbursement and perhaps damages, but had not done so by press time.

The Washington State Auditor's report for the years 2020 and '21 included two recommendations for the district. The first states:

"We reviewed the property manager's (Harborside Management LLC) monthly activity statements for July and August 2022 and noted PM was holding almost \$20,000 in a trust account in August of 2022. The district should determine how much funds are necessary to be maintained

in the trust account and collect any excess funds above what is necessary in a timely manner. We also noted the PM did not charge the correct management fees per the agreement."

In April 2022, Harborside billed the district \$18,000 in commission on the later cancelled lease for the Calahan property. The district did not agree to that in its contract with the property manager, according to fire commission Chair Stan Moffett, and the district's attorney is pursuing the matter.

The property manager has continued to pay itself its monthly \$595 fee plus administrative expenses, according to its statements. The only income is from the Olson house rent, which is \$1,900 per month. Harborside did not reply to a request for comment for this article.

The second recommendation regards the fire commissioners violating the Open Public Meetings Act in 2021.

"Based on the information provided in the board meeting minutes for October 26, 2021, the district violated the OPMA when all five commissioners discussed district official business during attendance of the Annual Fire Commissioners' Conference ... The public was not notified of the meeting or given a chance to attend. We recommend that the district ensure compliance with the OPMA requirements." ■

Got Eggs? Bypass the Grocery Store and Buy from the Backyard

Chicken farmers are seeing a demand for farm-fresh eggs amid rising grocery store prices.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

With things like supply chain issues, avian bird flu and inflation driving egg prices up, some Key Peninsula residents are fighting costs by going straight to the source.

The idea of pet poultry and daily farm-fresh eggs right from the backyard is enticing many to get their own birds.

But before going out and buying a coop and a flock of your own, farmers want to share some advice, and some ugly truths, about getting started.

Who Can Sell Eggs?

Pretty much anyone.

There are only a few rules from the Washington State Department of Agriculture to sell eggs from your own property. You must use clean containers and you can reuse them as long as they are clean. Eggs should be stored at 45 degrees or less. If you decide to sell eggs away from your property, there are different rules and regulations to follow.

It's a Gateway Farm Animal.

Chickens are an easy animal to keep with minimal care. According to Key Center chicken farmer Becky Vanausdal, chickens are gateway animals for anyone wanting to get into farming.

"This year I'm seeing a surge in first-time chicken owners," Vanausdal said. "It's similar to the toilet paper (hoarders) during the pandemic. People are looking for food security. It's not just the egg prices, it's the price of food in general."

On the other end of the spectrum, "It's a fun and mindless hobby," said Jamie Gates, who raises free-range chickens on her Purdy property.

You Won't Get Rich.

It's a hobby that generally supports itself. If you plan to sell eggs (many local backyard farmers on the KP sell theirs for about \$5 a dozen), don't plan on getting rich. If you're lucky you'll make enough money to offset chicken feed costs, which have doubled over the last few years. If you're really lucky, you'll have some extra money left over to buy bacon to go along with your morning breakfast.

Chuck Lentz, who has nine chickens on his 9-acre property in Lakebay, said it costs him about \$20 a week to feed his flock. Kasandra Schauer, owner of Key Peninsula Homestead Farm, said they only feed their flock organic food, which increases the cost significantly.



You would be a happy rooster too, surrounded by all these chicks. *Tina McKail, KP News*

And even if you're keeping the eggs, free eggs aren't necessarily "free."

You May Not Know What You're Getting.

If you're looking for egg layers, you need hens. You can have roosters in most places around Key Peninsula, something that's frowned upon in many Gig Harbor neighborhoods, but most farmers only need one or two. Keep in mind when you buy a chick it's hard to know if you're getting a rooster or a hen.

Gates said the problem with hatchery-born chicks is they stop producing eggs faster, so she breeds a barnyard variety. "We want longevity," Gates said. "We have birds that are 8 years old and still laying an egg a day. We want those eggs to pass on the genetics."

For backyard farmers who get in over their heads, Bill Neilson, owner of Happy Rooster Farm in Lakebay, may be able to help. He's been known to take roosters and hens off peoples' hands to re-home them. All he expects in return is a bag of chicken feed and bedding for the birds.



While not the best hens for production, bearded silkies are known for their easy-going demeanor. *Tina McKail, KP News*

Keep It Clean.

Chickens are really messy. They can quickly turn your yard into a mud pit during the winter, and when it's dry they

kick up dust.

"It's super important to stay on top

CONTINUED PAGE 13

CHICKENS FROM PAGE 12

of cleaning,” Gates said. Neilson and Gates both said they change food and water daily. Gates also suggests putting supplements in the water, like unpasteurized apple cider vinegar once a week for probiotics. She also adds some red pepper flakes to their food because it’s a natural dewormer.

Vanausdal said if you have multiple coops to keep different shoes and different tools for each one to prevent transmitting diseases. No matter what you do, most farmers agree that with chickens comes chicken feed and with chicken feed come mice. It’s hard to keep them away regardless of what you do.

As far as eggs go, the WSDA says to dry-clean with sandpaper or use clean water and wipe them dry with a single-use paper towel. Don’t submerge eggs in water to clean them.

Neilson sells eggs from his farm, but he’s also a licensed wholesaler who distributes eggs at PJ’s Market and Collelos in Port Orchard, and a small store in Bremerton. He cleans, inspects and “candles” (shining a bright light to get a view inside the egg) every egg he sells, no matter who is buying them, to make sure he’s providing the best quality product.

Pay Attention to Details.

Vanausdal said not all breeds of chicken lay eggs every day, and most mature hens don’t lay eggs during the winter, unless you add warming lights to the hen house.



Their personalities aren’t always endearing, but roosters are essential to every happy hen house. *Tina McKail, KP News*

She also said it’s important to look closely at the feed you’re giving the birds. “Chickens need 14 minerals to produce an egg and they usually hold back laying an egg until every building block is there.”

Don’t Plan On Traveling Anytime Soon.

“You have to treat these animals like your children. That means giving them your attention seven days a week, 365 days a year. There’s no day off,” Neilson said. “I haven’t taken a vacation in 10 years.”

Schauer also works daily collecting eggs up to three times a day, but it only takes

about five minutes each time.

Predators Are All Around.

Once you introduce chickens to your yard, winged-predators like hawks and bald eagles will be eyeballing your flock from nearby trees. Four-legged predators like raccoons and coyotes will be walking your fence line before you know it. And don’t forget about the two-legged predators.

“I’ve had to start bolt-locking my coops at night to keep people from stealing my chickens,” Vanausdal said.

It Can Be Addicting.

“I call it ‘chicken meth,’” Gates said. “You start with good intentions of having five or six chickens. Then it becomes 15. Then it becomes 30.”

You Have Access to Specialty Breeds Right Here on the KP.

People like Vanausdal and Gates have an appreciation for these birds. Vanausdal used to run Raregg Ranch on her 50-acre property off 118th Avenue NW. It was a nonprofit poultry preservation center dedicated to saving specific species. She has since downsized to a few acres in Key Center where she specializes in French Copper Marans, known for their dark chocolate-colored eggs, and the super rare Olandsk Dwarfs. All her hatching eggs are sold out until June.

Gates also sells specialty breed eggs for \$45 to \$60 per egg.

You Can Use Eggs for Other Things Besides Eating and Breeding.

Gates said she has seven large dogs, and she gives each dog an egg a day to help keep their skin moisturized and their coats shiny.

Schauer said she uses eggshells as a natural pesticide for the organic produce her farm grows and sells.

Every big yard farmer and backyard farmer encourages people to get involved with agriculture. “Farming is a dying culture,” Neilson said. “Kids have the opportunity to learn about these animals up close. It teaches them how to care for something, it teaches them responsibility.”

Learn more about selling eggs from your property at www.agr.wa.gov. ■

BEEES FROM PAGE 9

for pollination, close to starvation level for the bees. The growers replace one hive with 1,000 mason bees and, with plenty of pollen and nectar to go around, the honeybees emerge from the orchard far healthier than before. “The honeybee guys saw us as competition at first,” Watts said. Now they simply do more acres and, with healthy bees, have a leg up on the rest of summer.

The bee business is unique in that it requires rural landscapes full of diverse blooms to build bee populations at a scale that can pollinate modern agriculture.

Watts’ doorway to the KP was at a native plant sale, where he got to talking to a man who said he had 10 acres in a place called Longbranch. The man would love to have some bees. Watts looked it up on Google Maps. It looked like the right kind of vegetation.

“We put out five or six totes; quite a

few bees for just trying something,” he said. “Came back three weeks later and they were all full. I was like, ‘Sweet!’ ”

Neighbors told neighbors. Each year has given him access to more properties. He has spoken at the Longbranch Improvement Club and the KP Civic Center. This year he put something like 800,000 bees in 500 totes across the region, including the Tahuya Peninsula and Harstine Island. “It’s a lot of bees, but it’s not very many, to be honest,” he said.

Now he has seven years of data, organized tote by tote. Last year was the worst he’s had with rain clear into June. The year before was the best. This year he is adding a bundle of cardboard tubes to select totes. At the end of the summer, a researcher at UC Davis will analyze the pollen left in each nest cell to learn the exact plants the mason bees are using at each site. It is one of a handful of research projects Watts is involved in.

One open question is how much mason



The totes are usually sited to take advantage of a southern exposure for warmth.

Chris Rurik, KP News

bees visit huckleberry. If mason bees like huckleberry flowers as much as maple flowers, it will open a vast terrain for beekeeping. Two years ago, Manke Lumber Company gave Watts a master key to their logging roads and invited him to place bees wherever he wanted. “We’re

finding that clearcuts are very good for bees,” Watts said. “After about two years, stuff starts growing and blooming and there is a ton of bloom in those clearcuts. We figure we have about a 10 year period, maybe 15 — we’ll see — before the trees take over.”

For Watts, whose route of sites is based on grassroots relationships and word of mouth, much of the joy in his job comes from the chance to talk with people and hear their stories.

“It’s interesting out here, all economic strata, a lot of retired people who have done all kind of crazy things in their lives,” he said.

Then there are the farmers. “I would say that most farmers take seriously the idea of feeding the world. A lot of times people think everything is corporate farms and nobody cares, but I just don’t find it to be that way. I think that people actually do care. They’re trying to do the right things.” ■

Getting Hazed and Being Humbled, or How to Make Your Yard Love You Back

Do you have what it takes to “pledge” for the vegetable garden? You know any relationship worth having is one worth stressing over.

KAMRYN MINCH

The month of May is when the garden finally starts to look like a garden. The seeds I sowed two to four weeks before the last frost date have finally sprouted and the transplants of lettuce and kale that have stayed the same size for the past two months are growing like they actually want to live. Yes, mid-spring is a glorious time and if you’re new to gardening, it’s probably the first point in the growing season where you feel like this gardening thing isn’t so hard after all.

I urge you to embrace this moment of fleeting bliss.

After mid-spring comes what I like to call “pledge” month for gardeners. It runs from late May to late June and is usually set in motion by the transition between spring and summer weather, but it can definitely start much earlier than that with other aggravating challenges.

While Mother Nature’s hazing process is not for the faint of heart, it will be your official initiation into the 10,000-year-old tradition of crop cultivation and your goal will be to outlast the impact of the complete and utter devastation that will inevitably occur. It’s really not that bad, but what makes the hazing so brutal for new gardeners is that it can end up being a lot of chaos to keep up with in a short amount of time.

The whole ritual is more or less a gradual breakdown of the new gardener’s psyche, typically starting with slugs. They turn up first to decimate small seedlings, particularly tender greens like lettuce and broccoli (cole crops in general are their favorite). Month-old transplants of these crops generally have a better survival rate early on as they’re able to withstand the stress of a slimy diner. Beer traps with an extra malty brew are a good way to give slugs an enjoyable exit from the garden. But as the season warms up, they will generally slink back into the cooler, shady areas of the garden, and not cause much damage again until fall.

If you make it through slugs, the next visitor arriving closer to late spring is another cole crop connoisseur, the cabbage moth. Delicate, pearly white little beauties, fluttering whimsically around on warm sunny days, they lay their eggs on the underside of cabbage,



The lettuce bolts! *Kamryn Minch*

broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, bok choy and kale leaves, and the larvae decimate plants. Prevention is inspecting every plant every day for eggs, which look like little green pills, and you can just pop them. Interplanting cole crops with fragrant herbs and flowers that throw the cabbage moth off their scent is also a good solution.

The final hurdle of hazing is bolting. Bolting is when environmental stressors trigger crops to start their reproductive cycle. This is when plants begin to put their energy into developing a flower, which means all the parts we enjoy eating become rather unpalatable. Sudden fluctuations in temperatures during the transition from spring to summer are often



the culprit.

You can tell when lettuce, spinach, radishes, beets and carrots are bolting when the middle stalk begins to get tall. For crops like broccoli and cauliflower, the tightly formed head we’re familiar with seeing at the grocery store will unravel into various stems of yellow flowers.

Bolting is definitely one of the more defeating problems because it makes your two or three months of hard work essentially useless. Bolting can sometimes be prevented with adequate watering, using a shade cloth, or planting locally adapted seeds, but sometimes it sneaks up and there’s no way to get in front of it, so as soon as you see your plants begin to bolt, scrap ’em. They’re better as additions to the compost heap at that point.

Luckily, though, once you get over this chaotic hump (you can do it!), mid-season from late June into early July will be a much better time to directly sow most of the “early” season drama queens (except for spinach and bok choy, which legitimately hate hot weather, so you’ll have to wait until around late August to plant them again).

This strategy results in much better germination and overall faster growing plants (big perk for short attention spans) since conditions are just right as soon as the seeds hit the soil. All you have to do is remember to water (consistent moisture is key to germination). There’s still a chance bolting can occur, but with temperatures remaining relatively stable throughout the summer (save for a heat wave), not every plant will do it at the same time.

Deer, rabbits, moles, aphids, mildew and disease are other challenges mother nature can throw in there to test your resiliency. But fences, good air flow, nutritious soil and a diverse garden (a healthy mix of veggies, herbs and flowers) are good ways to show her you mean to see the task of cultivation through. Though, if in the end you find the experience more than humbling, there’s no shame in throwing in the trowel and thanking a farmer. ■



Early Looks at the New Pentheroudakis Preserve

As a wildlife reserve, the Pentheroudakis Preserve has no public access. Great Peninsula Conservancy hosts periodic stewardship events when community is invited to visit its protected lands.

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

The wren is basically a mouse. It weaves through ferns. Then it appears on a stump not 10 feet away. It glances at us and, without a second thought, goes about its inspection of the stump's terrain of moss. Has it ever seen a human?

A young maple's 20 trunks shake overhead in restless spring air. It took some doing to get to this place deep in the

new Pentheroudakis Preserve, a 22-acre forest near the southern tip of the peninsula. The only paths are deer trails, and they have a freaky way

of appearing and disappearing, meandering on contours, dumping you into thickets.

This land was logged a few decades ago. I don't think it was replanted. Everywhere are these maples, each with a profusion of trunks springing from and swallowing the stump left behind. Unlike conifers, maples respond to wounds by sprouting, and four years after being cut a maple can top 20 feet. These are more like 60 feet. Here and there are young fir, alder and bitter cherry. In places the understory is



Joseph Pentheroudakis walks the parcel he placed into conservation with Great Peninsula Conservancy. *All photos Chris Rurik, KP News*

open, littered with last year's leaves. In others it is lost in huckleberry, blackberry, sword fern, bathed in light, fighting. It is an adolescent forest just beginning, like a scrappy high schooler, to offer glimpses of its adulthood.

Winding along its spine is a creek where cedar and hemlock escaped the saw. Water links this preserve with the larger Johnson

surrounded by trunks fit for a national park, where tannic brown water murmurs around humps of logs that have become soil, it is a true discovery. Had you arrived by trail, the living log you climbed over — those young cedars, you realize with a start, are growing from the log, not on it — would be nothing but a curiosity, shined to a polish by the jeans of picnickers. In this way it is a mind-bender, a reminder that life has pulses far beyond the human grasp.

When I came here with the land's donor, Joseph Pentheroudakis, a regular contributor to KP News, he shared stories and speculation about Charles Taylor, the first permanent settler on the peninsula, long a magnet of local myth. This was once part of Taylor's homestead. Pentheroudakis shared what he has gleaned of Taylor's life and life generally for the earliest homesteaders, his labor of love.

"Our past is their present," he said.

We paused often to admire the sunken ships of stumps buried in moss and lichens. For the trees that survive here, our past and present are their present. Our future too. Our descendants' future.

Today I am here with my friend, the landscape painter Emma Webster. Recently,

South Sound Preserve to the south, where an undeveloped lagoon holds some of the peninsula's best fish habitat. The creek and its large conifers form a band narrow enough it is often exposed to the invasion of post-clearcut plants.

Yet this is the beauty of tramping without trails: when you do finally duck into a creekside space and realize you are

CONTINUED PAGE 20

Friends of the Key Center Library Comes Back from the Pandemic

After three years waiting out the pandemic, the longstanding volunteer organization must rebuild to continue.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

Three years after COVID-19 stopped its work, Friends of the Key Center Library is reconstituting to continue supporting the library and Key Peninsula community, and they're looking for help.

"The Friends is basically a fundraising organization of the Key Center library," said Rosina Vertz, a self-described "dedicated volunteer" for the Friends who retired as the supervising librarian of the Key Center library in 2018 after starting out there in 1991.

The late librarian Dory Myers first organized the Friends of the Key Center Library in the late 1980s or early '90s, according to Vertz. It is one of many such nonprofit organizations operating under the umbrella of the Pierce County Library system, authorized to collect donations and raise funds for the benefit of the Key Center branch.

"When I was library supervisor, the Friends funded the programming that we did," Vertz said. "We had one for instance that was for building bat houses. The Friends supplied all of the material and we had like 70 people hammering away building bat houses. It's my all-time favorite program."

The Friends also brought in artists, musicians, authors, and even arranged field trips to the Seattle opera for a few years.

"The pandemic pretty much knocked the Friends of the Library on the head," said former Friends Board President Maureen Reilly. The library closed to outside activity in 2020 and is only now ready to welcome the Friends back after getting its core functions back on track.

In addition to funding programs, Reilly said the Friends also supplied the library with things beyond its budget: magazine subscriptions, a new laminator, or in one case supplying \$40,000 in donations to renovate the community space known as the Brones Room.

"The library has always been, or at least used to be, the hub of the community," said volunteer Carolyn Wiley, who worked with Reilly to raise the \$40,000, among other things. She will not be continuing such an active role, she said, but "the next generation, or at least a younger generation, needs to pick up the mantle. It's very important."

Vertz and other legacy Friends are reaching out to the community to assemble



John Jewell's sculpture "Balancing the Books," was commissioned and paid for by the Friends of the Key Peninsula Library.

Ted Olinger, KP News

a new board of directors and rebuild the volunteer ranks.

"Our main fundraiser always was the book sale," she said, referring to the annual weekend sale of used books donated to the

Friends. "I always thought the book sale was a good community service. They are inexpensive books, they are good books, interesting novels and nonfiction, kids' books."

But given the amount of work involved and lack of volunteers, Vertz said they must forgo a big sale event.

"Right now we have a small shed in the back of the library that is up to the rafters in donated books that have been sitting there for three years," she said. "We are hoping to stock the two shelves dedicated to the Friends in the library lobby for book sales. It is on the honor system;

there will be a cash box attached to one of the shelves. The library is cashless, the staff does not have change, so whatever people can put in is gratefully accepted. We also have a nice collection of movies

that will also be on the shelves."

Vertz hopes to have the shelves stocked sometime in May. "And we have no room for more donations right now," she said. "We expect to be inundated with book donations later, but somebody has to be there to sort them, and eventually get them back onto the shelves as the shelves allow it."

The Friends of the Key Center Library will have a booth at the Livable Community Fair May 13 at the KP Civic Center for anyone interested in volunteering. Inquiries can also be made at the library itself. "We don't know what form it will take

yet," said Supervising Librarian Jessica Widmer of the future of the Friends and the library. "We haven't been able to meet up yet."

"You don't want to be stuck in what was past, even though it was great for that time," Vertz said. "Is what we were doing still needed on the Key Peninsula? There are other needs and who knows how the Friends fit into that. We need transportation, we need better internet. That is a discussion the Friends can bring to the (library) system."

"I don't know what the phoenix is going to look like when it rises from the ashes," Reilly said. "We have an award-winning library and anything the general public through the Friends of the Library can do to support it, to make sure it continues to be an award-winning library and help it to grow, is totally beneficial for the whole community." ■

"I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE PHOENIX IS GOING TO LOOK LIKE WHEN IT RISES FROM THE ASHES."

Mustard Seed Village Prepares to Open After Months of Delay

The first assisted living campus on the Key Peninsula hopes to welcome residents any day now as staff trains on new approaches to care and cooking.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

The Mustard Seed Village, a new nonprofit assisted living home on the KP, had its grand opening for the public November 12 and expected to welcome its first residents in mid-January. Unanticipated delays in state inspections and paperwork pushed that date back into April, but hope runs high the doors will open in May or June.

“I don’t think we had a realistic expectation of how long the state process would take,” said Eric Blegen, executive director of The Mustard Seed Project which built and oversees the Village.

“We completed our license application in the beginning of August (2022), and we heard back (from the state) the first time maybe three months after that when they asked for some more paperwork,” Blegen said.

And then there were two more rounds of paperwork.

“This is all a good process that the state has because they want to make sure that only people who are qualified and authorized have access to the people who live here,” he said. “They went through credit checks, background checks on all of our board members, for example, and they didn’t even ask for that until March.”

And then there were long gaps between requests for more information.

“Every time they asked we got it back to them in 24, 48 hours, but then we would wait for them to ask for more,” he said. “But, finally, in March they said that’s it, we’ve got everything we need, and they notified the state fire marshal.”

The fire marshal conducted two inspections and required more paperwork before approving the building April 11 and informed the Department of Social and Health Services that the Village was cleared for a final state inspection.

Blegen said his prior conversations with DSHS staff indicated the Village should pass without further delay. He expected an inspection any day, and “Once we get through that, they issue our license to operate. We’ve been through everything else.”

The Village consists of three homes in a single longhouse situated on 5 acres across the street from TMSP office, called the Crandall Center, overlooking Key Center at 9016 154th Avenue Court NW. Each home can accommodate 10 elders



Inside the dining and common area of one of the homes. *Tina McKail, KP News*



A sample menu employees are learning to prepare. *Tina McKail, KP News*

in private apartments with bathrooms and kitchenettes surrounding common areas and kitchens, with gardens and trails outside. Nine rooms are reserved for low income elders, and one home is dedicated to elders requiring memory care.

The Village will be managed by Concepts in Community Living according to the Green House Project principles of assisted living, under the supervision of TMSP.

Denise Mecartea is working as executive director of the Village, but her title is “guide.”

“We’ve got 25 rooms spoken for,” Mecartea said. “We have the first home all staffed and ready to go. One or two residents will move in over a week, or as it goes. In the meantime, we’ve been inviting them and the families to lunch,

and they’ve brought in a few belongings and are getting to know us, and that’s just a wonderful, positive thing.”

The Village will have a staff of 22, now at 10, including a full-time nurse, with a minimum ratio of one shahbaz to five residents.

In the Green House model, caregivers are called shahbaz (plural shahbazan), a Persian word meaning “royal falcon” from an old story about a magic bird that takes care of a village. They cook and provide housekeeping and laundry services, but will also deliver a different standard of care than the average assisted living home.

Across the street at the Crandall Center, TMSP is also preparing to open its commercial kitchen to prepare meals for a new snack bar and home delivery to elders. Nutrition Director Carolyn Benepe is in charge of that, as well as supervising meals prepared in the Village.

“We’re ready to go,” she said. “I just hired a kitchen assistant, and we already have 12 volunteers who want to be the people in the snack bar. Because I’m a dietician it’s going to be kind of healthy, but more delicious than anything else.”

The south room of the Crandall Center has a snack bar and large sitting area that will be open to the public from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. every weekday, once it passes the last inspection.

“We’re going to have breakfast cookies,

yogurt parfaits and smoothies, but smaller sizes than you’d find in other places, more portioned for the older adult,” Benepe said. “Once a month we’ll have brunch and bingo to start, and then by fall we’ll probably have it every Monday because that’s the day of the week our other senior center (KP Community Services) does not have a meal.”

The kitchens in the Village will follow a menu plan that can evolve with resident input, she said.

“We’re getting the shahbazan ready to make meals right there in the home in real time, every day, cooking for 15 people,” she said. “We hope the food will have the reputation of being excellent.”

Residents can work in their home kitchen too, such as by setting or clearing tables or making their favorite recipes, “if they get their food handler’s card, which is easy,” Benepe said. “We’re just there to assist, and they get a lot more say in what the meals are because we’ll meet as a group and talk about what they want.”

Before moving to Vaughn two years ago, Benepe worked for years as a senior center director and as a dietician for a Green House home in Wyoming.

“My dad spent the last year and a half of his life there,” she said. “I couldn’t believe that where I had just moved to here had this same cool thing happening. Just being in this space is such a special feeling of home.”

“I can’t wait for the people to move in so I can do my job,” said Cindy Wilkerson, one of the new shahbaz. She has been a certified home health aide for over a decade.

“Usually the approach is basically skills, how to deal with people’s bodies,” she said. “Here, we empower our elders to do the best that they still can with dignity, respect and privacy.”

That can be as simple as respecting an elder’s wishes about their own schedule.

“With an institution, you’re told, ‘Go give Mr. Jones a bath,’” Wilkerson said. “Well, maybe Mr. Jones doesn’t want a bath right then. Fine, we’ll do it when he wants. He doesn’t want to get up for breakfast at 8 a.m.? Fine, we’ll have a breakfast waiting for him when he does get up.

“And they are not referred to as patients or residents or clients, they are our elders. It’s a great concept,” she said. ■

MOTHER'S DAY MAY 14



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WILD FROM PAGE 15

fishing for fresh perspective on her massive monochromatic landscapes, in which clouds grasp and light strikes in bewildering ways, she asked a group of us to describe places where our sense of scale is tricked, or time becomes distorted.

My response was to bring her here. At first, following me carefully, she confesses that she feels like a tourist in nature.

She does pick up on the unseasonal crunch of maple leaves underfoot. I tell her these leaves are prized by gardeners. Big-leaf maple has a profligate appetite, shedding and reabsorbing nutrients en masse each fall and spring, making it one of our best soil-building species.

When I turn and say, "You don't have to follow me," hoping she will move freely and explore, even take the lead, she does not know how to react. Later she tells me that my suggestion throws her, transforms her experience of the tromp.

Still she follows me, yet as she grows into the place, I sense her begin to pay attention. She draws analogies. The multi-stemmed maples are like sticks shoved into a corner of her studio, unruly, the outer stems falling. She goes to inspect them, finds young mosses reaching around their



teenaged trunks. She says their tendrils make her think of character drawing: You're supposed to follow the contours.

She often paints from models, clay dioramas or virtual realities, forcing people who see her work to confront the idea that our models, our images and predictions, become so central to our understanding of the world that they often replace the world itself. Above us a raven calls in the wind. The pathless sky, sculpted by wings, contoured by gusts — she stops and says it is ominous. Order and disorder. There is no clear path to return us to the road.

Maple limbs knock together like

Before the leaves of deciduous trees begin to unfurl, the luscious green color of moss is typical of early spring in the forests of the Key Peninsula.

Chris Rurik, KP News

bones. In a decade or two they will be robbed. Their cracked, calcium-rich bark is the Northwest's ideal home for epiphytes. These are the draping tree-canopy communities of moss, licorice fern, and liverwort that make Olympic rainforests look so lush. Epiphytes can weigh four times as much as a maple's own foliage, before any rainwater is added.

Lacking roots, mosses are good at pulling nutrients from the sky. High in Olympic canopies, the peat-like soils they create have recently been studied, and in a remarkable discovery it has been found that big-leaf maples have the ability to sprout roots from branches in their crowns

to take advantage of these aerial soils. Also found is an enriched microhabitat around the base of a mature maple's trunk: Water caught in its vast aerial gardens slowly slips down its watershed-shaped body, full of nutrients, tracing, depositing.

Such landscapes cannot be planned. They grow into themselves. And every now and then you find a wolf tree, one so massive, strange and gnarled it is landscape history unto itself. Here I see it from a distance, a crown of tight twisting limbs. Oak, strangely, is my first impression. We approach and find a double trunk, one snapped off halfway, the wound surrounded by tall shoots. A hole in the tree's base, large shelf mushrooms. Death and life in confusion. The crown, seen again from directly beneath, high atop what is now clearly a maple, looks like nothing I have seen. Its life and body are a pathless story, each angle offering distortions. I cannot ask the loggers why they left it. Was it too freaky even for them?

A few yards away, coolness from creek mud, full of the first leaves of bittercress, offers a window back into the winding grove of cedar and hemlock. An owl calls from deeper in the preserve.

"It's such an amazing place," said Pentheroudakis. "So rich with life." ■

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Photo courtesy Tina McKail, KP News



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Spring into Summer with Some Easy Appetizers and One Dessert

BARBARA VAN BOGART

While the calendar tells us summer is still a little way off, it's never too early to plan ahead for the warm days we know are surely coming.

Thoughts of picnics, barbecues and spur of the moment get-togethers at the beach in one of our many parks, or on the patios and decks of friends and family, means planning for easy meals that allow us to spend time outdoors, as who wants to waste a minute of our lovely summer season in the kitchen?

Below are four appetizers (and one dessert!) easily transportable if you have been asked to bring a snack or that can be made ahead if you are hosting. Put away those store-bought chips and bottled salsas, and explore these easy to make, delicious snacks.

Caprese Skewers with Balsamic Reduction

Toothpicks

Cherry size balls of fresh mozzarella cheese (BelGioioso brand works well)

Fresh basil leaves

One carton cherry tomatoes

Balsamic vinegar

Make balsamic reduction (easy, or it can be purchased at Trader Joe's). Pour one cup balsamic vinegar into a small saucepan. Cook over high heat until it boils, then reduce heat and simmer until vinegar looks like thin maple syrup (it will thicken more as it cools). Set aside.

On a toothpick, thread one mozzarella ball, followed by a folded basil leaf followed by a cherry tomato. Continue until tomatoes, cheese and basil leaves are used up. At this point, they can be refrigerated covered with plastic wrap until ready to eat. Just before serving, lightly salt and pepper the skewers (Maldon Sea Salt, if you have it), and drizzle balsamic reduction over the skewers. So easy, so pretty and so delicious!

Pimento Cheese Spread with Crackers (adapted from Southern Living)

½ cup mayonnaise

12 ounces pimento, drained

¼ cup diced green onions

1 tablespoon dry mustard

2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce



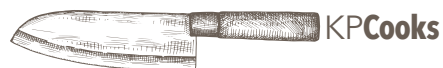
2 teaspoons hot sauce
¾ teaspoon celery seeds
¾ teaspoon cider vinegar
¾ teaspoon salt
¾ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
5 cups (20 ounces) freshly grated white cheddar cheese
Mix together mayonnaise, pimento, green onions, dry mustard, Worcestershire sauce, hot sauce, celery seeds, vinegar, salt and pepper. Stir in cheddar cheese until well blended. Cover and chill 8 to 24 hours. Serve with crackers.

Spiced Pecans

2 cups pecan halves
2 tablespoons butter, melted
1½ tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon cinnamon
¼ teaspoon garlic powder
¼ teaspoon ground red pepper
2 tablespoons sugar

Preheat oven to 300. Place pecans on baking sheet. Drizzle with butter and Worcestershire sauce. Toss to coat. Spread nuts in a single layer. Bake at 300 for 20 to 25 minutes, stirring every five minutes.

Meanwhile, stir together the salt, cinnamon, garlic powder, red pepper



and sugar.

Remove pecans from oven, sprinkle with spice mixture and toss to coat. Cool completely and store in an airtight container.

Cousin Cathy's Farmer Chicken Salad

In case someone asks you to bring a summer salad that acts as an entree, here is one of my favorite recipes. Make it a day ahead and your get-together just got easier.

5 cups cooked chicken, cut into bite-size pieces (store-bought roasted, like Costco, is fine)
2 tablespoons salad oil
2 tablespoons orange juice
2 tablespoons vinegar
1 teaspoon salt
3 cups cooked white rice
1½ cups small green seedless grapes
1½ cups sliced celery
1 cup pineapple tidbits, drained
1 can mandarin oranges, drained
1 cup toasted slivered almonds
1½ cups mayonnaise

Combine chicken, salad oil, orange juice, vinegar and salt. Refrigerate for several hours or overnight. Add remaining ingredients and gently toss. Refrigerate for several hours. Serves 12.



Edna's Rhubarb Torte

And finally, my mother-in-law Edna was an amazing cook and even better maker of desserts. We were always happy when she volunteered to bring dessert to a family get-together, because we knew it would be great. This is her rendition of a classic '70s recipe that became a family favorite we continue to enjoy several times each summer.

2 cups flour
4 tablespoons white sugar
1 cup butter
6 egg yolks
2½ cups sugar
4 tablespoons flour
2/3 cup heavy cream
7 cups diced rhubarb
6 egg whites
½ cup sugar

Preheat oven to 350. Combine first three ingredients until well blended. Press into a 9 x 13 pan and bake for 15 minutes or until lightly browned.

Combine egg yolks, sugar, flour and heavy cream. Add rhubarb and pour over the baked crust. Return to the oven and bake for approximately 45 minutes or until set.

Beat egg whites until stiff. Slowly add sugar and continue beating until thick and shiny. Top the baked rhubarb mixture with meringue and return to oven until the meringue is browned, about 15 to 20 minutes.

Now let's get ready for summer! ■

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Learning From ‘Gender Queer: A Memoir’ by Maia Kobabe

More than 1,600 books were banned from school libraries last year according to PEN America. This was No. 1.

JOSÉ ALANIZ

Do you know what nonbinary means? If you don’t care to know, do you think others should have the opportunity to read about it if they so choose, like at a library?

What if those others are adolescents? High schoolers? Children?

How you answer these questions will likely put you on one side or the other of our dreary, tiresome political divide. Sadly, it might predetermine whether you will be open to reading Maia Kobabe’s “Gender Queer: A Memoir” (2019), or whether you’re even still reading this piece.

It’s no exaggeration to say this book has saved lives, given that LGBTQ+ youth have disproportionately higher rates of suicide — largely because they feel themselves unseen, unheard and unvalued (even, or especially, by their families). Reading about this author’s journey in accessible words and brightly colored pictures could make all the difference for a lonely young person trying to find themselves.

“Gender Queer” started as drawings and short comics that Kobabe used to explain to eir parents and others what eir nonbinary identity felt like (Kobabe uses a version of the gender neutral Spivak pronouns: e, em, eir). E posted some of the material to Instagram and got overwhelmingly positive feedback, leading to this full-fledged graphic memoir.

Assigned female at birth, from a young age e felt in-between if not outside the gender dichotomy. By puberty, e was writing in eir diary: “I don’t want to be a girl. I don’t want to be a boy either. I just want to be myself.”

Some readers, I imagine, will be shocked by Kobabe’s pronouncements reflecting eir body dysmorphia, like wishing for breast cancer in order to remove eir breasts. But as e explains to eir mother, “No, I don’t hate my body. I don’t have chronic pain or any of the other health issues so many of my friends deal with. The majority of my body is great. There are just ... a few bits I don’t like. For example, if I could just remove my entire reproductive system, that would be ideal.”

And Kobabe’s description of getting a pap smear exam is agonizing and



harrowing; it made me understand what a traumatizing experience it must be for someone in eir position.

Kobabe had the good fortune of being born into a supportive, open-minded family in northern California (lots of nonbinary kids don’t), so at least e doesn’t have to deal with things like being told by your parents that you will burn in eternal hellfire for the sin of being nonbinary. Instead, “Gender Queer” is mostly about navigating cisgendered society’s expectations and presumptions (like women’s limited underwear choices); dating; and the advantages of friendship over romance. It’s also a fascinating window into the fandom communities of fantasy, manga and anime, which tend to be very queer-friendly.

Still, it’s not all smooth sailing with eir family. Kobabe’s mother struggles with keeping the pronouns straight, at one point venting, “Why are you doing this to us?” More pointedly, Shari, a lesbian feminist aunt, declares, “I have a hard time seeing this trend of FTM (female to male) trans and gender queer young people as something other than a kind of misogyny. A deeply internalized hatred of women.”

In a sense, “Gender Queer” is a long rebuttal to Shari’s assertion, laying out a nuanced argument for a “third option” (as e puts it) beyond the socially-constructed categories of male and female.

As a cartoonist, Kobabe has a gift for clarity, making eir journey legible and sympathetic. Among other things, e uses visual metaphors of scales (when flouting eir assigned gender: “The end goal wasn’t masculinity — the goal was balance”) and a seaside landscape (“Some people are born in the mountains, while others are born by the sea. Some people are happy to live in the place they were born, while others must make a journey to reach the climate in which they can flourish and grow.”)

It likely won’t surprise you to learn that “Gender Queer” was vilified by right wing politicians and parents’ groups, which led the American Library Association to declare it the most challenged book of 2021, restricted by

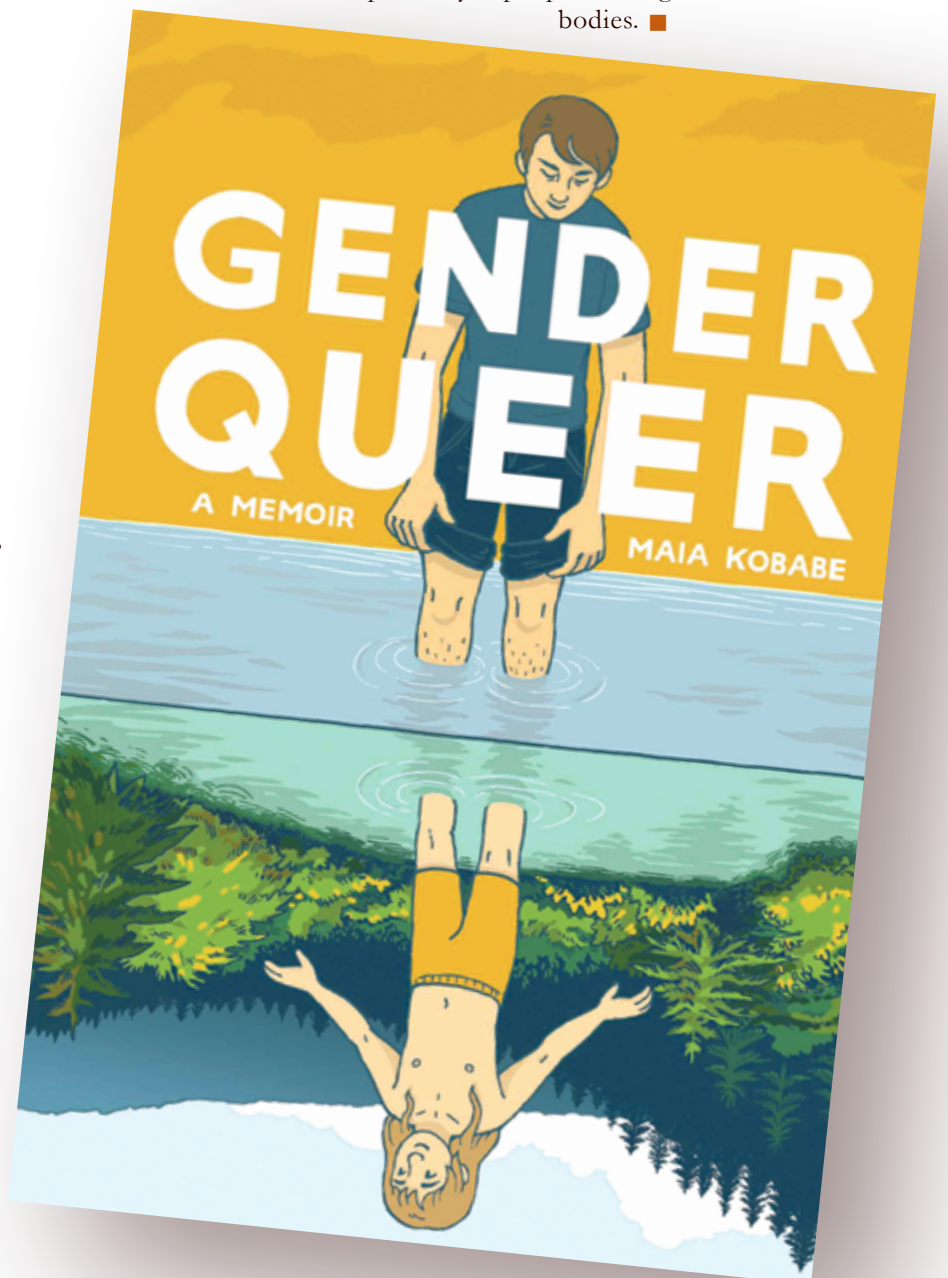
libraries and schools all over the map.

In late 2021, a parent of a student at Olympic High School in East Bremerton complained about “Gender Queer” in the school library, and it was quickly removed. That wasn’t good enough for the parent, though; they filed suit against the Central Kitsap School District, saying the librarian and other officials should be charged with the crime of distributing obscene material, including “pedophilia.” Kitsap County Prosecutor Chad Enright refused the request, noting that “Gender Queer” did not meet the state’s standard for obscenity (it’s not even close).

Kobabe stated publicly in 2022 that e doesn’t take the book challenges personally, because most people attacking the book have probably

not actually read it. “But the part of it that I do take personally,” e said, “is that it feels like the challenges are part of a coordinated effort to erase queer and trans and nonbinary voices from the public sphere.” E told The New York Times: “When you remove those books from the shelf or you challenge them publicly in a community, what you’re saying to any young person who identified with that narrative is, ‘We don’t want your story here.’”

A humble suggestion: the enthusiasm of our morality police might be better applied to protecting children from real threats: poverty, food insecurity, lack of consistent healthcare — or even guns ripping them apart in their classrooms — than by persecuting young people coming to terms with their own bodies. ■





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- 9:08 SR 302 @140th Ave/Lake of the Woods
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- 9:57 SR 302 @150th Ave/Lake Holiday bus shed
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- 5:14 Palmer Lake 21st St SW @193rd Ave
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keypennews.org/kpbus
for interactive map and
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Key Peninsula Transportation Forum

**Sunday, May 7 3-5pm & Tuesday, May 16 6:30-8:30pm
in the Whitmore Room/KP Civic Center**

Join us for a discussion on KP transportation problems and help think up solutions. All are welcome! Refreshments served

RSVP to stef@stefwarrencreative.com to enter a drawing for a \$20 gas card — must be at forum to win

**Strengthening the Key Peninsula
Connecting the Community**

For resources and information:
www.kphealthycommunity.org

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INDEPENDENT LIVING AND A FULL CONTINUUM OF CARE



Robyn Denson's County Council District 7 Meeting

Join us May 18 at 6 p.m.
Longbranch Improvement Club

Learn about upcoming County projects and programs on the Key Peninsula!

- Road Projects
- Broadband News
- Sheriff Department Report
- Human Services Programs
- County and KeyPen Park Updates
- Health Department Programs
- News from the Fire Department and School Districts

Special Proclamation honoring the late Hugh McMillan

In-Person Only (no Zoom)

Also: Come visit us during our District Office Open House May 11 from 4-6 at KP Corral in Key Center

For more information, email john.jolibois@piercecounitywa.gov

PRINT AND ONLINE CALENDARS ARE UNDERWRITTEN BY A GRANT FROM THE ANGEL GUILD

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

To add a listing for your event or find the latest details, visit www.keypennews.org/calendar

May 1 Bingo! 1 – 2 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project.

May 2 GH Literary Society 6 p.m., Gig Harbor History Museum. "Parable of the Sower" by Octavia E. Butler.

May 5 – 6, 12 – 13, 18 – 20 PHS Spring Musical, "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory" Times vary. Peninsula High School, tickets online at purplepass.com

May 6 Mom and Me Tea 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center. Sponsored by the Key Pen Parks, reservations required.

May 6 Bird Walks 8:30 a.m., rain or shine. Meet nature guide Chris Rurik at Gateway Park pavilion.

May 6 Community Table, An Evening Against Hunger 6 p.m., Greater Gig Harbor Foundation. Fundraising dinner to fight hunger, tickets available online.

May 6 Health Connection Pop Up 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., KP Community Office, KP Corral. Covid vaccines, mental health support, dental services, family resource center, and public health resources.

May 6 Baskets and More Auction 5 – 8:30 p.m., Key Peninsula Lutheran Church. Fundraiser to support local nonprofits.

May 8 Spring Giftbags Pickup 12 – 1 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. For seniors 60+ living on the KP, call The Mustard Seed Project to reserve: 253-884-9814.

May 9 Tacoma ProBono Legal Aid 1 – 3 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Free civil legal help.

May 10 Elders Intentionally Workshop 1 – 3 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Free workshop about developing your authentic self.

May 11 County Council District 7 Office Open House 4 – 6 p.m., Pierce County District 7 Office. Meet Robyn Denson and learn about county programs.

May 16 Hootenanny 2 – 4 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Folksong sing and play along.

May 17 Cribbage Club 2 – 4 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Everyone is welcome, no experience required.

May 18 Pierce County Council In-District Meeting 6 p.m., Longbranch Improvement Club. May meeting of the Pierce County Council.

May 19 Baby Lounge 12 p.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center. A gathering for connection with other parents.

May 20 Story Time at WayPoint 10 a.m. – 12 p.m., WayPoint Church. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

May 20 Vision Fair 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., Hope Vision Foundation. Information, resources and organizations to help those with low vision. Ocean 5 in Gig Harbor.

May 20 Taylor Bay Beach Club Yard Sale 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., Taylor Bay Beach Community.

May 24 Youth Night 6:30 p.m., Peninsula Life Church. All youth are welcome.

May 25 KP Book Club 11 a.m., KP Historical Society. "The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas" by Gertrude Stein.

May 25 Tales at the BoatShop 10:30 a.m., Gig Harbor BoatShop. Nautical storytelling for children.

May 27 Memorial Day Dance 8 p.m., Longbranch Improvement Club. Featuring the Tim Hall Band, \$20. Tickets at the door.

May 30 Northwest Sinfonietta - A Musical Story Time 4:30 – 5:15 p.m., Key Center Library. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Monday Make Peace with Your Guitar 2 – 4 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project, April 3 to May 15, \$15 per class or \$75 for the series.

Monday Al-Anon Keys to Sanity 5 p.m., KP fire station. Family group.

Monday Walks with Rusty 9 a.m., Gateway Dog Park/360 Trails. Dog Walks with Jason.

M-W-F SAIL 10 a.m., Stay Active and Independent for Life. The Mustard Seed Project, 253-884-9814.

M-F Rev+Flow Workout Mon 7 p.m., Fri 9:30 a.m., Women's free fitness classes. WayPoint South, heartfitwp@gmail.com

M-F Tai Ji Quan 11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m., exercise training program for improving balance and preventing falls. The Mustard Seed Project, 253-884-9814.

M-W SAIL 3:30 p.m., flexibility and balance for those over 60. KP Community Services, 253-884-4440.

T-TH-SA SAIL 8:30 a.m., flexibility and balance for those over 60. KP Community Services, 253-884-4440.

T-TH Tai Chi 9:45 a.m., KP Community Services, 253-884-4440.

T-W-Th REFIT Cardio Workout Tue and Wed 5:30 p.m., Thu 9:30 a.m., Women's free fitness classes. WayPoint North, heartfitwp@gmail.com

T-TH Toddler Indoor Park 9:30 – 11:30 a.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center in the gym.

T-SA KP Historical Museum 1 – 4 p.m. Open hours through November.

Wednesday Gentle Yoga for Older Adults 11:30 a.m., Mustard Seed Project, 253-884-9814.

Thursday Family Story Time 10:30 – 11 a.m., activities for the whole family. Key Center Library meeting room.

Thursday Senior Bingo 1 p.m., first and third Thursdays, KP Community Services, 253-884-4440.

Thursday KP Toastmasters 8 a.m., WayPoint Church, 425-243-2618.

Friday Skate Night 6 – 9 p.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center, kindergarten-eighth grade.

Saturday Eddon Boatyard Tours 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., Gig Harbor BoatShop.

Sunday WayPoint Community Dinners 6 p.m. Free community dinners at WayPoint North and WayPoint South churches.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

26th LD Democrats First Thursdays, 6:30 p.m. March meeting location Sehmel Homestead Park.

Caregiver Support Group Third Mondays, 2 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project.

Key Peninsula Advisory Commission Third Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m. piercecountywa.gov/5937

KP Business Association Luncheon, third Fridays, noon at El Sombrero. kpbusinessassociation@gmail.com

KP Business Association Business meeting, first Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m., All Around Gutters in Key Center. kpbusinessassociation@gmail.com

KP Community Council Second Wednesdays on Zoom, 6:30 p.m. keypencouncil@gmail.com

KP Citizens Against Crime Third Thursdays, 7 – 8:30 p.m., Key Center fire station.

KP Civic Center Association Board meeting, second Thursdays, 7 – 8:30 p.m., Whitmore Room, KP Civic Center, 253-884-3456.

KP Democrats Third Monday, 7 p.m., Home fire station, johnpatkelly@aol.com, 253-432-4256.

KP Emergency Prep Third Thursday, 7 p.m., KP Civic Center, eprep@kpciviccenter.org

WEEKLY EVENTS

KP Fire Regular Board Meeting Second and fourth Tuesdays, 5 p.m. on Zoom, keypeninsulafire.org, 253-884-2222.

KP Historical Society First Tuesdays, 11 a.m. at museum, kphsmuseum@gmail.com

KP Lions Club First and third Wednesdays, 6 p.m. Potluck at Key Center fire station, 253-525-0802, keypeninsulalions@outlook.com

Key Pen Parks Commission Board meeting, second Mondays, 7 p.m., Home fire station, 253-884-9240.

KP Veterans First and third Mondays, 7 – 8 p.m., KP Lutheran Church, 253-884-2626.

Lakebay Fuchsia Society First Thursdays, 7 p.m. KP Civic Center, Whitmore Room, 253-884-2283.

Longbranch Improvement Club Third Wednesdays, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., Longbranch Improvement Club, 253-200-0308 or licweb.org

Peninsula Emergency Preparedness Coalition Second Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m., check pep-c.org for meeting location.

Peninsula School District Board Meeting Fourth Thursdays, 6 – 7:30 p.m., 253-530-1000.

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department Tues and Thurs, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Key Center Corral. 253-432-4948 for schedule; Air Quality, Triple P, COVID-19, General HD, Water/Wells and Healthy Housing advice.

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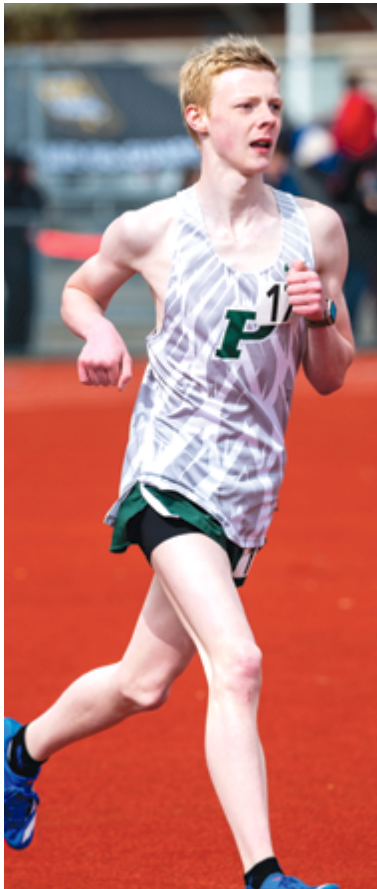
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TOP LEFT: PHS Seahawk sprinter nears the finish line.
 TOP RIGHT: Pole vaulter leaps into spring for Peninsula High School.
 MID LEFT: It was all smiles for PHS Girls Water Polo goalie Senior Olivia Eagles.
 MID RIGHT: Grayson, age 7, rides with his 5-year-old brother Braxton (BOTTOM LEFT) at Volunteer Park during spring break.
 BOTTOM RIGHT: PHS Senior Alli Frederickson focuses on water polo action.

All photos by Tina McKail, KP News

