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Dramatic End to Attempted County Health Dept. Takeover

Residents spent two weeks waiting for the county council to decide whether to reorganize its health department in the middle of the pandemic.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

A Pierce County Council attempt to terminate the 48-year-old agreement governing the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department and place it under its own control came to an abrupt end Dec 15. Outgoing council member Pam Roach, R-2nd District, voted against proposed Ordinance No. 2020-136 to dissolve TPCHD, which she had sponsored, blocking passage and concluding two weeks of turmoil in local politics.

The initial proposal was made Dec. 1, blindsiding the mayor of Tacoma, members of the county council and the TPCHD. The Rules and Operations Committee discussed it a week later and — after allowing less than an hour of public comment — voted along party lines

"HEALTH DEPARTMENTS HAVE EVOLVED FOLLOWING A HEALTH CRISIS... WE CAN LOOK AT THIS CRISIS AND LEARN."

to send it to the council with a recommendation for approval. The speed of the process, pushed by the term-limited outgoing council chair Doug Richardson, R-6th District, was unprecedented.

TPCHD, considered by many to be a model for the state, is overseen by an eight-member board, made up of the county executive and three council members, the mayor of Tacoma or her delegate, a Tacoma city council member, a mayor from a Pierce county municipality and a representative from the Pierce County Medical Society.

The timing of the proposal coincided with a shift from Republican to Democratic control of the council for the first time in nearly two decades. Nancy Sutton, who served eight years as deputy director of TPCHD until her retirement Dec 1, said "Coming now, in the middle of a pandemic, this is a strong and blatant attempt to absorb an independent, public health agency and bring it under political leadership."

The county contributed nearly \$5 million to TPCHD's recent annual budget of \$40 million. Tacoma contributed \$1.1 million. The TPCHD website posted a 2020-21

budget of \$79 million including funding from fees (47%), state and federal grants (33%), Pierce County (8.9%), and the City of Tacoma (3.3%).

Public feedback to the plan was overwhelmingly negative. Councilmen Derek Young, D-7th District, and Marty Campbell, D-5th District, said that of thousands of communications they received only a handful were in favor. "In 22 years of public service I have never seen anything this lopsided," Young said.

County Executive Bruce Dammeier remained silent.

Young and Tacoma Mayor Victoria Woodards reached out to Gov. Jay Inslee for assistance. Young said Inslee was hesitant to take action, knowing that he could serve as a lightning rod, but

one day before the Dec. 15 council vote he issued a proclamation prohibiting any efforts to dissolve or dismantle existing health departments unless all parties agreed, or if one party received approval from the state Department of Health during the current health crisis.

"This pause is necessary to ensure that we have a continuity and stability of our public health efforts throughout this pandemic," Inslee said. The proclamation was widely expected to halt the council's efforts.

The council instead responded with an amendment, which was presented to the council meeting in an executive session with Senior Legal Analyst Jeff Cox. The amendment gave authority to the county executive to make changes to TPCHD, but delayed any action until the pandemic crisis ended. Cox's opinion was that the amendment could legally circumvent the governor's proclamation.

Council member Connie Ladenburg, an outgoing Democrat from District 4, warned that taking any action on the proposed ordinance would open the council to

CONTINUED PAGE 3



Another "normal" school day for Oliver DeShon, age 5, who attends pre-kindergarten at Evergreen Elementary. Oliver doesn't know what school was like before COVID-19. Lisa Bryan, KP News

COVID-19 Vaccine Arrives as County Virus Rates Climb

State and federal officials say that vaccinations and continued social distancing are both needed to stop the pandemic.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

The first doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine were administered to hospital staff in Seattle Dec. 15.

The vaccine comes at a time when virus infections have reached record levels in Pierce County and some hospitals are at or approaching capacity, according to the state Department of Health.

"Our hospitals are stressed, taking care of patients, with or without COVID, and our health care workers are exhausted," said Dr. Kathy Lofy, state health officer and the chief science officer for DOH.

Hospitals in Pierce County were at an average 86% capacity by press time; anything over 80% is considered critical. St. Anthony in Gig Harbor was at 100% capacity, with 10% COVID-19 patients. Tacoma General was at 93% and 17%; St. Joseph Medical

Center in Tacoma was at 60% and 9%.

Washington state expects to receive 192,750 doses of Pfizer vaccine by the end of December.

The Pfizer vaccine was approved by the FDA Dec. 11 and western states the next day for persons 16 years and older. Pediatric clinical trials continue, as do three other large-scale trials in the U.S. for additional COVID-19 vaccines.

A vaccine from the National Institutes of Health and Moderna was approved Dec. 18, which could mean another 183,000 doses available to Washington before year's end. An additional 500,000 or more should arrive in January. The number of adults in each state determines the weekly delivery size.

The first people to receive vaccines will be health workers and first responders directly involved with COVID-19 patients, long-

CONTINUED PAGE 3



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LOOKING BACK, LOOKING AHEAD.

Here's What I Think About That

LISA BRYAN,
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Our longtime friends walked the country mile between us to deliver good cheer and connect on Christmas Eve.

Nestled inside the small gift bag they brought was the crown jewel of north-west summers at peak perfection, lovingly preserved in the form of homemade jam. The sweet burst of intense flavor from homegrown strawberries is just this side of heaven on Earth. It's a precious treasure in wintertime delivering a powerful reminder that the warmth of the sun will return.

We kept our distance outside. We talked nonstop for nearly 20 minutes. We shed sloppy tears and shared laughter too, before conceding it was too cold and damp to continue. It felt good to be together and it left a yearning for more. After waving goodbye, they each pulled out plastic garbage bags stashed in their pockets to gather the latest crop of roadside litter on their way home.

There is much outside our control as individuals but we persevere by doing what we can each day. And when we do something considerate for someone else or because it simply needs doing, we feel better ourselves. We reach out. People reach back. We connect.

The year 2020 was "exhausting." It may take a few choice words to get it just right but saying them aloud feels better.

As the year unfolded things grew crazy fast on multiple fronts. There were times I shoved down feelings I could not cope with. I can feel them in the pit of my stomach right now.

It was a year the likes of which few have known outside the pages of history and lingering family lore from the Great Depression.

We have a public health emergency: Everyone is affected by COVID-19, regardless of age, race sex, religion or politics. The virus doesn't care who we are, where we live or what we think.

The danger of politicizing public health continues at our collective peril. The collateral damage inflicted by endless political campaigns eroded civil discourse. It has become common to think of people with different opinions from ourselves as enemies.

Antithetical to individualism, such is the challenge to accept our part in the greater

whole and act accordingly.

Armed by science, we are well on the way to winning the fight against COVID-19 with vaccinations already being given to first responders and front-line health care workers.

But it will be months before there is enough vaccine to inoculate everyone. There will certainly be people who will refuse vacci-

nation against COVID-19. It remains unclear whether a person who has been vaccinated will still be capable of transmitting the virus to others who have not.

We don't know how this will play out. But we do know that vaccinations will not bring an end to pandemic restrictions right away. In order for restrictions to loosen, the number of active cases must drop considerably.

Locally there were some small business ventures that called it quits before the end of first quarter 2020, unrelated to the pandemic. Other local businesses booked their best year with record earnings. And hopeful new entrepreneurs opened during the pandemic as well.

Relentless challenges related to COVID-19 continue for owners and employees of traditional dining establishments and bars. Once thriving and popular locally owned businesses, before the novel coronavirus struck, continue to struggle under new pandemic restrictions.

The ongoing economic fallout has also been relentless for many families struggling to make ends meet. Young couples just getting by with double incomes have been forced to make the decision that one parent at home is essential.

Beginning in the second week of December, there was a leveling in the rise of newly confirmed COVID-19 cases in Pierce County. After spring, summer and fall of 2020, many families could tolerate the lengthy separation no more and gathered for winter holidays together against the recommendations of public health officials who strongly advised against travel and any holiday gatherings that included members from multiple households. Now we expect another rise in cases and extended restrictions.

As much as we loathe wearing them, masks continue to offer the best protection against further spread of the virus until many millions of people are vaccinated. Remain focused. Be diligent in social distancing. Wear a mask in public. Wash your hands frequently.

The end is in sight. We can do this for each other. And we can probably stop complaining about it too. It is 2021 after all. We may as well try something new.

CORRECTION:

We incorrectly credited the Great Peninsula Conservancy for management of two additional properties (Rocky Creek Preserve Expands by 150 Acres, KP News Dec. 2020.) Devil's Head Wildlife Refuge is managed by Pierce County Parks and Recreation. Taylor Bay Park is part of the Key Pen Parks system. We regret the error.



Calling All Dog Lovers

To celebrate Valentine's month the February issue will honor the unconditional love of our best friends.

Send brief anecdotes about and photos of the four-leggeds in your family to editor@keypennews.org

Feline fans — cats are coming later this year.



TPCHD FROM PAGE 1

legal action and excused herself from the meeting. Young and Campbell agreed with Ladenburg's assessment.

The amendment was approved along party lines.

The council meeting that immediately followed

included nearly four hours of calls from county residents, health care professionals and elected officials. Of the scores of callers only three spoke in favor of the ordinance.

Each council member made remarks prior to voting.

"My vote tonight will be based on what I think is right," Roach said. She had been asked by Richardson to sponsor a bill he had written and she did not know she would be the sole sponsor, and was not consulted about the amendment. She said it represented her belief in one person, one vote, but that she also believed in transparency in government, and that the governor's proclamation angered her.

Young and Campbell, both of whom opposed the ordinance, said that any action that might threaten or distract TPCHD during the pandemic was dangerous and that evaluation and improvement should take place after the pandemic crisis was over.

The other Republican members (Richardson and Jim McCune, R-3rd District, are outgoing, Dave Morrell, R-1st District, is serving his first four-year term) announced they planned to approve. McCune said they were not trying to dismantle TPCHD but to shift the oversight solely to the county council because their constituents were not adequately represented. They also said they wanted to streamline the department, especially with regards to permitting.

Richardson called for the vote. Roach voted first. "No," she said. Republican voices cried out. "What? What happened?" The final vote was three-to-three with one abstention, and the motion failed.

Following the vote, County Executive Dammeier tweeted: "The debate @PierceCoCouncil today begins a conversation about the future of public health in @PierceCo after the pandemic. I hope to work w/our new Council and stakeholders in our community to craft a shared version of the future of public health."

Roach explained her decision in a letter published online in The Suburban Times. "I believe the need for an informed and involved citizenry trumps one man, one vote. Without having given the citizens time to digest and to respond to (her bill), the council disregarded the principle of 'open government,' which I have long fought to achieve and maintain," she wrote.

"MY VOTE TONIGHT WILL BE BASED ON WHAT I THINK IS RIGHT."

Young, who will become council chair in January, told KP News he looked forward to evaluating the TPCHD. "Health departments have evolved following a health crisis," he said. "County health depart-

ments first formed in response to polio. We can look at this crisis and learn."

Young said that previous divestment in public health meant being unprepared for the pandemic, and that he would like to move toward expanding partnerships instead of ending them. "I'd like to explore partnerships with other cities, to reach out to other health experts and schools. It's not just about water and sewer permits, but let's talk to the realtors and master builders. We're going to do all that. We're just going to do it when the time is right." ■

COVID-19 VACCINE FROM PAGE 1

term care facilities, and 14 tribal nations. That could mean anywhere between 300,000 and 500,000 people, according to DOH.

Both the Pfizer and NIH-Moderna vaccine are given in two doses three and four weeks apart, respectively, and are 90% or more effective seven days after the second dose. Clinical trials revealed no major adverse effects, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

At press time, six people in the U.S. are known to have had severe allergic reactions requiring treatment.

The state plan for vaccine distribution follows the National Academy of Medicine's Framework for Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine. Teachers, child care workers, and other essential workers are next in line. "We'll have most people in Washington vaccinated by mid-summer," said Michele Roberts, the state's acting assistant secretary of health.

"If 75% to 80% of Americans are vaccinated, then by the end of 2021, we can reach a degree of normality," said Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, referring to the threshold needed for achieving herd immunity without endangering anyone by further exposure to the virus.

For Washington state, that translates to over 10 million doses for more than 5 million people. Lower participation would mean it would take longer to stop the pandemic.

"We're supposed to get it soon for staff and I will be administering it and definitely taking it," said Anne Nesbit, KP fire department public information officer. "People have concerns and so do I... but someone has to lead. And we're not dropping our guard; we have to keep up with masks and

KP News from TPCHD and Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health



Pierce County confirmed cases (blue line) grew as testing increased (blue bars), but rising infections (gold bars) warn against relaxing restrictions aimed at reducing transmission.

precautions to stop the spread."

Dr. William Roes of Key Medical Clinic in Key Center said he has applied to become a vaccine distributor under the auspices of Community Health Care, the clinic's new owner in January.

"I don't know if we'll get it or not, but we're in a unique situation (on the Key Peninsula), so maybe. It will be months though, after the first responders and so on."

Roes said he understood suspicion about the speed of the vaccine's development might make people wary about getting it. "What seems like a miracle now is really a product of how we dealt with SARS, MERS, with Ebola; the techniques and technology since then have transformed everything. I will take it as soon as I can get it," he said.

A Gallup poll published Dec. 8 reported that 63% of Americans were willing to get the vaccine, up from 50% in September. When asked about the pace of the vaccine approval process, 78% said their primary concern "is that it will move too fast, without fully establishing safety and effectiveness."

Traditional vaccines can take about 10 years to develop. The fastest vaccine — for mumps — took four years. Because of the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic, research efforts were boosted and clinical trials ran concurrently instead of consecutively.

A significant difference about both Pfizer and NIH-Moderna vaccines is that they are messenger RNA vaccines that do not include dead or weakened virus to trigger an immune response, and therefore don't take nearly as long to produce. The mRNA contains a genetic code that mimics the virus to provoke the body into creating antibodies. The technology has been studied for more than a decade and does not affect a person's DNA, according to DOH.

The success of any vaccine stopping the coronavirus pandemic depends both

on people taking it and also continuing to wear masks and practice social distancing for many more months, according to Dr. Colleen Kraft, associate chief medical officer at Emory University Hospital in Atlanta, in a Nov. 25 interview with Today.

"I would say we have at least another year at the rate we're going," she said. "The more people that are just refusing to wear masks and making this an issue of personal freedom, I think the longer we're going to be wearing masks. The longer we can't get it done, the longer the pandemic rages on."

The CDC and World Health Organization recommend wearing a mask even if individuals don't feel sick because asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic people can spread the virus to others. It's also unknown whether or not people who have received the vaccine can still transmit the virus.

A review conducted in June by researchers at the Oregon Health & Science University found no evidence of serious harm from wearing a mask.

"Masks can have some occasional adverse effects like discomfort, skin irritation or shortness of breath, especially for people with chronic lung or heart disease," said Gopal Allada, M.D., associate professor of medicine at OHSU (pulmonary and critical care medicine). "However, on balance, the benefits in preventing virus transmission far outweigh the potential risks of wearing a mask."

The report concluded that "even a small effect can have a big impact on reducing exponential spread of novel coronavirus."

The U.S. sustained 323,000 deaths from COVID-19 by the middle of December. The U.W. Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation estimated a total of 562,000 by the end of March. It expects that vaccines will have saved 25,000 lives by then — but that broader mask usage in this period could save 56,000. ■



Many hands make light work as FB4K volunteers sort, pack and load food into waiting cars. *Kamryn Minch, KP News*

Backpacks for Kids Steps Up in Time of Need

In its first 10 years the program distributed a million pounds of food. Between March and Dec. 2020, it sent 250,000 pounds home with families.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

Food Backpacks 4 Kids, now just over a decade old, transformed during the pandemic. In a matter of months, the organization more than doubled the amount of food going to families, moving from sending students home with backpacks containing 10 pounds of nonperishable food each week to running a drive-through operation where families pick up boxes filled with non-perishables along with produce, meat and dairy.

“We are feeding families,” said FB4K Executive Director Richard Miller.

In early 2020, FB4K was run by three part-time staff and a team of valued volunteers. From its first day in 2009 when it sent nine Evergreen students home for the weekend with food-filled backpacks, the program expanded to serve all schools in the district. Each school had a champion in 2020 — the principal or a teacher or a counselor — to be sure the program worked for students. Two hundred and ninety-three students participated, with backpacks for grade schoolers and food pantries serving the middle and high schools.

Miller, who also teaches photography and art at Key Peninsula Middle School, said that when the pandemic led to school closure the organization had to pivot

rapidly to be sure vulnerable students and their families would not go hungry.

Rather than send kids home with food, FB4K designed a drive-through pick-up model. COVID-19 risks meant that the retirees who had been the backbone of the volunteer staff could no longer safely work. Miller and the staff networked to recruit an under-60 group of volunteers who now number about 20. Of those, 10 are his “stalwarts.”

“It’s heavy and intense work,” he said, “with hours of filling, lifting and carrying boxes of food.”

Every Wednesday volunteers receive deliveries, sort, store and then prepack boxes with nonperishables according to family size. On a typical Friday afternoon, families registered with the program arrive in a steady stream of cars at FB4K’s lot in Key Center, greeted by operations

manager Zaida Woodworth and her volunteers.

Perishables — meat, milk, cheese, produce — are added as the families arrive. Shelves and tables outside the warehouse have random extras that families can also take home. One Friday there were enormous boxes of chocolate bark. There is a second distribution site in Gig Harbor, near the old Peninsula Gardens.

“WE HAVE BEEN RUNNING AT EMERGENCY SPEED FOR NINE MONTHS.”

“This is the best job I have ever had,” Woodworth said. She is one of the three part-time employees who coordinate the program, including Miller and office manager Michelle Johnson.

“I am so grateful for our staff,” FB4K Board President Joe Urvina said. “They saw the need and filled it. They created partnerships to make sure families who couldn’t get to Key Center got food. They have knocked it out of the park.”

One family of nine (parents, a grandparent and six children) has participated in the program for several years. “My husband’s hours were cut during the pandemic,” said the mother of the household, “so the extra food has really helped.” She added that her older children were embarrassed to take food home from school and being able to come to the distribution site has made thing easier.

Another mother, new to the program, arrived with her four young children. She originally found out about FB4K at church and started to volunteer. When she discovered that the program is for all families with children 18 and under (her kids aren’t yet in school) and not limited to students in Peninsula School District schools, she signed up. Her husband lost his job. While they had a cushion

of savings and he now has a new job, it meant a pay cut. The FB4K program means they can make ends meet.

“We are now serving 567 kids,” Miller said. “Pre pandemic we distributed about 3,000 to 4,000 pounds of food a week. Now it is 7,000 to 9,000 pounds. We’ve been running at emergency speed for nine months.”

It its first 10 years the program distributed a million pounds of food. Between March and December, it sent 250,000 pounds home with families.

New coolers and freezers line the warehouse — purchased through a grant to store the perishables they now send home with families — along with shelves of canned goods, peanut butter, masa, rice and beans. Emergency Food Network, essentially a foodbank for foodbanks, provides most of the food, but what they can provide is limited to what is donated to them. FB4K works with organizations

on targeted food drives, requesting specific items when there are gaps. They

also purchase from WinCo and Costco as needed. Funding comes from grants and donations from businesses and individuals.

Miller anticipates that when the pandemic is over and schools reopen, FB4K will pivot once again. “I think we will have a hybrid program,” he said. “We’ll have the backpacks and the food pantries, but probably will have drive-thru pickups twice a month.” ■

“THIS IS THE BEST JOB I HAVE EVER HAD.”



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Ted Olinger

ANOTHER LAST WORD



Re-history

I spent the best part of my 1960s childhood in a beach town outside L.A. We lived in a platted neighborhood that sloped down to the water, but it wasn't fully developed. The road to the freeway remained unpaved for years. About a third of the land around us consisted of empty sand lots ideal for crashing our bikes into.

There was a group of us grade school kids, boys and girls both, mostly white but some Latinos, a couple Black kids, and a few girls of Japanese descent who kindly suffered through my succeeding crushes.

We ran into the ocean fully clothed for the fun of it, played a lot of seaweed baseball, flew kites until they blew apart, rode bikes until our legs were spaghetti, and thought nothing of knocking on a stranger's door to ask for water when we were thirsty.

Most remarkable to me now was how that place attracted so many different kinds of people. There were young couples with children, single parents raising kids alone, older adults by themselves, and shared homes full of hippies and their most excellent dogs, who ran wild with us on the beach and whom we loved as our own.

My best friend was this kid from India who moved in across the street. He was a great baseball player, meaning he could throw, catch and hit, but he was a terrible runner. He also refused to drop the bat after he got a hit, a holdover from playing cricket. He'd drill a ball into the outfield and then go loping up the baseline gripping his precious bat until he got thrown out at first base or tagged on his way to second. It was infuriating.

Somehow I was allowed to become his pinch runner because I was fast and not much good at anything else. He would slam a ball into the clouds and if he made it to first, I would take over and run, slide or steal my way home. It was beautiful.

Life was good, or at least a potent illusion of good.

His mom was driving us home one day from something, probably baseball. I loved his mom. I'd never seen anyone like her before; she had a bright, open face, long black hair and startling, bright green eyes that shone like crystals, and she was always exceedingly kind to me. There were two younger siblings, who were also in the car with us that day.

We pulled up in front of the house to unload everything; I can't remember what, probably sports gear and book bags. The

mom went ahead to open the front door, but then just stood there.

The door was nothing special, your standard paneled thing. Right in the middle of it, about eye level for an adult, someone had carved a large swastika.

The vandal had taken his time. There were long, curled wood shavings scattered on the welcome mat.

My friend and I were furious. We were going to kick some ass. We had baseball bats.

His mom coldly told us to shut our mouths, get the kids inside, and stay there. She called the police and her husband.

She spoke with the officer alone outside. My friend and I of course came out to listen, but she abruptly ordered us away. The dad arrived after the officer had left and talked with the mom outside. Then he went into the garage to find a piece of plywood or some such and unceremoniously nailed it onto the door to cover the swastika.

My friend had had enough. "What is going on?"

His dad said the police officer told them they could file a report but advised against it. It would get on the police blotter, and then into the newspapers, and then whoever did this would feel emboldened by the attention, and it would inspire others to do the same.

"So, what are we going to do?"

"We're going to buy a new door."

My friend's mother recovered some of her usual self and implored us not to say anything to anyone at school. I remember her shining green eyes looking into mine. We didn't understand it then, but her rage had melted into fear, and the same thing happened to us.

Ted Olinger lives in Vaughn.

Caleb Galbreath

A RISING TIDE



Between Worlds

Like many families across the country, dogs hold a significant place in our family dynamic. Since before I was born, we've always had at least one dog in our pack.

We've had a number of dogs over the years and each one has brought their own personality and quirks and filled our lives with joy. But every dog comes with a somber inevitability. In November, we said goodbye to our sweet giant Tiberius, as gentle as he was playful.

No matter how many times we do this, these goodbyes never seem to get any easier.

Just a few weeks later though, my parents got a puppy and, after much deliberation, settled on the name Porter. Gravy was a close second. I drove down the same

weekend they brought Porter home in order to finish and install the grave post for Tiberius.

It was a strange weekend. One moment I was rolling on the floor with a four-legged fluff ball and the next I was carving out the letters of my late friend's name.

It was like being caught between two worlds. One of celebration and the other of mourning. The joys of playing with Porter did little to spare me the sting of losing Tiberius but that grief didn't stop me from smiling and laughing throughout the weekend.

Holding both of these emotions at the same time was difficult. Sometimes I even felt guilty for letting myself enjoy playing with the puppy, as if grief was the only emotion I was supposed to allow myself.

I've realized that we face dualities like this almost every day. Life, it seems, is full of them. Especially now, when every moment, good or bad, is painted over the backdrop of a pandemic. No matter your situation, I believe there's a balance to be found.

It's easy to let the grief and stress consume us. But I encourage you to seize those moments of joy. Even if they're small or brief compared to what you're going through, they will offer you some balance.

I don't mean to block out the bad either. Your pain, your grief — they're real, it's OK to feel those and mourn as you need. But remember, your life is more than just a struggle.

Because life is never just one thing. It's never all good or all bad and that's probably what gives much of our lives meaning and even beauty.

So, no matter what you're going through, take time to put away your pain and explore the moments of joy in your life too. Savor that cup of coffee, laugh unapologetically with your friend, or spend an afternoon crawling around the floor with a puppy.

Where there are shadows, there is light.

Caleb Galbreath is a freelance journalist and web editor for KP News.

Phyllis Henry

COAST TO COAST



Eureka

One afternoon back in the late '70s, my husband Bill and I were resting on a little bench that used to be situated inside the Panda House at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C. Through the big window we were watching Hsing-Hsing — or maybe it was Ling-Ling (how does one check the sex of a giant fluffy panda?) — tear off long strips of bamboo and stuff them

into his or her mouth. After a few minutes Ling-Ling — or maybe it was Hsing-Hsing — came down from the grassy area behind the panda shelter to join his or her mate in the glassed-in area, lowered his or her massive haunches and then gently foraged through the bamboo littering the area.

No one else was in the Panda House but us. Once the pandas left the grassy enclosure and came into the Panda House, they could not be seen from outside. We watched them for a few minutes, and then Bill said, "This is a magic moment. We are the only two people in the entire United States who are looking at giant pandas."

He was right. No other zoo in this country at that time housed giant pandas. He was also right that it was a magic moment. We had done nothing to bring about this moment other than accidentally arriving in the Panda House when both pandas, but no other tourists, were present.

Was that how the first person to climb Mount Everest felt? Was that how the first woman to fly an airplane felt? Was that how President Obama felt when he became the first Black President of the United States, living in a White House not many miles from the Panda House where we felt magic that day? Still today I can relive that "eureka" feeling, a feeling of being special, being blessed with magic, a slice of time that could never be identically repeated.

After our visit to D.C. we drove back to our home in Ship Bottom, New Jersey, but from time to time reminded each other of that afternoon with our black-and-white friends from China. Then it happened again.

One dark autumn evening we were lying on a beach on Long Beach Island after casting our bait into the Atlantic. With our 12-foot poles stuck into cylindrical holders beside us, we nestled on a blanket and tried to identify the stars.

Tall sand dunes and beach grass separated us from houses on the island. We looked along the beach, into the distance to the left and to the right, and saw no evidence of anyone else on our stretch of beach. No small fires for roasting hot dogs and no flashlights used to light the way of dog owners taking their pets for a walk. Across the water we could see the lights of Manahawkin, but no one there could possibly see us on the beach.

I said, "We are the only people in the world fishing and lying on the sand on this stretch of beach." A delicious sense of wellbeing filled me. This was another magic moment. But it didn't last. Headlights from a pickup parked on the road leading to the shore shone over the beach and the moment was gone.

Over the years I've thought about the

joy of those moments, the one in the Panda House and the aborted one on that clean island sand. I've remembered them with a sense of loss. Now that I'm older I know that those moments are never erased from our lives.

Years later, when my 6-year-old granddaughter visited us in Iowa, we went for a walk down our country road. After we had checked out the corn in the fields, the wild roses in the ditches and the antics of our dog, Baron, she said, "Grandma, this is really good. Walking with you is fun, but I'm sad too."

I asked her why she was sad. Very seriously, she explained, "Because it will never be just like this again and today is perfect."

I thought that was really cute, but it wasn't until I was much older and wiser that I realized what she knew as a small child. Perfect moments will happen again and again, but each perfection will not be identical to any other perfect moment. Life is full of magic, but magic that never can be relived.

Award-winning columnist Phyllis Henry lives in Gig Harbor.

Krisa Bruemmer
IRREVERENT MOM



Plague Parenting, Part III - Insomnia and Kitty Games

"Stop getting out of bed," I tell Violet every night around 9 p.m. "You need to go to sleep so you'll feel good and have power for your day tomorrow."

I tell her to recharge her battery, to have sweet dreams, to sleep tight because that's what's best. Then I go upstairs and watch nearly a full season of "The Crown" in one sitting while gorging on Ghirardelli's seasonal peppermint chocolate squares.

Last night I startled awake on the couch around 1 a.m. to find my knitting needles resting precariously close to my face. You might think that would be a good time to go to bed, but no — time for second dinner! After polishing off the leftovers and shoveling a few handfuls of orange Cheez-It crackers into my face at the kitchen counter, I finally crawled into bed around 2, where I put one earbud in and opened Netflix on my phone. "Just one more episode," I told myself, knowing one would turn into two.

These days there's not much to go out and do, hardly anyone to see, and nowhere to rush, so who cares if I'm a little extra tired in the minutes before I chug my morning coffee?

Most days, Violet creeps into my room

meowing like a cat around 9 a.m. to wake me up for "Kitty Games," a languid, unhurried morning routine that involves purring for about an hour while pretending to eat fresh fish in bed. After Kitty Games, Violet and I don't go anywhere. We log on to Zoom. We color pictures. We read books. We go out into the yard. I take all day to finish a single load of laundry. I don't need to be my most disciplined self for this lifestyle.

I used to keep to-do lists but I don't worry much if nothing ever really gets done now, which is for the best in a world shared with a 5-year-old where no task goes uninterrupted.

Between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m., I hear "Mom!" approximately every two minutes:

"Mom! Where's Vanilla?" Violet yells every time she misplaces her favorite stuffed cat.

"Mom! I'm hungry!" (10 minutes after lunch.)

"Mom! I'm out of socks!" (They're all Barbie doll sleeping bags right now.)

"Mom! When are we getting a dog and why can't it be a chihuahua?"

"Mom! Why don't I have a sister?"

"Mom! My toe hurts!"

"Mom! Is it Christmas yet?"

"Mom! Is it Christmas soon?"

"Mom! Why isn't Christmas today?"

"Mom! Why did Bear Doggie die?"

"Mom! Where did Bear Doggie go?"

"Mom! When coronavirus dies, will it go where Bear Doggie went?"

"Mom! I really want a dog that's a tiny, cute chihuahua."

"Mom! I lost Vanilla again and I'm thirsty!"

When Violet's dad warns me about blue light coming off my phone at night or cites some study illustrating the importance of a good night's sleep, I secretly feel sorry for him. He's missing out, for which I am grateful, because when I stay up late I feel like a kid at the best slumber party ever, precisely because I am completely, gloriously alone.

One o'clock in the morning is predictably, magically quiet. I hear creaking sounds and convince myself there are ghosts in the den, owls on the roof, a bear in the yard. Unlike my adorable little daytime companion, none of them ask me for a thing.

Fighting my inner night owl seems pointless when there's nowhere to get up and go. I knit four purple stuffed kittens while watching "The Crown" and tell myself that finishing the cats justifies the excessive late-night TV. Then I start a fifth cat because I can't stop watching the new season with Princess Diana.

Despite the darkening circles under my eyes, I feel the most rested I've ever been. One day when the world lures me

out of bed early again, I'll probably feel nostalgic for this period of waking hibernation, these eerily quiet months emptied of daily activities and obligations, filled with binge watching and reading things there was never enough time for before.

Violet likes books about "big girls" who go to elementary school, like Ramona Quimby, young Amelia Bedelia and Junie B. Jones.

"When do I get to go to kindergarten?" Violet asks, her green eyes pleading, fighting back tears. "I miss my preschool, Mom."

"Next year," I say, hoping it's true, hoping she's not traumatized by never going back to preschool, which feels like it got cut off forever ago.

At this point it's almost hard to believe our unhurried, stuck-at-home routine will ever come to an end, for better and for worse. But one day, I know I'll look back and reminisce about these slow mornings when Violet woke me with a "meow" and we had all the time in the world to lie around, catching fish together with our paws.

Krisa Bruemmer lives in Vaughn.

Dan Clouse
THE OTHER SIDE



By Any Other Name

Too bad there isn't a superlative form for "unique." If the grammar police let me say "unique-est," I'd wear it out describing the KP.

From above, the Key Peninsula doesn't look like a key. Not on a map, either. Except maybe for those of us who look up at the clouds and see elephants or the Mario Brothers. After all, it's legal now.

Our three U.S. Post Offices, Wauna, Vaughn and Lakebay, are in Lake Kathryn, Key Center and Home. In the interests of making my point, without any ruth (another useful, missing word), I'm kicking the correctly named P.O. in Burley off the peninsula for its dull conformism. Besides, it's in unremarkable Kitsap County.

We boat in Von Geldern Cove, aka "Joe's Bay," and Mayo Cove, alias "Lake Bay." What some people call Dead Man's Island is labeled "Cutts Island" on the charts.

On the Key Peninsula, the KP, or "Tha' 884," you could say that we enjoy better than we name.

But tell that to the UPS driver who has to lay down the GPS and use the map in his head to find my doorstep. You'd think Humpty Dumpty had taken us through the looking glass with Alice and said, "When I name a place, it means just what I choose

it to mean — neither more nor less."

Fine. If ambiguity makes you uncomfortable, you're going to struggle on the Key "almost island." Water on three sides is a side short of an island.

Most people call me "Dan," but some call me "Daniel," while my children call me "Dad." Everyone calls me "you" in conversation, and some of you have called me "You (expletive)!" for taking the righthand overflow lane on the Purdy exit from northbound SR-16 at 1:59 p.m. I make do with "I." Can yours truly be all five at the same time? Deep stuff to think about next time you are out on grass looking up at the clouds.

Then there are the unique-est communication issues talking to forever-young KP old-timers who haven't updated their place names in 50 years. They shop at local archaeological sites they call Vissell's and Walt's. What is a newcomer to think of "I'm goin' into Vissell's for a box of sinkers?" or, "There was a big wreck in front of Libby's liquor store." Where is the Longbranch Mercantile anyway?

Transplanted boaters (to mix gardening and nautical metaphors shamelessly) make funny faces when they hear advice like: "Watch out for low tide at Driftwood Annie's." How many out-of-town guests have wondered what rowing out to "The Reef" was going to involve? Looking at anemones and crabs in the shallows? Or the wet surprise of a squirt in the shorts from a geoduck, one of those words that the natives pronounce better than they spell.

We drive by lots of unusual roadside signs. How 'bout the official greeting on the highway north of town, "Welcome Home," where the little preposition "to" is one-tenth the other words' size. Older citizens will smile at the memory of the sign just above the Wauna curve announcing "Emerald Shores" that was missing the crucial first "S" for several years. The "Air Mail" box mounted atop a phone pole above the Cornwall Gulch is still there.

On the topic of KP misnaming, why does Google think that both Food Markets are in Gig Harbor? So does Amazon.

But try picking up a Prime shipment from the Amazon locker in the back of the Food Market at Key Center when you've inadvertently sent it to the locker in the Lake Kathryn Village store. Pro tip: the one in Key Center is called "Sunset." The other one is "Channel."

If you are unable to get "Sunset" in Walt's, I mean the Food Market at Key Center, to open any of its doors because you're using the code for "Channel," and it's a Tuesday

CONTINUED PAGE 8

DAN CLOUSE FROM PAGE 7

before 2 p.m., well, that's different. The staff will cut you slack for one of those senior moments. You just wish the nice checkers would be gracious enough to ask for ID and not automatically apply the senior citizen discount.

Of course, I could have avoided the Amazon confusion altogether if I'd just sent it to the post office in Home, but addressed to Lakebay, of course.

Dan Clouse lives in Lakebay. Or maybe it's Bay Lake.

Letter to the Editor

NAMING THE NEW BRIDGE

The State Route 302 improvement project over Minter Creek is nearly finished. Most work is on winter suspension.

It's been suggested that the KP community formally name the replacement bridge. Some want it named for Ricky, our favorite friendly flagger, who entertained us with his effervescent spirit during months of construction, but we've checked into it and the state will not name a bridge after a living person.

A better suggestion is that we name it for Helen Davis Skahan, whose family property the road crosses. This seems more appropriate because of her historical connection to the Key Peninsula and the legacy of her garden flowers, which still bloom alongside the road. (See "Skahan Property History," KP News, Aug. 2017.)

Helen, of pioneer stock, died in 2015 at the age of 96. Her great granddaughter, Megan Sherrard, is interested in pursuing this memorial project and Kathy Faulk Lyons, who started the KP Blooms project, is interested in facilitating the garden.

We need to support our request with documentation and letters. We're applying for inclusion on the Pierce County Historic Register, and County Councilman Derek Young will help whenever he can. We can form an online committee to put the Helen Skahan Bridge on the map for us and for KP posterity. To get involved, contact me at SusanFMendenhall@gmail.com.

Susan Freiler Mendenhall, Vaughn

JANUARY HAIKU

Liken prejudice
To an onion tightly bound
Peel and start to cry.

Abel Uemura, Longbranch

Letters to the editor must be signed and include a daytime phone number. No anonymous letters will be published. Obituaries are printed at no charge as a community service. Limit to 300 words and provide high-resolution photographs. Submissions are used on a space-available basis and will be edited for length and clarity. Mail letters to: P.O. Box 3, Vaughn, WA 98394, or email to editor@keypennews.org.

OBITUARIES



Rebecca Jo Radonich Olsen

Rebecca "Becky" Jo Radonich Olsen, 67, of Longbranch, died Nov. 23. She was born May 25, 1953, at Tacoma General Hospital to parents Richard L. Radonich and Marjorie A. Rickert Radonich. She graduated from Peninsula High School in 1971.

Becky moved to Palm Springs, California, in 1981 where she resided for 17 years, working in the hospitality industry and created lifelong friendships.

She returned to the family home in Longbranch in 1998 to help her parents with the upkeep on their beautiful property and waterfront landscape. She spent the next 20 years as a loving, devoted caregiver to many in the communities of Longbranch and Key Center.

Anyone who knew Becky knew that she was incredibly hardworking, talented in her design and home projects, ferociously loved animals and nature, and was the best hugger around. She was funny, vibrant and had the kindest of hearts. She will be sorely missed by all who knew her.

Becky is survived by her beloved daughter, Gretchen Olsen of Longbranch; granddaughter Addison; two nieces, Molly McAllister of Seattle and Heidi Jackson of New Jersey; as well as many close cousins and dear friends.

A celebration of her life will be determined at a later date.

Donations may be made to the Key Peninsula Historical Society or your favorite dog rescue organization.



Shirley Jean Rickert Olson

Shirley Jean Rickert Olson was born to Minnie and George Rickert of Longbranch April 28, 1927, and died peacefully Dec. 4, at the age of 93. She lived her entire life on the Key Peninsula, which she described as "the best place on Earth!"

She graduated from Vaughn High School in 1946 and married Donald Olson of Vaughn in 1947. They built their family home right in the middle of Key Center on the Olson homestead property. They went on to spend the next 64 years together there, raising four beautiful daughters.

Shirley volunteered with many local organizations: Vaughn Community Church, Vaughn Elementary PTA, KP Civic Center, as a founding member of the Angel Guild, a charter member of the KP Historical Society, Ashes, and the Twilite Dance Club. Shirley loved to dance, travel, garden, decorate for all holidays, dress up in costumes, and loved all animals.

But the main highlight of her life was spending time with her grandchildren when she became "Mumma." She was a loving presence in all their lives, attending sporting events, birthdays, graduations, and hosting the best Christmas Eve on the KP. The party was open to all her family, friends and Santa, who visited every year.

She was the best mom ever and the best Mumma ever! Keep on dancing!

Shirley was predeceased by her husband, Donald Olson; her parents, George and Minnie Rickert; her in-laws Elmer and Elsie Olson; her best friend and sister Marge Radonich; and brother Dave Rickert. She is survived by her daughters Donna Summerhays of Tucson; Claudia Loy (Dale) of Key Center; Debby Englund (Lance) of Victor; and Darcie Long of Victor; grandchildren Kyle Koehn (Heather), Amy Shaver (Ty), Kara Koehn, Taryn Laakso, Bryan Long and Brandon Long; great-grandchildren Kelsy, Emily,

Dylan, Kacey, Isabella, Avery, Kaitlyn, Whitney; and great-great-grandchildren Kolten and Kavayah.

Thank you to the staff at The Arbor at Bremerton for taking care of Mom for the last two years. In lieu of flowers, please donate to the KP Civic Center, the KP Historical Society or the KP organization of your choice. Shirley's celebration of life will be later this year.



Kathryn Louise Zimmerman

Kathryn Louise Zimmerman, 70, of Gig Harbor died peacefully Nov. 8.

The daughter of Gordon and Gloria MacDonald, Kathy was born in Seattle March 26, 1950, the eldest of five children.

Kathy was an accomplished golfer, world traveler and the bookkeeper in her family-owned pharmacy, Costless in Purdy. A selfless wife and mother, Kathy spent many years carpooling her kids and their friends from rural Longbranch to their various sporting events around Pierce County.

After raising her children, Kathy traveled to Asia and later Europe, often with family, researching her ancestors and enjoying new cultures.

Kathy is survived by her husband of 50 years, Don Zimmerman; brother Marty (Lisa) MacDonald; sister Leslie (Don) Wagner; three children, Julie, Bryce and Drew (Allison) Zimmerman; and eight grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her brother, John (Becky) MacDonald; sister Mary MacDonald; and nephews Andrew and David MacDonald.

A private service was held at Haven of Rest Nov. 29 due to COVID-19 capacity restrictions.

Kathy would have appreciated any donations be made to Village Community Services, 3210 Smokey Pt. Dr. Suite 200, Arlington, WA 98223

Condolences may be sent to Cost Less Pharmacy, 14218 92nd Avenue NW, Gig Harbor, WA 98329.



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COVID-19 testing includes the very youngest of Peninsula students. *Peninsula School District*

COVID-19 Testing Puts PSD in Groundbreaking Role

Regular testing of students and staff has already provided helpful results in stopping the spread of the coronavirus.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department launched a COVID-19 pilot testing program at three school districts in the county in December, including Peninsula, White River and Eatonville. The pilot studied whether testing could add an extra layer of safety in addition to the steps the schools are already taking and provided baseline information about the status of COVID-19 in those schools.

“The pilot will give us another level of knowledge and a fair picture of what actually is occurring on campus with students who are positive, to allow us to isolate and prevent spread of COVID,” said Peninsula School District Assistant Superintendent Dan Gregory. “We hope it provides more information that will allow the district to open its doors to bringing more students back safely.”

TPCHD Director Anthony Chen described the pilot as a win-win-win.

“I get hate mail from those who want schools to open, but also letters of thanks for keeping people safe,” he said, noting that the department needs to balance health safety concerns with the emotional, educational and social needs of students.

Chen also said the health department seeks to reduce community transmission and increase access to testing in communities where that is a problem. The pilot was designed to address all of these issues.

The pilot kicked off with testing offered to the entire community at Key Peninsula Middle School and Gig Harbor High School Nov. 29 in collaboration with the Pierce County Department of Emergency Management. School-based testing for students and staff started the next day and

continued through Dec 18. TPCHD staff analyzed findings over the winter break with results expected in January.

The pilot used a 15-minute rapid antigen test with the same technology as home pregnancy tests. All on-site students, staff and bus drivers who had signed consents were tested once a week. Anyone

with a positive test was isolated and then tested with the more sensitive PCR test that has a two-day turnaround.

“We are very pleased,” Gregory said.

More than 1,000 students and staff were tested the first week and 1,624 participated the following week, according to District Information Officer Aimee Gordan. She said that student participation increased because they were able to reach more parents after the Thanksgiving holiday, and that parents were reassured once they knew students had no problems tolerating the nasal swab. More staff were able to participate when the district adjusted the testing schedule.

There were two positive tests in PSD the first week, and five the second. All cases originated from outside the schools and none occurred at schools on the Key Peninsula.

“After just the first week the data was already helpful,” Chen said. “As the rate of community transmission goes up, cases go up in churches, businesses and daycare. And so we expected cases to show up in schools. This result gives us hope. It is a great opportunity not to work just from assumptions.”

Chen said that reports suggest kids don't get as sick and are not as likely to spread disease, but as infection rates have risen, so have hospitalizations of children.

“The number of cases in students and staff parallel the community,” he said. “And we are learning that kids are often asymptomatic, so they don't get tested. We don't just want

to empirically say they will be fine, so send them back to school. We want to provide an extra layer of safety and mitigation so everyone feels OK.”

The Washington State Department of Health has started testing pilots in 12 other school districts, but they are based on testing those with symptoms, as well as routine testing of staff.

“Testing like ours will expand the data because we are testing asymptomatic people,” Chen said.

The current pilot was funded by \$7.8 million from the CARES Act, which ended Dec. 31. The cost included the tests themselves, protective equipment, other supplies, and 60 staff. Continuing or expanding the program will require additional funding, and Chen said the department is exploring ways to decrease costs.

Chen described the pilot as “starting with training wheels” given the relatively small number of students. Starting in rural districts with less access to resources made sense, but he would like to consider expanding to Tacoma, which has a higher percentage of students with risk factors such as race, limited knowledge of English and homelessness. ■

“AS THE RATE OF COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION GOES UP, CASES GO UP IN CHURCHES, BUSINESSES AND DAYCARE. AND SO WE EXPECTED CASES TO SHOW UP IN SCHOOLS. THIS RESULT GIVES US HOPE.”



An oyster farm on Burley Lagoon in 2018 during a king tide. Ed Johnson, KP News

King Tides Coming: How You Can Capture Them

For a democracy, there are a lot of kings in these parts: king salmon, golden-crowned kinglets, “king ducks” (that would be geoducks), and – every midwinter – the high waters known as king tides.

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

The University of Washington Sea Grant Program has again issued a call for the public to take photographs of the year’s highest tides on Puget Sound and the outer coast. The images sent in by citizen scientists will be added to an ongoing effort to document the effects of high water on local waterfronts.

Sea level has risen slightly but steadily in the last several decades. The rise will accelerate over the next 20 years, according to climate models, though predictions for total rise locally range from a few inches to nearly a foot — and ongoing rise beyond that.

King tides offer a window into the future, giving scientists and citizens alike a look at how tidal flooding might affect both natural beaches and manmade structures.

“King tide” is an informal term originating in Australia and the Pacific islands that has spread to North America. The highest tides of the year — the kings — occur in winter for astronomical reasons. The Earth’s perihelion is Jan. 2, when its orbit takes it closest to the sun, creating the largest solar influence on the tides. The moon, which exerts a more powerful sway over the tides, reaches its monthly perigee — its closest point to Earth — Jan. 9.

The new moon arrives Jan. 13, putting the three celestial bodies in a straight sun-moon-Earth line, effectively combining the sun and moon’s gravitational pull on the tides — a situation known as a spring tide, which describes the “springing forth” of water at those times. All of these factors will combine to provide a window into the future.

As with most things in nature, it’s a little more complex than the predictable

movement of planets and moons. Weather conditions influence tides, and actual tides can be different from predicted tides by over a foot. Wind determines the size and reach of waves. High atmospheric pressure compresses the water and causes both high and low tides to be lower. The reverse is true of low atmospheric pressure. Puget Sound’s twisting topography amplifies and mutes each tidal movement, as an average of 1.5 cubic miles of seawater works its way into and out of Puget Sound.

King tides continue for several days after the apex of prime celestial conditions

because tides “slosh” — an informal term. Puget Sound is a particularly good place to

note this tidal sloshing, as tides at the south end of Puget Sound, around Olympia, have a greater range than those around Admiralty Inlet, at the northern entrance.

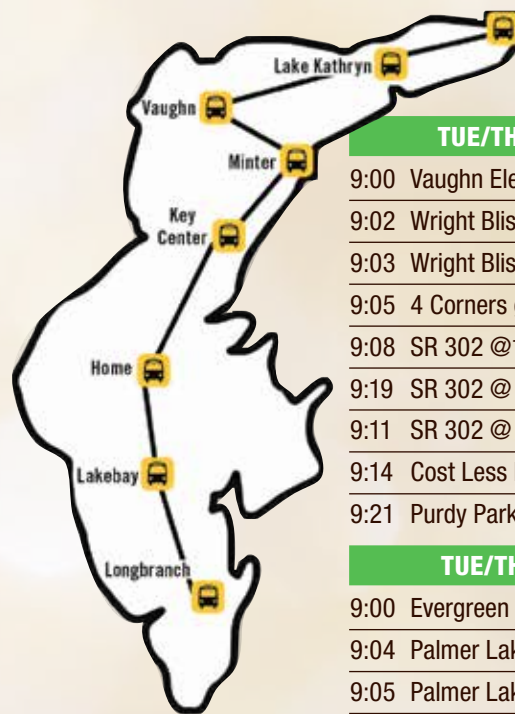
This complexity makes it all the more important to cast a wide net when documenting the effects of king tides. What happens on one side of the Key Peninsula may not happen on the other side, and models of the future based on a handful of study locations are less powerful than those based on data from everywhere. Citizen-scientist photographs will work to identify flood-prone locations and build understanding of how sea level rise will impact each community.

The most useful photos are those where the tide height can be gauged against landmarks like buildings, roads, sea walls and piers. “MyCoast” is a free phone app available for download on Android or iOS which makes sending photos, complete with location data, nearly as simple as taking the shot. Photos may also be submitted online to mycoast.org/wa. ■

NEW TUESDAY/THURSDAY SCHEDULE

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TUE/THUR MORNING NORTH

- 9:00 Vaughn Elementary School
- 9:02 Wright Bliss Rd NW @ Olson Dr NW
- 9:03 Wright Bliss Road @ 104th St Ct NW
- 9:05 4 Corners gas station @ SR 302
- 9:08 SR 302 @150th Ave/Lake Holiday bus shed
- 9:19 SR 302 @ 140th Ave/Lake of the Woods
- 9:11 SR 302 @ Charboneau Construction
- 9:14 Cost Less Pharmacy/Lake Kathryn Village
- 9:21 Purdy Park & Ride

TUE/THUR MORNING SOUTH

- 9:00 Evergreen Elementary School
- 9:04 Palmer Lake public access 24th St SW
- 9:05 Palmer Lake 21st St SW @ 193rd Ave
- 9:10 KPCS Senior Center & Food Bank
- 9:11 Home Gas Station @ KP Hwy N
- 9:10 167th Ave Ct NW @ KP Hwy N
- 9:15 Volunteer Park
- 9:18 Food Market in Key Center
- 9:19 KP Hwy N @ Minterwood Dr NW
- 9:26 Lake Kathryn Village/Cost Less Pharmacy
- 9:32 Purdy Park & Ride

TUE/THUR AFTERNOON SOUTHBOUND

- 4:42 Purdy Park & Ride
- 4:49 Lake Kathryn Village/Cost Less Pharmacy
- 4:52 SR 302 @ Windermere Realty, 118th Ave
- 4:54 SR 302 @ 140th Ave/Lake of the Woods
- 4:56 SR 302 @150th Ave/Lake Holiday bus shed
- 4:58 4 Corners gas station @ SR 302
- 5:00 Wright Bliss Road @ 104th St Ct NW
- 5:01 Wright Bliss Road @ Olson Dr NW
- 5:03 Food Market in Key Center
- 5:06 Volunteer Park
- 5:07 167th Ave Ct NW @ KP Hwy N
- 5:10 Home Gas Station @ KP Hwy N
- 5:11 KPCS Senior Center & Food Bank
- 5:16 Palmer Lake public access 24th St SW
- 5:17 Palmer Lake 21st St SW @ 193rd Ave
- 5:21 Evergreen Elementary School



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Naturalist Notebook

Dion Rurik

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

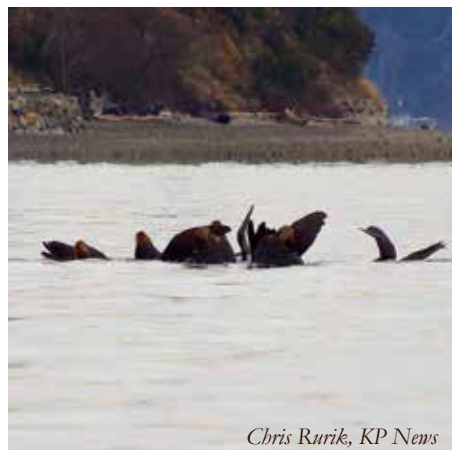
ASK THE KP NATURE GUIDE:

SEA LIONS “JUGGING”

Q: The other day I saw a bunch of sea lions floating with their flippers in the air, just off the beach. They were hardly moving. Were they okay? What were they doing?

— Mimi Chau, Glen Cove.

A: These sea lions! They keep trying to trick me. I'll see a curved fin in the distance and get all excited about an orca — and when I raise my binoculars it's a sea lion flipper. Only recently did I see my first raft of them behaving in the way you described. From a distance I thought it was a tree with many branches floating in the bay. But no, I counted six to eight sea lions in two groups. They stayed like that for an hour. The flipper-lifting has to do with heat



Chris Rurik, KP News

regulation. Scientists call the behavior “jugging,” following the lead of old-time sealers who called it the jug handle position. California sea lions come to Puget Sound in winter, and while our waters offer plenty of food, it's a lot colder here than on their Californian and Mexican breeding grounds.

All mammals work hard to maintain a consistent internal temperature. Marine mammals work especially hard: water conducts heat away from the body 25 times faster than air. Sea lions have as adaptations a compact body shape, a thick layer of blubber, and, in their skin and extremities, special cross-linked lacings of veins — so-called *retia mirabilia*, Latin for “miraculous nets” — that allow heat to pass from outgoing blood to ingoing blood. Still, a sea lion's flippers are the least insulated parts of its body, and by holding them out of the cold water while it rests, it is able to conserve its precious body heat.

SISKIN INVASION

Have you walked under an alder this winter thinking it was empty, only to have its crown explode into a hundred tiny birds? Most likely those were pine siskins, a small finch that travels far and wide in search of seeds. This winter is proving to be exceptional for them — we have a strong cone crop here and food sources farther north are likely limited. Look for siskins at feeders and passing like schools

of baitfish above the treetops. Sometimes they'll flush from roadsides.

You might also see smaller flocks of red crossbills, a finch with a curious bill it uses to pry open conifer cones. They also appear in great numbers in some winters, an event called an irruption. Listen for their strong “kip kip kip” calls.

If you're extra savvy and look hard, you might even find a rarer arctic finch like a common redpoll or a white-winged crossbill. If you do that, I'll come sprinting over to have a look.

AT THE FEEDER: TOWNSEND'S WARBLER

Unless you feed with suet or mealworms, a Townsend's warbler is unlikely to pay a visit to your bird feeder. I was lucky enough to be at my mom's house when this male arrived. While we flipped out — such bright colors ought to be illegal in wintertime — it jumped around to inspect her offerings of seed, moving from perch to perch, even looking into the window as if to ask: “But where's the good stuff? I'm no vegetarian!”

The first bird to make my jaw drop was a Townsend's warbler just like the one above. It was just after college, in winter, and with my first real pair of binoculars I was watching a flock of chickadees and kinglets in a cedar when it popped into my field of vision. What!? I yelled. Later that day I ran to the library and began to seriously learn about birds. Needless to say, it was a slippery slope.

Most wood warblers are in Central

MISSION FOR KIDS

Hey kids, ever wonder where all the bugs go in winter? This month's mission is all about cold-weather survival. I want you to go and dig around in fallen leaves, rotting wood, soil, and under rocks around the house. Make a list of all the signs of bug life you find. Remember — some bugs might be adult but others could be eggs, larvae or pupae. Take note of size, shape, color and number. And don't forget to report on what you find — together we can learn a lot. Send me your results at nature@keypennews.org.



Into the
WILD
EXPLORING WITH THE
KP NATURE GUIDE

America this time of year, but a few hardy Townsend's warblers spend the winter in our evergreens, finding enough insect and spider life to keep them going until spring. Look for them with other small songbirds in tall trees.

WANTED: MOUNTAIN BEAVER SIGHTINGS

It's the anti-Sasquatch: a creature we all believe doesn't exist though it actually does. Scientists call it a “living fossil.” I'm looking for locations where mountain beavers thrive on the Key Peninsula. Though they live underground and are seldom seen, their holes — sometimes with piles of food stacked in front — and their habit of gnawing down young raspberry canes and fir trees can give them away. Generally shaped like true beavers, mountain beavers have a stub of a tail, are smaller, and have long fingers and long whiskers.

I've heard speculation that they have declined in the area, and I'd like to do some basic research on their local habits and habitats. Did you know that mountain beavers are unable to produce concentrated urine, which forces them to live in places where they can drink over half their weight in water every day? Could this be a relevant fact in a region where summers are getting drier? Only by paying close attention will we gather clues as to how they're doing. Much about the lives of mountain beavers remains unknown. Email me leads at nature@keypennews.org. ■

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THE TRICK TO GETTING THROUGH DARK WINTER: THE DREAMS PROMISED IN SEED CATALOGS



The Miracle of Seeds

Key Peninsula gardeners settle in for the winter to plan for the coming year.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

By January gardens are put to rest. Beds are cleared, mulch is spread. In the comfort of winter life spent indoors, people begin to dream and plan for the coming spring. It is a time to cozy up with what, for an avid gardener, may be better than a good novel. “People here do love their seed catalogs,” said KP resident and Pierce County Master Gardener Dale Skrivanich.

This is when gardeners like Catherine Kosel begin to pore over their catalogs. Kosel grew up on the KP and one of her earliest memories is standing in the family garden with her father when she was a toddler. She helped with the “fun things,” like planting potatoes when she was about 5, and was put to work in earnest by the time she was 10, weeding the beds. The garden was primarily vegetables in the beginning but expanded to include flowers — adding to the number of catalogs that can fill her days.

“You can look at things online,” she said, “but it is much harder to really see all the seeds and compare the growing seasons.” She starts with the basic things she knows she will need to grow — things like corn, beans, tomatoes — and then she adds the things she just can’t live without. It may be particular squashes for their unique shapes and colors, or a flower that intrigues her.

Seeds are miraculous things. For plants they are the key to survival. A plant may be able to sprout from a shoot or a stem — anyone trying to eradicate blackberries or buttercups knows that. But evolution

and spread beyond the mother plant require seeds. They contain an embryo and the food it needs to get a start. They have any number of mechanisms to assure they get sent far and wide, be it by animals, wind or water. They may be contained in a protective shell, supplied with wings, coated by burrs, or surrounded by something tasty.

Humans have foraged and eaten seeds and the fruit that contain them for more than 100,000 years. Crops were first cultivated about 12,000 years ago in the Fertile Crescent in the Middle East. Humans have toiled to bend nature ever since and then on occasion, to heal the resulting damage.

From the beginning, people used cross-breeding to introduce desirable traits in crops and animals, but it wasn’t until 1866 that Gregor Mendel, an Austrian monk, identified the basic mechanism of inheritance through his work with peas.

Author John Navazio, in “A Short History of Agricultural Seed,” wrote that before World War II farms were largely self-sufficient, growing their own livestock and seed. The three decades following the war brought agricultural industrialization. Fertilizers, pesticides, mechanization and more sophisticated plant breeding (incorporation of disease resistance, improved production and nutritional quality) brought a faith in science to solve world hunger. The agricultural industrial complex began to buy up seed companies and selected seeds that thrived in environments with ample irrigation and fertilizer, not “field toughened” as in prior times.

At the same time, organic farming was

coming into its own. In the 1970s and ’80s farmers worked a greater variety of lands and built soil health through local nutrients rather than depending on fertilizers. Early on they paid less attention to seed sources, assuming the seeds supplied by seed companies were what they needed. When they realized that those newer varieties did not necessarily meet their needs, they began to work on decentralizing seed sources and encouraging seed diversity. At about the same time, seed banks were established to preserve plant diversity. Worldwide there are more than 1,000, including one at Washington State University and one at the University of Washington.

For those looking for some winter reading, the Key Pen Gardeners group on Facebook had several recommendations. The top two contenders were Territorial Seed Company which, with its Pacific Northwest roots, is especially suited to local gardens, and Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds in Missouri. Both have websites full of useful information. Skrivanich advises paying close attention to the growing season when making selections. It’s very short.

Skrivanich recommends Irish Eyes Garden Seeds in Ellensburg; Dixondale Farms in Texas for onions and leeks; Kitazawa Seed Company in California for Asian vegetables (they have recipes if some of the produce is unfamiliar) and MIGardener in Missouri for premium heirloom seeds. Other Northwest favorites are Nichols Garden Nursery in Oregon, Uprising Seeds. For flower lovers Kosel turns to Skagit Valley’s Floret Flowers. ■



KPGardens



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A MAJOR SHIFT IN HABITS OF WORD, THOUGHT AND DEED IS NECESSARY TO MOVE FORWARD

The Epic Story of America's Great Migration

MAUREEN REILLY

I had no idea.

I have been an avid student of American history both before my arrival in this country and while living here and I still had no idea.

I prided myself on the breadth of my knowledge and the variety of books and articles I had read. Certainly, I read about the Jim Crow laws and about lynching in the South as well as the depredations of the KKK and still I had no idea of the full effect of that culture on Black Americans. I

allowed myself to believe that I was learning about isolated instances and that those threats couldn't possibly lie over the whole land like a suffocating blanket.

I was completely wrong.

At first glance, "The Warmth of Other Suns" is an intimidating book of many pages and it could have been a deadly dull recitation of abuse and repression. Instead, I found myself wrapped up in the story of real people who had hope and vision and iron determination. It's the story of the mass exodus of Blacks from the South starting at the end of World War I to the 1970s, and why they left.

By following the lives of three people from different areas in the South and of different backgrounds to their separate destinations in the North and West, Isabel Wilkerson paints a full picture of life for Black people in the country of their birth in the 20th century and beyond. The story of those three individuals and their families is interspersed with demographic studies that clearly show how migrants from the South were more likely

to work, stay out of debt and educate their children than Blacks born in the urban North. She shows that they had more in common with Irish immigrants fleeing the famine and Europeans running from religious and ethnic persecution than other Americans simply moving from one part of the country to another.

Wilkerson's prose is quite beautiful and at times lyrical. Her description of the Great Migration being akin to three majestic rivers flowing from the South along the train lines

to cities in the North and West is a visual image that will stay with me.

Even in the relatively enlightened culture of the North and West, Ida Mae, George and Robert were boxed in and denied simple freedoms that white people have taken for granted all their lives. This is the story of how they persevered and to what

extent they overcame those difficulties. This is the story of how they always felt it was all worth it.

I had no idea, but I do now — somewhat. I can now make

more sense of what we are hearing from the Black Lives Matter movement due to a better understanding of how Blacks in the South were truly in fear for their lives every day. I have a better understanding of how it can be that young Black men are afraid they might be shot by a policeman just for driving their own car. At the same time, I understand the distress of those in law enforcement who are good people doing their best when they hear demands for defunding the police. This book reinforces the fact that a major shift in habits of word, thought and deed on all sides is necessary for this country to move forward together.

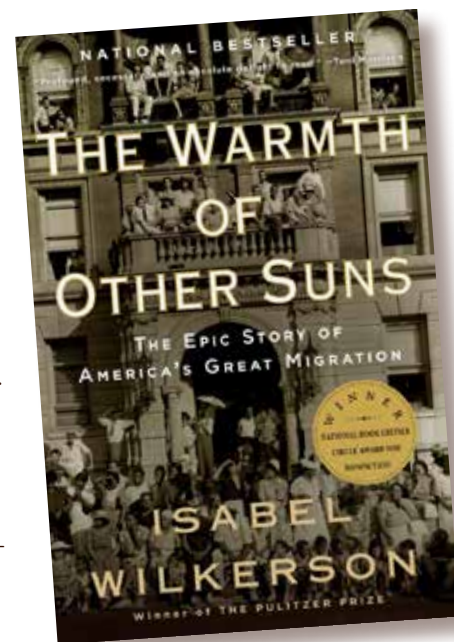
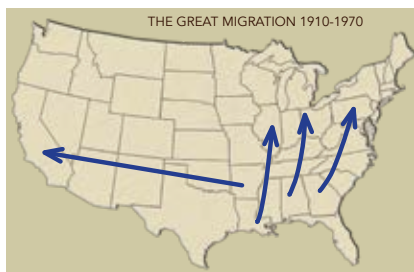
In the last two paragraphs of the book, Wilkerson quotes from the 1922 Chicago Commission on Race Relations report on the riots of 1919: "It is important for our white citizens to remember that the

Negroes alone of all our immigrants came to America against their will by the special compelling invitation of the whites; that the institution of slavery was introduced,

expanded and maintained by the United States by the white people and for their own benefit; and they likewise created the conditions that followed emancipation.

"Our Negro problem, therefore, is not of the Negro's making. No group in our population is less responsible for its existence. But every group is responsible for its continuance ... Both races need to understand that their rights and duties are mutual and equal and that their interests in the common good are identical." ■

"OUR NEGRO PROBLEM, THEREFORE, IS NOT OF THE NEGRO'S MAKING. NO GROUP IN OUR POPULATION IS LESS RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS EXISTENCE."



"THE WARMTH OF OTHER SUNS"

Published 2010 by Random House, 622 pages.

In 1994, Isabel Wilkerson became the first African American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize in journalism. She has also won the George S. Polk Award, Journalist of the Year from the National Association of Black Journalists, the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award, the National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction and the National Humanities Medal. "Other Suns" was named one of the 10 Best Nonfiction Books of the 2010s by Time Magazine and is on The New York Times list of the Best Nonfiction of All Time.



Wilkerson has been a professor at Boston University, Emory, Princeton, Northwestern and Columbia.

I was leaving the South to fling myself into the unknown... I was taking a part of the South to transplant in alien soil, to see if it could grow differently, if it could drink of new and cool rains, bend in strange winds, respond to the warmth of other suns and, perhaps, to bloom.

—Richard Wright, "Black Boy," 1945





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Fruitcakes We Have Heard on High

KATRINA HERRINGBOTTOM

It was late one Christmas Eve and I was sharing a piano bench with some guy I thought was my husband. He was playing away and the assembled company, back when company could assemble, were all singing loudly and badly and talking over each other at the same time, but he was a really good piano player plowing ahead undaunted. I was so surprised and kept spilling my drink on him to get his attention and saying, "Honey, honey, when did you learn to play the piano?"

Then his wife appeared. She was this short woman from New Jersey named Reni Moriarity.

She gave me a look that said much, but managed to compress the meaning verbally by yelling over the din: "Would you care to try my fruit bread?"

She extended a tray with slices of what, even in those challenging conditions, was obviously fruitcake.

"Fruit bread? Fruit? Bread? Fruit. Bread." I was having trouble with the concept.

My real husband then appeared and said, "Of course, we'd love some. We've heard so much about it."

There was a taste of smokey cinnamon, sweet and bitter apricot, and a bunch of other stuff.

"What makes this bread, exactly?" I demanded, still chewing.

"You bake it in a (expletive) loaf pan," Reni said.

That was so her, as I would come to learn, appreciate and love.

We went into the kitchen — her kitchen as it turned out — where she went on to insist it was properly fruit bread and not fruitcake with the evidence of two still warm loaf pans and some singed parchment paper among remains of egg shell, baking powder, and an unfinished bottle of wine, which we finished while arguing the merits of various stewed fruits and husbands.

She passed only a few years later, but never lost her taste for life or sense of humor, making for a short but glorious friendship. She was a wonderful painter, photographer, cook and spirit. And she made everything funny, the kind of person whose laughter cut through everything, all the unhappiness, everything that wasn't right. I enjoyed the world more because I saw it through her eyes when I was with her, including how to make a proper fruitcake (that is really fruit bread) which, as she said of so many things, "is the only (expletive) way it ought to be (expletive) done."

Reni's Fruit Bread

- ¾ cup flour
- ¾ cup brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- 1½ cups dried apricot halves
- 2 cups whole dates
- 3 cups walnuts
- 3 eggs
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Preheat oven to 300. Mix together flour, brown sugar, baking powder and baking soda. Stir in apricots, dates and walnuts until coated. Beat eggs and vanilla until foamy and add the mixture. Pour in equal parts into two small buttered loaf pans lined with 4x8 inch parchment paper. Bake for 1 hour. ■



We'd love to feature a dish from your KP kitchen that friends and family ask for. Email details to editor@keypennews.org with your phone number; we'll be in touch. (Don't worry, we can do most of the writing.)

Changing of the Guard at KP Community Council

Outgoing Pres. Don Swensen passed the virtual gavel to Chuck West, who will lead the grassroots organization through 2021.

STAFF REPORT

Chuck West of Lakebay, who served three previous terms as president, was again elected president of the Key Peninsula Community Council by a vote of its seated 2021 directors during its regular meeting Dec. 9 via Zoom.



Director RoxAnne Simon, who has previously served on the council, was elected vice president; newcomer Angela Mattison-Lindbom was elected secretary; and beginning her second year on the council, Director Joan Cyr was voted in to become the organization's treasurer.

KPC elected its 2021 directors virtually Nov. 11. The group consists of some newcomers: Edale Clark was elected to serve Area 1, Angela Mattison-Lindbom in Area 2, Kathy Lyons in Area 3; and Max Michelson and RoxAnne Simon were each elected to serve in Area 4.

In one of his final acts as president, Don Swensen proposed filling two vacant director positions in Areas 1 and 3 with the appointments of Kristen Augusztiny and David Michelson to serve as directors at large. Both have served as directors in years past.

Established in 2004 to encourage civic involvement, KPC seeks "to address, respond to and meet the needs of the community residents by developing partnerships, sponsorships and programs in order to maintain and improve the quality of life on the Key Peninsula."

KPC has grown considerably from its early days and today maintains a staffed office in Key Center where it provides a home base for meeting with specialists from the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, the KP Partnership for a Healthy Community, School Bus Connects, KP Farm Council, the Suicide Prevention Coalition and others. Prior to the pandemic, Pierce County Councilmember Derek Young and his staff met with KP constituents at the KPC office as well.

In October, KPC managed and facilitated a successful virtual 2020 KP forum for candidates in local and national elections, a semiannual event that received considerable praise and was considered

by many to be preferable to the traditional in-person forum. "Honestly, I thought it was the best candidate forum yet," said retiring KPC Director Marcia Harris. "Hosting it on Zoom was very effective."

Danna Webster, a tireless community booster, recently retired from the post of Swensen's executive liaison and was succeeded by Irene Torres, who Swensen appointed to the position in late 2020. Torres has served on the council as a director on and off for eight years.

"The council has been a huge part of my life on the KP," Torres told KP News. "Even when I wasn't an elected director, I volunteered. I have always wanted to see them succeed."

Swensen, who retired himself from the council following six years of service, acknowledged outgoing 2020 KPC directors Bob Anderson, Marcia Harris, Robert McCrossin and Irene Torres.

Swensen spoke to the ongoing efforts of Director Mark Cockerill in particular for "busting his hump on this broadband thing. He's done amazing work, as I knew he would." (See "Internet From Above," KP News, Dec. 2020.)

He offered special thanks to Webster and praised KPC employee Lisa Larson who he said went above and beyond the call of duty "to make things happen in 2020." ■

KP Bischoff Food Bank Relocates

To avoid eviction, the food bank needed a new rental and quick. Food bank leadership reached out and found a sympathetic landlord willing to help.

STAFF REPORT

KP Bischoff Food Bank was back in operation Saturday, Dec. 19, at its new location at 12402 134th Avenue NW at the corner of the Key Peninsula Highway after a sudden and exhausting move.

"We are so happy to be open and start helping people again," said Gail Torgerson, Bischoff's secretary who coordinated the move. "It's a little cramped but we'll make it work. We don't want people to go without our services."

The situation was dire in early December when Bischoff faced eviction at the worst possible time — just before Christmas in the middle of a pandemic that has caused unemployment and food bank use to soar. (See "KP Bischoff Food Bank Forced to Move," KP News, Dec. 2020.)

The move presented many logistical challenges and Torgerson credits the community that turned up when they needed to get the heavy stuff out. She said that on any given day there were half a dozen to 20 people helping with the move. To supplement the food bank's truck and van, volunteers showed up with pickup trucks or loaded up their backseats to get all the food moved quickly and properly stored.

"We'll be fine. We've never skipped a beat and we don't intend to now," said Kimberly

Miller, board vice president and operations manager of the nearly 15-year-old food bank. "I just feel totally blessed that we could secure that building."

"The location is smaller. Things will be tight but that's OK," she said. "It's temporary and we have a home."

Nonprofit food bank or not, finding a new landlord with reasonable terms while under threat of eviction was not easy, but Miller said they never lost faith. "The owner was so gracious, she totally understood our needs and allowed us a month-to-month lease."

Landlord Jessica Kim told KP News she was glad to help the food bank under the circumstances, "... people need to have food."

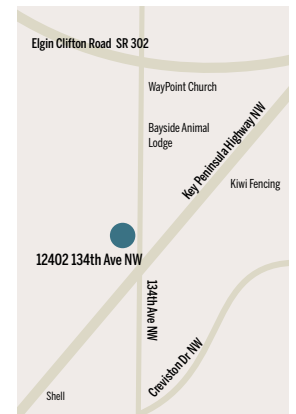
There is an adjacent space for rent that would make things more comfortable, but it would increase Bischoff's monthly expenses substantially.

Miller said the food bank has potential partnerships lined up that may allow it to build a place of its own. Board members have been actively researching suitable parcels in line with existing zoning and land use rules. Miller said if they were lucky enough to find a place with a well and septic already installed, things would go much faster — especially since Pierce County has always been supportive of food banks.

"There are already so many people who have come out of the woodwork ready and willing to help ... I just know that once we actually purchase the property, people will be falling from the sky to help," she said.

"Ben Paganelli and his wife (Susan) and that group (Key Peninsula Partnership for a Healthy Community) have always been very supportive of Bischoff and they know the value we bring," Miller said. "While they don't have hundreds of thousands of dollars to donate for a build, as far as resources, they provide a wealth of support to us and have since their inception."

Miller said for the time being the food bank may expand operating hours to six days a week, considering the serious increase in food insecurity, including for people who may never have needed to ask for help before. "We want to be there for them." ■



What's Happening

The KP Events Calendar isn't quite as busy as it used to be, now most meetings and events are virtual. They are listed on the new KP Events Calendar, online. When live events resume, we'll bring back the printed version.

On the web calendar, it's easy to see what's scheduled by day, week or month.

It's very easy to add your nonprofit meeting or event. Need a little help? Email calendar@keypennews.org

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See the Events Calendar, right under the "Community" tab



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Sharing the Good News

When a do-gooder does their thing, let's give them some applause!

We've created a special website section for that very thing. It's part of the Community Section, along with our Events Calendar.

It's the perfect way to share praise and pride for those who are taking care to take extra care, with Good Deeds like:

Local Teens Collect New Blankets and Socks

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Evergreen Elementary Families Get Holiday Cheer

Add yours — it's free and you can even show a photo. After editor's review, the Good Deed will be posted and ready to share.

There are so many KP people doing good things, we created a page just for them, at

[keypennews.org](https://www.keypennews.org)

Good Deeds is right under the "Community" tab

Calling All Dog Lovers

Big or small. Young or old. February is Dog Month and we'd like to see yours.

Best in the world, smarter than spouse, most beautiful sweeties and circus dogs are all eligible.

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TOP LEFT Logger John Jaggi's big toy on tour in the First Annual Home Parade of Lights. *Ed Johnson, KP News* **TOP RIGHT** Home for the holidays in Lakebay. *David Zeigler, KP News* **MID LEFT** Fred Leensta takes Santa Mike Fay for a sweet ride at the LIC Kids and Christmas. *David Zeigler, KP News* **CENTER** Three bright faces wonder if Santa really stole Rudolph's nose. *Anne Nesbit* **MID RIGHT** Mrs. Claus strikes a pose with her very own Santa Jerry Nebel. *Anne Nesbit* **BOTTOM LEFT** A colorful parade of boats from Longbranch Marina tour Carr Inlet. *Pol Robinson* **BOTTOM RIGHT** Santa and crew hitched a ride from KP Fire Dept. to tour select KP neighborhoods. *Anne Nesbit*