



KEY PENINSULA NEWS



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THE VOICE OF THE KEY PENINSULA

February 2021 Vol. 48 No. 2

KP Community Services Puts \$100K County Grant to Work

Long-needed improvements at the Home senior center and food bank made without missing a day of service.

KAMRYN MINCH, KP NEWS

The Key Peninsula Community Services building in Home is a bit of a head-turner these days. Exciting changes are in the works inside and out for the nearly 100-year-old structure, home to the former Lakebay Elementary School until the 1940s.

Thanks to generous COVID-19 relief funding from Pierce County, the property will get several much needed upgrades.

A couple of big exterior projects have already been completed, such as installation of a new cedar handrail on the ramp leading to the office of the senior center.

Another project was repaving the parking lot entrance. An increase in the flow of traffic for food bank and senior meal pickups over the last year caused more wear and tear to existing potholes. When funds became available, these issues were among the first to be addressed.

“We’ve been really putting a lot of effort into being good stewards of the funds that we were given,” said KPCS Executive Director Willow Eaton. “The whole focus was that we would spend it on things that would serve us for many years.”

The new asphalt project was funded by a portion of a \$100,000 grant awarded by the county. It was a challenge trying

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New cedar railing for the ADA ramp on the 100-year-old building. *Kamryn Minch, KP News*



TO CELEBRATE VALENTINE MONTH, WE’VE DEDICATED THIS ISSUE TO OUR FURRY, FRIENDLY 4-LEGGED FAMILY MEMBERS, OUR BELOVED DOGS, CHAMPIONS OF UNCONDITIONAL LOVE AND UNDYING DEVOTION. (above) As part of a clever multi-media marketing program, 5-year old Violet Bruemmer has decorated the walls of her house with mini-posters of “snuggly and loveable” dogs. She is certain that 2021 will bring not only some relief from the pandemic, but a much-needed new dog playmate. *Krisa Bruemmer, KP News*

Vaccine Roll-out Ramps Up to Goal of 45,000 a Day

Distribution and access to vaccination sign-ups present challenges.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

Gov. Jay Inslee directed the Washington Department of Health to move the state into Phase 1B, Tier 1, of its COVID-19 vaccination distribution plan Jan. 18, allowing everyone over the age of 65 and anyone 50 or older living in multigenerational homes (excluding parents and their children) to receive the vaccine.

That means about 1 million more Washington residents are now eligible for the vaccine.

The state goal is to vaccinate 45,000 people a day. As of Jan. 18, the average was 15,500, for a total of 335,836 out of 608,325 doses on hand since mid-December.

DOH anticipates moving to Tiers 2, 3 and 4 in late winter

or early spring, when more vaccine becomes available and at least 50% of those eligible have received it. Succeeding phases will extend eligibility to people with certain underlying medical conditions and school employees. Vaccines in Phase 1A went to people at the highest risk of coronavirus transmission and illness, including health care workers, first responders and older adults living in group settings.

The Pierce County Council approved \$4 million Jan. 19 to a

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LOOK FOR MIDDLE GROUND.

Here's What I Think About That

LISA BRYAN,
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

A year has passed since the first mention of the novel coronavirus in a KP News staff meeting. The whole world has changed since.

The stress and fatigue from living during the pandemic comes in waves. Winter was bound to be difficult and it is that. Families and friends are leaning on each other, being creative to find solutions to ease the pain and challenges of hard times getting worse.

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department officials confirmed Jan. 24 that the UK variant strain of COVID-19 labeled B.1.1.7 has been identified in an existing case of the virus in Pierce County.

Viruses change as they spread and these variants spread more readily from person to person.

"This new information does not change how we fight COVID-19," said TPCHD Director Anthony Chen. "Everyone needs to continue to do their part to minimize the spread — and get vaccinated when it's your turn — so we can put this pandemic behind us."

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported there is no evidence the variants cause more severe cases or an increased chance of death but they can produce more cases. The CDC recently predicted the UK variant will become the dominant strain in the U.S. by March.

"I'm so tired of constant crisis and negativity," a local health care provider confided to me. "My system has been running on high alert about work, COVID and politics for over a year and it just feels toxic."

Did we as Americans reach a watershed moment as a nation? How we respond to the events of Jan. 6 at the U.S. Capitol, and Olympia, will determine how we face extremism even as we argue over what to call them: a riot, insurrection, attempted coup?

Perhaps the time has come for us to focus on what we love instead of what we hate.

It was true love that lured me into river rafting. Thrilling outdoor adventure was not my thing, but it was his and that was good enough for me. Our first date was a late season run on the dam-controlled Tieton River. He

pulled into my driveway to pick me up sitting behind the wheel of a 1953 Ford school bus converted to living space for the traveling life on the road. After that weekend, I would have followed him anywhere, and did.

We married three months later. And with that single act I happily became the mother of a four-year old boy whose own natural curiosity led to the transformative expansion of mine. Our lives were forever changed by saying "yes" 32 years ago.

Many years and countless river trips later, I never lost that breathless anxiety and sense of dread that came with scouting from shore at the top of the most challenging rapids. From my perspective, the very worst camps were always above a big rapid where it was impossible to get away from the thunderous roar. I worried myself sick all night while the hardcore boaters jacked themselves up with excitement.

For me it was always about the trip, traveling through time inside deep canyons and the wonders of truly untouched wild places. The Wild and Scenic Selway River, inside the protected Bitterroot Wilderness area straddling Montana and Idaho, proved to me the existence of perfect balance in nature. Every plant and creature occupied its own niche in time and season.

North-facing walls along the river corridor were lush, green and wet. Around the bend, south-facing walls were entirely typical of arid environments, complete with cacti, lizards and big rattlesnakes absorbing the warmth of the sun. Fields of wildflowers and great towering trees appeared pristine in unintended natural perfection.

Our trip was at spring high water, when the Selway is described as big and violent. The most difficult rapids are concentrated in a Class IV stretch called the Ladle. The guidebooks caution that capsizing or coming out of your raft or kayak here will mean a long and lonely 5-mile swim through more or less continuous rapids.

The entrance is a very narrow channel. The first boats down from our group had very rough runs, but managed to stay upright. Miraculously we hit the entrance just right and it was as if we rode a magic carpet with water exploding all around us. In my memory, it was the most incredible whitewater run we ever made — unforgettable.

Reading whitewater is an art. There is a natural instinct to skirt the big, churning water and sneak through on the edges. I've learned that most of the time it's best to stay in the main channel with some forward momentum rather than getting stuck or tripped up in the counter-currents.

I suggest the same is true for politics. To rediscover our best American selves, we must stop being drawn off to the easy-looking extremes on the edges. We have to face the big stuff, the scary stuff in the middle, to find the good stuff in ourselves.



CELEBRATING THE DOGS OF THE KEY PENINSULA

As we considered February themes, Valentine's Day and the time we've spent indoors this last year, our thoughts turned to our best friends, loyal companions, entertainers, cuddle buddies and security guards.

You can't go far on the Key Peninsula without meeting someone's dog — in the post office parking lot, strolling along A Street, spreading joy and mud in the Gateway dog park. They're curled in front of the fire, perched on the passenger seat in the pickup, alerting when the UPS comes and generally keeping us sane and civil. Most of the time.

Cat people have not been forgotten, we promise a feline feature this fall. But until then, remember the best thing about people is often their dog.



At work in the upgraded KPCS commercial kitchen. *Kamryn Minch, KP News*

\$100K GRANT FROM PAGE 1

to spend this money since the center was only given nine days to figure out where to allocate the funds.

“When you haven’t been able to purchase things for your program in forever, it takes a different mindset to really consider what it is you need,” Eaton said.

In addition to repaving, KPCS was also able to increase its food bank storage capacity by repairing the freezer and purchasing two new refrigerators.

Other improvements include new ADA accessible sinks in the restrooms, new lights and new floors.

Upstairs, the front office has been given a facelift with a new coat of paint, fresh trim and a new desk for the office manager, Kyong Bertsch. Her presence front and center is as important as ever and will continue when the building eventually reopens for in-person programs; Eaton said they will continue to maintain safety precautions taken during the pandemic for some time. Having someone at the front door to remind patrons that social distancing and sanitizing protocols are still being practiced will help keep the center safe for vulnerable community members.

This turn of events isn’t exactly what Eaton expected when she started her job as director back in October of 2019, just a few months before the pandemic hit. “COVID has impacted my role in every way you can possibly imagine,” she said.

“I’m coming into my own, though it’s much different than I anticipated because we’re still basically closed down even though we still provide all our services.” Eaton said KPCS hasn’t missed a day of service since the pandemic began, thanks to her amazing team.

Though the county has been generous with relief funds and having many big expenditures taken care of puts KPCS in a better financial position, Eaton said receiving this kind of large grant isn’t a regular occurrence.

For day-to-day operations, KPCS relies on the community for support and appreciates donations of any amount.

As for volunteering, the state sent a few National Guardsmen to help and KPCS is limited to how many people can be on site at a time. But there are always things to do, Eaton said.

“We have a delightful woman who makes hats and I hand them out at the senior center or at the food bank and people are very appreciative. And so if there are people who have a skill along those lines, of course we can always use that kind of stuff.”

Key Peninsula Community Services is located at 17015 9th Street Court NW, just south of the Home bridge on the KP Highway. The food bank is open Tuesday through Friday; hours vary. For more information, go to www.keypeninsulacommunityservices.org, or call 253-884-4440. ■

“WHEN YOU HAVEN’T BEEN ABLE TO PURCHASE THINGS FOR YOUR PROGRAM IN FOREVER, IT TAKES A DIFFERENT MINDSET TO REALLY CONSIDER WHAT IT IS YOU NEED.”

VACCINE FROM PAGE 1

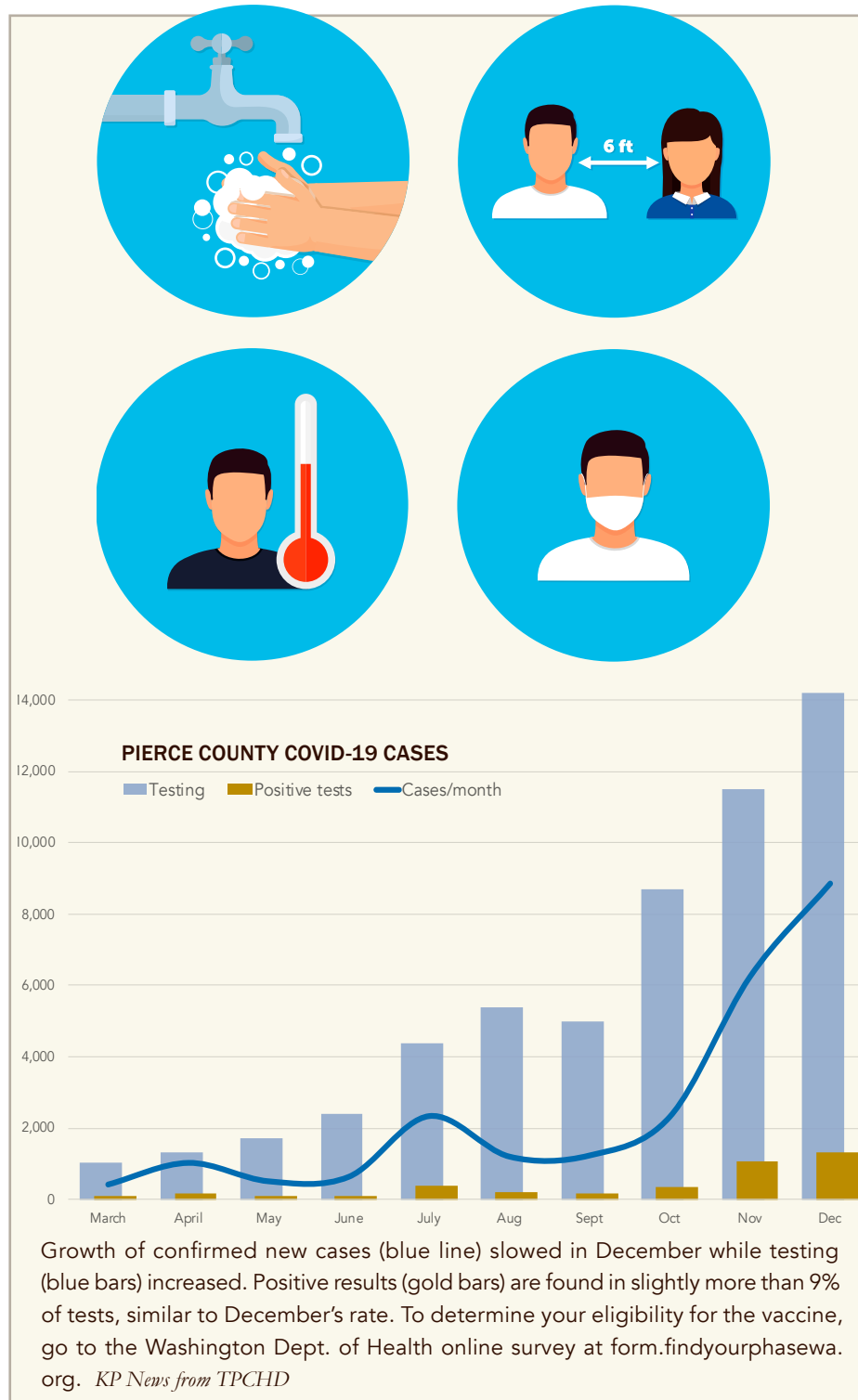
create three vaccination sites, several mobile locations and delivery drop teams to expedite distribution by the beginning of February.

“Getting vaccines into arms as efficiently as possible is our top priority,” said Council Chair Derek Young, D-Gig Harbor, in a prepared statement. “Creating this plan now and providing easy to access locations for people to get vaccinated across the county will reduce life-altering injuries and ultimately save lives.” ■

ACCORDING TO DOH, PHASE 1B VACCINES ARE OR WILL BE AVAILABLE AT:

- Registered medical clinics by appointment.
- Pharmacies such as Safeway, Albertson’s, Fred Meyer, and independent pharmacies.
- COVID-19 vaccination drive-through clinics sponsored by the county and local health care systems by appointment.
- High-risk settings, such as long-term care facilities, by vaccine drop teams.

For information to determine eligibility for and availability of COVID-19 vaccines, go to www.tpchd.org. To find the locations of vaccine distributors, go to www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily.





Annie Bell moves PSD school buses to the tune of 1.5 million miles a year. *Lisa Bryan, KP News*

PSD Transportation Director Annie Bell to Retire February 28

A school bus driver 30 years ago now commands a fleet of 102 buses that moves thousands of students a day on an ever-changing schedule set by the pandemic.

KRISA BRUEMMER, KP NEWS

Transportation Director Annie Bell will retire this month after 19 years with the Peninsula School District and over 30 years working in school transportation.

Bell started out as a bus driver in Grapeview in 1987, later becoming an assistant supervisor in North Mason. During a four-year training program at Central Washington University, Bell decided she wanted to become a Transportation Director west of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge. At PSD, she focused on doing her job well while living out that goal.

Since 2004, Bell has been in charge of managing student transportation across the entire district, which spans 120 square miles, encompassing two peninsulas, three islands, multiple bridges and countless rural, winding back roads. Bell's department employs 114 bus drivers and maintains a fleet of 102 school buses.

"We go over 1.5 million miles a year. When I first started, I never thought we'd get to a million," Bell said. "It's always a

challenge that we're surrounded by water. Most of our bus runs have three tiers — high school, middle school and elementary — but sometimes the distance makes it so a bus can't do all three. Those are things on the back side that, when we're routing, we have to consider. That's a challenge I've enjoyed."

About a third of PSD's 10,000 students ride the bus to and from 16 different schools, including targeted programs not available at all schools, meaning a child who lives near Evergreen Elementary might ride the bus to Minter or Discovery outside the regular boundaries. Under the current school schedule combining in-person and virtual learning, 74 drivers cover the district's 120 square miles.

Bell's work has always been a shifting puzzle, but this pandemic year has had the most challenges. When the number of students attending school in-person

is limited or changes, the number of kids riding the bus changes too. PSD Transportation has had to adapt to school schedule and policy changes and the opening of new schools, as well as servicing meal delivery routes.

"We had to reinvent everything and my routers had to reroute everything; we've done this three times and this is usually

"WHATEVER THE JOB WAS, SHE DID IT. IF WE WERE SHORT A DRIVER AND NEEDED SOMEONE FOR A ROUTE, SHE'D GO OUT AND JUMP IN THE BUS."

something we have all summer to plan," Bell said. "And with COVID, we have to make sure we have enough cleaning time in between to properly clean the buses."

Bell's "transportation family" — mechanics, bus drivers, dispatchers, a driver trainer, a secretary and bookkeeper, and her supervisor — work hard to keep the system running smoothly.

"It takes all of us. All the pieces have to fit together and we have to complete the circle. You have to have all those great people on the bus to make the opera-

tion work," Bell said. "With COVID, it's been quite challenging for the drivers — wearing their masks every day, trying to keep the ventilation going, out there in the pouring rain. Add kids behind you, all the traffic, that rain, your mask, trying to stay composed. It's difficult."

Former PSD Deputy Superintendent Marcia Harris, who hired Bell as a dispatcher in 2002, promoted her to Transportation Director in 2004, and worked with Bell on establishing the KP Connects program, which provides community transportation using off-duty school buses, said Bell is always upbeat, making things work no matter how difficult the challenge.

"I've worked with a lot of transportation directors and I've met no one like her. Whatever the job was, she did it. If we were short a driver and needed someone for a route, she'd go out and jump in the bus," Harris said. "Annie's been successful in unbelievable ways. She's absolutely amazing and respected by the whole department."

As Bell's work comes to an end, she takes the most pride in the transformation of the district's bus fleet over the course of her career. When she started, PSD had the oldest fleet in the state of Washington. The Detroit-engine buses, which Bell referred to as "old smokers" were replaced in 2005 when Bell secured a grant matched by the district. Now, most PSD buses are on the Washington State depreciation schedule, meaning they qualify for the Transportation Vehicle Fund, part of Washington State's school bus reimbursement system.

"That's taken years to have happen," Bell said. "I feel a great accomplishment that we've improved our bus fleet and got new equipment on our buses."

Bell looks forward to spending more time enjoying her home in Grapeview in her retirement, kayaking, boating and clam digging, as well as visiting grandchildren in Oregon and extended family in her childhood home of Arklow, County Wicklow, Ireland, where she was born.

"I'll miss all of the great people that work for me, and the importance of what we do every day, getting these kids to and from school safely. I've enjoyed so much working for this district. And that's from the bottom of my heart," Bell said. "It's been a good ride." ■

Local Groups and Schools Respond to Pandemic

CISP collaborated with FB4K, Red Barn and other organizations to meet the needs of at-risk students and families.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

Communities in Schools of Peninsula, whose mission is to identify at-risk students and surround them with a community of support, has been serving students on the Key Peninsula and in Gig Harbor for nearly two decades. With 135 volunteers and a site coordinator at each school, most of what CISP does is school-based. When the pandemic closed schools in March 2020, the organization had to adjust quickly.

"Our first response was 'How are we going to serve these kids who need our help more than ever?'" said Cathy Rich, volunteer coordinator and communications director. "The site coordinators really had to pivot. The needs are still there. The biggest concerns right away were food

insecurity, clothing, school supplies, and helping parents struggle through the basics of internet access."

Over the last 10 months CISP has continued to meet its mission, deepened

and internet access. "We leveraged our partnerships with other organizations," she said. "We needed to help each other because we couldn't bring in our own volunteers." Food Backpacks 4 Kids set up food distribution sites, and CISP site coordinators joined to help distribute food to families who did not have transportation.

Site coordinators distributed clothes, helped school staff assemble class packets and coordinated with Two Waters Arts Alliance to distribute art kits. They connected with non-English speaking parents. And they became digital navigators, working with families who needed assistance accessing internet services.

"It was a collaborative effort. We didn't want to duplicate services," Rich said. "Once we got the basics going, we could start to work on mentoring and tutoring."

Rich said that parents were struggling with the stress of school closures. Kirsten Roberts, the Vaughn Elementary School site coordinator and a certified Positive Discipline parent educator, responded and began teaching classes for parents online, available free to anyone.

Over the summer, CISP ran a virtual reading club and started a pen-pal program. Volunteers who were already matched with students exchanged letters. This winter the popular Tutors with Tails program went online. (See "Tutors with Tails Help Young Readers at Vaughn Elementary," KP News, Jan. 2020)

In September, the Operation Education program, a collaboration with the Red Barn

Youth Center, Children's Home Society and KP School Bus Connects, opened its doors. Every Monday and Tuesday more than a dozen students from Key Peninsula Middle School and Peninsula High School

who have unreliable or no internet access come to the Red Barn in Key Center. Staff from CHS and CISP work with the students each morning, and Red Barn provides the building, box lunches and supervision in the afternoon. Buses provide transportation for those who need it.

Over the holidays CISP worked with the Interact Clubs of all three area high schools to collect blankets and socks for families. "Our entire office looked like Target. We had 150 blankets and 3,000 socks. It was heartwarming," Rich said. They also coordinated with the St. Anthony Hospital auxiliary group and the Gig Harbor Rotary and Kiwanis for a gift drive. They worked with the Gnosh food truck and FB4K to supply meals for 40 families at Thanksgiving and 60 at Christmas.

CISP's annual fundraising event, held in November, was a virtual affair this year, and though they were uncertain how it would go, Rich said it was their most successful ever. "I think people really want to help and since they can't come in as volunteers, they can help with money. I hope it continues. The needs are not going to go away."

The pandemic, Rich said, made it clear that in times of crisis the system doesn't support all people equally. "In my mind we are all learning that we need to go deeper to see why kids are not successful. Since the pandemic, we have wrapped our arms around more students, and we are more than ever working with the whole family. What we were already doing has been amplified."

Executive Director Colleen Speer anticipates that the need for CISP services will increase when schools reopen, and that how they deliver those services will continue to evolve. They know that they will continue to be digital navigators, she said. If schools open with a hybrid model — combining in person with virtual classes — that will have an impact. "We work with each child, one at a time, depending on their circumstances. Because we are small, we can pivot pretty quickly," she said. ■



CISP Site Coordinator Sammi Feldman loads food at Key Peninsula Middle School. *Cathy Rich*

and broadened its community partnerships, kept its volunteers connected and engaged, and planned how to adjust when schools fully reopen, according to Rich.

The immediate concerns were food inse-

Ted Olinger

ANOTHER LAST WORD



Lost Valentine

I was maybe 15 when I asked this gorgeous 17-year-old girl out on a date. I had no business doing that, but back then I had an abundance of courage and not much sense.

I don't remember how I got her phone number, it wasn't from her, but I do remember pacing back and forth for five or six hours before I finally picked up the receiver of our standard beige rotary phone and dialing it.

She was at least two years older, six inches taller and a year ahead of me. We had no classes together but we were friendly, which of course made me think we would be more than friendly if only I could somehow say the right things to unlock all those mysteries I longed to discover.

She was so considerate on the phone it took me some time to realize she had declined my invitation.

I did at last get the message after she said no a few more times. What is strange to me now is that when I finally understood it, all of my anxiety and desire went away; only stupidity and regret survived. We remained friendly but I kept my distance because I didn't know whether I had embarrassed her or myself or both of us, and I didn't want to find out.

To her lasting credit, no one at our high school ever showed any sign of knowledge about that conversation. For my part, I would have taken it to the grave if not for what happened later.

I saw her for the first time in more than three decades at my high school reunion a few years ago. It was a small affair, only 100 people or so encircling a dance floor and stage where a jazz combo played standards far removed from our era growing up. She was not in my class but chose to attend because it was local for her and she had friends there. I confess she looked to me just like that 17-year-old knockout I remembered, flowing gray hair and all.

I politely greeted her, speaking a little louder than I wanted to over the music, reminded her who I was, and said something really interesting about the weather. She asked me if I had lost my mind.

"How could I ever forget you?" she said.

We went down the list. Career, check. Marriage, check. Parents living, dead or somewhere in between, check, check, check.

She became an eye surgeon of some kind and was happily married and teaching at a big university. I told her about my life

as a freelance writer laboring in obscurity.

When I was done talking about myself, finally, she said, "I want to tell you something. You made me feel like I belonged."

She went on to describe her younger self and all of the unwanted attention she endured, which even in that moment made me burn with shame.

I asked how it was possible that the most desirable and intelligent of people could feel excluded, especially when those around her wanted so much for her to be included.

As a teen, she said, she had already experienced much. She later became a model and was on her way to becoming an actor. But the more she experienced, the more she felt alone, and she began to resist forces pulling on her the way a black hole pulls a planet away from its destined course.

"You were part of what was good about my life back then," she said. "That's where I really wanted to be."

It was like she had opened the door of that secret warehouse where they stashed the lost ark of the covenant. Where you store all those indispensable parts of the past that are too painful to name: the broken toys, the lost storybooks, the words you wish you had never heard or wish you had never said — or wish you had said. We were together in that room and she handed me this lost piece of a puzzle I never dreamt I was missing.

I didn't know, I said.

She looked at me silently long enough to make me think I should say something more. Then she wrapped her arms around me in the way I had longed for so long ago, and we danced.

Ted Olinger lives in Vaughn.

Joseph Pentheroudakis

ON THE WING



All About Eva

"Run, Eva!" I tell her in an excited voice once we're safely inside the gate and I've taken off her leash. "Eva, run!" And off she goes, zero to warp speed in under three seconds, almost always on the same route around the yard, running, leaping, checking everything out, so happy she could burst.

Eva is my pandemic pet, a 5-year-old Australian cattle dog mix I adopted last August. Short snow-white coat, long pointed ears that miss nothing, dark brown eyes with heavy coffee-colored eyebrow markings, and a habit of tilting her head in puzzlement in that way dogs do: I was smitten at first sight.

Fostered in at least two homes since her family gave her up earlier this year, Eva

would have been completely justified in being tentative and reluctant at yet another move. After I picked her up in Seattle she curled up in the passenger seat, but when we stopped at the light in Purdy she sat up, looked out the window, then turned towards me and gave the side of my face a thorough, slobbering lick. Of course she had also made sure the seat received a protective treatment of hard-to-remove white dog hair. But I didn't care; the memory of that tongue facial had me smiling the rest of the drive home.

Eva quickly made herself at home. Couch? Check. Big fenced yard? Ooh, check and check. And a garden hose too? Score! Her foster owner had tipped me off about the hose; snapping at water spraying out of the hose is one of Eva's favorite games.

And then there's playing, something she can't get enough of, as I was warned by friends familiar with the breed. She's a working dog, they said. How bad can it be? I said. They were right. She could go after the squeaky toys that I send flying through the air, over shrubbery and flowerbeds, from sunup to sundown.

But that's not going to happen; I usually quit after 15 minutes, leaving her standing in the yard staring at me, toy in mouth, frozen in time, her dark eyes burning holes into my guilty conscience, clearly wondering what exactly it is I have to do that's so important, really?

But it wasn't all sunshine and roses. Eva is a lovable, playful, well-behaved pup at home, but soon I discovered that walking her was a problem. There wasn't a dog we ran into that she didn't want to go after. Leash aggression? Telling the other dogs that hell no, they couldn't have me? Or maybe she was just an ornery pup? Then there were the deer of Herron Island, lumbering across the road or grazing nonchalantly, that clearly had to be rounded up — Daddy, they're going to get away, let me at 'em, now!

And my arm would almost part company with my shoulder.

Then there were her abandonment issues that made it impossible for me to leave her at home alone, something that could seriously get in the way. The first time I tried to go off on a bike ride, I came home to a dog deliriously happy to see me. It wasn't until a few minutes later I saw the blinds torn off the windows, two ceramic pieces that until then had lived uneventful and perhaps boring lives on a shelf now lying shattered on the floor, and the words of fear and panic that she had scratched all

over the front door.

And that's when I started to panic as well. What had I done? I had come to love this dog, but as a first-time dog owner, was I in over my head? In theory I could send her back to the agency I got her from, and everyone assured me there was no shame in that, but she had stolen my heart. I wasn't about to let her go.

Many of my dog-owning friends came to the rescue. Eva had stolen their hearts too, and in the end they saved the relationship. I got tips and suggestions, dog-proofed the house, read books and watched videos on dog and dog-owner behavior, and walked Eva with my friends and their dogs. I discovered that she was enormously food-motivated, which made it a whole lot easier to

control her. I even modified my walking route around the island so as to avoid the gangs of blithely ambling ungulate vermin. Then a neighbor with a sweet, happy-go-lucky dog named Bear offered to watch Eva when I needed to be away, and after several visits Eva and Bear are now best pals. Miracles do happen.

I post photos of Eva obsessively; nothing like having a ready subject. A friend commented that in all those photos Eva looks placid. "But I'm glad that she's more complex, and that your relationship with her is more deep and intense," she added.

It certainly is that. And even though placid is the goal, I wouldn't have it any other way.

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



Anne Nesbit

SIREN'S SONG



'If'

To say that 2021 started out a little rough may be an understatement. It's hard not to feel overwhelmed by the politics, by the pandemic, by the long road ahead. I think all of us can acknowledge some change is needed.

It reminds me of a bit of history I've always liked.

In 346 BCE, Philip II of Macedon (Alexander's father) was rampaging through Greece, crushing one city-state after another. When he came to Sparta, he demanded their surrender, saying "If I win this war, you will be slaves forever. I will destroy your farms, slay your people and raze your city." The Spartans replied with one word: "If."

Philip detoured around Sparta.

The turbulence we're seeing in the outer world isn't separate from ourselves. Whether we realize it or not, it has emotional and physical impacts on all of us. But we cannot merely resist it — we can change things. It can be the simple act of choosing love and compassion, or of more actively going out and doing something that could make a difference.

One of my favorite quotes is from Gandhi, who said "All the tendencies present in the outer world are to be found in the world of our body. If we could change ourselves, the tendencies in the world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him. ... We need not wait to see what others do."

In other words, nobody else is going to create the change you desire. Individuals always have power to change things. It is just perspective that makes one think otherwise. In order to change this, it is necessary to shift perspective from victim to change-maker.

Even the smallest actions ripple outward and have the potential to effect change. How can we accomplish this task? Here are some things one can be mindful of that will help get you on your way:

Be willing to work hard. As with anything in life, if you want something, you've got to work hard to get it. Action is what's important and the more inspired the action, the better the results.

Make sure you have friends you can talk to. Sharing the load is important. If you can get feedback on how you are doing, that's great. But you also need people who will tell you how it is even when you don't want to hear it. Make sure you have a good support network, especially those people whose opinions you respect.

Use your time wisely. One thing we know is that we each have one life on this planet. Look at how you currently spend your days: Do you sit working all day, get home, eat and then sit slumped in front of the TV for the rest of the evening? Time is precious, so isn't it time to make use of the time you have left? Try something new: Go for a walk, learn a new language, or meditate. Make sure it's something you absolutely love.

Always be consistent. Make changes to how you do things. When you make a commitment, stick to it. It will improve your life immeasurably; you'll feel more confident and happier with yourself.

Find your happy place. Self-care is something many of us don't take seriously. Especially in uncertain times, it is important that you find what you love to do, what makes

you happy, and do it. This is how you get the energy to make positive changes. Meditation is a great way to find your happy place; it brings you back to yourself and ensures you are always living in the present moment.

Self-improvement and accomplishing goals is a wonderful way to reinvent yourself, but it's hard. It starts with how you see the world and how you can positively affect others. Small steps lead to larger ones. The pandemic has created an environment that is ripe for self-improvement. We have the power to turn recent events into a motivational positive.

If we have the courage.

Anne Nesbit is the prevention and public information officer and a volunteer battalion chief for the Key Peninsula Fire Department. She lives in Lakebay.



Rob Vajko
KEYTHOUGHTS

Mahaut

Last October found me in Indiana. My wife and I traveled there to say our final goodbyes to my dad, who was dying of mesothelioma. I returned in December for his funeral. Because of COVID-19, it was a small, family-only funeral; we will have a large memorial service post-COVID. I lost my mother recently too, just over a year and a half ago, as I mentioned in an earlier column.

If there is a silver lining to having to fly back to Indiana to say goodbye, both in person before my father passed away and again after he had passed, it has to be Mahaut.

Mahaut lives next door to my sister and her husband, with whom I stay whenever I am in Bloomington. In October when I was there, my sister insisted I had to meet her. Mahaut is French and although I grew up in France and am fluent in French, as is my sister, I'm not usually all that excited about meeting someone just because they speak French. But Mahaut was 90 years old and wanted to meet me.

We knocked on the door after my sister assured me that we didn't need to call ahead because Mahaut always welcomed anyone who came to see her. After a couple of "J'arrive" ("I'm coming"), the door opened to a little fireball of a woman with keen, sharp eyes that apparently no longer work (she is legally blind) and a beautiful smile. She was excited to have visitors, especially ones who spoke French. She brought out a six-pack of Stella Artois cider and we sat outside in her yard drinking it in the

still warm-for-the-time-of-year sunshine.

I asked Mahaut how she ended up in Bloomington, and she told me all about her life. It was a fascinating one.

Mahaut was raised in France during the war. She was evacuated to Brittany because Paris was constantly being bombed. She talked about the castle that she and her mother lived in, about the turrets on either end of the castle where she hid and kept her collections of feathers and whatever else she happened to find interesting. She talked about her father, who was one of the first aviators of the war, about how he was shot down and died in a German concentration camp when she was still very young. She talked about her travels all over the world.

She told us about a young man that she fell in love with when she worked as a cartographer. She was the first woman in that position and mapped the first French expedition to Antarctica. She wanted to go with them but, because she was a woman, she was not allowed. She then went on to work for the "Petit Larousse," the equivalent of Webster's dictionary, National Geographic and Rand McNally rolled into one — an iconic French company. She created some of the maps we still use today. She told us about meeting her husband while she was studying at Indiana University where he eventually taught. She told me about their marriage and their children.

When I told her that my wife and I were planning on retiring in Portugal, she told me to do it as soon as possible, about how beautiful it was there and about all the great food. "Retire as soon as you can" she told me in French. "My husband died three years after he retired and those three years were the best years of our life!" She has been living alone in the big house next to my sister's for upwards of 25 years. Her son stops by to check up on her at least once a day. She has very few visitors.

When I went back to Indiana for my dad's funeral the week after Christmas, we went to see Mahaut again. I brought her a bottle of pastis, a French liqueur made from anise that is near impossible to find in the U.S. She promised to save it for my next visit when the weather was warm. (It's a liqueur that you dilute with ice cold water. Perfect for a hot day).

Madame Mahaut reminds me that we all have a story to tell and that we all want someone to hear it, to be a witness to what we have lived, to all the memories we have.

If we're lucky and just a little inquisitive, we might be fortunate to be that witness.

Rob Vajko lives near Wauna.

Vicki Husted Biggs
A SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE



New Hard Times

One year ago I was on a sunny beach in Mexico with friends, enjoying the relaxed pace of small-town life, swimming in the ocean, sampling the local food and soaking up the sun. It was marvelous in every way.

One year has passed. In this one year we began to learn about the virus that causes COVID-19, which has resulted in sickness, death and global lockdowns. The past year has also been one of political pressures, conflicting beliefs, name-calling and taking sides. On the West Coast, we have suffered smoke and scorched earth destruction by uncontrolled wildfires. Millions of people have lost their livelihoods. The normal pace and patterns of our lives have been disrupted in a hundred ways, large and small. The Capitol of the United States was attacked and ransacked by rioters.

In reflecting on this traumatic year, I wondered if this country had been through any comparable circumstances before. It was not too difficult to discover that we have indeed had other years of suffering. The time period that jumps to the front of the line is the 1930s, when the United States and the world went through a decade of misery.

In 1933, we were in the midst of a global economic depression. The U.S. was waiting for a new president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, to be sworn in. The Reichstag, Germany's parliament, was burned in Berlin, allowing Hitler to consolidate power. Dust Bowl storms forced the migration of thousands, lines for soup kitchens were a way of life and unemployment was over 25%. People were in despair.

What happened to those people? How did they cope? How did they come out on the other side?

In his book, "Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression," Studs Terkel recorded their stories. "The book is a monument," said Michael Frisch, professor emeritus of history at the University at Buffalo. "People (are) living on the edge of history and trying to figure it out as they go along. I think that's what we're going through right now, because we are all over the edge."

There are lessons in that book that can offer us hope for the hard times we are living through today.

Among them are many examples of

CONTINUED PAGE 8

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NEW HARD TIMES FROM PAGE 7

people showing compassion for their fellow Americans. People who were newly poverty-stricken had to face what living in poverty was like for others, with no social safety net. There was a real sense of “We’re all in this together.” People shared what they had, and most people had very little.

People reinvented themselves. One example is “Yip” Harburg. His business went bankrupt, and all he had left was a pencil. Ira Gershwin advised him to take the pencil and start rhyming words and writing songs. He wrote the lyrics to the “Wizard of Oz” for one. Harburg later said he lost his possessions and found his creativity.

People depended on their families and neighbors. Many who lost their homes moved in with relatives. People made their own fun, gathering to play games and listen to the radio together. The board game Monopoly became a huge success at this time, although ironically it had been invented in 1903 by anti-monopolist Lizzie Magie, who created it as an educational tool to illustrate the negative aspects of monopolies.

Others in “Hard Times” talk about learning to believe in the future, trying to effect change and not to be afraid of it. Some called those years exhilarating, as

people came together in what we would now call “brainstorming” to solve the enormous problems facing the country.

Here on the Key Peninsula, in year one of our crisis, there are residents making a concerted and organized effort to support local businesses. Many of those businesses have donated to the community in good times, and now Key Penners want to help them. Local people are looking to supplement lost incomes by offering unique services to others, reinventing themselves. People have learned to use technology to connect with others but deeply appreciate the special times when we can meet — still at a distance — in person. Many people empathize with the self-discipline needed to distance from friends and family. The heartache and loneliness are real.

At a time when there is much loss, uncertainty and suffering, we can be encouraged by the experiences of past generations. We can also choose to look at the future with an open mind and take heart. We celebrate the arrival of the COVID-19 vaccines, revel in our new hobbies, and enjoy the time we have to “nest” with family. The worst hard times may also be the very times that reveal inner strengths, creativity and generosity.

Vicki Biggs is a longtime social worker. She lives in Home.

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As COVID-19 cases continue, our temporary hours may change* on short notice. Thanks for your help, we're all in this together.



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Letters to the Editor

THANK YOU KP NEWS

Congratulations on the success of your recent well-deserved awards. We really appreciate your clearly written and thought-provoking articles.

Thank you and keep these good articles coming.

Harry and Kay Bennett, Wauna

GETTING VACCINATED WHILE BLACK

I am a Black social worker who lives on the Key Peninsula. My primary occupation is as a psychiatric social worker at Western State Hospital in the Center for Forensics.

I was given the opportunity to receive a COVID-19 vaccine in December. I had mixed feelings about this opportunity, or what some call "vaccine hesitancy." I remembered reading the history of my ancestors who were unethically experimented upon in this country, including being injected with toxins that later compromised their health. I thought about how minorities are suffering from disproportionality, inequalities and disparities, and are dying of COVID-19 at rates up to three times higher than whites.

You might think one could wish they were in my position with this opportunity. I thought about the perspectives of various people around me on whether they were going to get the vaccine or not. Some made valid points and others gave uninformed responses. Regardless, they were entitled to feel the way they felt.

Applying my skills and reading the literature from a scientific perspective, I believe that receiving this vaccine will not just benefit me, but will allow me to continue diligently serving populations that need mental health services during this challenging era.

As one presidency ends and another begins, it doesn't matter if you are Republican, Democrat or Independent. We all breathe the same air in this beautiful landscape. We have to help and communicate with our state legislators from the 26th District, our private sector and nonprofit entities, and do whatever we can to increase our vaccine mobilization opportunities here on the KP.

Rion Tisino, Longbranch

Letters to the editor must be signed and include a daytime phone number. No anonymous letters will be published. Letters 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



Leon Hill

Leon died on Thanksgiving Day 2020 in Gig Harbor at the age of 90.

He served in the U.S. Coast Guard during the Korean War, and after completing his service finished a degree in mechanical engineering at Gonzaga University. He was a proud Zag who often wore his school colors.

For several years after graduation, Leon designed nuclear reactors in various parts of the country, then moved back to his native Washington to take a job with Boeing until retirement. He and his wife Mary moved to the Key Peninsula just in time for the 1995-96 ice storm. They both enjoyed the area and the friends they made on the KP and Herron Island.

Leon maintained a garden throughout his life. At age 82, he became a vegan. He enjoyed harvesting, sharing and eating his garden salads, including homegrown tomatoes.

He was an active member of St. Paul Parish in Seattle and later St. Nicholas Parish in Gig Harbor, volunteering for the St. Vincent de Paul Society in both places.

A quiet, gentle presence throughout his life, Leon was a loving son, brother, husband, father, grandfather, uncle and friend. He will be missed. For Leon, his passing means that he rejoins his remarkable wife in eternal love, peace and joy.

He is survived by his children Leonard (Cathy), Julie, Maureen (Eric), Kathryn (Sean), Monica (Dave); grandchildren Emma, Hillary, Cooper; and sisters Shirley, Luanne and Allene.

A celebration of life ceremony is planned for later in 2021. To be notified, please email LeonMemorial@gmail.com.

Contributions in memory of Leon may be made to the St. Vincent de Paul Society at St. Paul SVDP Conference, 5600 South Ryan St., Seattle, WA 98178; or St. Nicholas SVDP Conference, 3510 Rosedale St., Gig Harbor, WA 98335.



Margaret Lea Petersen

Margaret Lea Petersen was born in Seattle Feb. 23, 1956 and died in Tacoma Dec. 14, 2020. Maggie was beautiful, brilliant, funny and amazingly good at everything she tried. She was a professional singer, an EMS dispatcher, a small business owner and a legal assistant, among other things. A true Pisces, Maggie loved the water and lived near it her entire life, including decades spent on Herron Island with her husband, Gary.

If you ever met Maggie, you'll never forget her. She was a bright bundle of energy who loved her family, friends and pets fiercely. She hated injustice and was always willing to help out the underdog, giving freely of her time and abilities. She was a gourmet cook and expert craftswoman, and her recipes and handiwork are cherished across the Pacific Northwest.

Maggie loved Christmas on Herron, so it is perhaps fitting that she moved on to her next adventure during the holiday season. If you saw a few extra stars in December, know that she was decorating the heavens for you.

Maggie was predeceased by her parents, Beatrice and Frank Noah Klees. She is survived by her husband Gary of 38 years; her stepson Gary Petersen Jr. and wife Jennifer of Lake Tapps; grandchildren Zoey and Zack Petersen; her brother John Klees of Portland, Oregon; niece Jena Klees of Vancouver, Washington; and too many friends to count.

At her request, no services will be held. If you would like to make a donation in her memory, please contribute to research on breast cancer or multiple sclerosis. Maggie would like that.

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



Unsafe Structures Removed from Lakebay Marina Property

STAFF REPORT

Lakebay Marina owner Mark Scott watched in dismay as, bite by bite, bulldozers demolished and trucks hauled away debris from three dilapidated former cabins cited in a Warrant of Abatement and executed by Pierce County Code Enforcement Project Manager Craig Swanson the morning of Jan. 20. Multiple Pierce County Sheriff deputies were present to protect the peace at the site already familiar to law enforcement officers.

A white two-story structure was boarded up to prevent people getting inside.

Another structure also slated for demolition nearest to the pier near the water's edge was found to contain asbestos. Swanson said once that hazardous material is safely removed, that structure, too, will come down in the weeks ahead.

Ample time to comply with the order was afforded Scott but in keeping with a long pattern of noncompliance, he chose not to respond. Scott declined to comment. ■

(top) Pierce County abatement operation underway. (below) Property owner Mark Scott discusses situation with Deputy Jeff Papan.

Lisa Bryan KP News



Local Group Combats Suicide in Pandemic

Local volunteers and mental health workers respond to challenges on all fronts brought on by COVID-19.

CALEB GALBREATH AND TED OLINGER,
KP NEWS

The Gig Harbor-Key Peninsula Suicide Prevention Coalition was formed in 2012 after two local teens died by suicide in close succession. The coalition has since developed programs to support survivors and their loved ones and to train for prevention.

“Our focus is really on raising awareness and giving people the tools to get the care they need,” said Bob Anderson, head of the coalition board of directors.

“Culturally, we need to change how we view suicide,” board member Anne Nesbit said. “The words that get attached to it — crazy, unstable — make people feel like they can’t even talk about their struggle without judgment.”

The coalition regularly makes presentations to Peninsula School District students and other groups about how to talk about suicide, recognize the danger signs and help someone in need. It has developed a curriculum for sixth, seventh and eighth graders starting with self-care, acceptance of differences and learning the signs of trouble.

“I really feel like the kids are receptive,” Nesbit said. “They want to talk about it. They want to know how to talk to their friends.”

The training and support discussions have continued online throughout the pandemic.

“We presented to the KP middle school kids and all the health classes at Gig Harbor and Peninsula High School this year (2020),” she said. “It was a great insight into what the teachers have been struggling with, because on Zoom a lot of kids don’t have their cameras on; they have their profile picture up so you can’t see how they’re reacting.”

Nesbit and other presenters got past that hurdle with online breakout rooms.

“That was more intimate. Some kids did reach out to share their story or because they were worried about a friend or had a question about something that we said. But it was not as satisfying.”

The need for emotional support, mental health and addiction treatment increased significantly in 2020 on the peninsula just as it has across the country during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to an August 2020 survey conducted by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, among people ages 18-24, 25%

“seriously considered suicide in the past 30 days,” and 75% experienced debilitating anxiety or depression. More than 40% of U.S. adults reported struggling with mental health or substance abuse.

While suicide rates around the world have declined, they have steadily increased in the U.S. since 1999, including 35% in the last 20 years, according to the CDC. In the two years after the 2008 Great Recession, the rate increased four times as quickly as it had in the eight years before.

It takes the CDC up to two years to track annual U.S. deaths by suicide, meaning the effect of the pandemic may not be known until it is over.

But suicidal thoughts are not the first sign of a crisis, according to a 2020 study published in *The Lancet*. There is a strong correlation between suicide and financial pressure, such as that caused by unemployment. Early warning signs include substance abuse, anxiety, depression, domestic violence and homelessness.

Overdoses increased 38% across the U.S. in 2020; domestic violence in some parts of the country doubled, including in Seattle and surrounding areas.

“There’s been more overdoses, we’ve had more domestic stuff, we’ve had a gunshot, there’s been more people fighting, and that’s down to COVID and frustration,” said Nesbit about the KP. Nesbit is also the public information officer and volunteer battalion chief for Fire District 16.

“Mental health resources are still scarce out here,” she said. “The biggest thing is talking. If you notice something different from the norm for someone, and that can be them suddenly sad or even excessively happy, ask them about it. And you can call crisis lines to get advice if you’re worried about someone. Or you can call me and we can figure it out.”

Nesbit said “Something that’s especially hard is to ask someone if they are thinking of suicide. It’s not going to give them the idea. What it does is show them that you’re paying attention. They’re going to want to talk.”

In 2019, the coalition funded a project to place signs along the Tacoma Narrows



Lives have been saved by signs posted by the coalition on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge and in local parks. *Anne Nesbit*

Bridge and several parks on the Key Peninsula referring people to a suicide crisis hotline. Anderson said there have been several instances in which these signs have saved lives.

In 2020, after operating under the auspices of the Key Peninsula Community Council, the coalition submitted applications to become its own nonprofit organization.

Anderson said the move was inevitable as the organization grew. It will change the way the coalition funds their services, but it will continue to work with the KPC.

“I can’t overstate how much we appreciate all the support we’ve received from the community council,” he said. “They’ve been essential in reaching our goals.”

As an independent nonprofit, the coalition will be eligible for federal funding, grants, tax benefits and more. It relied on its partnership with the KPC to receive such funding in the past. ■

EMERGENCY RESOURCES

The coalition is creating a new website; until then, information can be found on its Facebook page. Anderson has invited anyone interested in receiving suicide prevention training videos to contact him at 253-753-3013 or bobtanderson@me.com.

- Anne Nesbit can be reached at KP fire headquarters at 253-884-2222
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255
- Teen support line: 1-310-855-HOPE, or text “teen” to 839863, or visit www.teenlineonline.org
- Crisis text line: 741741 and hit send
- If you, or someone you know is experiencing abuse, call the Crystal Judson Family Justice Center at 253-798-4166, or
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233), text LOVEIS to 22522 or visit www.thehotline.org



Chris Rurik, KP News

On Foot, Deep in Rocky Creek Preserve

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

As I haul on my boots, it's hard to know what to expect. From the muddy pullout where we've parked, an overgrown road leads into low, tangled woods. It's December. Even the blackberries look the worse for wear.

It would be easy to write a glowing nature piece about the heart of Key Peninsula's newest protected area, Great Peninsula Conservancy's Rocky Creek Preserve, where the creek plunges among mudbanks strewn with salmon, and bald eagles glide and swerve through moss-covered trees. I went there. It was spectacular.

But this foolhardy naturalist has a thing for deep tangles. So I'm setting out with Nate Daniel, GPC's executive director, to penetrate the upper reaches of this 150-acre landscape.

Despite the help of local historians as quick as minutemen, all I know of its past are the names of homesteaders and the deed for an original 160-acre homestead. No telling when it was last logged, a question I often find myself asking on a peninsula where no land is untouched and most forest ecosystems, having once been clearcut, are determined by the age of their trees.

The overgrown road squelches underfoot. We cross a creek. Soon a wall of thin firs appears on our right. Too dark for Douglas fir, I realize. Grand fir. We duck into them. The ground is moss and a few bonelike coral mushrooms. Nate

remembers that an abandoned Christmas tree farm is supposed to be in here somewhere. This must be part of it.

But it's not 10 trees deep before we're looking into a tangle of maple, alder and salmonberry around another branch of the creek. We go back to the road, which soon narrows into a trail. Mixed conifers rise and lean around us. Again and again we leave the trail to investigate mushrooms, hillsides, hollows, natural artifacts. Clues. We find a mint-like plant with leaves painted in three shades of gray. An escaped garden plant, we agree. Too beautiful.

We slide down an embankment to a wide creek that plunges over logs and through clear pools. There's a wonderful clarity to the forest here, a musicality. We find a fallen maple limb and inspect it, this bit of world that once lived in the sky: mosses, tiny mushrooms, a fern that we agree must be licorice fern. The knobby rhizomes are bitter, gritty, with maybe just a hint of licorice in there.

A large pool blocks our progress, and anyway we've been noticing a swath of sky in the forest above. After crossing several outflow creeks we find a series of stepped pools held in shape by curved berms of earth. Though we do not see fresh signs of beaver, their engineering work was built to last. Then a vista opens below us. Massive backlit maples, their edges glowing with moss, lean over a wide ravine. A growing creek falls in the distance. It's about as magnificent of a view as you can have in deep forest.

We push into the upland beyond. A

game trail brings us to a stand of small firs. Between them is the utterly smashed carcass of an ancient car, its metal bent back like flower petals. We take it in. How in the world did it get here?

Nearby, a mixed flock of birds leads us onto a trail that widens to a double-track, pinches in again, and brings us to an opening. Scotch broom and huckleberry grow among alders and old cherry trees. Foxglove and bracken fern crowd the edges. A home once stood here. Now fox sparrows call in richly varied brush. One day it will be forest again.

Nate and I have walked, waded, crawled and squeezed our way here. Every yard of progress has brought a change in our surroundings — microhabitats and plant communities speaking of all that has happened in this landscape, the homesteaders, beavers, car-dumpers, tree-planters and wind gusts knocking maple limbs to the ground. That I thought I could get a sense of what we would find by learning the land's logging history probably says something about how I've been trained by this culture of ours to think of forests as plantations, one interchangeable with another, like the parts in machines.

A naturalist should not begin his work with theory, as an economist might. We are trained instead in the art of noticing. Nature shifts and morphs through disturbance and change of all kinds, often thriving, and landscapes carry stories even when history's specifics have been lost. Stories, unlike statistics, play out in certain topographic arrangements,

ABOUT THE SITE

Great Peninsula Conservancy plans to treat Rocky Creek Preserve as one of its new Land Lab sites, meaning it will be a center for community science projects, primarily with students. For example, trail cameras installed by students will provide glimpses of the preserve's nocturnal wildlife. Summer 2022 groundbreaking is planned for a simple public trail system. Additional staff and AmeriCorps VISTA members will design the Land Lab; there will be opportunities for the public to provide input on the trail system, volunteer as local trail stewards and help raise funds for public access.

Current access is limited to a pullout on the south side of 132nd Street NW off Wright-Bliss Road, just west of 175th Ave NW, where a sign describes how to walk a short access road into the preserve.

Into the
WILD
EXPLORING WITH THE
KP NATURE GUIDE

where each turn of fate matters. This landscape could only exist here.

Still we've only seen a corner of the preserve. Again we hear water. Though it's near solstice and we don't have much daylight left, we dream again of following a creek to where the salmon spawn. A weedy road takes us to the lip of a ravine. Below, another branch of Rocky Creek jumps through rocks and ferns; a log shines in the water. Crouched above it, we are forced to admit that its undercut banks and deep pools would make it impossible to follow. We stay for a while. It's another magnificent spot.

Only when we stand to go do we realize that across the ravine the road continues, though it is camouflaged with young trees. The log in the water is actually a concrete culvert snapped in half and spun to an odd angle. We shake our heads. Where have 30 vertical feet of roadbed gone?

Nature has a way of working away toward its ends: trees, moss, stone, clear water carrying food to young salmon. Pockets of habitat. Stories unfolding. Here, removed from the fickleness of man's projects, it will continue to do just that. ■



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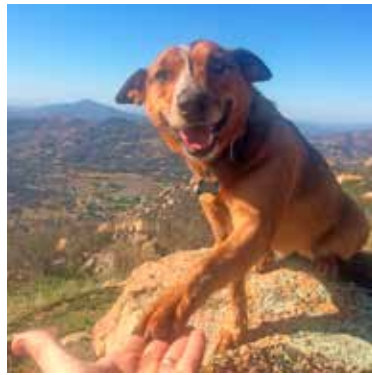


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Who's a good dog?



ABBY, CHARLIE and GUS by Anne Nesbit. Abby is quite possibly the best and sweetest dog, new brothers super snuggly Charlie and Gus already fit right in.



BELLA by David Zeigler of Longbranch. Bella is a red heeler. Every New Year's Day in California, we'd do a neighbors and friends hike up a 1,200 foot hill for a picnic lunch. Looking west toward Mt. Miguel and coastal foothills to the Pacific.



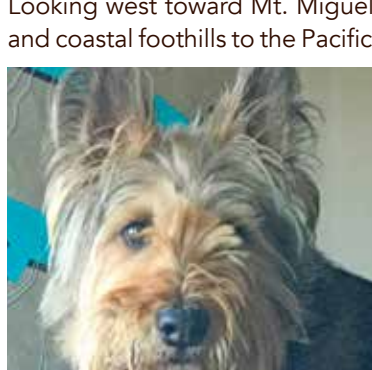
CATI by B Floyd & B Doat. We still miss Cati my fifth GSD, RIP 2013. And we miss BC, the orange tabby who thought he was a GSD and raised two of them in his 20 years...



COOPER by Laura Armstrong of Wauna. Cooper is a 5-month-old Saint Bernard.



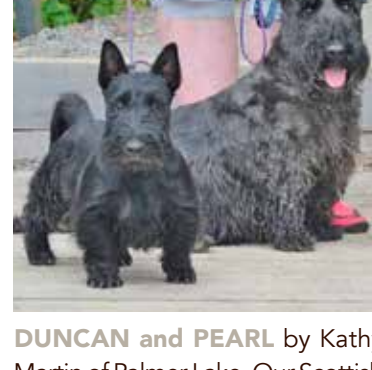
ANNIE and TUCKER by Judy and Marv Scott of Wauna. Annie, left, and Tucker are palillos.



BUDDY by Tim Heitzman of Longbranch. Rescued from a family that did not know they had the best dog in the whole world, he makes me a better person every day.



CHARLIE by Stefanie Warren. Charlie loved to ride in a sidecar, tongue flapping in the wind. When we learned he wouldn't be with us much longer, we found a Good Samaritan willing to give Charlie a final ride. We're so grateful to live in a community that cares enough to grant a pet's final wish.



DUNCAN and PEARL by Kathy Martin of Palmer Lake. Our Scottish terriers, 7-year-old Duncan and his little sister, Pearl, 11 months are quite the "Holy terriers!"



AUTTIE by Candice Hardt and David Shinnars. This photo was taken shortly after we rescued our sweet girl Auttie in 2020 from Texas. The forest was all new to her and this walk is still her favorite. It brings us such joy to see her flourish here on the Key.



BULLSEYE and SHOUP by Sean Whittemore.



CLIFF by Max Tritt. Cliff's always ready to chase a ball.



EVA by Joseph Pentheroudakis of Herron Island. "Wake me when it's over." Eva is a 5-year-old Australian cattle dog mix, a rescue adopted in August.

Nearly three-quarters of Americans have at least one family member that's a canine. From beast-large to toy-tiny, man's best friend is definitely more than a "pet." They have their own special spots, their own routines and timetables. Dogs celebrate birthdays and holidays with special gifts and (more please) treats. Your dog greets you in the morning and brings a smile to your face no matter what. They patiently train us to wag more, bark less and dogs should be the first part of any health and wellness program. Walkies? Though they never live long enough, their time with us is unequalled. ♥♥♥ Here's a Valentine kiss to our dogs and their unconditional love.

Love is a wet nose



GATSBY (from right) with **AUGIE** and **FRODO** by Lisa and George Bryan. Gatsby's last day, resting from varmint hunting with his pack this summer.



LUCY by Barb Boettcher of Longbranch. Lucy playing with her "baby." She is a rescue, about 3 years old, and we were told she is a shepherd-corgi mix. A fantastic dog and great companion!



LUNA and **RAM** by Monika St. Jean. Luna the 6-month-old German shepherd thought she was a big girl, until she sat next to her friend, Ram, the Shiloh shepherd.



2-month-old French bulldog **OLIVIA**, and finally learning to play!



MS. CHANDLER by Janet Brown of Longbranch. My beautiful Ms. Chandler, 2005-2020. The most kind and gentle soul. I miss her.



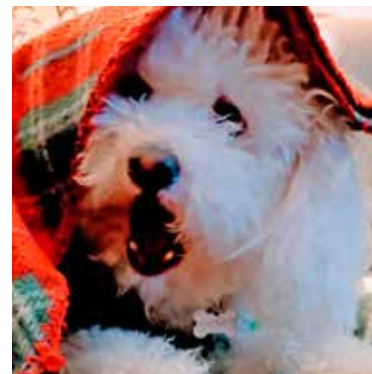
GYPSY and **KUEY** by Christine McKail of Vaughn. "I am the filthy queen of the hog fuel pile, and you are my mere minion." Gypsy, Great Pyrenees, and Kuey, Jack Russell terror... yes, "terror."



LUCY by Cindy Moore. Lucy is 4 years old, loves long walks on the beach and stuffed toy ducks. "I'm a very good girl and a major foodie," she said.



MILO and **EDDIE** by Amelia Rohwein. Floating on a tube in Carney Lake. My husband, two boys and most favorite two pups moved here in June. We love it here!



MR. BOJANGLES by Janet Brown, aka "Houdini dog," aka "the Instigator," aka "the most under-loved dog in the world" of just ask him... "Please, pet me!" Age indeterminate; he was found dancing up a freeway ramp in Los Angeles in 2011.



PEACHES (top) and **TALLIE** by Diane Linthicum of Lakebay. Peaches is a 4-year-old sheltie. Tally, also a sheltie, is 7. They both compete in dog agility trials when they aren't hiking local trails or playing on the beach. We all moved here three years ago and the dogs are living the life.



KALI by Sheila Morin of Vaughn. Kali is a border collie-lab mix always up for adventure. My daughter Sierra's dog, adopted in March. They now are inseparable.



LUCY by Sam Tritt. Sleek, fast and filled with as much curiosity as energy, Lucy can often be found sitting on the naughty step.



MINNIE and **OLIVIA** by Barbara and Orrie Moore of Longbranch. Minnie, my 14-year-old Brussels Griffon was rescued 11 years ago. She is now sharing her home with our (next column)



MR. PORTER aka **PORTER BEAR** by Stephanie Brooks, always ready to "play ball."

and a wagging tail



PRINCE and CHARLIE by Elizabeth Pierce. Brothers from another mother and total ball freaks, 1-year-old Prince, left, and 9-year-old Charlie.



REX by Katie Postlewait. Although this guy loves his little humans, running fields and beaches, evening snuggles, and the word "biscuit," Rex's most favorite thing is being in a boat on Case Inlet.



ROHAN by Cathleen FitzGerald of Longbranch. Rohan is a Key Peninsula treasure. As a certified therapy dog, he has for the last seven years worked with the KP

library for preschool story time, provided stress relief to staff and patients at St. Anthony hospital, and helped support students learning to read at Evergreen Elementary. He continues to help through YouTube and Zoom.



RUBY IRIS and SAPPHIRE LOTUS by Dolezal family of Lake of the Woods. Ruby Iris, left, 3 years old, rescued at 3 weeks old. One eye and crooked jaw. Sapphire Lotus, 12 weeks old, early Christmas gift from best friend.



RUFAS AND ROCO by Eric Moreland of Key Center



SCHIPPERKE INDIE (previous column) by P.J. Kezele of Jackson Lake. He and his schipperke sister Rogue love all things stinky.



SISTER by Marina Kourlis of Lakebay. Sister the terrier, busy making her 2021 New Year's resolutions.



STEVE by Mike, Jamie and Steve Adcock of Lakebay. Steve is our 5-month-old pandemic puppy! We have been busily exploring the KP!



SUKA by Sam Tritt. Five-month-old German shepherd is learning the ropes from older sister Lucy.



T-BONE and SMOKY BONES by Wendy Bone of Lakebay. T-Bone and Smoky Bones patiently waiting for mom to finish talking with a neighbor.



TEDDY by Linda Grubaugh. When pandemic isolation became too boring, the fun and companionship of a Maltese-cocker Spaniel puppy made great sense. He's ready for his mile-a-day walk, happy with baskets full of toys, and stimulating company for his over-50 mom and dad.



TITAN of VAUGHN by Christine McKail.



VITO by Deb and Bob Kildren of Lakebay. Vito, a lifelong resident of the KP, enjoying the sun.



ZEUS and COOPER from the KP by Linda Burton of Rocky Bay.



X DOG Your next dog is waiting. Whether you choose to adopt from a pound or rescue organization, or buy from a breeder, you should do your homework first. There are thousands of books, articles and online resources about choosing a perfect dog for you and your family. Start at www.paws.org/resources, search the web, talk to a vet or visit a dog park and talk to owners.



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Rufus and Roco - Photo by Eric Moreland



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Deborah Krishnadasan Ends Two-Year Term as PSD Board President

The former school board president reflects on her tumultuous years at the helm.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

Deborah Krishnadasan stepped down in December after serving her two year term as president of the Peninsula School District Board of Directors, but continues in her second elected term on the board. She has worked with three superintendents, experienced the disappointment of a school bond failure in 2018, followed by a victory in 2019, and weathered the turmoil of the pandemic.

"WHEN WE HAD TO CLOSE OUR DOORS THERE WERE SO MANY PROGRAMS THAT HAD TO BE FILLED IN ANOTHER WAY."

"It has been a busy couple of years. It's been a full-time job for me. But it is a great way to give back to my community," she said.

As board president, Krishnadasan served as the primary spokesperson and set the meeting agendas with interim Superintendent Art Jarvis, who was hired on a one-year contract three years ago.

"The board's main role is to, in conjunction with the superintendent, establish vision and strategic plan and set policies," she said. "But day-to-day decisions are made by the district staff. They are the experts."

Krishnadasan said she worked hard to ensure the board operated from a place of mutual trust and respect. "We are five equal board members. Our votes are equal."

David Olson, who as board vice president stepped into the role of president as part of the planned leadership rotation, credited Krishnadasan with making the board a more cohesive group. "She has been an anchor, and gave us the opportunity to agree to disagree," he said. "An effective board can disagree and discuss and come to agreement. Each member is one vote and at the end of the day you work as a group and move on." Olson plans to lead with that same philosophy.

Krishnadasan has a corporate background in human resources and communications. When she and her husband moved to Gig Harbor 13 years ago, she dove into school and community volunteer work. She said her role as a parent —

her oldest child graduated from Peninsula High School last year and her others are in ninth and 12th grade now — has been an asset. "Being a parent is valuable, to have that connection with teachers. What does that policy really look like? I hear it from my kids."

Krishnadasan is delighted with what the district achieved with the 2019 capital bond.

"Talk about a high," she said. "In the face of several failed attempts to raise money for aging school facilities along with a growing student population, we passed a bond. And with our construction timeline and ability to maximize a state match to make improvements in two middle schools, we will really have six new schools in two years."

When the pandemic closed schools in March, it became obvious they provide



Deborah Krishnadasan was elected to the school board after the midterm departure of another member. She is now serving a four-year term as director of District 2, which encompasses the northern edge of the Key Peninsula and Gig Harbor. *Peninsula School District*

much more than education. "When we had to close our doors there were so many programs that had to be filled in another way," Krishnadasan said. "Transportation, nutrition, mental health and counseling services, a safe place for kids to be for six hours each day."

Regarding decisions around school closure and reopening, Krishnadasan said



Krishnadasan and a future PSD student at the groundbreaking for new elementary school No. 9 on Harbor Hill Drive in 2019. *Peninsula School District*

“WE WERE IN A DIFFICULT SITUATION, LIKE ALL THE OTHER SCHOOLS. IN HINDSIGHT, WE COULD LOOK AND SAY OF COURSE WE COULD DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY, BUT THERE WERE THINGS WE JUST DIDN’T KNOW YET.”

“We definitely had very strong, vocal opinions on both sides and it was hard to take that in. We were in a difficult situation, like all the other schools. In hindsight, we could look and say of course we could do things differently, but there were things we just didn’t know yet. In our excitement to get kids back in, we might have done a better job about making sure all the pieces were in place before sending out communications.”

Krishnadasan looks forward to getting kids back into the classroom as quickly and safely as possible and is proud to have had the district be a part of the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department COVID-19 testing pilot. The pilot data showed that, with adherence to safety protocols, there was no transmission inside the schools. Having the space and staff

required to maintain social distancing as more students return will be a challenge.

“With the pandemic, (public education) has changed and there is an opportunity to look at what education is and how we can make it better for the future. How we deliver it doesn’t need to be the same for every person and maybe it shouldn’t be,” she said.

PSD has launched a search for a new superintendent to succeed Jarvis at the end of the 2020-21 school year. Northwest Leadership Associates, the firm that conducted the last superintendent search, has been hired again. “They were very good about involving all of our stakeholders and it was a very cohesive process,” Krishnadasan said. “They have already indicated we have a lot of interest in the position. And hopefully we will hire a superintendent that will be with us for five or more years.”

Krishnadasan wants to continue to work in education, but has not decided if she will seek re-election at the end of her term in 2021. “I need to be sure I will bring the value that is needed. It will be a family decision. I want to make sure it is the right place to contribute to public education,” she said. ■



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THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EXPERT AND AMATEUR IS SEEN IN JUST A FEW SNIPS

On Pruning

KP old-timer Tim Kezele shares thoughts on weeds, trees and shrubberies.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

In the dead of winter, at least for some homeowners, thoughts turn to pruning. Deciduous trees have shed their leaves, making it easier to see their structure, and growth is dormant. If you are Tim Kezele, though, you think about pruning all the time.

Kezele, who recently retired from the business he founded in 2004, Longbranch Tree and Shrub Care, looks at trees the way birders look at birds or architects look at buildings. He can't help himself. What does he notice about Lake Kathryn Village? "The 86 trees in the parking lot are thinned and looking great. What an asset." Pioneer Way in downtown Gig Harbor? "They just shear the tops off — giant thickets on top instead of branches."

He got his start as a teenager when he answered an ad — "Wanted: Weeder" — posted at the Home gas station. One job led to another and he learned a lot. "It was all about attention to detail," he said. He walked or biked from his home in Lakebay until he was old enough to drive and one of his customers sold him a 1956 Buick Special Estate wagon for a dollar.

He discovered a world far beyond weeding. "Pruning was the greatest thing. Anyone can weed, but pruning is amazing — thousands of plants, and it's not just fruit trees. It's vines and ornamentals."

Kezele went on to take an 18-month course in landscape design and construction at Clover Park Technical College

and completed the Pierce County Master Gardener Program through Washington State University. He worked on large local estate gardens on the Key Peninsula and in Tacoma, then joined the grounds maintenance staff at the University of Puget Sound, where he ultimately became head of the department. He also worked at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden and joined the board of the Lakewold Gardens in Lakewood, where he taught pruning classes. "I never became a certified arborist," he said. "I don't do well with tests. But whenever someone needed help with ornamental trees, they would call me."

"MAKE CUTS THAT DON'T LOOK FORCED. YOU WANT TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE IT HASN'T BEEN PRUNED."

The history of pruning itself stretches back thousands of years. Pruning shrubs and trees into shapes — topiary — goes back to ancient Greece. Its popularity peaked in England in the 1660s, and then fell out of fashion when natural gardens became popular.

Pruning fruit trees goes back even further. Humans began growing fruit trees (such as dates, olives, figs and pomegranates) as early as 6,000 years ago in Mesopotamia. Pruning to control the size and shape of fruit trees was illustrated in drawings from ancient Egypt. The forerunners of apples and pears were probably introduced from Western Asia through Persia. By Greek and Roman times, stone fruits had arrived from Central and Eastern Asia. Apple grafting technology was perfected

"EACH PLANT COMES WITH ITS OWN STORY, ITS GENETIC POTENTIAL."

by the Romans more than 2,000 years ago.

Kezele has some basic words of wisdom to offer the modern do-it-yourselfer.

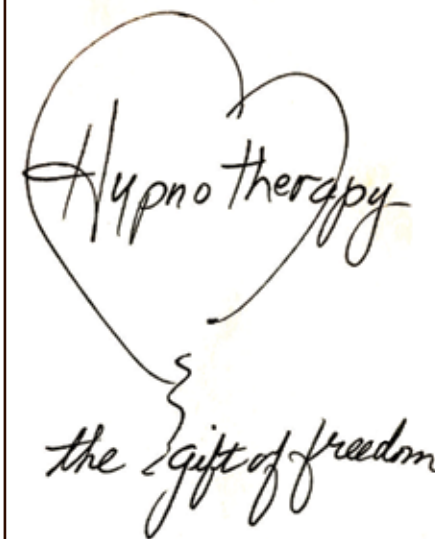
"Each plant comes with its own story, its genetic potential. And then how it grows depends on where you plant it — how it reaches for light, how close it is to a building, how much room the roots have," he said.

"Start with the three Ds: removing dead, diseased or damaged wood," he said. "I prune for health, shape, flower and fruit." "Make cuts that don't look forced. You want to make it look like it hasn't been pruned. Always cut to an outside bud. Follow the 25% rule, never removing more than 25% of the foliage. Plants depend on leaves for nutrition."

Pruning can take place year-round, but he warned not to hard prune in August when it could cause sun scorch due to exposure. But thinning can take place throughout the year.

It's important to know the age of wood for flower and fruit. "Prune rhododendrons too much and they won't flower for two years," he said. "That isn't the case for azaleas." Wisteria grow so aggressively they may need to be pruned back four times a year.

Kezele has a short list of necessary tools. First and foremost is a good hand saw, then pruners kept sharp so that they don't crush. For taller jobs he recommends a pole saw and a 6-foot, three-legged ladder. And don't forget a tarp. It will make cleanup much easier. ■



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MORE THAN 500,000 PEOPLE WERE KILLED IN THE 1936-39 WAR. 100,000 REMAIN MISSING.

After the Coup, Came the War: 'Homage to Catalonia' by George Orwell

Yes, that guy, fighting on the front of the Spanish Civil War.



TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

"The attack on the Fascist redoubt which had been called off on the previous occasion was to be carried out tonight. I oiled my 10 Mexican cartridges, dirtied my bayonet (the things give your position away if they flash too much), and packed up a hunk of bread, three inches of chorizo, and a cigar which my wife had sent from Barcelona and which I had been hoarding for a long time."

That is George Orwell, then 34, in the mountains of Aragón in northeast Spain in January 1937, preparing to slip out of his trench after dark, cross no man's land, and climb a ravine to capture an enemy machine gun nest.

Five months later he was on the run from the secret police, recovering from a gunshot wound to the neck that destroyed a vocal cord and paralyzed his right arm, and hiding in the ruins of bombed buildings in Barcelona while trying to rendezvous with his wife and flee the country.

It was all very inconvenient.

"The worst about being wanted by the police in a town like Barcelona is that everything opens so late. When you sleep out of doors you always wake up about dawn, and none of the Barcelona cafés open much before nine. It was hours before I could get a cup of coffee or a shave."

In July 1936, General Francisco Franco and other elements of the Spanish national military launched a coup against a squabbling leftist Republican government weakened by division. The Nationalists were supported with money, weapons and troops by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The Republicans were backed by the Soviet Union and Mexico. The other great powers did little, in Orwell's view, having no love for Communists or understanding of Fascists.

Orwell was a former Imperial Police Officer in Burma (from where we have his famous essays about colonialism, "Shooting an Elephant" and "A Hanging"), and was about to publish his fifth book ("1984" and "Animal Farm" were still years away). His Labor Party sympathies, military experience and journalist's curiosity took him to Spain, where he joined one of the few Republican militias that considered him

sufficiently radical to be trusted.

"I had accepted the (newspaper) version of the war as the defense of civilization against a maniacal outbreak of Colonel Blimps in the pay of Hitler. ... Since 1930 the Fascists had won all the victories; it was time they got a beating, it hardly mattered from whom."

The soldiers in his unit were farm boys aged 12 to 20, mostly refugees from Fascist territory who had never held a firearm in their lives. Orwell, appalled at their deprivation and concerned for their well-being, was rapidly promoted from private to brevet lieutenant and struggled to keep his charges safe from the enemy, the elements, and themselves. Their rifles were over 40

years old (in other words, from the 19th century) and without meticulous care were likely to fire the bolt

back into the shooter's face. Orwell called their hand grenades "impartial Anarchist bombs" because one might kill the man who threw it as readily as the man it was thrown at.

Orwell's perception of the government's apparent disinterest in men and matériel matured as he pursued it. Foreign supplies were indeed coming into the country but were sent to pro-Soviet forces or cached to keep them out of the hands of potential rivals, like his militia.

That deliberate neglect doomed the Republic. Orwell explains why in two chapters of exposition describing "the kaleidoscope of political parties and trade unions, with their tiresome names," which he gamely invites readers to skip if it seems tedious. "Compared with the huge miseries of civil war, this kind of internecine squabble between parties, with its inevitable injustices and false accusations, may appear trivial ... (but) I believe that libels and press-campaigns of this kind, and the habits of mind they indicate, are capable of doing the most deadly damage."

Orwell was invalidated out of the front after being shot through the neck by a sniper, and returned to Barcelona. His wife met him in the lobby of her hotel to casually inform him the government had declared his militia enemies of the state and that he must run at once before the desk clerk spotted him.

As their friends disappeared into government dungeons, Orwell sought out

one ruined building after another to hide in while his wife, under constant surveillance, appealed to the British

embassy and government officials. Their names were on a list of "foreign agents" marked for arrest, but because of the confusion of war "in the end we crossed the frontier without incident. ... Two detectives came round the train taking the names of foreigners, but when they saw us in the dining car they seemed satisfied we were respectable." Even after such a narrow

escape, they were sorry to leave Spain, still wanting to share her troubles and her joys.

More than 500,000 people were killed during the 1936 to 1939 war. Over 100,000 people remain missing. Unmarked mass graves are found to this day in Aragón.

Back in London by summer, Orwell published this memoir in less than seven months, before the end of that war and before the beginning of the next, hoping to rouse his countrymen from "the deep, deep sleep of England from which I sometimes fear that we shall never wake till we are jerked out of it by the roar of bombs." ■



Eric Arthur Blair (1903-1950) wrote under the pen name George Orwell to avoid embarrassing his family. He is the author of six novels and three works of nonfiction, including his Catalonia memoir. He also wrote hundreds of essays and was an outspoken social critic opposing totalitarianism and promoting democratic socialism. His seminal works, "Animal Farm" (1945) and "1984" (1948), remain stark warnings of how governments and political parties can manipulate the public with Orwellian fallacies to obfuscate language and meaning. It is from Orwell that we have the neologisms "big brother," "thought police" and "doublethink," among others, including "Orwellian."

one ruined building after another to hide in while his wife, under constant surveillance, appealed to the British embassy and government officials. Their names were on a list of "foreign agents" marked for arrest, but because of the confusion of war "in the end we crossed the frontier without incident. ... Two detectives came round the train taking the names of foreigners, but when they saw us in the dining car they seemed satisfied we were respectable." Even after such a narrow escape, they were sorry to leave Spain, still wanting to share her troubles and her joys.



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FORGET ABOUT THE SMELL — NUTRITIOUS SUPERFOODS MAKE SUPER TREATS



Treats Your Dogs Will Absolutely Love

LISA BRYAN

When it comes to feeding the dogs we love, the options are mind-boggling. The choices in days gone by included kibble or canned. The range of ready-made specialty diets for dogs today is a far cry from the chow our grandparents' poodles lived on.

Sure, kibble is easy, but what kind? What about canned food? Freeze dried? All-natural fresh ingredients or all organic? Made in America? Grain-free? Soy-free? Chicken, turkey, beef, lamb, fish, duck, venison, bison — or vegetarian? You name it, it's out there.

While we're busy pondering the best diet to keep them healthy, all dogs really care about is whatever comes next. Mine do all their asking with their eyes. If that fails, a gentle nose nudge works pretty well too. I imagine they ask, "How about a walk in the woods?" or, "How about a ride in the car with the back window rolled down enough to catch a good whiff?"

The internet is filled with countless recipes for homemade dog treats, but this recipe evolved from my quest for a limited number of superfood ingredients to make a cost-effective alternative to store-bought goodies.

The sustainable high-quality protein comes from sardines or mackerel, excellent sources of omega-3 fatty acids and high in vitamin B12 and selenium. Sweet potatoes are loaded with beta carotene, a rich source of vitamin A, and provide easily digestible fiber. Peanuts, actually legumes

rather than nuts, provide good plant-based protein. Oatmeal and flaxseed meal make great gluten-free sources of fiber in addition to the extra boost of omega-3 fatty acids in flax seeds.

If there is one thing my dogs will do just about anything for, it is the not-so-subtle aroma of these homemade dog treats.

Superfood Power Treats

- 1 small sweet potato
- 4.375 oz. canned sardines or mackerel, preferably water packed, no salt added, drained
- 1 large egg
- 2 tablespoons unsalted peanut butter. (Avoid peanut butter with artificial sweeteners, which are dangerous for dogs. The only ingredient on the label should be peanuts.)
- 3 cups rolled oats
- 2 tablespoons flaxseed meal

Preheat oven to 350°. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Pierce the sweet potato with a fork and microwave on high 4 to 5 minutes or until soft. Cool and remove skin.

Using a food processor fitted with a metal blade, process the rolled oats for 2 to 3 minutes to grind into a meal. Transfer to another bowl. Add flaxseed meal, mix well and set aside.

Place cooked sweet potato, sardines,

egg and peanut butter in the food processor and pulse until thoroughly mixed. Add dry ingredients and pulse until just mixed (as you would if making pie dough or biscuits) without allowing the dough to form a ball.

At this stage the mixture will appear dry and crumbly but don't be deceived — it should hold together when pressed. If too crumbly, sprinkle up to 1 tablespoon of water and pulse the dough a few more times to make it workable. The less water added, the better.

Using a 1-teaspoon measuring spoon, roll pieces of dough into balls and press onto the lined baking sheet to ¼ inch thickness. Or roll the dough out on parchment to ¼ inch thickness and cut into 1-inch square pieces to save labor. With crunchy treats like these, smaller is better.

Bake for 30 minutes or until the treats appear dry and the bottoms are lightly browned. Turn off the oven and allow the treats to dry in the warm oven until completely cool.

Store in an airtight container for up to a week or store frozen for up to 3 months.

Makes 72 yummy and highly addictive dog treats.

A word to the wise: Turn on your exhaust fan while baking these bad boys. That funky fish smell in your kitchen will dissipate as quickly as your heart melts over how much your dog loves 'em. ■

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



Danna Webster has been working on behalf of the KP since 2004. *Lisa Bryan, KP News*

KP Booster Danna Webster on Making Dreams Come True

The quintessential civic volunteer resigned after a long tenure on the KP Community Council but will continue to be active on the peninsula.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

Danna Webster discovered the Key Peninsula in 2000 after a nearly 30-year career as a teacher. She then spent the next 20 years becoming an indispensable part of KP life by volunteering as a member of the KP Community Council, a post she left at the end of December.

“I gave proper notice back in 2019,” Webster said. “I told them I wanted to retire in 2020 because it was such a great number. They said fine and put it on the calendar for Dec. 31. That’s not what I had in mind but I said ‘fine,’ and then when we got to December people were shocked — shocked! — that I was leaving.”

But Webster was quick to add she isn’t going anywhere.

“I find that it’s really a wonderful next step to formally stop one thing to free you up to do other things,” she said. “Way back I think I had something like 17 meetings a month, which was kind of nuts. But I’ve had so much fun and appreciated and enjoyed it.”

Webster was born in Iowa and has lived in Nebraska, California, Idaho and Colorado, where she spent the bulk of

her professional life. Her husband of 42 years, Gordon, spent part of his youth in Edmonds and has a sister in Arlington. After the couple had raised their family of three in Colorado, and Webster neared retirement, she decided she was willing to relocate. “I don’t know why you’d go

back to all that rain, but we can go look if you want,” she told him.

“Gordon took me up to the San Juan Islands and said ‘Wouldn’t you love to live in this

beautiful country?’ I was all gung ho, and he said ‘Of course we can’t afford anything up here, but I’ve heard down in the South Sound there are some affordable things.’”

They spent one weekend going through 16 houses and bought one near Rocky Bay.

“I couldn’t believe how beautiful and fun it is out here, and when you drive to go somewhere it’s only 10 or 15 minutes instead of a day and a half to get there like it is in Colorado.”

It wasn’t long before her enthusiasm caught up with her. In 2004, Webster was

invited to run for the board of directors of the newly formed KP Community Council.

“It was their first election. I wrote a magnificent resume for the position for Area 2, which is where I live, and I won by a landslide. I felt like a big winner there for a while before I realized nobody had read my resume and my opponent was largely absent.”

The council is a homegrown concept, intended to represent the four census areas of the Key Peninsula; unbiased, nonpartisan and able to advocate for the KP as a united voice to county and state officials.

“We started the candidates’ forum to get our elected officials to come talk to us, we took on School Bus Connects for transportation, and created a youth council for students to learn about government and parliamentary procedure,” Webster said. “Then we adopted the Farm Tour in 2008. We could put it under our nonprofit status and help them try and get some money, and it became probably the most successful event we have on the Key Peninsula.”

In 2017 the council opened an office in the Key Center Corral to do business and provide space for the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, the Safe Streets program and Pierce County Councilman Derek Young. “We want it to be a hub for the community and it’s well on its way to being that, should we ever open again after COVID.

“But it was in 2015 that the council undertook perhaps its most important work by helping to create the KP Partnership for a Healthy Community,” Webster said.

“We needed to learn how to share with each other instead of duplicating efforts of all the nonprofits out here,” she said. “We designed an organization with three priorities:

“I BELIEVE THAT EVERYBODY THAT COMES TO THE KEY PENINSULA GETS TO HAVE THEIR DREAM COME TRUE. IT MEANS THAT THEY GET TO BE THE VERY BEST THEY ARE BECAUSE THEY ARE BUILDING ON THEIR OWN DREAMS.”

dealing with hunger, transportation, and health and wellness, and then coordinated to get our combined resources or skills to where they were needed.”

The partnership has been operating for five years under a council steering committee but recently established a seven-person board and gained its own state nonprofit status. “This is where I’ll continue to be involved,” Webster said. “I’m not on the board but I’m going to be an executive liaison to the partnership. I’ll be around as a very historical resource.”

Webster also spent 10 years with the Key Peninsula News, first as a reporter and later as assistant editor.

“The newspaper was the most wonderful

thing,” she said. “That experience opened the entire Key Peninsula to me. I got into its history by meeting so many people who had made it, who had lived it. That was my best experience in my new life after retiring from education.

“I believe that everybody that comes to the Key Peninsula gets to have their dream come true. It means that they get to be the very best they are because they are building on their own dreams. They’ve built their own home, or their own boat, their own business, or they’ve written their own book or they become a great artist.

“So, I’m not going anywhere,” she said. “My phone number isn’t changing and if I can be of help, I will.” ■

TWAA Brings Colorful Murals to Key Center

Eight artists answered the call to create large scale public art.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

This past summer when the Two Waters Arts Alliance board met, they talked about the pandemic and its impact on events they sponsored each year. The juried art show: cancelled. The Art Walk: cancelled. Gone were two popular activities that bring the community together and showcase the talent of local artists.

Board member Cathy Williams had read about the Downtown Storefront Mural Project in Seattle, a plan to transform boarded up storefronts into canvases. Although Key Center is not plagued by plywood windows, TWAA decided to run with the idea.

They put the word out to artists and provided Masonite panels and supplies. Eight artists answered the call. The murals were installed at various Key Center locations in late January and will be on display through March. The murals will be auctioned off afterward with proceeds supporting TWAA’s mission to bring artists and art instruction into local schools.

The artists were intrigued by the challenge of a large format, interested in supporting TWAA and excited to create artwork accessible to everyone.

“I jumped at the opportunity to step up to the challenge of doing something on a grand scale,” said Chris Bronstad, who moved to the Key Peninsula in 1993 and taught science and art at Key Peninsula Middle School. Largely self-taught, Bronstad has a reputation for striking portraits and landscapes. He took a series of photographs from the Home bridge and painted a mural inspired by the scene of clouds across Carr Inlet. It took four months to complete the piece.



Artist Chris Bronstad shows off his finished piece. *Colleen Carrigan*

“It’s exciting to have the work up and be a part of the display,” Bronstad said. “There are so many wonderful artists here.”

Ray Steiner had always wanted to paint but never had the time until his retirement as a pharmacist in 2009, when he apprenticed himself with Puyallup artist Frances Buckmaster for two years. His mural depicts the beach at Penrose State Park at sunset. “This is a community project about what we love about the peninsula,” Steiner said. “You can drive less than 20 minutes and know there is no more beautiful place to be.”

Patti and Jerry Nebel moved to the KP four years ago. Patti is an artist by training and has taught ceramics. Jerry, whose mural is a floral image, learned largely from working with Patti.

“I WANT TO SEND THE MESSAGE THAT YOU CAN BE YOUNG AND MAKE A STATEMENT, TO SPEAK AND BE HEARD.”

“I’m very excited to see the murals go up,” she said. “I have always wanted to do a barn quilt, so I took it up a notch and used the fine art technique of collage to make the quilt on the panel.”

Max Mikelson grew up on the KP and graduated from Peninsula High School in 2016. He spent about a year in Seattle before returning. “I always painted,” he said. “I started with portraiture and then moved to more abstract images.” Now he considers himself an abstract realist. He has sculpted, carved stone and ultimately wants to work in animation and stop motion. He calls himself an activist at heart and founded a collective for local young artists. When he saw the call for artists he responded immediately.

“I thought, ‘What a break for a young artist.’ It is such a big deal for youth to

see what art looks like. I want to send the message that you can be young and make a statement, to speak and be heard.”

Christine Bingham, a Seattle artist, also saw the call for artists. She trained at Cornish and received her MFA in Scotland. She teaches, and has a particular interest in the therapeutic benefit of art. A Washington native, she knew of the Key Peninsula as a beautiful and nature-filled place. “I’m excited to be part of showing art more publicly,” she said. “Art is for everyone and this creates more accessibility.”

Another young artist, Anthony Krejci, has been drawing and illustrating for as long as he can remember. He started painting five years ago and learned about the project from his father. “I am all about spreading the arts,” he said.

Creating a mural allowed him to “tackle the largest piece of work I have ever done and to contribute to a public show.” He drove around the Key Peninsula to take photographs, thinking he would paint a scene of modern life. “But I wanted to give a tip of the hat to the Snohomish tribe, so I put in a traditional canoe.”

Carolyn Carr, who has lived on the KP for decades with her husband Randy, was quick to say that she is not a professional artist. “I love art, I love to look at it and I like to experiment. But I know my limitations.” Still, she was excited to try a new medium — alcohol ink — in a large format. “Key Center is growing and has a new vitality,” she said. “Why not try to do my little part in making it nicer for a bit?” ■

To see more of the murals, visit Key Center, keypennews.org or twowaters.org.

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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TOP LEFT A winter's day on Case Inlet. *Joseph Pentheroudakis, KP News* **TOP RIGHT** Dramatic car fire Jan. 22 at Chevron station on SR 302, reportedly the fourth of recent similar incidents in Pierce County. *Anne Nesbit* **MID LEFT** Fertile environment at Rocky Bay encourages rich flora like these mushrooms. *Chris Rurik, KP News* **MID CENTER** An overnight thunderstorm Jan. 13 brought 4 inches of rain and felled trees from Longbranch, seen here, to Bellingham, knocking out power to tens of thousands. *Lisa Bryan, KP News* **MID RIGHT** One of many local storm casualties. *Ted Olinger, KP News* **BOTTOM** It wasn't all bad. Sunrise over Penrose State Park. *Linda Grubangb*

