

KP News Becomes Fully Independent

**"Independence is the only way for us
to continue to grow."**

STAFF REPORT

Key Peninsula News received approval of its application for 501(c)(3) nonprofit tax-exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service in January. The tax designation enables the 50-year-old publication to step out from under the fiscal umbrella of the Key Peninsula Civic Center Association and operate under a newly organized Washington nonprofit corporation aptly called "Key Peninsula News."

The newspaper began as the KP Civic Center newsletter in 1973 and ran for nearly three decades with a mostly unpaid volunteer staff. Dwindling revenues and concerns about editorial quality briefly shuttered the newspaper in August 2002.

A KPCCA reconstitution committee was formed to resolve the newspaper's problems. The committee established what it called a publishing board in order to ensure a certain degree of autonomy so the newspaper could function within the civic center management structure. After hiring a professional new editor, publication resumed in February 2003.

Sara Thompson, president of the publishing board since 2018, said KP News has evolved over time and its scope has expanded. "It was not clear whether being under the umbrella of the civic center made sense anymore."

The publishing board designated a task force in the summer of 2021 to explore the pros and cons of KP News becoming an independent 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.

The task force, led by Clark Van Bogart, presented its findings to the publishing board last fall and determined that applying for independent status was the best direction to take.

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An aerial view of McDermott Point as it appeared in August 2016. *Washington State Department of Ecology*

Land Trusts Conserve 323 Key Peninsula Acres Through Community Donations, Partnerships

Kauiki Farm, Minter Creek, Sound View Camp, McDermott Point, Rocky Creek and the Pentheroudakis Preserve are among new or expanded parcels that preserve the Key Peninsula's natural world.

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

A shoreline summer camp, the former site of an iconic lighthouse, a working sheep farm and over 1,000 feet of mainstem Minter Creek are among seven properties that two local land trusts worked to conserve in 2022. Of the 323 total protected acres, 59 were acquired outright as nature preserves while the remaining 264 are new conservation easements on land that will remain privately held.

Unlike many communities in the West that back up against vast tracts of public land offering recreation and wildlife habitat, the Key Peninsula has traditionally relied on private landowners to protect and steward trees, shoreline and other habitats. As the

population continues to grow and vacant land becomes desirable, local land trusts are increasingly focusing their efforts on the KP.

Conservation remains piecemeal, and of the peninsula's roughly 38,000 acres, less than 4% is park or preserve.

Just north of Devil's Head, Sound View Camp highlights the new easements. A retreat center and youth camp owned by the Olympia Presbytery, the 93-acre property has "a rare set of shoreline features important for salmon habitat including a barrier lagoon, saltmarsh, and a bluff-backed beach with intact forest along the bluff," according to Jeanette Dorner, executive director of the Nisqually Land Trust.

In recent years the camp has placed increasing focus on environmental education

in alignment with its concept of "creation care." It now hosts fall and spring classroom groups as well as Christian summer camps.

Pam Anderson, board chair of Sound View Camp, said, "One of the tenets of Christianity and many other religions too, including spiritual practices of Indigenous people, has to do with our role as stewards of the Earth. When I say creation care, that's what I mean. We're put on Earth not just to control it and exploit it but to tend it and care for it for future generations."

Conservation easements create restrictions on land use that stay with a property in perpetuity. They are enacted by the landowner

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READ UP AND VOTE.

Here's What I Think About That

LISA BRYAN,
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

It looks like 2023, the Year of the Rabbit, is already shaping up to be quite newsy.

On the heels of publishing our 50th Anniversary Edition in January, duly recorded as Volume 50 Number 1, Key Peninsula News already has more to crow about.

Our front-page story this month announces the news of the newspaper becoming fully independent as a new nonprofit corporation with the approval of 501(c)(3) charitable tax-exempt status from the IRS.

It's a big deal.

The board of directors of both KP News and the Key Peninsula Civic Center Association deserve congratulations and gratitude for doing the best thing for both organizations to continue to thrive and grow independently. But we remain forever bound together in our mutual desire to foster the healthy community we know is possible.

Thanks to another year of record-breaking financial support from donors near and far, your respect and appreciation of our work continues to inspire us to be the best local newspaper we can be. How many people do you know say they "love" their newspaper?

It's no secret that our board of directors, our staff and regular contributors love what we do too, but at the end of the day, nothing matters more than reader engagement. Awards are great, don't get me wrong (14 last year — see "KP News Wins Top State Awards Five Years Running," November 2022), but did we make a difference in your life? Would you be satisfied with what you read about our community just on social media?

Shoot us an email or give us a call and let us know what you think about that.

Overall, the change in ownership will be imperceptible to readers and advertisers. The newspaper has already operated independently for the most part over the last 20 years while nestled under the fiscal umbrella of the civic center.

We've been surprised by the number of people who never made the connection between the newspaper and the KPCCA despite its listing on our masthead as the publisher for decades. Although the number of old timers who continue to refer to us as "their newsletter" makes me wince a little, most readers appreciate our unbiased journalistic standards.

Our stories are your stories. They are about your neighborhood, your schools, your parks and fire districts, your ancestors and your children; your endeavors at work and play to make our community shine a little brighter.

The death knell has been ringing loud and clear for newspaper publishers for years now, portending the collapse of local journalism. We hear that print journalism is



dead too and advertising has been relegated to social media pages most people never see. As a nation we've become nearly deaf to the cries of communities waking up one morning to discover that their daily newspapers are merely ghosts of their former selves. The numbers are astonishing.

Over 3,400 weekly newspapers have closed their doors since 2004 and many communities have no source of reliable local news at all.

What fills the space in the absence of local news? Everything from national cable television, radio to social media tends to polarize by design, and most of it has very little to do with our daily lives. As a result, communities grow increasingly isolated to the point of stagnation and an inability to get anything done.

Thomas Jefferson said as much in a letter to a friend in 1789, marveling in his own surprise at the success of the newly ratified Constitution, when he wrote "Wherever the people are well informed, they can be trusted with their own government."

Nowhere is this more important than at the ballot box, which brings me to the news of the day.

The Peninsula School District is asking voters to approve two property tax levies in a February 14 election.

Proposition 1 is a three-year Replacement Educational Programs and Operations Levy to replace the current one, which will expire at the end of 2023. The operations levy makes up approximately 18% of the district's budget for items not fully funded by the state, including school nurses, athletics, arts and preventive maintenance.

The estimated tax rate starts at \$1.13 per \$1,000 of property value in 2024, raising about \$27 million in its first year, and decreasing by one cent in each of the next two years.

Proposition 2 is a new six-year Safety, Security and Technology Levy to pay for building access controls, cameras and communications, cybersecurity and classroom devices. The rate for this levy would be 25 cents per \$1,000 of property

value, raising \$6 million in its first year.

The full text of the levies can be found in the Voter's Pamphlet mailed by the Pierce County Auditor's Office and online at www.piercecountywa.gov.

In 2019, voters approved a \$198.55 million school construction bond, the first in two decades, used to build new schools and refurbish old ones. PSD said the combined rates of both school levies plus the existing bond are estimated to be \$1.82 per \$1,000 in 2024, lower than this year's levy-plus-bond rate of \$2.01 in 2022.

The KP News editorial policy forbids our taking or promoting political stands, but we strive to provide as much information and local opinion as possible on issues concerning the Key Peninsula and beyond, so that you can take a stand.

Even national issues — abortion, guns, Ukraine — resonate with our neighbors, along with local traffic, crime and personal stories, and we will continue to tell them as well as we can.

Thank you for your support. ■

NOTICE TO DONORS: With independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit status, Key Peninsula News becomes a new charitable organization, EIN 88-1782029. As a matter of policy, we do not share donor information. If you wish to opt out of remaining on our donor list, please let us know by February 21, 2023. Send an email to donors@keypennews.org or a note to PO Box 3, Vaughn WA 98394.

CONSERVE FROM PAGE 1

and can be fully customized. In many cases, through an intensive appraisal process, the landowner is compensated through conservation grants for the value they are relinquishing, usually development and timber value.

In the case of Sound View Camp, the easement defines a maximum protection zone where future building is strictly prohibited and a minimum protection zone where the camp can continue to evolve its footprint with limitations designed to protect the environment. Nisqually Land Trust coordinated the grants, a mix of state and county funds earmarked for species and habitat recovery.

Dorner said Nisqually Land Trust was motivated to pursue the project despite considerable funding hurdles because the camp abuts the 14,000-acre Nisqually Reach Aquatic Reserve and offers sheltered habitat for juvenile chinook salmon that migrate out of the Nisqually River, one of the runs in Puget Sound listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

A little farther north on Carr Inlet is McDermott Point, the iconic southern boundary of Filicy Bay, where an ornamental lighthouse stood for decades. Boasting 1,400 feet of natural shoreline and a barrier beach, the point supports forage fish like sand lance and surf smelt, food sources for migrating chinook.

The property will be known as McDermott Point Preserve. A land access easement does not exist. Visitors must arrive by boat.

Great Peninsula Conservancy purchased the 12-acre property with private donations and a grant from Pierce County Conservation Futures, a program enacted in 1991 to counterbalance development with a fund to conserve working forestland, farms, parks, wildlife habitat and open space. Funded by a property tax, it is currently the most significant funding source for KP conservation projects. In 2021 the levy was about 3.55 cents per \$1,000 assessed value.

Ali Querin, conservation project manager for GPC, said that the peninsula has become a priority area for the member-driven organization, whose work also covers the Kitsap and Gig Harbor peninsulas as well as part of Mason County. “I think we’re just ahead of development. The community on the Key Peninsula is working to keep Key Pen feeling the way it is, to have natural spaces and stay rural.”

Several acquisitions in 2022 build on larger GPC preserves. At the north end of Filicy Bay, in the last two years about 60 acres have been added to Filicy Bay Preserve. This year two parcels totaling 2.6 acres were donated, extending the preserve’s shoreline by 200 feet.

Most conservation grants require a match, and GPC used the donation as a match for



The barrier beach at McDermott Point Preserve. *Great Peninsula Conservancy*

a state Recreation and Conservation Office grant that allowed it to add 8 acres and another 200 feet of shoreline to the preserve, which now totals 120 acres.

On the east fork of Rocky Creek, GPC purchased 5 acres that bridge Rocky Creek Preserve’s 150-acre core to a 35-acre parcel purchased in 2019, forming continuous habitat that spans several branches of Rocky Creek.

Querin said that while salmon and shorelines remain the dominant priority for conservationists and funders throughout the region, for GPC the last year has been marked by a new ability to look upland at conserving different types of forest, particularly around its core preserves. Forests are seen as increasingly important for healthy communities and climate resilience, and grant funding is following.

A 22-acre parcel of young upland forest off 88th Street SW was donated to GPC this fall. The parcel, to be known as Pentheroudakis Preserve in honor of donor Joseph Pentheroudakis (a frequent contributor to KP News), sits adjacent to Johnson South Sound Preserve. It contains 1,500 feet of seasonal stream, and while much of the property was logged a few decades ago, the stream buffer contains big trees and wetland plants like skunk cabbage. Letting the younger upland trees grow undisturbed, according to Querin,

will ensure that the creek’s freshwater will be clean when it flows into the preserve’s lagoon.

For all the acquisitions, 2022 may go down as the year of the conservation easement.

In addition to Sound View Camp, a major conservation easement was finalized for Kaukiki Farm. The easement, which has been in the works since 2018, protects 150 acres of farmland and forest and is written to ensure the land can be used for the production of food and fiber forever while releasing development pressure. In addition to fields and sheep pasture, the acreage includes more than half a mile of Taylor Bay Creek and 1,000 feet of estuary shoreline and tidal marsh adjacent to Taylor Bay Park.

Warwick Bryant, who owns and operates Kaukiki Farm with his wife Janice, said, “We are thrilled to preserve a portion of our Key Peninsula’s agricultural legacy and hope it inspires others to realize there are options other than growth.”

Funding for the easement came from Pierce County Conservation Futures as well as a Farmland Preservation Grant from the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program.

Finally, GPC arranged a conservation easement for a private landowner on the main stem of Minter Creek. The 22-acre parcel includes intact forest and wetlands around the peninsula’s largest salmon-bearing creek. The easement prohibits subdivision, home-

building and timber harvest. The owners have stewarded the land for decades and, according to Querin, were motivated by wanting to be sure that when they are finished owning it, the land and its habitat will remain protected.

Key Peninsula News was unable to confirm the total acreage of conservation easements in place on the peninsula. A tabulation of current parks and preserves totals 1,458 acres, a quarter of which is owned by Key Pen Parks and a quarter by GPC. The state parks, including the Haley property, account for 40%, while the county owns the 93 acres of Devil’s Head Preserve.

This accounting does not include 360 Trails Park or Key Central Forest, both of which are owned by the Department of Natural Resources with trail access provided through 50-year leases to Key Pen Parks. Both are managed as revenue-generating timberlands.

Two tax designations in particular signal landowners who may have prioritized conservation. Land categorized as Designated Forest Land is managed for timber revenue but has flexibility to incorporate conservation. Land categorized as Open Space receives a tax break commensurate with the value of the habitat it preserves. Land may be converted out of both designations.

While exact statistics are hard to come by, private land remains the lynchpin of conservation of the Key Peninsula’s natural world. ■

Izzy Edwards, Photographer and Conservationist, Sharpens Her Eye While Honing Her Skill

A young wildlife photographer explores the connections between art and nature.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

Isabelle (Izzy) Edwards introduced herself to the Key Peninsula community in late September 2021. She posted the first of what would be many spectacular photographs on the Key Peninsula Community and Birding Facebook pages and asked for suggestions of favorite places to view wildlife.

Using social media comes naturally to the 19-year-old photographer and aspiring naturalist and

conservationist.

She has more than 28,000 Instagram followers on her Northwest Wildlife account and has developed friendships with many fellow professional photographers through those connections.

Her love for nature, she said, was instilled by her parents. She grew up in Maple Valley and remembers going for hikes with them on local trails as soon as she could walk.

Her father suffered a life-altering brain injury just two months before Edwards was born. He was hospitalized for more than a month and

the injury prevented him from returning to work. Her parents divorced when she was 10. It was difficult,

she said, but she also values the amount of time she was able to spend with her father. While many of her friends saw their fathers just briefly after work and for a few hours a week, she had hours every day.

As her father recovered, when Edwards was about 7, he developed an interest in photography, befriended Art Wolfe, an internationally acclaimed photographer and conservationist, and accompanied him on photography expeditions for a time. When she turned 10,

her dad gave her a camera, a Cannon Power Shot. "It was a nice little handy camera that didn't have any added lenses, and could zoom to 10X," she said. "That got me interested in taking pictures. I'd take photos in the backyard."

A few years later her dad gave Edwards some hand-me-down professional equipment and taught her the basics. "I got really hooked with that," she said. "I would get so excited about taking pictures of the farm animals when we went to visit family in Montana."

Her dad inspired her to shift her focus from domestic animals to wild ones. "He was the force encouraging me," she said.

Her mother, though not a photographer, was very supportive. Edwards recalled sitting with her for more than eight hours in the North Cascades until bears appeared. "Wildlife photography is an exercise in patience. There is no instant gratification," Edwards said.

She fell in love with orcas and at age 13 spent a season as the marine naturalist with Mystic Sea Charters in Anacortes, the youngest person with that position in the state. She began to hone her skills on the boat, photographing and identifying both resident and transient orcas.

Following the whale season, she changed her focus. "I became obsessed with Copic (brand) markers," Edwards said. "I started a small business drawing portraits of people's pets or favorite wildlife." She returned to the camera

a year or so later, in 2018. "Drawing really helped my photography," she said. "Drawing made me look at

details more, to think about lighting and all the different elements that go into creating art."

She began to travel, mostly in the Pacific Northwest, but also to Yellowstone National Park, to Jasper and Banff Canadian National Parks, and the Gulf of Mexico. "I started to realize how precious our Earth really is," she wrote on the website she created when she was 16.

After receiving her diploma from Tahoma High School in 2021, with



Top: A Northern Saw-whet owl.
Mid: Female Anna's hummingbird feeding.
Bottom: Barred Owl at sunset.
Izzy Edwards

"WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY IS AN EXERCISE IN PATIENCE. THERE IS NO INSTANT GRATIFICATION."



For Edwards, being a wildlife photographer demands intimate knowledge of her subjects that can only be gained with steady observation and patience in the field. *Tina McKail, KP News*

college credits through the Running Start program, Edwards treated herself to a trip to Alaska as a graduation present. The photographs she took there, particularly of grizzly bears, count among her favorites. By the time she returned, her father and his second wife had moved to the Key Peninsula. Edwards joined the household and has been getting to know the area since then.

She spends an hour or more four to five times a week in the woods or on nature preserves taking pictures. “About once a month I get a really cool wildlife or nature experience,” she said. Often, she will go to trees where she knows a bird has roosted — owls typically will stay in one place for weeks or a month and hunt at dusk. Sometimes the experience is unexpected; on a recent walk a barred owl swooped by. She followed it, waiting for its third time to perch, when she could take a shot with the sunset

shining in the background. “You have to know your subject, stick around, and use restraint in deciding when to take the shot,” she said.

“The most important part of wildlife photography is creating a story with the image,” Edwards said. “How you do that is through composition and lighting. I focus on where I want my subject in the frame and move around to capture the angle that tells the story I want to tell.”

Edwards would ultimately like to work as a naturalist, perhaps a park ranger. “There is an aspect to wildlife photography that is more take than give, with people chasing wildlife around to get that perfect shot,” she said. She’d prefer to be more give than take — to work in conservation and take pictures on the side.

Edwards’ photographs are on [Instagram.com/northwest_wildlife/](https://www.instagram.com/northwest_wildlife/) and [isabelleedwards.com](https://www.isabelleedwards.com) ■



It’s hard to say whether the eagle or the fox was more surprised. *Izzy Edwards*

José Alaniz
WE LIVE HERE



Thoughts While Burying Maggie (In Words)

At some point a grave is no longer a grave, just a depression. Then a disturbance in the soil. Then part of the garden, a pile of rocks. (She's gone.)

Lots of rocks down here.

When is a pile not a pile? The Sorites paradox, which we inherited from the ancient Greeks, defies us to say precisely when a pile is no longer a pile ("sorites" is Attic Greek for heap or pile). It's about vagueness. The philosopher Timothy Morton explains it this way: "If you take a single rock away from a heap of rocks, does that mean that it is no longer a heap? What if you take 10 rocks away? Where does a heap start, and where does it end?"

Up, and over. Up, and over.

There's a very nice movie with Hugh Grant, "The Man Who Went Up a Hill But Came Down a Mountain," that deals with a similar quandary. It's about a small village in Wales where its denizens refuse to accept the government's decision that their beloved nearby mountain is too short (by about 70 feet) to qualify as a mountain. They resolve to collectively transport tons of earth to the top of the hill such that (spoiler alert) they "raise" it to the required 1,000 feet.

Clay? I'm hitting clay? Already? I've only dug down to about the level of my thighs.

Generations of gravediggers must find me laughable.

Our dear Maggie died last night. French Alpine goat. It was only her first winter with us.

The freezing rain hit, lashing, making every-

thing icy. She had gotten out of her pasture.

She had really bad luck.

Number one: The fence. We needed to fix it, just didn't get to it.

Number two: My mother was visiting for the holiday. When people visit, animals die — or they will if we let our attention get too divided. This time we did.

Other goats bleating in the distance. The most human-sized grave I've ever dug. They sound just like Maggie.

Number three: Kristin caught a cold. Normally she would have heard a nighttime cry for help. Not that night.

Number four: Sleeping on the living room couch, I had gotten used to hearing my mother's night noises. So, late at night, half-asleep, when I heard something odd and disturbing, I chalked it up to Mom in our bedroom.

Maggie was yelling, desperate in the rain, uncovered, right outside my window.

But number five: I have a bad left ear. I heard the noise as coming from Mom because that's where my good ear was aimed. Maggie vocalized, for five minutes (I think), maybe more, steadily. She wasn't bleating. It was a noise I'd never heard before. A cry, a wail, a scream. Now I know: A goat's distress call sounds a lot like a human having a nightmare. I thought it was Mom.

When does a scream for help turn into a rumble of despair?

Though I didn't know it then, I think I heard Maggie give up.

Later, closer to dawn, I heard a recognizable bleat. I even looked out, but without my glasses. Nothing.

Again, Maggie was so unlucky, so many things went wrong.

But come on, I'm being much too easy on myself. In bad weather, bring your animals in. Period. Check and doublecheck. Obviously. This was another one of our damnable mistakes, which — not for the first time —

brought disaster.

Why did Maggie do it? Why did she stay out on such a terrible night? It just never entered our heads that she wouldn't stay in her shed with the others.

She was our most adventurous and risk-taking. She would break out and go to the neighbors, charm them into giving her carrots. We needed to manage her. We didn't. She froze to death. We found her wedged between a couple of sheds, on her side, trying to the last to find shelter.

On Christmas eve, my wife Kristin read us Hans Christian Andersen's "The Little Match Girl." Have you read it? Devastating. She had me finish it. In tears, she couldn't.

Kristin also told me about the Scandinavian legend, Odin's Wild Hunt. The king of the gods plies the sky with his posse on freezing inclement nights, taking livestock and anything else out and about, unprotected.

It struck me what, maybe, Odin's Wild Hunt is really about: It's a metaphor for the monstrosity of our own stupidity.

I finish the grave. A brown hole in the frost. We put her in, say sorry, goodbye.

Later Kristin writes this in long-hand:

"Every time a loved one passes the rhythms of nature are clarified. In Maggie's death, we see the harshness of a winter freeze. And yet the forest looks beautiful dressed in white and shimmering as the ice coats the branches. Even individual blades of grass stand erect with their transparent coats. They let us know they will return come spring.

"Two nights ago was the Winter Solstice — the promise of the returning light.

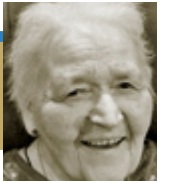
"That same day that Maggie died, Leona laid the first egg of the season.

"In Maggie's death we still have beauty, light and life."

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ies (adjunct) at UW. He lives blissfully with his wife and many animals in Longbrunch.

Phyllis Henry
COAST TO COAST



Just a Shoulder Pat

My husband, Bill, recovering from minor surgery, slept in the downstairs bedroom. Rather than bother him during the night, I slept on the sofa a few feet from the door to the bedroom so I could hear him in the night if he needed me. On the carpeting beside the sofa, Vanessa, my 5-year-old granddaughter visiting from Seattle, created a warm cave with quilts and a big pillow.

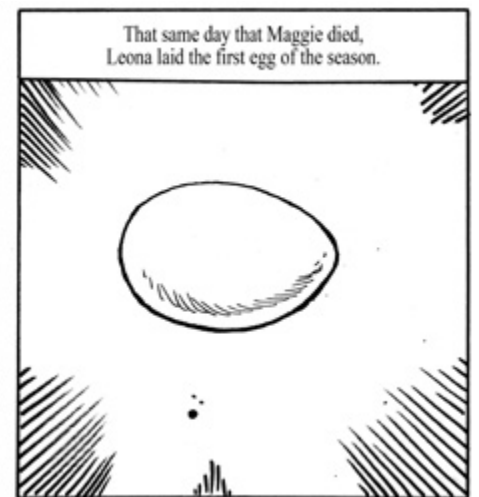
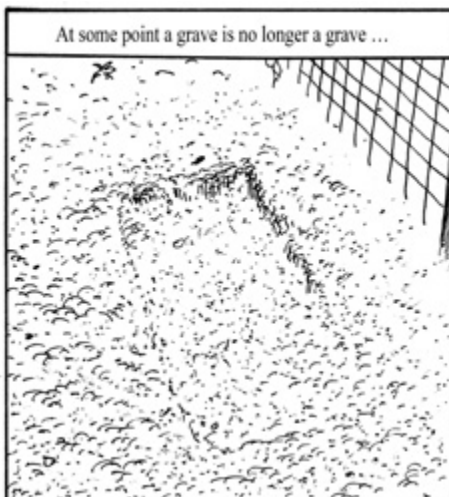
Snow lay deep outside our Iowa house, a reminder of five days of falling snow. One morning at around 6 I woke up in the quiet house and tried to go back to sleep. No way. I needed to use the bathroom and check to see if more snow had fallen during the night and also to feed the animals. Baron, my golden lab, was awake too.

I quietly slipped off the sofa, careful not to disturb Vanessa's sleep. She'd watched the movie "ET" until after 11 the night before. I dressed quickly in warm sweatpants, my heavy Carhartt winter jacket, tall boots, farmer gloves and stocking cap.

The outside door opened easily. Each day I'd scooped the fallen snow that grew to block the doorway. However, a few feet outside the door the snow was deep enough to almost reach my knees. I set my feet into the deep footprints that marked the path to the barn. Baron, wild with glee, leaped through the snow, showering himself and me with white.

After unhooking the top door of the Dutch door at the barn I could see the animals gath-

JOSÉ ALANIZ WE LIVE HERE: THOUGHTS WHILE BURYING MAGGIE (IN DRAWINGS)



ering close in their enclosures, happy to see me, but happier because breakfast was coming to them. Inside the barn an 8-by-8-foot area was off limits to the animals. There I stored cat food in a large metal garbage can, buckets of grain for the other animals, and a reject white lawn chair to use when I needed a quiet place to read.

Sundance, the big male llama, stretched his neck over the wooden barricade and rubbed noses with me. The other llamas, Leah and Tinkerbelle, ignored me, but stayed close because they knew food was coming. The Jerusalem donkeys, Polly and Patrick, nuzzled my leg, pretending to nip me to get my attention, knowing that I would thoroughly pet them while admiring the cross on each of their backs, stretching from neck to tail and shoulder to shoulder.

When I opened the cat food container, the barn cats started to gather. Baron ignored them, considering them too foolish to befriend or attack, but cat food was his favorite treat. I'd built a 3-by-4-foot platform 5 feet off the ground, nailed round metal pie tins to the platform, and there the cats gathered, filling every inch of the platform until all I could see was a mass of fur.

Hay was stored in the middle of the barn, wooden railings keeping the animals from overeating. With the big knife in my hand, I stepped over the railing, lifted a 50-pound bale of hay, slung it near the edge of the haymow where the animals could reach it, cut the twine holding the bale together, and parted the hay layers to encourage the animals to enjoy their breakfast.

The barn was warmed by the breath of the animals and the insulating hay in the mow and straw on the floors, but still a cold breeze flowed through the open door leading to the horse tank where the animals drank. Even though an electric heater kept the water from freezing solid, still sometimes bits of ice floated alongside the four goldfish living in it. The fish ate the algae in the tank. They somehow hibernated during the coldest weather, and almost magically each spring grew a bit larger, but this morning they were all still swimming.

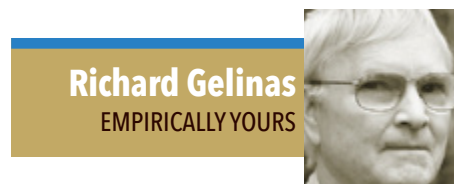
Back in the barn I realized that the fur mass of cats was missing from their platform. Instead, Sundance's long neck stretched over the wire barricade behind the platform, his tongue efficiently gathering up the last of the dry cat food. I shooed the llama away and put up a higher wire barricade and more cat food, and watched the barn cats scramble for it.

It was time to match my boots with the tracks in the snow leading from the barn to the house. Once inside, I quietly closed the door and knelt to Vanessa's level. She was not crying, but the tears were backed up in her eyes. "What's wrong? Is Grampa Bill OK?"

"He snored real loud and woke me up." I told her I was sorry she'd been awakened. She shook her head, looked hard into my eyes, and tapped her hand on my shoulder. She accused me, "You didn't wake me."

With her hand on my cheek forcing me to look at her, she explained, "Grandma, if I'm asleep put your hand on my shoulder and pat it a few times, and then I'll wake up and help you with the animals." Hugging her warm little flannel-clad body, I promised to always share the morning chores when she was visiting me in Iowa.

Award-winning columnist Phyllis Henry lives in Gig Harbor.



Is Fusion Power On the Way?

Harnessing fusion energy as a source for carbon-free, near limitless electricity seemed much closer last November when the Department of Energy breathlessly announced a key advance: there was a successful "controlled burn" of the fuel in an experimental fusion reactor at the National Ignition Facility at Lawrence Livermore National Lab. This means that more energy was produced as the fuel burned than it took to ignite the fuel using lasers.

The news was flashed around the world, leaving the impression that a fusion power generator is finally at hand, marking the dawn of a new era.

Fusion, not to be confused with fission, is the atomic reaction that powers the sun and our big thermonuclear bombs. Taming the fusion reaction as a reliable source of electricity has been a goal for more than 60 years.

This does represent an important advance and I am relieved, since the team at Livermore has been working toward this goal for more than 10 years under the guise of a program called "Stockpile Stewardship," which studies whether our stash of aging fusion-powered bombs will go off if we ever need them to.

After the announcement, several sources looked at the energy budget of the experiment, and the future isn't here quite yet.

While it is true the energy released exceeded the energy delivered by the lasers that ignited the tiny fuel pellet, the electricity needed to run the lasers was overlooked. Less energy was released than required to do the test, which pricks the enthusiastic bubble. More work will be needed to improve the efficiency of the process before an economically viable fusion reactor can generate several times the

energy needed to burn the fuel, and thus be plugged into an electrical grid.

The allure of fusion to make electricity has heated up the private sector. There are more than 10 development-phase companies in the U.S. and the U.K. competing to perfect a practical fusion reactor. Ultimately, a successful reactor would generate an enormous amount of heat, which would probably be captured via a steam cycle, just like today's electricity generation stations that run on fission or the combustion of oil, gas or coal.

Why is achieving controlled fusion so hard? Because it takes a great deal of energy to force the atoms in the fuel (usually a form of hydrogen called deuterium) to fuse with one another. After all, it takes a fission bomb to ignite a fusion bomb. But there is a possible workaround by replacing deuterium with a form of helium (helium-3) that could have advantages. A reactor based on the fusion of helium-3 would be clean, since no nasty neutrons would be released. Today's fission reactors produce gobs of neutrons, resulting in the spent fuel and parts of the reactor vessel itself becoming highly radioactive, essentially forever. That's why nobody wants to store spent fuel in their backyards. Atomic energy with no radioactive waste would be a tremendous advance.

Alas, helium-3 does not exist on Earth in useful amounts, but there are hints that it does on the moon. Harrison Schmitt was the astronaut trained as a geologist who was part of the crew on Apollo 17 and one of the last people to walk on the moon. I met him at a meeting on space exploration a few years ago. He believes we should investigate helium-3 immediately: Collect some from the moon, bring it to Earth and test it as a reactor fuel.

The Chinese may have done what Harrison was suggesting. Learning more about helium-3 was likely one of the motivations for the Chinese Lunar Exploration Program. Their 2021 trip to the moon supposedly returned a sample of something that might contain some helium-3 to investigate its potential as a reactor fuel. This is only my guess, since the Chinese space program has said nothing more about what they found or what their plans are.

Sadly, an industry observer of fusion research said many years ago that practical fusion energy is 30 years away and always will be.

In the meantime, we can be consoled by the fact that we already have a wonderful big fusion reactor — the sun — that bathes the Earth in recoverable energy, and it is safely tucked 93 million miles away. Even as the pace of wind and solar projects is increasing around the world, we're not even close to getting all we might from the sun. More than 1,000 watts of energy comes to each square

meter of the Earth's surface when the sun is directly overhead (1,000 watts or 1 kilowatt is a bit more than one horsepower).

Sunlight is free. No wonder photovoltaic systems are so popular. So, while we wait for a safe and affordable electric generator based on fusion, we can always collect some free horsepower from our sunshine.

Richard Gelinas, Ph.D., whose early work earned a Nobel prize, is a senior research scientist at the Institute for Systems Biology. He lives in Lakebay.



Know Yourself

February is Black History Month. It was first conceived by Black historian Carter G. Woodson (1875-1950) and the members of his Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. Together they organized a Negro History Week, beginning in February 1926. The month of February was chosen because it was close to the birthdays of the author, orator and abolitionist Frederick Douglass and President Lincoln.

It was not until 50 years later, in 1976, that President Ford officially recognized Black History Month, calling upon the public to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."

Now it is 2023 and I have been thinking about my own history. Do I still have to ask myself whether I am going to worry about what people think of me, or am I going to be what I was destined to be?

Most of the time I feel disconnected. Sometimes people act peculiar around me because I seem peculiar to them, I guess. I am too Black for the White Folk and too White for the Black Folk. Even when I engage with people that had the same trials and tribulations in life that I did, they don't see me as one of them.

My great uncle Alain LeRoy Locke (1885-1954) was an American writer, philosopher, educator and patron of the arts. He was the first African American Rhodes Scholar (1907), a philosophical architect and the "Dean of the Harlem Renaissance." He produced a book called "The New Negro" (1925), a collection of writings by him and other leading African Americans about our growing culture to educate White America, but Black America too. Meaning, learn to know yourself.

I thought about that for a long time, and finally wrote an autobiography (“Diss-Funk-Shun-All,” 2011). Readers told me time and again they knew someone similar to someone in my book. Writing that and having it translated into different languages to sell around the world has been a kind of therapy. Also, both sadly and happily, I am the first African American male to earn a Bachelor of Social Work degree at Seattle University. Only 19% of Black men have a bachelor’s degree or higher and just 7% of Black men obtain a post-graduate degree.

I have worked for the Department of Social and Health Services for 16 years as a social worker, including nine with Child Welfare Services and seven at Western State Hospital. It’s not a system always receptive to constructive criticism, even when their own advocate for themselves. I was once accused of being on drugs by upper management when I expressed concern about the lack of safety for us workers in a competency restoration ward — a concern that was sadly validated when my coworkers were attacked. More than 66% of social workers are Caucasian, as were 85% of my supervisors during my career. New social workers are mostly women (90%) which is a good thing. I don’t discriminate — but others do.

I have been reassigned multiple times over the years but only now am I beginning to understand why I am one of only a handful of Black men that have lasted in DSHS in King and Pierce counties: I am a commodity. Or maybe it’s because I am used to being treated like a second-class citizen.

But I have realized that if I don’t invest in myself, I won’t make any more progress.

One thing I’ve learned came from newly facilitating a group of inmates at a Washington Corrections Center. It’s not easy but it is simple: I give back to these men from a strengths-based perspective. That means building on their strengths, recognizing and treating them as resourceful and resilient when they experience adversity.

And now I’m doing the same for myself.

I have decided that I need to move forward. If I can’t collaborate with folk, then I will have to productively work alone. That means less work for Western State and more at my practice in Gig Harbor, and opening a new office on the Key Peninsula to work with our own children. The Peninsula School District could benefit from more inclusion and cultural humility. Why when my young cousin helps win a basketball game for Peninsula High, for example, do we still have to hear racist terms from the opposing team? Everything starts in the home, and everyone must be held accountable.

I am also moving forward to build the mental health agency in the Dominican

Republic I’ve dreamed about for so long. Believe it or not, there are many educated folk in developing countries. It’s not just Black kids with flies on their faces like commercials on television show you, and I plan to spend more and more time there too.

As I have changed my mindset, the negativity is gone. I can see that I am here to help out the families and kids that need a role model like me to validate their feelings and help them break out of bad cycles. It took me years to realize I could be something other than what people thought of me. It’s hard when there aren’t people around who look like you. But like a local principal told me a few years back, “Rion, if you want diversity, be diversity.”

Meaning show up, participate, know yourself.

It’s easy to act Black and hard to be Black. But as I continue to look at myself from a strengths-based perspective, I will take the baton my ancestors passed on to me.

Rion Tisino, MSW, lives in Longbranch.



Jack Dunne
FROM THE CITIOT DESK

Who Are You?

We were on Pirates of the Caribbean, my 6-year-old daughter wide-eyed with glee for the realism and mystery, while my 3-year-old son quickly closed his eyes and put his head down in my lap — too real. A few years later when we went back, pride held his eyes open though I knew he was pretty scared. At one point he turned to me, with trust that I will forever cherish, and asked, “These are all robots right, Dad?” “Yes” I offered with assurance. Three anxious beats later he asked me a question I also will forever cherish: “But they don’t know they’re robots, do they?”

Do you think about who you are? Are you the best judge? How would you know? Maybe it’s not important to you. You’ve got stuff to do, bills to pay. I like the question for myself. It feels important, lets me course correct, helps me avoid small concerns. So, like Alice’s smoking caterpillar, let me pompously ask, “Who are you?”

You might quite reasonably answer with your name. It’s been with you all along, traveling with you through all your changes like comfortable jeans. As a child and again as a parent, we see how your name grows in clarity, just as our personalities strengthen. Early, I was my parents’ son, with some general tendencies and weaknesses, but mostly undefined potential. Later, I was my children’s father, trying to create a safe and constant

model of myself to anchor their own ongoing definition. By now, when your family and friends hear your name, it has real meaning, and while the meanings likely differ between your mom and your ex, maybe in the sum of all cases it is who you are.

Another reasonable tack is to answer with what you do. I’m a biologist. You might be a program manager or a carpenter. I would ask you to try to push this a little bit. Try to replace “a” with “the,” as in, “I am the carpenter who built that house.” Specificity is important when diving into a question as deep as personal identity. I’m a writer, but I’m the guy writing this. If you’ve gotten this far, you’re the person reading this.

As a biologist, I coldly answer that I am this system of muscular epithelia and neural circuitry, and my sense of self is some kind of Darwinian magic. Wonderful certainly, but nothing more. As a somewhat romantic biologist, I define myself as the thing that lives inside this meat bucket I’ve been carrying around for so long. Some might call that thing my soul and that’s fine with me. Stories about souls bring clarity and comfort to the question I hope you’re asking.

The lesson my daughter is still teaching me is that you can believe whatever you want about who you are. Like most of us, she’s had some stressful childhood situations. Her coping strategy was to play a part, and the part she chose was tuned to the situation. I realize now that I’ve done that. You ever tried to be somebody you’re not? She got really good at it. She’s so good that I often worry that she tells me what I want to hear about who she is because she loves me and wants to make me happy. I’d never know. I wonder if she would ever know.

The era that we grew up in goes a long way to defining who we are. I’m an old hippie because I went to college in 1970. The University of California was essentially free, I was a B+ student and I could get in. I learned a lot, and the rest of my life rose out of some of those experiences, academic and social. One thing I did was a fair dosing with THC and some psychedelics (alcohol was frowned upon in that bubble). I endorse the recent discussions about enabling safe but hallucinogenic experiences, because I’ve had some terrific insights during those very exciting and fun rides. I think I learned a lot, about organic chemistry, and girls I cared about, and myself.

All this questioning and answering comes from retiring and moving to this spectacular place. In five years, I’ve learned so much, seen so much I never imagined, that I just have to wonder about who I am now, and who I was. Looking back is mostly pleasant, with some pride and some shame. At my age you can average over time, and it is who I am.

Jack Dunne lives gratefully in Lakebay.

Letters to the Editor

LETTER FROM UKRAINE

January 15: The one-year anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine is approaching. The invaders crossed the border Feb. 24, 2022. I arrived in the city of Przemysł, Poland, in early March last year and will have spent over nine months in Ukraine on the anniversary date. I’ve returned home twice since but the time was brief. My work in Ukraine was unfinished and beckoning. (See “Local Animal Rescuer Is Home From the War, for Now,” October 2022.)

Today I am in a hotel outside Kyiv. The power has been off for a few hours, and it is getting colder in my room. No matter. I’ll be leaving soon to go into the city and load humanitarian aid for people and animals in Kherson. There will be just two vehicles in this convoy, mine and another operated by Ukrainian volunteers. The language barrier is there even though we all use Google Translate, which is not very reliable.

We leave tomorrow morning for Kherson and enter the city seven hours later, say our hellos, embrace, wish each other good luck, and then depart. I’ll be going to Dnipro from Kherson, while the others head back to Kyiv. I’ll reach Dnipro that night and get some rest before I reload the next morning for Bakhmut.

Bakhmut is a city in the Donbas region of Eastern Ukraine under attack by the Russian military and the Wagner Group mercenaries. It is a “meat grinder” for the Russians. They are losing significant numbers of soldiers attempting to capture the city. There are civilians with their animals that have chosen to remain, all hoping the Ukrainian military will be able to hold off the Russian advance and save what is left of the city. Those are the people we are bringing the humanitarian aid to.

January 16: Kherson is in the rearview mirror. We finished unloading during a Russian rocket attack. I went to visit a British friend before leaving for Dnipro. As we sat in his apartment the rockets came often and close. I could see people running rather than walking to wherever they were going. No point hanging anywhere too long. Another rocket struck and debris hit the building. Time for me to go.

January 17: I arrived in Dnipro this afternoon and went to the Ukrainian volunteer organization to load supplies for Bakhmut. Five hundred loaves of bread, 500 cans of beans with meat, 540 kilograms of animal feed and other humanitarian aid. I met a French bulldog there, Jessica, who was rescued from the Kharkiv region earlier in the war. Meeting rescued animals always

makes the day better for me. I meet a lot of them. I'm currently sitting in a mechanic's garage having contaminated steering fluid flushed and refilled. It's not warm here either. Thinking about tomorrow and what it will bring.

Tom Bates, Lakebay

UNCHECKED BULLYING AT KPMS?

As a former Key Peninsula Middle School employee and a parent that sent two kids through KPMS, the issue of bullying has nothing to do with the current administration: specifically, Principal Jeri Goebel. After working there for eight years directly under her, I can tell you she isn't the problem. KPMS isn't alone in issues of bullying. Take any generation, any school, different economic levels, the issue has always been there.

I do believe however there are multiple challenges KPMS, along with other schools,

have faced in recent years. One being laws from the state Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction regarding discipline that took effect in 2018. Simply put, OSPI changed an administrator's ability to suspend immediately, offered fewer suspension days for bigger offenses, and even limited how long a student can be removed from a classroom. So, when parents were citing an offending child back in school the next day, it wasn't necessarily an option for the administrator depending on how many offenses the child had committed.

The second issue specific to KPMS is the high number of vice principals the school has had in the last six years. After a well-established VP left, there were two vice principals that came and went, only lasting about two school years each. This is a big deal when you are talking about establishing a rapport with kids, parents and staff, and getting a handle on the middle school as a

whole. Yes, the principal is responsible for the overall well-being of the school, but it is a well-known fact that the vice principal oversees discipline. If you don't have a strong vice principal, the school discipline suffers, and in turn the kids suffer. I believe that this is what happened at KPMS.

When you look at the contributing factors mentioned above, not even going into what the pandemic has done to our kids socially, there are so many more factors here than a principal who cares deeply for our kids.

Alisha Beesinger, Lakebay

STUDENTS NEED OUR SUPPORT

The Peninsula School District is running two levies in February. As a retired high school counselor and current volunteer with AVID students, I hope I can count on your yes vote for both. These levies will fund essential programs for our kids and safety and security projects that the state

does not fund. Under these two proposed measures, our total local school tax rate is still estimated to decrease.

Access to technology is essential for our students and school safety and security must be beefed up. We hear about school shootings around the country almost every week and pray that horror does not visit our community. We also hear about student suicides, which have happened and do happen right here. When I learn of those things, I cringe. Support needs to be increased, not cut back as would happen with a levy failure.

All of us want the best for our kids and our grandkids. Providing a solid school experience is an essential ingredient. I urge you to watch for the levy ballot in the mail in late January and mark it Yes for both levies. What a great Valentine's Day gift it will be to our community to pass this pair of school levies on Feb. 14.

Marsba Williams, Wauna

OBITUARIES



Virginia Anne Ducharme Thompson

Virginia Thompson of Lakebay died January 3. She was 99 years old.

Daughter, sister, wife, mother, aunt, grandmother, great-grandmother, friend. Writer, painter, teacher. Virginia was all of these and more.

She was born in Gowrie, Iowa, in 1923, the eldest of four and daughter of a banker and homemaker. She had fond memories of playing Tarzan in the streets of her small town and spending time on her uncle's farm.

Virginia graduated from the University of Iowa, spent an adventurous year working in Chicago, and then returned to Iowa to teach. She decided to get a teaching certificate and moved to Seattle to attend the University of Washington — she'd visited her aunt in the Pacific Northwest and was ready

to leave Iowa for the mountains and salt water. It was there she met Ray Thompson, who would become her lifelong love and partner. They built a life over the next 54 years, until his death in 2002.

She taught high school English and art until the first of four children was born. The family moved frequently in the early years for Ray's work — from Seattle to Washington, D.C., Tacoma, Alabama, and finally back to Seattle again — and with each move Virginia created home, security and belonging for their family of six. They bought property on the Key Peninsula in 1958 and built a weekend getaway. When her kids were launched, she co-designed and taught a course at Seattle Community College, "Art for Institutions," at a time when art therapy was in its infancy. In 1974, with Ray's pending retirement, they built their dream house and made Lakebay their home. They dove into the community and their church and traveled extensively.

When Ray died Virginia forged her life as a widow. She wrote daily, often to Ray. She traveled to New York and South Africa with her daughters. She found meaning and solace in work with church and local organizations. She was part of the group that built the Key Peninsula Health and Professional Center, read with students at Evergreen Elementary, was an early volunteer at The Mustard Seed Project, and she joined Two Waters Arts Alliance in its first year.

Virginia's creativity knew no bounds. She painted always. When she moved to Lakebay, she joined a writer's group through the local library and published a set of

essays, "I am Positive and Negative Spaces." She read widely — poetry, essays, fiction, philosophy. She was an unabashed liberal, a lover of the underdog and a champion for social justice.

Virginia leaves behind her brothers John and Richard (Vicki); children Sara (Richard Gelinis), Cappy, Molly (Joe Casalini) and Peter (Patrice); nine grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

A memorial service was held January 28. Donations in her honor can be made to St. Hugh of Lincoln Episcopal Church, Two Waters Arts Alliance, or The Mustard Seed Project of Key Peninsula.



Susan Henry

Susan Henry of Vaughn died October 20. She was 73 years old.

Sue was born in 1949 on Vashon Island to George and Mary Alice Schoepel and was later raised by her stepmother, Ruby Schoepel. She had three siblings: John,

Pam and Bruce, of whom Pam is the sole survivor.

After graduating high school, Sue worked as a secretary at Western Farmers in Seattle.

Sue married Doug Henry in 1976. Doug's career with Manson Construction Co. moved the young family, including their sons Jeff and Jacques, from Seattle to Fernald, Federal Way and Valdez, Alaska. After building a house and restoring a 35-foot boat in Valdez, they sold it all and moved onto a 65-foot liveaboard boat in Tacoma.

The family moved to Vaughn in 1989. Sue was employed by the Peninsula School District in human resources, where she enjoyed working for 25 years.

While there, Sue and Doug started Instep Dance and taught ballroom dancing in many places including the Tacoma Elks Lodge, Amvets, Gig Harbor Eagles, Tacoma and Kitsap USA Dance, and Jubilee Lodge.

Sue also co-produced and co-directed the three-day dance event "Pacific Dancefest" for three years and "Instep Dancefest" for 16 years with her husband.

She enjoyed traveling, crafts and dancing, especially tango and swing, and loved listening to country music.

Sue enjoyed good times with family and friends but especially with Jacques's dog Erebus. She had a beautiful smile and charming wit and will be sorely missed by her family and the many friends she made.

Thank you to the doctors and especially to the many nurses that took care of her at St. Anthony Hospital. We are eternally grateful.

A memorial will be held in the spring. We love you "Lady Bug."

Questions of Equity Voiced at Peninsula School Board Meeting

Superintendent Krestin Bahr and directors listened as a Key Peninsula Middle School staff member and a former student raised pointed concerns of fairness.

LISA BRYAN, KP NEWS

Kari Trivette has a great deal of experience with the Peninsula School District. Her kids attended Minter Creek Elementary, Harbor Ridge Middle School, and graduated from Peninsula High School with an excellent educational experience that set them up to be successful in college. She said she always considered this a reflection of the district and the support their schools received.

But at the January 12 PSD board meeting, Trivette told directors that as a former staff member at Goodman Middle School, a Harbor Ridge Middle School parent and current office manager at KPMS, she now asks herself whether all students in the district have equal access to the same educational benefits.

“That answer is no,” Trivette said. “There is a stark difference in programs, courses, support, access and equity compared to other middle schools.”

Field trips were one example she cited where students lack access. Because KPMS must travel greater distances than others, the cost to charter buses is higher than for the other buildings.

“Many of our students have never been to Uptown or across the Narrows Bridge,” she said.

In her 21 years working for PSD, Trivette said has read many unflattering articles about different situations at schools districtwide. Most of the time, she said, district leadership came out with a counter narrative or at the very least a statement of support.

“After the article about KPMS came out in the (KP News) paper, our staff spent the last week upset, frustrated, embarrassed and mortified,” she said. “We waited for someone, anyone from the district or from our school board to say something, to offer support and tell our staff that they are valued and respected.” (See “Allegations of Unchecked Bullying at Middle School Made by Parents,” January 2023.)

Instead, she said the school board showed up for a photo opportunity related to recent construction to promote the upcoming levy.

“We are worth more than a photo op and deserve your support,” Trivette said. “If other schools in our district receive published public support when unflattering articles come out, why not Key Peninsula Middle School?”

School demographics on Key Peninsula differ dramatically from other middle schools in Gig Harbor. Trivette said KPMS is considered a high-needs school, with more than 70% of students on free or reduced lunch.

Trivette told directors the school has not had a substitute teacher in the building since November. Instead, she said teachers give up their daily planning period to cover absences because subs rarely come out to KPMS. She said the absence of just one teacher results in seven staff members needing to cover; two out means 14 staff members must cover. For a school with 26 teachers and daily absences, Trivette said they are exhausted, but remain her heroes.

“Our teachers, counselors and classified

staff are on the frontlines every day, selflessly giving, supporting and wrapping around our students while always supporting each other.

“Our district talking points include being equitable and inclusive and as a district we have to be mindful of our entire population, she said. “We are Vaughn, we are Lakebay, we are Longbranch, we are the Key Peninsula.”

Peninsula High School freshman Ryan Anderson, who attended Minter Creek Elementary and KPMS, told directors, “The staff at KPMS is amazing and do the best they can with what they have, but only within the policies of PSD and state laws.”

Anderson said the lack of equity affected him personally when he was not afforded the opportunity to take advanced math classes offered at Goodman, Kopachuck and Harbor Ridge middle schools.

He said he was told there weren’t enough students at KPMS to form a class for algebra or geometry. Instead, he was placed in an advanced eighth grade math class, despite coming from the district highly capable program and his high state standardized test scores.

“This has slowed my path in high school as I now have to take additional classes to get my high school credits instead of getting them in advance, like some of my peers from the other middle school have done.”

After filling out an application to a Naval Academy STEM program, Anderson discovered that he is even further behind some of his peers, now in foreign language credits not offered at KPMS due to lack of interest.

“Now I must navigate a finite time schedule

to try and acquire all the credits I would like, which is going to involve missing some great class experiences that otherwise could have enriched my learning and high school experiences,” Anderson said.

He asked the school board to find a solution to this problem, suggesting a paraeducator might supervise a class of students using Zoom to take classes not offered at their school.

“Maybe a roving teacher who could teach Spanish at Harbor Ridge in the morning and KPMS in the afternoon?” he said. “But please make the experience for students coming behind me better than mine. And make sure that opportunities for PSD students are found at every school.”

The standard protocol at school board meetings is to listen but not respond directly to public comments during the meetings.

“The challenges that schools on the Key Peninsula face due to their location is not new to the district,” said Superintendent Krestin Bahr in a statement provided to KP News. “The work to create inclusive, safe and equitable spaces inside our schools on both peninsulas is ongoing and will not be solved with a quick fix or on a fast timeline.

“If approved by voters in February, the Replacement Educational Programs and Opportunity Levy and the Safety Security and Technology Levy will continue to fund staff, programs and more at our Key Peninsula schools while providing funding for new security at our Key Peninsula buildings and more technology in classrooms to match that in our newly built schools.” ■

KP Citizen of the Year Award Returns After Pandemic Hiatus Headlined by Local Hero

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

The Key Peninsula Lions Club will hold its 36th annual Key Peninsula Citizen of the Year Award banquet at the KP Civic Center March 25 beginning at 6 p.m. The long-standing ceremony had been postponed since March 2020, and the award will go to one of the original nominees for 2019.

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

The winner is chosen by Lions Club members voting by secret ballot. The current nominees were submitted to the Lions in 2018. The club will again solicit nominees at the end of this year.

A number of other citations are given during the celebration to commend local achievers in addition to the Citizen of the Year, in keeping with the Lions Club motto: “We serve.”

The evening also includes a variety of auctions and raffles and other fundraising opportunities to donate to the Lions Club. “Whatever we get goes right back into the community,” Wolverton said.

The KP Lions provide eyeglasses and hearing aids to KP residents, awards the KP Lions Memorial Scholarship to high school

students, organizes highway cleanups and an annual Volksmarch, volunteers its labor and expertise to maintaining and improving KP parks, distributes free dictionaries each year to every third-grader on the KP and to Key Peninsula Middle School, and makes grants to local nonprofits, according to Wolverton.

The keynote speaker this year will be longtime Lions Club member, KP booster and raconteur Hugh McMillan.

The event will include dinner and a no-host bar, and there is usually a chance to meet community leaders, local officials and elected representatives. Tickets often sell out in advance and are available online for a donation of \$25.

For more information, go to the KP Lions Club website at e-clubhouse.org/sites/keypeninsulawa.

sites/keypeninsulawa.

The 2019 Citizen of the Year nominees are:

Pat Augustziny
Marilyn Brennan
Stephanie Brooks
Peggy Gablehouse
Diane Gressley and David Starkweather
Marcia Harris
David Haycock
Tim Kezele
Don Lee
Jill Peters
Victoria Schauer
Thomas Smith
Alberta Stave
Amy Turk
Don Zimmerman ■



Our best year ever.

In 2022, community support for the KP News continued to grow.

We published more stories and photos than ever, delivered online to 78,000 viewers and in print with 126,000 newspapers. In 2022, the newspaper won another 14 awards in the statewide Better Newspapers competition.

Your community newspaper depends on advertising and organizations like NewsMatch and Angel Guild. And substantial thanks to the generous and loyal donors listed here.

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Seeking a ‘Just Mercy’ by Bryan Stevenson: A Story of Justice and Redemption

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

In 1986, an 18-year-old white woman named Ronda Morrison was murdered during an apparent sexual assault at the dry cleaners where she worked in Monroeville, Alabama. The community was stunned but despite an aggressive investigation, the police got nowhere.

Six months later, a 45-year-old Black man named Walter McMillian was arrested for the crime. He had no criminal history and had worked for many people in town as a logger for years. His arrest occurred after a white woman he'd been having an affair with filed for a very messy, very public divorce from her husband.

McMillian was sent to death row immediately after his arrest, 18 months before his trial, which lasted a day and a half. Multiple witnesses, all Black, testified that he had been at a church function 11 miles away during the time of the murder. He was convicted on the basis of coerced testimony from a white jail house informant, who later tried to recant. The trial judge overrode the jury's verdict of life in prison and instead sentenced McMillian to death.

This is the foundation of “Just Mercy,” a striking story about the shortcomings of our justice system, written by a man who has spent a career trying to fix them.

Bryan Stevenson was a Harvard law student the first time he visited death row as part of a summer intern-

ship program. It was in Alabama, which had the fastest growing condemned population in the country (at 100 prisoners) and the only state with no public defender system for them — “which meant that large numbers of death row prisoners had no legal representation of any kind,” he writes.

Stevenson took on McMillian's case in 1986 and spent the next seven years trying to exonerate him. That is the core of this book, but along the way he introduces us to some of the many, many other cases of wrongful convictions and inhumane punishments he and his colleagues challenged, and the challenges of doing so as a Black attorney in the deep South.



“This book is about getting closer to mass incarceration and extreme punishment in America,” he writes. “When I first went to death row in December 1983, America was in the early stages of a radical transformation that would turn us into an unprecedentedly hard and punitive nation and result in mass imprisonment that has no historical parallel.”

Or practical effect, it would seem, as we continue to struggle with the same problems while imprisoning 2.3 million people as of January 2023, the sixth highest per capita rate in the world (though down from No. 1 in 2013), with Black Americans incarcerated at nearly five times the rate of whites.

What this book is not about is defunding the police, letting criminals run free, or shaming white people or the nation. It's about life on the front lines for those people working to help the nation live up to its values and potential.

Stevenson describes sitting in an empty courtroom preparing to meet a jailed client before their first hearing together when the judge and district attorney emerge from chambers, laughing at some private joke. That is, until the judge spots Stevenson at the defense

table, with his suit and tie and open briefcase. “Hey!” he shouts. “You can't be in here! Get outside and wait for your lawyer!”

Stevenson stands up and introduces

himself, politely saying he is the lawyer. The judge says “Oh,” and goes on his way.

That's called racial profiling, and it's even more insidious than it might seem.

At a different pretrial hearing, Stevenson argues against the exclusion of African Americans from a jury pool in a town where 25% of the population is Black. “The judge complained loudly,” he writes. “I'm going to grant your motion ... but I'm pretty fed up with people always talking about minority rights. African Americans, Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans ... When is someone going to come to my courtroom and protect the rights of Confederate Americans?”

Stevenson wants to ask whether that

includes him, since he was born a Black man in the segregated South.

Instead, he cofounded the nonprofit Equal Justice Initiative with Eva Ansley in Montgomery in 1989 to provide legal representation for poor prisoners, and for anyone who may have been denied a fair trial.

By 2019, they had saved 125 men from the death penalty while filing appeals, overturning wrongful convictions, and working “to alleviate bias in the criminal justice system.”

Stevenson tells a chilling story about what “to alleviate bias” looks like.

He visits a prison that he's entered many times to meet a new client and notices a pickup truck in the parking lot adorned with Confederate flags and other racist symbols. When he enters the office, a new guard asks him if he saw the truck. “I want you to know, that's my truck,” he says, before subjecting Stevenson to a strip search — his first — and a slew of bureaucratic hassles before allowing him to see his client, a mentally ill Black prisoner more interested in getting a chocolate shake than getting treatment at a hospital.

Stevenson arranges a hearing but it's in a distant city, requiring a three-day trip that will be supervised by the same guard. The guard transports and shadows the prisoner; Stevenson sees him in court every day, staring at him and listening to his testimony and that of the doctors Stevenson calls, as well as the state attorneys arguing against any change in the prisoner's living conditions.

In the end, the motion is granted, but before he is moved Stevenson visits him one more time in the prison and is again stopped by the guard.

This time, the guard puts a hand on Stevenson's shoulder and apologizes. Sitting in the courtroom, listening to the man talk and experts

talk about him, the guard realized how little he understood the man's situation — or his own. He and the man had a lot in common, he said. On the way back to prison, the guard stopped to buy him a chocolate shake.

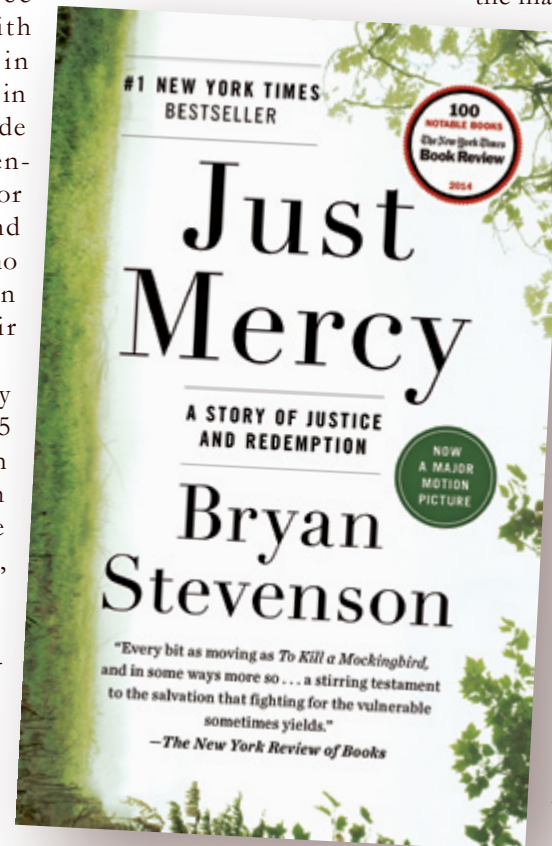
The book concludes with the end of Walter McMillian's case. After six years of hearings and filings, Stevenson convinced the Alabama Court of Criminal Appeals that McMillian's conviction was

unconstitutional. The Alabama Bureau of Investigation confirmed the evidence uncovered by Stevenson and the EJI, and determined that McMillian was innocent. The State of Alabama dropped the charges and released him from death row in March 1993.

Ronda Morrison's murder remains unsolved. ■

“Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption,” published 2014 by Spiegel & Grau.

One of Time magazine's “10 Best Books of Nonfiction” for 2014 and among The New York Times' “100 Notable Books” of the year. Stevenson won the 2015 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Nonfiction and the 2015 Dayton Literary Peace Prize for Nonfiction. He won a MacArthur Fellowship in 1995, the Olof Palme Prize in 2000 and in 2020 received the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers Lifetime Achievement Award. Stevenson continues to run the Equal Justice Initiative and is a law professor at New York University.



The 15 Most Camouflaged Critters Around Puget Sound

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

Visitors pass through the Key Peninsula and notice only our impressive trees. Those who know the terrain well know how much can be concealed here.

Camouflaged critters exploit psychology as much as terrain.

Our rural peninsula offers a rich patchwork of forest, field, scrub and shore. Hiding places are everywhere. Yet it's a lesson we must constantly learn: What's in one place isn't necessarily in another. As soon as we think we have a handle on what is before us, it is our mind filling the gaps rather than our eyes. This is exactly where these wild and sneaky animals like to live, right where we begin to make assumptions.

Here is my list of the 15 most camouflaged creatures that call the Key Peninsula home.

15. Brown creeper: In an entourage of small winter songbirds, cheery and colorful, this bark-colored bird sticks close to the trunks of trees. It darts upward as it searches for spiders and can be found by its double-noted call, which is nearly as high as a dog whistle.

14. Goldenrod crab spider: This spider can be white or yellow and sometimes streaked with green or violet. It lives on flowers, its legs looking like stamens, and lies in wait for visiting pollinators to ambush. When it moves to another flower, it secretes pigments to slowly change color to match its new home.

13. Western fence lizard: The all-purpose checkered skin of fence lizards reminds me of army camo; the color scheme of grays, browns and blacks not only blending into its terrain of dirt, rocks, sand and logs, but obscuring the lizard's outline, making it hard to pinpoint its parts.

12. Brittle star: In the intertidal zone, where every rough surface is crowded with critters that aren't what they seem, I get an extra kick out of finding the sand-colored and nearly translucent arm of a brittle star sweeping slowly from under a rock, feeling around for prey.

11. Azure butterflies: While an argument could be made that sky-blue adult azures are camouflaged against the sky, it is their caterpillars and chrysalises that earn a place on this list — with a shout-out to hundreds of equally cryptic caterpillars of other moth and butterfly species. Inseparable from the flowers on which they feed, like dogwoods and lupines, azure caterpillars look like tiny green, pink or white chitons. The brown chrysalises look like castoff leaf buds.



Look closely to spot the brown creeper that all but disappears on the trunk of a Douglas fir. See photos of these easily missed critters online at keypennews.org. *Tina McKail, KP News*

10. Decorator crab: The body is canvas and garden for several species of decorator crabs. Carefully attaching small anemones, sponges and fronds of algae to its shell, a decorator crab looks like any other encrusted rock when it sits motionless. When it molts, it often picks the garden off its old shell and transfers it to the new.

9. Flying squirrel: I am dying to see a flying squirrel. They are certainly around. Nocturnal tree-dwellers, much of their elusiveness has to do with spending their days motionless in treetops, but their brown and gray fur also vanishes against bark. It has recently been found that all of North America's flying squirrel species fluoresce pink in ultraviolet light. No one knows why.

8. Wilson's snipe: With a shout-out to the many twig-colored female birds out there, it is hard to beat snipe for sneakiness. Four tan stripes run across feathers mottled with brown and charcoal. A snipe crouches in wetland grass, invisible until you draw near. Then it rockets away with a screech.

7. Bay pipefish / Penpoint gunnel: In offshore beds of eelgrass, two fish look like diaphanous blades of grass. The bay pipefish, a seahorse relative, is bookended by a long snout and a tiny circular tail. The penpoint gunnel, an eel-like fish, has three

color morphs to match the three color-zones of undersea vegetation: green in the shallows, mustard yellow beyond, and maroon in the depths.

6. Carolina grasshopper: Of several grasshopper species on the KP, I choose the large Carolina grasshopper, identified by black wings with yellow margins, for its ability to disappear even when you have tracked where it landed. It comes in shades of rust, gray, tan and brown, a variation handy in a world that yearly shifts its palette. Recent research suggests that an individual grasshopper knows its specific hue and chooses its resting places accordingly.

5. Morel: Experienced mushroom hunters remain tormented by morels on the KP. Already rare, their pitted forms can be impossible to spot in the dappled darkness of the forest. Plus, they look like pine cones — with a shout-out to another pine cone mimic, the bizarre groundcone, a parasitic plant — fortifying their camouflage with mimicry.

4. Giant water bug: Camouflage helps predators as well as prey. I once watched a giant water bug swim to the bottom of a pond. The instant it glided to a stop in



the old brown leaves collected there, transforming into another leaf, I understood how such a relatively large predator could operate by ambush. They even catch fish.

3. Bobcat: Is it not incredible that this lynx cousin lives around us, stalking its territories and hunting rabbits and raising kittens without ever being seen? Master of silence, a bobcat's spotted and striped fur helps it melt into tangled vegetation, where the outlines of objects are lost in ridiculous patterns of shadow and texture.

2. Starry flounder: It takes a special sea critter to attempt to camouflage against the sandy bottoms that are far more common in Puget Sound than rocky reefs. The starry flounder flat-out succeeds, speckled like sand. Old-timers fished for them by walking barefoot in the shallows. You could not see a flounder before you stepped on it, and then it took every bit of gumption to quell the instinct to jump away from the large wriggling fish.

1. Moths: I will brook no argument on this one. Various moths could take the top 50 spots on this list. Try finding a single resting moth the next time you walk in the woods, where they are abundant. Good luck. ■



Little Eagles at Evergreen. *Myka Cranford, Communities in Schools of Peninsula*

Evergreen Elementary School Encourages Engagement with Community

Evergreen staff, PTA and Communities in Schools of Peninsula collaborate, innovate and cooperate to help students and schools achieve their goals.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

Evergreen Elementary School welcomed families with a new outreach program, Parents Assisting Kids, last fall. Megan White, site coordinator for Communities in Schools of Peninsula, and Susan Brummitt, Evergreen's learning assistance program teacher, worked with the Parent Teacher Association to offer monthly Parents And Kids (PAK) meetings to address concerns that the parents prioritized.

"We are having fun welcoming families back into the building," said Evergreen Principal Hugh Maxwell. "Students did fall behind, and it's hard to know how to help your child. This was the perfect time to reach out."

"Hugh was behind this from the beginning," White said. "He was there for each evening, which made them even more powerful. He has been so instrumental in the culture of the school, the positivity and support and care of students."

Evergreen welcomed returning students in the 2021-22 school year, but could not open to parents or volunteers.

"As a school we really place a priority on reaching out to parents," White said. "Whenever you get parents involved it is only good for kids. It shows kids school is important (and) models caring about education and that kids are important."

At each PAK night, families eat pizza together before the kids go to the gym for supervised play, while adults gather in the school's new community room.

When they first met in September, the adults broke into small groups to brainstorm what they most wanted and needed to support their children. "We wanted to be responsive to their needs," Maxwell said.

The parents and other caregivers said they wanted some tools they could use at a small scale to assist their children with reading and math as well as help dealing with the emotional issues of adjusting to being back in a classroom. They were also interested in more information about dyslexia and how the school communicates with parents about their students.

At follow-up meetings, the Evergreen reading specialist presented easy to implement strategies to help struggling readers, and the school counselor talked about the importance of self-care.

"As we move forward, our hope is to inform parents regarding the topics discussed as well as have an activity they can practice with, then take home and use with their student," Brummitt said.

In response to the request for help with the social emotional needs of students, Myka Cranford, volunteer and communications director for CISP, presented an introduction to a parenting class. Parents were enthusiastic for more, and Cranford now teaches a five-session parenting class that started in January. As with the PAK program, dinner and free childcare are provided.

Cranford, who has two children in their twenties, has always had a passion for parenting. "Even one good tool that works can make you feel successful," she



Mentor and mentee at work at Vaughn Elementary. *Myka Cranford, Communities in Schools of Peninsula*

said. She is certified to teach through Positive Discipline, a program that focuses on positive behaviors rather than negative punitive consequences.

"Positive Discipline is designed to teach young people to become responsible, respectful and resourceful members of their communities and teaches important social and life skills in a manner that is deeply respectful and encouraging for both children and adults," Cranford said. "It works for all ages."

The class is interactive and encourages parent engagement. Parents work to find solutions that work for their own families, to anticipate problems, and have family meetings where the children can help come up with solutions that will work for them. For example, Cranford said, kids can plan ahead and design a time-out place that is positive for them, where they will want to be if they need to calm down.

The classes last for an hour and a half, with parents taking new tools home and reporting on how they worked the following week. A class will also be offered at Minter Creek Elementary.

In addition to PAK nights, White has coordinated other efforts to support Evergreen students and their families.

Little Eagles is a reading mentor program with 12 volunteer mentors who work along with teachers each week, supporting more than two dozen students after school on Tuesdays. "Sometimes mentors are afraid they don't know enough about reading strategies," White said, "but they don't need to worry. They instill a sense of joy in reading and are a consistent adult presence." Once a week there is a Tutors with Tails program that pairs students with trained canines that help kids relax while reading aloud.

Over the holiday season the holiday helper program worked to provide gifts for families. The families, identified by staff, gave guidance about exactly what the students wanted and needed. "It gave me goosebumps to see their faces when they came to pick up the presents," White said.

"What CIS is about, is assisting families and kids with what they need to succeed in school and in life, helping with whatever barriers there might be, including food, clothes and mentors," she said. ■

Burley Lagoon Geoduck Battle Enters Next Phase

Environmental impact is said to be minor. Opponents disagree and vow to appeal.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

The Taylor Shellfish Co. plan to convert part of its existing manila clam and oyster beds in Burley Lagoon to geoduck aquaculture has moved forward. Fourteen months after seeking comments on a draft, Pierce County's Planning and Public Works Department released the final environmental impact statement January 6.

The statement reviewed three scenarios. The Taylor preferred plan is to replace 25.5 acres of existing clam and oyster beds with geoducks, planted in phases using nursery tubes and predator exclusion netting. The second scenario would allow geoduck aquaculture throughout the proposed 25.5 acres but limit use to 17 acres at a time. The final alternative would be to take no action and to maintain current clam and oyster aquaculture.

The summary of impacts noted that the potential environmental impact of converting the full 25.5 acres would "range from negligible (at the lowest levels of detection, barely measurable, with no perceptible consequences) to minor (a detectable change, but the change would be localized, small, and temporary) in the context of Burley Lagoon as a whole." The second scenario would have slightly less impact. "With the possible exception of Aesthetics and Recreation, no significant unavoidable adverse impacts were identified."

The statement incorporated some minor revisions to the original draft, including an additional section on the Purdy Creek Fish Passage Barrier Replacement project located under the State Route 302 spur just south of 144th Street NW, a habitat improvement proposed by the Washington State Department of Transportation.

It documented more than 300 comments made in opposition to the permit together with the county's responses. Objections included concerns about the impartiality of the process, the short timeframe allowed to comment on the draft statement, the accuracy of the history of shellfish farming in Burley Lagoon, the legality of farming geoducks in the area and the environmental effects on the shoreline.

"Every single comment was dismissed. There was not even any mitigation. I think that's ridiculous," said Laura Hendricks, executive director of the Coalition to Save Puget Sound, a group based in Burley



Proposed working areas. Pierce County Department of Planning and Public Works

that advocates for shoreline protection.

Hendricks said there are a number of environmental concerns, including damage due to harvesting, but her main focus is the use of plastics. Several commentators stated that if all 25 acres were farmed, a million plastic tubes would be used. In its response, the county noted that with the proposed phased patchwork planting, the number of tubes would be about 444,000.

"The material is high density polyethylene, and we know it is toxic, terrible for marine life," Hendricks said. "I find the state of Washington is closing its eyes as to the destruction this stuff is causing."

Hendricks also said geoduck farming in the lagoon may be illegal. RCW 79.135.010, passed by the Washington Legislature in 2002, clarified use of Bush-

Callow land — subtidal and intertidal shoreline initially set aside for oysters in the 1890s. The new legislation stated that those lands could be used to cultivate clams and shellfish only if they had been planted with those species prior to the end of 2001.

Taylor Shellfish Co. provided a letter from Doug Mcrae written in 2011 stating that he had scatter-planted geoduck seed in Burley Lagoon from a boat, with no exclusion gear, in June 2001 and April 2002. Mcrae, who owned Washington Shellfish at the time, was sued by the county for his shellfish practices ("Business Owner Presents His Case at Hearing," KP News, Dec. 1, 2003)

"Johnny Appleseeding geoduck seed is not planting," Hendricks said. "Doug's declarations all took place long after the

supposed seeding took place. There was no verification that he did it."

"Taylor does our best to be responsible as we farm with our environmental practices and our engagement with the community addressing concerns people raise," said Bill Dewey, the company's public affairs director. "This is probably one of the most robust assessments of geoduck culture developed to date. A team of highly qualified consultants conducted an exhaustive science-based review. It took six years to complete and examines all the critical environmental issues including those identified by community outreach."

Burley Lagoon was first farmed in the 1930s by Tye Oyster Company. The tidelands were purchased by Western Oyster Properties in 1952. Taylor Shellfish has leased the 300-acre farm from Western since 2012. Since that time, depending on conditions and demand, between 80 and 200 acres of oysters and manilla clams have been under active cultivation.

Taylor first submitted its geoduck proposal in 2014. Pierce County required an environmental impact statement because the proposal was different from other permitted projects, involving more acreage, a relatively enclosed location, and denser surrounding population.

The next steps in the permitting process are public meetings at the Key Peninsula and Gig Harbor Land Use Advisory Commissions. The timing had not been decided by press time, but meetings should be scheduled in the first quarter of 2023, said Michelle Kircher, Pierce County public information specialist.

A public hearing before the Pierce County hearing examiner will follow. The examiner's decision, subject to appeal, will go to the Washington State Department of Ecology for more public hearings. Its decision will also be subject to appeal.

"Our position is that we will be appealing every decision as high as we can go," Hendricks said. The appeal will focus on both environmental concerns and whether or not a permit for converting beds from oysters and clams to geoducks is legal.

The environmental impact statement is available for review at the Key Center Library. It is also online together with process updates at www.piercecountywa.gov/7418/Proposed-Burley-Lagoon-Geoduck-Farm. ■

Grocery Store Shooter Denied Unsupervised Outings from Western

Laura K. Sorenson was found not guilty by reason of insanity for the 2012 killing of David Long.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

For Heidi Michaelson, the memory of what happened at what is now the Lake Kathryn Food Market the afternoon of Aug. 11, 2012, is still fresh in her mind.

"I walk in there today and just stare. That's where my brother was standing."

Michaelson's brother, David Long, who lived near the store, was one of three people shot when 20-year-old Laura Sorenson entered what was then Peninsula Market,

pulled a .357-caliber revolver out of her purse and opened fire. Long was shot three times while standing at a checkout lane, with one bullet going through his chest and out his back. He was taken to Tacoma General Hospital where he died two months later from complications due to his injuries.

"I FEEL LIKE THE LEAP I'M BEING ASKED HERE GOING FROM ESCORTED OUTINGS TO (UNESCORTED OUTINGS) IS TOO GREAT. I DON'T FEEL I CAN PUT THE COMMUNITY AT THAT KIND OF RISK."

Lee Crider, a 70-year-old Key Peninsula resident, was shot in the leg, and a 20-year-old store employee received a leg wound from a ricocheted bullet. After she emptied her gun, customers and other witnesses held Sorenson down until police arrived.

Sorenson was initially charged with two counts of attempted murder and one count of first-degree assault. Court documents showed Sorenson suffered from a history of mental illness and was on medication. The documents said she heard voices

telling her to kill pedophiles and entered the store intent on killing men.

A year after Long's death, Sorenson was charged with first-degree murder. She was found not guilty by reason of insanity and was committed indefinitely to Western State Hospital in Lakewood, where she remains today.

Now, more than 10 years after the shooting, Sorenson last month was denied "unescorted community outings" privileges by Pierce County Superior Court Judge Shelly Spier-Moss, despite risk-evaluation and recommendations from the hospital's Risk Review Board, the Public Safety Review Panel, and Behavioral Health Administration Assistant Secretary Kevin Bovenkamp to grant her the privilege. She was denied a similar request in December 2021 because there wasn't unanimous support.

"This is not an easy decision for the court. While they say (Sorenson) is low-risk, if she were to escalate, it could result in the death of a human being," said Spier-Moss. "I feel like the leap I'm being asked here going from escorted outings to (unescorted outings) is too great. I don't feel I can put the community at that kind of risk."

Spier-Moss also noted that Sorenson is not symptom-free and continues to "struggle with anxiety, intense emotions and reactions to stressors."

This wasn't the news Michaelson was expecting, but what she was hoping for.

"I'm very happy," she said after testifying at the hearing, along with family friends Matt Graham and Tracy Geiss. "This means our community is a little safer for another year."

She expects Sorenson will eventually be granted the privilege.

"I have heard hints over the last five years that she may get out, but I was prepared for 20 years down the road," said Michaelson. "It's only been nine years (since Sorenson's commitment) and the fact they're considering unsupervised outings is out of my realm of common sense."

Sorenson's treatment team said she'll be on anxiety medication for the rest of her life and is still trying to improve controlling her anxiety when out in the community. She's already had nearly 30 escorted outings and if her treatments improve may likely be granted unescorted privileges within the next two years. ■

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In December, grants were awarded to:

\$1,500 to
KP Emergency Preparedness
Coalition

\$3,558 to
Vaughn Elementary School



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Contract Signed to Bring Broadband to North Key Peninsula

STAFF REPORT, KP NEWS

Comcast and Pierce County finalized an agreement in January to bring high speed internet to at least 526 homes and businesses on the north end of the Key Peninsula. The approximately \$5 million project is being funded as a public-private partnership between Comcast and the county, with the county contributing \$3.75 million of federal funding allocated through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

The project will take at least a few years to complete. “The permitting process — things like accessing the existing pole system — takes the most time,” said Terry Davis, the Comcast senior director of external affairs. “The project then moves to the neighborhood level, connecting

with homeowners to follow existing utilities to get optic into each home. The good news is that we have existing resources in the area and a good relationship with Peninsula Light.”

The location of the project, Davis said, hit a “sweet spot,” between existing services in the Purdy area and Key Center. Comcast was interested in the location because its proximity to existing services assured the company that it could offer a good experience to these new customers, including timely service appointments and access to their stores for equipment and products.

Customers will be able to subscribe to the entire suite of Comcast’s offerings or they may choose to simply use the internet service. For low-income homes, the Internet Essentials program

combined with the federal Affordable Connection Program could make internet access available at no cost. “It is not just about access but providing affordable internet to low-income households,” Davis said.

The north Key Peninsula project is part of the county’s multipronged plan to close the broadband divide. There is also an incentive program designed to attract service providers to expand their networks.

The county defined four incentive districts with no or inadequate internet. Two are on the Key Peninsula. Davis said that Comcast is exploring the incentive program.

(See “More High-Speed Internet Comes to the Key Peninsula, But Only for Some on the North End,” November 2022). ■

Gig Harbor Man Charged in 2022 KP Highway Head-on Collision Death

STAFF REPORT

The Pierce County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office charged Dean Ryan Jones of Gig Harbor, 42, with vehicular homicide in December for his role in a collision that killed a Key Peninsula woman last May. He was also charged with failure to have an ignition interlock device, reckless endangerment, and driving with a suspended license.

Jones was behind the wheel of his Chevrolet Silverado May 22 when his truck allegedly crossed the centerline and crashed head-on into a Ford Focus occupied by two women on the KP Highway north of Key Center.

The driver, Marcia “Marcy” Coefer Sparks of Longbranch, died at the scene.

She was 62. The passenger was her eldest daughter, Ashley Sparks, who escaped with minor injuries. Jones was treated for a broken ankle.

According to charging papers, two witnesses said Jones had been driving erratically prior to the crash, but didn’t see it happen. Jones told a Pierce County sheriff’s deputy that his truck had “steering issues” and he was on his way to a friend’s house in Key Center to get it fixed.

His driver’s license was suspended at the time from a driving under the influence case and he was supposed to have had an ignition interlock on his vehicle, according to the charging papers. He told the deputy he thought the order had expired. Jones did not appear intoxicated

at the scene, and a breath test showed no alcohol in his system.

Jones was arrested in Kitsap County December 5 for second degree assault after a failure to appear in court, according to Kitsap County Jail records, where he remained without bail at press time. A bench warrant for a second failure to appear in Pierce County Superior Court to respond to the new charges was issued December 27, according to Pierce County records.

Marcy Sparks worked as a letter carrier for the U.S. Postal Service in Federal Way from 1981 until her retirement in 2015. She moved to Longbranch in 2016 where she was raising her granddaughter. She twice survived breast cancer, and was an active volunteer in the community. ■

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INDEPENDENCE FROM PAGE 1

Acting KPCCA Board President Bruce Macdonald (and member of the newly formed board of directors of Key Peninsula News) said everyone involved from the civic center takes great pride in having launched the original newsletter. He said some people thought the newspaper might one day become profitable enough to add money to the civic center coffers, but that never materialized.

“Back then we were proud just to break even with it,” Macdonald said. “But with all the logistics and the newspaper’s growing success, the time has come for it to be its own entity.

“We’re not happy to see them go, but we’re very happy to see them grow.”

Executive Editor Lisa Bryan said the newspaper has benefitted from joining other state and national professional news associations such as the Washington Newspaper Publishers Association and the Institute for Nonprofit News, in addition to receiving matching donations through NewsMatch, a collaborative organization supporting independent, public service journalism.

“Our goal is to bring more funding to the newspaper, to increase our eligibility for the various grants and opportunities for matching funds that help build the sustainability needed for us to continue

our mission to deliver quality journalism about issues affecting the community,” she said. “In the past we’ve lost out on grants and had donors who wanted to contribute through their employer matching fund programs, but were unable to because we were not an independent nonprofit. Independence is the only way for us to continue to grow.”

Thompson said everyone can rest assured that the Key Peninsula News will continue, as it has each month, delivering quality journalism free to everyone with a mailing address on the KP as well as being available at newsstands in select retail locations throughout the area. ■



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NOTHING SAYS LOVE LIKE STEAK AND POTATOES AND LOTS OF GARLIC



Romancing the Fork — A Meal You'll Love Over and Over Again

ANN-MARIE UGLES

Valentine's Day is fast approaching and the need to do something special for the person that adds light into your life can be overwhelming. You love them, and every year you feel like you must represent that love and devotion with a gift. What gift could possibly represent all that you feel for them?

Flowers, candy, jewelry, a fancy dinner out; some overdone and some straining the budget. Going out to dinner around here means traveling off the peninsula to join the hordes in Gig Harbor to have a not-so-intimate dinner.

One thing that is always appreciated is an intimate dinner for two. There is something sensually primal about creating food that enlivens the tastebuds of the one you love. When the bite melts into your mouth and you release a small moan, savoring all the flavors. Romance can live on the tines of a fork.

You might scoff as you say, "I'm not a cook, so I can't pull off romance on a fork." Let me reassure you, you can.

This meal is easy, elegant and unique. The meat and potatoes are the easy part. And since most of this meal can be done

in advance, it relieves a lot of the stress. The Thai garlic sauce that brings it all together is boldly unique and can be done the day before and reheated.

Steak and Garlic Sauce

Combine in a medium saucepan:

½ cup fresh garlic, minced
2 tablespoons Thai chilies or other spicy pepper like habanero or jalapeño

1 tablespoon soy sauce
½ teaspoon red pepper flakes
1 tablespoon fresh squeezed lime juice

1 tablespoon lime zest
2 tablespoons tamarind water or a 1-inch nub of tamarind (sold in blocks of pulp) simmered in 1 cup water until it cooks down to 1/3 cup of tamarind water. Toss out the nub of tamarind.

1 can of coconut milk

Heat together and reduce by half on medium heat. Make a slurry with 2 tablespoons cornstarch mixed with 4 tablespoons water. Add to sauce with 1/3 cup of dry cooking sherry. Stir in and cook for 5 minutes. Blend with an immersion blender or cool slightly and blend in a blender. Reheat and add a



pat of butter.

For the beef, a filet mignon requires no trimming and comes in the perfect serving size. You can also use a ribeye steak (cutting out the tender circle in the middle of the steak, reserving the outer lip for another meal). If you are serving a group, use a beef tenderloin, allowing 1½ to 2 inches of steak width per person.

Order your filet mignon or tenderloin two weeks in advance from your local butcher. Pick up your meat one week in advance so you can cure it. Remove the plastic wrapping and put your meat on a rack, so air can flow around it. The tenderloin needs to be trimmed of fat and sinew, leaving a nice tender cylinder, and then cut into steaks. Sprinkle it with kosher salt and put it in the fridge uncovered. After three days, flip the meat and salt the other side. Pull out the beef one hour before cooking to bring to room temp. Trim any hard dry spots.

To cook the beef, heat a cast iron skillet to medium high heat. Once hot, sprinkle salt in the dry pan and sear the beef for two minutes on each side, then

put the whole pan in a 415-degree oven for 5 to 7 minutes for medium rare, or an internal temp of 125 degrees. Allow the meat to rest for five to 10 minutes before serving.

Crispy Mashed Potatoes

For the potatoes, I like to use Yukon Gold. Cut the larger potatoes into chunks. Boil them in salted water until tender. Drain the water and mash potatoes with salt, pepper and 4 tablespoons of butter. Mash in ¼ to ½ cup of sour cream, depending on the amount of potatoes. Taste to adjust the seasoning.

Line a cookie sheet with foil and spray with cooking oil. Spread potatoes on the sheet and cover with plastic and put in the fridge. This can be done in advance. Pull out potatoes 30 minutes before cooking to bring to room temp. Place in a 425-degree preheated oven and bake for 20 to 30 minutes until golden brown.

To serve, add a puddle of garlic sauce to one side of the plate. Add your potatoes and steak on top of the sauce and add your favorite steamed vegetable to accompany your meal. Drizzle with more sauce. ■

PENINSULA SCHOOL DISTRICT KEY PENINSULA COMMUNITY CONNECTION



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- 8:55 Vaughn Elementary School
- 9:01 Wright Bliss Rd NW @Olson Dr NW
- 9:02 Wright Bliss Road @104th St Ct NW
- 9:03 Union 76 @SR 302/4 Corners
- 9:06 SR 302 @150th Ave/Lake Holiday bus shed
- 9:08 SR 302 @140th Ave/Lake of the Woods
- 9:10 SR 302 @Charboneau Construction
- 9:13 Lake Kathryn Village
- 9:19 Purdy Park & Ride

VAUGHN WEDNESDAY MORNING

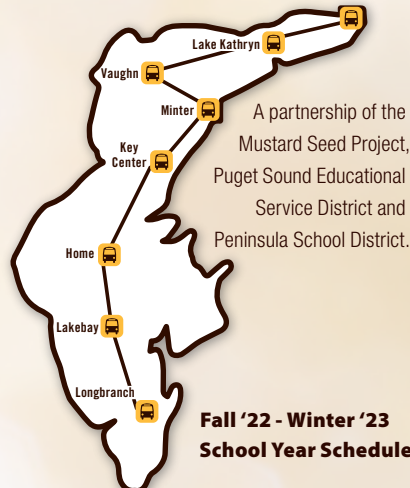
- 9:50 Vaughn Elementary School
- 9:51 Wright Bliss Rd NW @Olson Dr NW
- 9:52 Wright Bliss Road @104th St Ct NW
- 9:54 Union 76 @SR 302/4 Corners
- 9:57 SR 302 @150th Ave/Lake Holiday bus shed
- 9:58 SR 302 @140th Ave/Lake of the Woods
- 10:00 SR 302 @Charboneau Construction
- 10:03 Lake Kathryn Village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

EVERGREEN TUE/THUR MORNING

- 8:50 Evergreen Elementary School
- 8:59 Palmer Lake public access 24th St SW
- 9:00 Palmer Lake 21st St SW @193rd Ave
- 9:05 KPCS Senior Center & Food Bank
- 9:06 Home Gas Station @KP Hwy N
- 9:09 167th Ave Ct NW @KP Hwy N
- 9:13 Food Market in Key Center
- 9:15 KP Hwy N @Minterwood Dr NW
- 9:21 Lake Kathryn Village
- 9:30 Purdy Park & Ride

EVERGREEN WEDNESDAY MORNING

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



TUE/WED/THUR AFTERNOON

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



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

Feb 4 Pier Into the Night 6 p.m., Harbor Wild Watch, Skansie Brothers Park.

Feb 4 Bird Walks 8:30 a.m., rain or shine. Meet nature guide Chris Rurik at Gateway Park pavilion.

Feb 7 GH Literary Society 6 p.m., Gig Harbor History Museum. "My Own Two Feet" by Beverly Cleary.

Feb 10 Artist Showcase Benefitting PSD Hands on Art 4 – 7 p.m., Sotheby's Realty Office. Artist Kristin Page.

Feb 11 Gig Harbor Parent Support Group for Adolescent and Teenage Depression 1:30 p.m., Asha Yoga & Wellness.

Feb 11 Give Your Heart to Art 1 – 4 p.m., Two Waters Alliance Open Studio Tour, Key Peninsula Civic Center.

Feb 14 Open Mic Café 6 – 9 p.m. by Two Waters Alliance and The Mustard Seed Project, Longbranch Improvement Club.

Feb 14 TacomaProBono Legal Aid Pop-Up 10 a.m. – 12 p.m., KP Community Services, 253-888-4440. Free civil legal help.

Feb 15 Cribbage Club 2 – 4 p.m., Mustard Seed Project, 253-884-9814. Everyone is welcome, no experience required.

Feb 17 Baby Lounge 12 p.m. Key Peninsula Civic Center. A gathering for connection with other parents.

Feb 20 KP Democrats 7 p.m., Home fire station. Guest is Pierce County Assessor/Treasurer Mike Loneragan.

Feb 21 Hootenanny Folk Music 2 p.m., Mustard Seed Project.

Feb 21 KP Kids Maker Fun 4 p.m., Key Center Library. STEAM and science activities.

Feb 23 KP Book Club 11 a.m., KP Historical Society Museum. "A World of Curiosities" by Louise Penny.

Feb 25 CHEW Dog Rescue Adoption Event 12 to 3 p.m., Wilco Gig Harbor Farm Store.

WEEKLY EVENTS

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

Monday Walks with Rusty 9 a.m.,

Gateway Dog Park/360 Trails. Dog walks with Jason.

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

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

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

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

T-TH Tai Chi 9:45 a.m., KP Community Services, 253-888-4440.

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

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

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

Thursday Family Story Time 10:30 a.m., Key Center Library, 253-548-3309.

Thursday Senior Bingo 1 p.m., first and third Thursdays, KP Community Services, 253-888-4440.

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

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

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

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Caregiver Support Group Third Mondays, 2 p.m., Mustard Seed Project. (Rescheduled for February 27 at 2:00 pm)

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

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

KP Business Association Business meeting, first Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m., DK Property Management. kpbusinessassociation@gmail.com

KP Community Council Second Wednesdays on Zoom, 7 p.m. keypencouncil@gmail.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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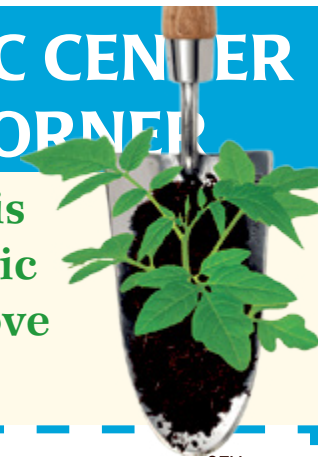
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Top: King tide comes to Home for Christmas. *Lita Dann*
 Mid left: PHS Seahawks (13-3) player Grace Richardson takes the court January 7 against the West Seattle Wildcats. *Tina McKail, KP News*
 Mid right: A Key Peninsula bobcat heads to work. *Chris Rurik, KP News*
 Mid lower right: Seahawk Daisy Peay drives past the Wildcats. *Tina McKail, KP News*
 Bottom left: Brooke Zimmerman for the rebound. Final score 39-24, Peninsula. *Tina McKail, KP News*

