

KP Food Markets Sold; Changes on the Way to KP Retail Scene

Both Key Center and Lake Kathryn have seen big expansions and shoppers can expect to see more on the way.

LISA BRYAN, KP NEWS

The Food Markets at Key Center and Lake Kathryn have been sold to a new owner, and Lake Kathryn may also be getting a new retail tenant.

Don Stolz sold the two businesses to The Myers Group, a large retail management company specializing in grocery stores. Stolz said he's known Tyler Myers for over 25 years.

"He's a longtime independent grocery operator, has multiple grocery stores from Alaska to Oregon," he said. "He also operates five or six Ace Hardware stores."

Stolz said Myers intends to convert the Lake Kathryn store into an Ace Hardware, but that will likely take some months.

"It's still going to have some groceries, but not to the extent of a full grocery store," Stolz said. "I can't speak for Tyler, but I expect ... the essentials will be there."

Stolz has owned the Key Center Food Market for 20 years after buying the old Walt's store. After he opened the new one, he said women came in with tears in their eyes. "I don't think they knew what a real grocery store looked like."

New ownership should begin on or around March 6, Stolz said, without any immediate drastic changes.

"All the details have already been worked through, but now it's just a matter of pushing papers and having the right people sign the right documents for liquor licenses and those sorts of things to be transferred," Stolz said.

He also said that no one will be losing their job, according to Myers. "Everyone who wants their job, still has their job."

The Tacoma born and raised Stolz is retiring but will still be involved. He only sold the businesses; he still owns the Key Center shopping

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With the installation of the 38-foot wooden tower pole complete, exterior painting will begin as the weather warms. *Tina McKail, KP News*

Historic Vaughn Library Hall Restoration Forges Ahead for the Love of History

This last of the original meeting halls that once dotted the KP in the late 1800s was in continuous use until 1956.

LISA BRYAN, KP NEWS

The Key Peninsula Historical Society was awarded a \$35,000 Pierce County Historic Preservation grant Jan. 31 after being ranked No. 1 on the county project list for its ongoing restoration of the 1893 Vaughn Library Hall located at the corner of Hall and Van Slyke Road NW.

Bart Wolfe, consulting architect and project manager for the hall restoration, and who also serves on the KPHS board of directors, testified before the Pierce County Council in support of its recent grant application.

The project, now in its final year of work under its 5-year building permit, made front page news after a driver smashed into the corner of the building and fled the scene, leaving behind a half empty bottle of liquor, an undrivable car, and thousands of dollars of damage to a completed corner of the building ("Historic Vaughn Library Hall Damaged by Car Crash," January 2022).



KPHS volunteers at the onsite work party Feb. 9 were visited by Pierce County Councilmember Robyn Denson (D-7th, Gig Harbor). *Lisa Bryan, KP News*

Wolfe praised structural engineer John Hodge and general contractor Chuck West who both got right on it.

"We never learned who did it, but luckily the damage done was easily fixed and Pierce County signed off on the repairs," Wolfe said.

One of the positive things that came from the accident was the public response. Insurance on a vacant building during construction is priced well out of reach for KPHS, but

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KEY PENINSULA NEWS

253-884-4699

www.keypennews.org

www.facebook.com/KeyPenNews

PO Box 3, Vaughn WA 98394

EXECUTIVE EDITOR: Lisa Bryan

editor@keypennews.org

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Ted Olinger

STAFF CONTRIBUTORS: Nancy Carr, Ed Johnson, Eddie Macsalka, Tina McKail, Joseph Pentheroudakis, Chris Rurik, Sara Thompson, Carolyn Wiley

CONTRIBUTORS: José Alaniz, Vicki Biggs, Dan Clouse, April Godwin

CALENDAR EDITOR: Meredith Browand
calendar@keypennews.org

PAGINATOR: Heather Meier

SOCIAL MEDIA: Joseph Pentheroudakis

OPERATIONS MANAGER: Tim Heitzman

BOOKKEEPER: Linda Grubaugh

AD SALES: Deanna Hunter
sales@keypennews.org

DISTRIBUTION: Anna Brones, Norm Brones, Bill Dietz, Bruce Macdonald, Jay Stewart, Bob Wilkins, David "Yukon" Younkin

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SAYING GOODBYE TO "HUGE" MCMILLAN

Here's What I Think About That

LISA BRYAN,
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Hugh McMillan made me famous.

Alright, famous is an exaggeration, but in the first few years we lived here, my photograph appeared half a dozen times between the KP News and the Gateway. My friends ribbed me: "In the paper, again?"

Still, for the first 10 years I knew him, Hugh never once remembered my name or whether we'd met before (yes, a hundred times, yes).

I remember suggesting he photograph somebody else, but he'd say, "Oh, don't you worry about it kid, my editors are going to love this."

I think that's how Hugh made everyone feel — special — as if there was nobody more important than you, at least while you were under his spell.

When I became the executive editor of this newspaper, he suddenly remembered my name. He called me all the time to pitch stories he demanded we cover, and he would send page after page of blurry photos of anonymous children we couldn't use.

And to be fair, he was largely blind these last few years.

But he didn't care. The man was unstoppable. He frequently reminded me, though didn't need to, that he'd been taking pictures and writing articles for the KP News for 30 years already, and that he sure knew what he was doing so I'd better pay attention.

We had our disagreements, but after 21 years of crossed paths and mixed messages, when he said one day, "You're doing a great job and the paper has never been better. I love you kid" — I melted in spite of myself. In the end, I loved him too. How could I not?

Hugh McMillan died in his sleep Feb. 10 at the age of 96, leaving behind a fan club nobody else could touch. Many years ago, a friend's 8-year-old son called him "Huge McMillan." Everyone laughed, but the kid was spot on.

Retired KPFD Battalion Chief and current Peninsula School Board member Chuck West was a 26-year-old volunteer firefighter when he first met Hugh, who was also a volunteer firefighter and a fire commissioner at the time.

"He mentored me in my career," West

said. "My background was rough, and I didn't get much parenting in my early years. Hugh kind of took over and helped me along. He taught me that I can do anything."

When Chuck lost his son in an accident, Hugh and his wife Janice were there. Knowing firsthand what that pain was like, Janice wrote Chuck a letter he says he still reads today. Hugh coached him on getting a memo-



rial skatepark built at Volunteer Park to honor his son.

"When it comes to dealing with others who have experienced loss, I'm not afraid anymore," Chuck said. "Hugh taught me not to run from that pain, but to reach out and comfort others."

U.S. Congressman Derek Kilmer (D-6th) told KP News he's not sure he has met anyone who cared more about kids, community, family or his country more than Hugh McMillan.

Hugh served in the intelligence service and to the end of his days, Kilmer said, "he was incredibly dialed in to what was happening in our country and our world. That's what made him a unique person and someone whose friendship I really treasure."

His favorite Hugh McMillan story took place during his own first election day, when they were out waving signs at the end of the Purdy Spit.

Kilmer had seen Hugh at meetings and was curious, so he asked him how he met his wife Janice and how he joined the CIA.

"I'm pretty sure I didn't speak again for two hours. He just rolled. It was fascinating and I wished I had a tape recorder going ... those are the types of experiences, on top of all that he's done for the community and kids ... but it was that gleam in his eye and ability to tell a story that was really special."

Former PSD Board President Marcia Harris said she's grateful for the tribute Hugh is leaving on YouTube, stories from his trips and adventures overseas.

Her favorite is one Hugh told her a long

time ago, about his visiting Driftwood Annie along "her" beach down at Pitt Passage.

"That's the only personal story I've really heard about her," Marcia said. "He spoke of his visit with her as almost an ethereal experience. Hugh gave me a real sense of who that woman was and what she created out here, a myth we all believe in."

Another legacy he left is the KP Lions Club

Citizen of the Year Awards, she said. "I say that not because the award is about recognizing an individual, but because his process of publication in the paper really celebrates the Key Peninsula residents who are giving back to their community."

The next Citizen of the Year Award banquet is scheduled for March 25 at the Key Peninsula Civic Center (see page 19 of this edition).

Norm McLoughlin, who has done his own share of heavy lifting for the Key Peninsula, said, "Hugh was a great friend and a good troublemaker. I hope people will take on the community work he did and was planning to tackle."

The truth is anyone who knew Hugh McMillan has a story to tell, and that story still lives in each one of us. As does, I hope, the need to keep it going, and the need to give back just a little to what Hugh started and kept at since he first set foot on the Key Peninsula in 1978, and which he kept after to the end, even when he could no longer see it. ■



‘Be Goatful for What You Have’ — A Deadheads’ Lakebay Goat-Milk Farm

Grateful Goat Farms operates on the same property as the former Steiner Nursery, where the new owners “make cheese, not war!”

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

For most people on the Key Peninsula, Himalayan blackberry bushes are a minor nuisance.

For Farrell and Laurie Timlake, they were a major problem.

When the couple took over the former Steiner Nursery in Lakebay in December 2018, the invasive plant stood 10 feet tall and took up more than 85% of their 3½ acre property.

“We thought about renting goats, but surprisingly it was cheaper to buy some,” Farrell said.

They found a pair of goats for sale on Craigslist — an Oberhasli male they named Samson and a Nigerian Dwarf female they call Delilah — and drove them home in the back of their Audi wagon.

And when the goats got to their new home, they ate, and ate ... and ate. They ate through the blackberry vines intertwined with the Steiner Nursery’s well-known heirloom rhododendrons. They ate so much the goats revealed a 15-foot round pond toward the back of the property. Their appetite helped the farm reclaim a large, grassy open space surrounded by beauty that dense blackberry thickets kept hidden for nearly 30 years.

As the number of blackberry brambles shrank, the goat-family grew. Much to the couple’s surprise, Delilah was pregnant and within two months of her arrival, she delivered her first babies during the February 2019 snowstorm.

Change of plans. What went from bringing a dilapidated flower nursery back to life, turned into Grateful Goat Farms.

After four years of newborns, the Timlakes had up to 13 goats at one point last year. And for many Deadheads, names like Rider, Cosmic Charlie and Iko might start ringing a bell. The farm name pays homage to the Grateful Dead band, and all the goats are named after the group’s songs. Farrell has followed the Grateful Dead, literally while they were on tour, since the 1980s and converted Laurie to a Deadhead soon after they met.

For Farrell and Laurie, everything they know about goats is self-taught. It kind of had to be since they didn’t know they were getting into the goat business. It even took a year for Farrell to learn how to keep them penned up. “They’re insane escape artists,” he said.

But the biggest revelation for the new farmers is all the uses for goat milk. Farrell



Dogs Mia and China Cat have learned to sit. The goats? Not so much. *Tina McKail, KP News*



Beauty and the Goat Man. *Tina McKail, KP News*

learned how to make goat milk-soap and the business is now cleaning up, so to speak.

“You can make a lot of goat milk soap with a little goat milk,” Farrell said, adding that he only takes the necessary amount of milk, about 20 ounces per batch, leaving the rest for the babies. He produces natural, hand-made soap using Pacific Northwest-inspired essential oils and herbs, like cedar wood and lavender. It takes Farrell about 45-minutes to make a batch of soap

and each batch makes about 45 bars.

The Timlakes stress the benefits of goat milk soap since the milk contains a large amount of lactic acid, which serves as a natural exfoliant. It has a similar pH balance to human skin, so the milk helps the skin absorb moisture. Farrell mentioned it’s great for people with eczema and forms of psoriasis.

While a lot of small businesses are going online-only to save on costs, Grateful Goat

Farms wants to get more involved with local businesses. They are already selling their soap at Purdy Cost Less Pharmacy, and they hope to expand. The Timlakes even participated in their first Key Peninsula Farm Tour last October, where nearly 2,500 people stopped by. Naturally their stop on the tour was Grateful Dead-themed, complete with a drum circle, a tie-dye shirt-making station, and the band’s music blasting over the speakers. But the highlight of their part of the tour was the goats.

“It was a great experience. We bonded with our community through our goats,” Farrell said.

The couple has big plans for the farm. In addition to the soap, Farrell is branching out to make goat cheese. They also plan to put more effort into bringing the rhododendron part of the farm back, though there’s plenty on the property already to make it stand out. Grateful Goat Farm also is available for larger events, or smaller groups for what Laurie calls “goat togethers.”

“I just want people to find peace here and have a Zen experience, because the world is so crazy right now,” Laurie said.

“Make cheese, not war!” is one of their mottos, together with “Be goatful for what you have.”

Learn more about the farm at www.GratefulGoatFarms.com. ■

Carolyn Wiley: A Star is Recognized

An advocate for art, education and the environment receives a 2022 Rotary Star Award recognizing decades of volunteer work for local causes.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

Longtime KP booster Carolyn Wiley of Longbranch was honored with a Rotary Star Award Feb. 3 at the 11th annual dinner ceremony presented by the local Gig Harbor Rotary Clubs.

Each Gig Harbor Rotary Club — North, Morning and Midday — selected a nominee. Three non-Rotarians exemplifying the club motto of service above self were recognized, including Wiley, nominated by the North Club; former state representative Patricia Lantz (D-26th), nominated by the Morning Club; and Robert Vollbracht, co-chair of the Gig Harbor-Key Peninsula Housing-Homeless Coalition, nominated by the Midday Club.

In addition to the award, a \$1,000 contribution was made to the Rotary Foundation in the names of the winners, making them Paul Harris Fellows. Other fellows include Winston Churchill, Walt Disney, Franklin Roosevelt and Jonas Salk. Additional money raised at the dinner was divided among the winners and donated to the charity of their choice.

Wiley was recognized for her many contributions to the KP community.

“I rack up a lot of volunteer hours because I have a tendency to stand too close to people with good ideas,” she said.

She is also a frequent contributor to the Key Peninsula News, where her column “Devil’s Head Diary” has earned five consecutive statewide Washington Newspaper Publishers Association awards in as many years.

Her own story is one of strong family ties and independent women, a love of art and education, and an ability to raise money for worthy causes.

Born and raised in Texas, Wiley moved every few years. “Dad built government projects,” she said. “Transit in California, a water system in El Paso, an arsenal on the Texas-Arkansas border, a hospital in New Orleans.” In each new place her mother insisted they explore everything. It later dawned on Wiley that frequent moves could have been traumatic, “but kids don’t know what they don’t know,” she said. “We moved as a unit.”

Her father died when Wiley was in seventh grade and her brother in high school. Two months later her mother went back to school to complete her degree. She got her teaching certificate, then a master’s degree, and served as



An accomplished grant writer, Wiley said “It’s fun to get money to do things you want to do.”

Tina McKail, KP News

president of the Dallas Teachers Union. “She was a remarkable person in her own right,” Wiley said.

Wiley never considered any other place than the University of Texas for college. It was there she met David, her husband of 62 years. They married, she taught for one year in Austin, and then they moved to the Seattle area in 1962, where David worked for Boeing. Her early years were dominated by young motherhood and art.

Boeing loaned David to NASA for work on the Apollo lunar module, and the family moved back to Texas. After their third daughter was born, Carolyn took painting and printmaking classes, and hung art at local shows for a local group.

The family jumped at the chance to return to the Pacific Northwest in

“I RACK UP A LOT OF VOLUNTEER HOURS BECAUSE I HAVE A TENDENCY TO STAND TOO CLOSE TO PEOPLE WITH GOOD IDEAS.”

1972. They moved to Kent, where Carolyn taught preschool and at a senior center, then kindergarteners

and older grade schoolers, and earned a master’s degree as a reading specialist and administrator.

She was also active in the Washington State Arts Alliance and the Kent Community Foundation, and joined the Kent Arts Commission, an experience that would prove transformational.

“I discovered that I was better at writing grants than being an artist,” she said.

Carolyn began fundraising for the Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks, designed by Herbert Bayer, an Austrian Bauhaus artist and architect who fled Germany in 1937. As a volunteer she was instrumental in raising \$95,000 before the city hired staff and supplied an office to

complete the fundraising as the construction costs grew.

Designated as Kent’s first historic landmark in 2008, the creation of sculpted earth, pathways, water and lawns functions together as public park, storm water retention facility and landscape artwork.

Carolyn continued to write grants to fund other projects: programs for developmentally delayed adults; a classroom salmon project and equipment for a TV studio; a grade school steel drum program.

“It is fun to get money to do things you want to do,” she said.

The Wileys moved to the Key Peninsula in 1997. Carolyn applied for a principal position at Evergreen Elementary School, and although she did not get the job, she and David looked at houses in the area and one in Longbranch captured her imagination.

“After that, every time we looked at another house, I wanted to change it so it would look like this (Longbranch) house,” she said. “The kitchen looks out over the water. The living room looks out over the water. The bedroom looks out over the water.”

When Carolyn ultimately decided she was ready to retire, the Longbranch house came back on the market and their fate was sealed.

She dove into the community. She joined a book group at the Key Center library and helped write a grant to remodel the reading room. She joined the Longbranch Improvement Club and worked on membership and events, helped establish the Halloween Trunk or Treat party, and expanded Kids and Christmas to provide toys to all the children living in the Evergreen catchment area. She joined the Key Peninsula Farm Council and established the Fiber Arts Fair as part of the Farm Tour. She joined the staff of the Key Peninsula News and teaches Tai Chi sword fighting at the Gig Harbor YMCA.

When she received her Rotary Star Award, Carolyn announced “I do not want to be the little old lady who stands in the way of progress, so I am limiting some of my activities. Henceforth I will only be volunteering at the KP News, the Longbranch Improvement Club and the Longbranch Foundation, and I will continue to teach Tai Chi sword fighting.” The audience broke out into laughter and applause. ■

KPMS Athlete Makes Name For Himself On the Soccer Field

Leiston Stoddard was recently named to the U.S. Youth Soccer National Select team on his way to more and bigger things.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

Justin and Nicole Stoddard recently connected over soccer.

No, the Wauna couple didn't just meet; in fact, they've been married for 19 years. It's just that for the last six years they've been pulled in such different directions supporting their kids' daily and nightly sports schedules across the Puget Sound, they barely saw each other.

Now that their daughter, Kadence, a 2022 Peninsula High School graduate, is a red-shirt freshman volleyball player at Cal Poly Humboldt in Arcata, Calif., that just leaves their 14-year-old son Leiston to follow around.

"We were so far apart for so long," said Nicole jokingly about her husband. "Absence makes the heart grow fonder."

The scheduling is only going to get harder, but at least the supportive parents will be together.

Leiston, an eighth grader at Key Peninsula Middle School and one of the best young soccer stars in the country, was recently named to U.S. Youth Soccer's prestigious National Select team. He is one of only 18 players in the country in his age group, selected after a long, rigorous tryout process. The team was whittled down from nearly 1,000 players during state, regional and national competitions in 2022.

Leiston's first tournament with his new team was at the Mayor's Cup in Las Vegas last month (results were not available at press time). The National Select team is just one of the many soccer clubs that take up most of Leiston's and his parents' weeknights and weekends — and they couldn't be happier.

For the Stoddard boys, soccer is in their blood.

For Nicole, she was kind of thrust into it. "I hated soccer, but I married into a soccer family. I can't get rid of it," she said.

Then there's Justin, who can't get enough of it. He was drafted by the Seattle Sounders when he was still in high school and played soccer professionally for about five years before a series of knee injuries grudgingly caused him to call it quits.

To stay involved with a game he played since he was 3 years old, Justin turned his attention to coaching. He had stints with the Kitsap SC Pumas, coached Leiston on the Harbor Soccer and Crossfire Redmond club teams, and was head coach at Peninsula High School in 2020. The COVID-19



Leiston, 14, is one of only 18 players in the country in his age group on the national select team. *Jay Peters*

pandemic quickly put an end to any spring sports that year.

For now, his focus is being a soccer dad to Leiston, but that doesn't mean "Coach Stoddard" doesn't come out once in a while.

"I've calmed down, but it's hard when you've been through it yourself and you can see the talent Leiston has," said Justin, who admits his sideline antics have waned from yelling instructions to more subtle hand signals, to now waiting until the car ride home to give feedback. "My job is to challenge him."

Challenge accepted.

Leiston is now in the running to level up to the prestigious Sounders FC Academy. The academy is where some of the most talented players in the country go to train and play, and maybe eventually sign a professional contract with the Seattle Sounders FC. Leiston will hear if he makes the team in May, but he can wait.

Going pro is his ultimate goal, but for now Leiston is just enjoying time with his Puyallup-based club team, the Washington Premier Football Club. His skills helped him land a spot on a team with older kids — some bigger, faster and stronger than Leiston.

"But he's got the biggest heart," WPFC Coach Michael Donne said. "His head is 100% in it, and if anyone doubts that

Leiston will prove them wrong."

A normal teenager would be at-risk for getting burned out doing the same thing almost every day of the week. Not Leiston. He understands there's a price to pay for playing soccer all year long.

"I feel like my passion for the sport has grown," he said. "I just enjoy going around to play a sport I love."

Justin and Nicole are also well aware soccer comes at a price. Literally.

Playing competitive club sports isn't cheap. There are the monthly fees for the club and buying and replacing gear for a growing boy, but according to Nicole, what really hurts the wallet is all the travel costs. In addition to his first tournament last month in Las Vegas, Leiston was in San Diego last June with his WPFC team, and had trips to Utah and Colorado last summer and Florida in November for U.S. National Select team tryouts. In December and January, he played in tournaments in Missouri and Arizona with his WPFC team. Justin and Nicole try to tag along when they can, but they also like the fact that Leiston is gaining some independence when traveling with his Washington Premier team.

"A big part of his growth is being able to do things on his own," said Justin. "He's learning when he needs to get off his phone and go to bed, how to eat right and

get prepared for his games without mom and dad. It's getting him ready for college."

Nicole added that with traveling, scheduling and prioritizing she and Justin have been able to work through a lot of life skills with their kids.

Though he has an irregular amount of independence, he's still just a teenager. He hangs out with his friends, plays video games and watches TV shows with his parents. Leiston enjoys playing basketball and hitting golf balls when he can. And when his schedule allows, he joins his parents on their monthly 24-hour round trip drive to visit Kadence at her college.

"Leiston's a pretty happy-go-lucky kid," said Nicole. "He's always been a busy kid who likes to go, go, go."

The Key Peninsula now has the opportunity to find its next Leiston Stoddard. Last fall the Harbor Soccer Club brought the program over to Key Peninsula for 4- to 7-year-olds. Nearly 40 kids practiced and played at Volunteer Park. The club is expanding the program to 8-year-olds in 2023.

The organization is looking for players, coaches and sponsors to consider broadening the age range in the future, said Larry Kalahiki, Harbor Soccer's director of business development. Those interested can email Kalahiki at BizDev@harborsoccerclub.com. ■

Vicki Biggs
A SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE



Discovering Happiness

It's happening again, the thing we all know and dread. There is nothing we can do about it; we just have to get through it. You know what I'm talking about — the long, dreary last days of winter dripping into the unpredictable spring meld, eventually leading to summer.

After the excitement of the holidays, many of us begin to look at the clock each evening. We note the exact minute of sunset and watch the slow tally of lengthening days. The addition of those extra minutes of daylight contributes inordinately to our sense of well-being.

I am a clock watcher myself, counting on daylight to lift my mood, and I celebrate the moment sunset takes place past 5 p.m. I am also a reader and began to notice articles, whole books and podcasts dedicated to the subject of happiness. I recently took a sampling of what is being published about happiness, and why. Evidently happiness does not depend on the hours of sunrise and sunset.

I found that there have been longitudinal studies going on for as long as 80 years researching happiness, like the Harvard Study of Adult Development. The happiest places on Earth — the Nordic countries, inherently cold and dark — study happiness. There are many websites dedicated to sharing knowledge about happiness. One called Tracking Happiness has an ongoing log of happiness studies called "464 Happiness Studies: the Most Interesting Data from Trusted Studies."

Why are people so interested in this subject? What do they want to know? While humans are hardwired for negativity — a vital part of our evolution and survival — it is still possible to change our brains and adapt new thoughts, moving our outlook to a more positive one. Discovering what makes us happy, and how we define happiness, improves mental health and well-being in our daily lives.

On a national or global scale, understanding happiness can help develop policies and environments that improve the lives of every citizen. For example, understanding that happy humans need companionship, green space and common spaces with others, as well

as space for privacy, helps planners develop living spaces that enhance well-being. Studies have shown that people who are happy are more productive, creative and engaged, and have a higher tolerance for pain.

My mood improved just by reading through this material. Much of what I discovered was not that difficult to put into practice, and I found it hopeful.

Some of the findings confirm what we have been told since we were kids. "Helping others, friend or stranger, leads to happiness." Or, "Experiences bring more happiness than material items." Other findings were a surprise, like "Creativity on one day predicts happiness on the next day." The old adage about money not buying happiness is only true if you have enough of it; for others, financial security is an important contributor to happiness.

I learned that savoring the moment leads to greater rates of positive emotion and reduced incidents of depression. I also learned that younger people are more likely to associate happiness with excitement while older people are more likely to associate happiness with peacefulness. People in the studies associated love with happiness, and happier individuals tend to be healthier and live longer lives.

The field of happiness research is expansive, and information is easy to find. There are many ways to improve your happiness quotient. I have enjoyed author Gretchen Rubin's Happiness Project for the last five years, which includes a diary with a daily inspirational happiness quote. Thankfully (an attitude of gratitude increases happiness by 10%) counting the minutes of sunlight is not the only way to find happiness.

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

Ted Olinger
ANOTHER LAST WORD



Learning to See

In 1990 I was a 26-year-old dilettante who thought I'd accumulated enough savings and contacts and clout working at a big time publisher in New York City to believe I could plunge blind-folded behind the newly fallen Iron Curtain and write my way across Europe on someone else's dime.

Remember that blind-folded part.

I spent a long, cold and hungry winter

inching my way back west from the Soviet Union while publishing nothing, sleeping in crowded train stations and lonely rooms barely heated with coal and eating mostly bread and Nutella, which I came to detest.

In late December I reached Vienna where I met a real journalist my age doing the same thing, but successfully. We spent a couple of weeks together kind of falling in love, which might have been really falling in love if only I had been as interested in her as I was in my fantasy career.

One snowy day we went on an excursion to the elaborate historical cemeteries somewhere east of the city. Centuries old and built in the Imperial style, they are monumental works of art. Structures tell you a great deal about the people who built them, and the people buried in their shadows.

I could hardly believe it when I saw my surname on one of the tombstones, an elaborate marble affair and, as it turned out, one of many with various spellings. Mine is an odd name but an old one, a mix of ancient verbs and adjectives that bears little resemblance to its origin in the Black Forest of modern southwest Germany, where the Romans called my ancestors "Spear Tribe," supposedly.

So, big thrill for me.

We moved on to another part of the cemetery where every headstone had been defaced or destroyed. Some were new, some were 200 years old. Same treatment. I immediately thought — and said — something brilliant like, "Wow, this must have just happened, or they would've cleaned this up." But it was obvious the vandalism had been going on for a long time, judging by the lichen and moss on some of the breaks.

My companion looked at me like I was a stranger.

"Don't you see it?" she said.

We were in the Jewish quarter, and her surname was on some of those ruined tombstones.

My first reaction was to rationalize. It must be a question of funding, or labor, or the time of year, obviously. No one would tolerate this. Would they?

But the physical evidence in front of us suggested that no one cared. And I didn't see it.

That girl and I are still friends, but it was a long, silent bus ride back to the city while I tried to absorb what I understood was going to be a new way of seeing.

I first learned about the Holocaust in my ninth grade social studies class, the

peak of my lackluster academic career. It was taught by an art historian with an encyclopedic memory and a rabbi with a degree in psychology. I didn't notice at the time, but the course was carefully designed to gently expose our unripened minds to the beauty and horror of history without terrifying us.

It may sound inconceivable now, but as 13-year-olds we read from "Mein Kampf" to dissect Hitler's fever dreams. We read Richard Wright's memoir, "Black Boy," a book that was banned even then in the 1970s for "instigating hatred between the races," a soaring testament to how racism re-writes the destiny of everyone it touches. We read from the Bible, where God walks through his garden in the cool of the evening, looking for Adam hiding in shame after he's eaten from the tree of knowledge. We read "The Epic of Gilgamesh" and after a strict Christian upbringing, I marveled at meeting Utnapishtim, who survived a flood that destroyed the world by building an ark, in a story written in stone two thousand years before the birth of Christ.

I wasn't a good student, but that class had its intended effect. I became curious about the world, and I wanted to see it. And about a decade later, I did.

A month after touring the cemetery, I headed east again to Poland. I went to Auschwitz, an enormous complex where 1,100,000 people are estimated to have died.

About 1 million of those were murdered and burned at Auschwitz II, a subcamp called Birkenau. I was there alone, incredibly, on a freezing day in the rain after walking for miles along the train tracks from town to the gate. There isn't much left of the barracks; most were destroyed by the Nazis to hide the evidence of their crimes. But some remain, as do the foundations of the gas chambers and crematoria, and the ponds where they dumped the ashes of the dead.

I was a fit hiker at the time unencumbered by a backpack or companions, but it still took me 50 minutes at a brisk pace to walk from one corner of Birkenau to the other.

Remember that blind-folded part?

It's one thing to read that Birkenau covered 9.48 square miles, but you don't know what that means — what "enormous" means.

Until you feel it.

Until you watch someone discover her people and her own name defiled.

Until you learn to see it.

Ted Olinger lives in Vaughn.

Dan Clouse
THE OTHER SIDE



The Joy of Lists

I am not quite old enough to remember the assassination of Lincoln, but I do remember hearing Hank Snow's 1962 hit "I've Been Everywhere, Man" on AM radio.

If you are a youngster, that's the C&W classic that has four lists, each with two dozen toponyms, that, by the end of the song, add up to a transcontinental travelogue of 92 different places.

"I've been to Pittsburgh, Parkersburg, Gravelbourg, Colorado,

Ellensburg, Rexburg, Vicksburg, El Dorado

Larimore, Admore, Haverstraw, Chatanika

Chaska, Nebraska, Alaska, Opelaka Baraboo, Waterloo, Kalamazoo, Kansas City

Sioux City, Cedar City, Dodge City, what a pity."

Imagine this delivered at break-neck speed in the staccato patter of an auctioneer and you'll get the idea. (If not, you can always watch it on YouTube.)

There is the bravura performance of not running out of breath in singing these place names. Add to that the heavy memory load that "I've Been Everywhere, Man" requires, so much more than The Kingsmen's northwest anthem "Louie Louie," whose words were unintelligible anyway, even to the FBI.

The singer not forgetting a single town was a spectacular feat of memory, equal to that of the mnemonists who can recite in order the first thousand digits of pi or name all 957 baseball players who've played for the Seattle Mariners.

Which is probably why Willie Nelson doesn't try to sing it.

For highbrows, there is Leporello's list in the opera Don Giovanni, "Madamina, il catalogo è questo," with its brag list of Don Juan's multinational seductions.

"My dear lady, this is a list of the beauties my master has loved, a list which I have compiled ...

In Italy, six hundred and forty; in Germany, two hundred and thirty-one;

a hundred in France; in Turkey ninety-one.

In Spain already one thousand and three."

I mean, wow! We have U.S. Congressmen who don't even come close to numbers like these!

People have wondered what perversity motivated Don Juan's serial philandering, but Leporello (who should know) let slip a clue in the next verse: It was all "for the pleasure of adding to the list."

Somewhere in between country and opera, Gilbert & Sullivan's "Mikado" offers its own list:

"I've got a little list, of society offenders who might well be underground,

who never would be missed!

There's the pestilential nuisances who write for autographs —

all people who have flabby hands

and irritating laughs —

all children who are up in dates, and floor you with 'em flat —

and all third persons who on spoiling tête-à-têtes insist —

they'd none of 'em be missed!"

There's just a certain je ne sais quoi about lists.

They are everywhere, and not just in songs.

Since lists proliferate like Himalayan blackberries along a KP fence line, The Other Side can't resist its own little list of lists, but, for safety's sake, without bullets:

Scary lists: "10 Medical Terms Doctors Don't Want You to Know."

Listicles online: "32 Cool and Colorful Tattoos That Will Inspire You to Get One."

Movie titles that promise lists: "10 Things I Hate About You" and "Five Easy Pieces."

Personal lists: Shopping lists, to-do lists, bucket lists, hit lists.

Lists of schoolkids' bloopers: "This is a picture of an octopus. It has eight testicles" (Kelly, age 6).

Literary lists: Homer's enumeration of all 1,186 ships that sailed for Troy, the 16 ways Elizabeth Barrett Browning loved Robert in her 43rd Sonnet, and Joyce's sarcastic list of 87 Irish heroes in Ulysses.

God's lists: Bible genealogies, the 10 Commandments, Seven Cardinal Sins, and the Seven Heavenly Virtues.

Lists I'm on but wish I weren't, like Pierce County's jury duty roster.

Since all lists are potentially infinite, stopping — like driving on ice or eating potato chips — is the hard part. This listophile indulges in one more.

Consider, mystified reader, the bizarre catalogue of animals that, according to the Argentine humorist Jorge Luis Borges, is found in an obscure Chinese encyclopedia. Reading that heterogeneous list famously caused one Parisian intellectual to explode in laughter that "shattered all the familiar landmarks" of his thought. So, if your thought's landmarks are as fragile as Michel Foucault's, consider this a trigger alert.

The 14 Chinese animals in Borges' make-believe encyclopedia are these: "Those that belong to the Emperor, embalmed ones, those that are trained, suckling pigs, mermaids, unreal ones, stray dogs, those included in the present classification, those that tremble as if they were mad, innumerable ones, those drawn with a very fine camel-hair brush, others, those that have just broken a flower vase, those that from a long way off look like flies."

Your mental landmarks exploded and patience exhausted, I pause here with et cetera, the perfect way to end but not end a list.

Dan Clouse is an award-winning columnist. He lives in Lakebay.

April Godwin
TECH TALK

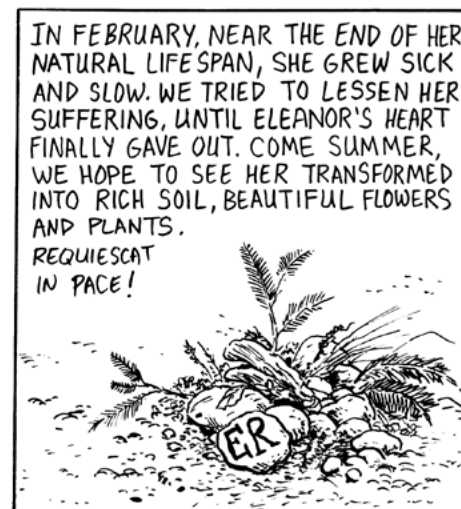
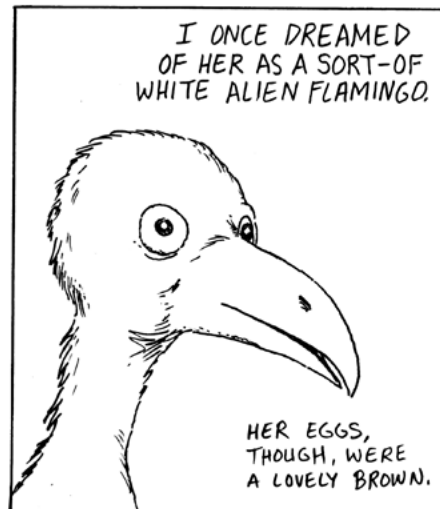


Me and ChatGPT

Artificial intelligence is coming for your job! It's coming for my job! It's taking us a step closer to the singu-

CONTINUED PAGE 8

José Alaniz WE LIVE HERE: ELEANOR ROOSEVELT (2016-2023)



larity! We need to prepare for the rise of the machines! (Insert Skynet joke here.) The sky is falling!

Or maybe not?

ChatGPT, or Chat Generative Pre-Trained Transformer, is an artificial intelligence technology tool that uses natural language processing to have conversations with people. It was developed by a company called OpenAI in partnership with Microsoft and other investors. The model is trained on a vast amount of data, which enables it to generate responses that are not only accurate but also sound human-like. The conversational flow is smooth, and the responses are coherent, making it almost impossible to distinguish between a conversation with a human or with ChatGPT.

While some people are busy prophesying about the dangers of AI and how it's going to bring about the end of the world as we know it, others are having a great time playing with ChatGPT. It can share facts, tell stories, solve problems and write software code. It can even write poems. Here's a haiku I asked it to write about a man who lives in the metaverse full-time:

In the digital world,
A man lives, never leaves,
Limitless joy found.

I also asked it to tell me a story in the tone of the Canterbury Tales about a man who lives in the metaverse full-time. In a matter of seconds, it produced an eight-paragraph story about a man named Algor who lives a very happy, healthy, adventure-filled life in the metaverse. Mind. Blown.

I will say, I do find it a little suspicious that ChatGPT had such a high opinion of the metaverse. Maybe they're buddies? Maybe they hang out together in the cloud? Get drinks after work? But I digress.

I recently attended a Microsoft training where I learned that I could use ChatGPT to help me create automations in some of the Microsoft tools I use at work. Aha! What a time saver! Or so I thought.

Turns out, I had to clear a couple of hurdles first. Currently, my employer doesn't allow me to use their computer to access the OpenAI site where I can interact with ChatGPT. It's not on their safe list yet. So, I had to use my own computer. When I went to the site, I had to create an account and sign in using a personal email address.

When I finally asked ChatGPT my question, I was surprised to see the

answer was outdated. It turns out, as of right now, it has limited knowledge of the world and events; everything it knows is pre-2021. I was fortunate because I knew there was a newer, more effective method for accomplishing my task, but other people may not be as lucky.

While ChatGPT is a lot of fun and can be helpful for a lot of things, it still has some fairly significant limitations, which means it'll probably be a while before it's sophisticated enough to take over the world. In fact, when I asked ChatGPT if it will be "capable of independent thought in the future," here's what it told me:

"The concept of AI having independent thought is a topic of ongoing research and debate in the field of artificial intelligence. While some researchers are working on developing AI systems that are capable of more advanced forms of reasoning and decision-making, the current state of AI technology does not yet allow for true, independent thought.

"It is possible that AI systems may become more advanced in the future and be capable of more sophisticated forms of thought, but it is also possible that AI will always remain limited to the specific tasks and functions it was designed for. The future of AI is still uncertain and much remains to be seen."

I don't think ChatGPT is going to replace jobs any time soon, and it certainly isn't ready to revolt against humanity and send terminators into the past, but it isn't slowing down either, so we might as well take a seat and try to enjoy the ride.

Riding the train fast,
Into the future we soar,
Limitless ahead.

April Godwin is an IT administrator who lives in Lakebay.

Letters to the Editor

AN ODE TO KP NEWS

After living in the Rosedale area of the Gig Harbor Peninsula since 1968, I moved across Carr Inlet (straight as the crow flies) to Lake Minterwood on the Key Peninsula after the passing of my husband in 2007.

In the decade of the 1990s, I served on the board of the Peninsula Neighborhood Association. We considered

ourselves slow growth on development, environmentally concerned, politically active citizens of the community.

As long as it has been published I have enjoyed, been informed and been grateful for this local newspaper. Congratulations on your new status as a nonprofit. Now teetering into my 81st year, and as one who really wants to hold a paper in my hands to receive knowledge or enjoyment, I sit here reading and reflecting on Volume 50, issue two.

I am particularly struck by the first page with the so thoroughly researched and well written article on the new land acquisitions for preservation ("Land Trusts Conserve 323 Key Peninsula Acres"). The articles by Chris Rurik always delight and add to my knowledge of the natural world and its inhabitants I have already cut out the page containing his compiled list of 15 unique denizens of our area to add to my collection of wildlife books.

Many times, the younger generation has impressed me with their knowledge and curiosity, but I just shook my head in wonder reading the profile of Izzy Edwards. Such a wonderful future lies before her, and I look forward to seeing her photographs and reading about her adventures to come. The insight and love of wildlife that stand out in her work is amazing, especially in the eyes of the little Saw-whet owl.

I have testified in the past on behalf of keeping geoduck farming out of Burley Lagoon and I thank Laura Hendricks and her group for continuing to fight this battle. The latest article portends a hard fight to protect this estuary ("Burley Lagoon Geoduck Battle Enters Next Phase").

I thoughtfully read the columns of your contributors. We are lucky to have so many residents here who donate so much time and thought to add to our knowledge and understanding of others ("Peninsula Views").

I have always found your reporting on politics and other subjects of concern to be fair and informative. I think it is in the best interest of all of us to understand, or at least to respectfully listen to, the opinions or beliefs of others. It is possible in doing so, we may find some understanding and the possibility of getting along peacefully.

Thank you for asking for your readers' views. I think it is far too easy to criticize someone or something, and far too hard to offer a compliment. In the past I have given a quick thought to letting

you know what a fine newspaper you publish. Today just seemed the right time to do it.

Helen Nupp, Lakebay

FROM A LOYAL FAN

I was annoyed to read the letter from Dale Lyman complaining about your Progressively Liberal Left-Wing Communist (OK, I'm exaggerating slightly) publication ("KP News Is Biased Liberal Mouthpiece," December 2022). I enjoy and appreciate our KP News, from the local news coverage to the wonderful columns to the history pieces to the natural environment to — well, everything.

I wonder what he objects to besides bumper stickers. The fascinating history of the Purdy Bridge? The Mustard Seed's new residence for the elderly? Animal rescue in Ukraine? Our wonderful and always improving parks?

The paper has steadily improved over the years. The Seattle Times has been running opinion pieces about the Demise of Local Newspapers lately, but that certainly does not apply to the Key Peninsula.

Robin Winslow, Lakebay

SUPPORT FOR "JUST MERCY"

My gratitude for the article about the book "Just Mercy" and its author, Bryan Stevenson. I knew nothing about Bryan and his work until a few years ago when I visited Montgomery, Alabama, on a mini-civil rights tour that my sisters and I undertook.

I still feel the impact of visiting the Equal Justice Initiative museum and the other monuments and memorials in Montgomery. On the way there we crossed the Edmund Pettus bridge in Selma. The area carries a particular vibe and, unexpected as it is, that vibe for me is one of importance and accomplishment. So much happened in Montgomery.

I appreciate the impetus the article gives me to donate again to that project. The stories from it are so important in the eternal fight for justice.

Marsha Williams, Wanna

BRING BACK THE BIRD!

Please bring back the bird to the KP News masthead. I always look at the bird first. The masthead seems blank without it.

Diane Yorgason-Quinn, Gig Harbor

OBITUARIES



Mary Patrice Cultum

Mary Patrice (Lambion) Cultum died at her home, in Vaughn, January 9. She was born March 18, 1951, in Kansas City, Missouri, to James McLaughlin Lambion and Mary Joanne (Brewster) Lambion, both of whom preceded her in death.

Mary's entire family moved to Bremerton in 1966. She graduated from South Kitsap High School in the Class of 1969. She married Jimmie Dale Johnston that year and divorced in 1975. They had one child, Karma, born in 1973.

Mary and Karma moved to the Key Peninsula in 1976. In 1977 Mary and Larry Cultum were united in marriage and went on to have two children.

Mary will be remembered as an accomplished seamstress and craft person. She loved working on creative projects with children and was a great teacher.

She was an active member of the Angel Guild Thrift Shop. She enjoyed putting crafts together that others may have thrown out.

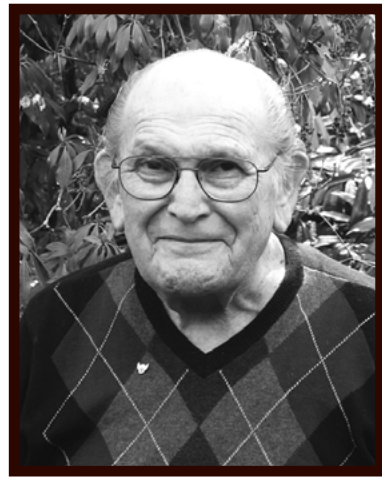
She was also an active member of WayPoint Church and was involved in many ministries throughout her years there. Her favorite verse was Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight." That is how she lived her life.

Mary appreciated the freedom of driving and going when and where she wanted to go. She loved animals and making memories with her family and friends. She was a positive and wise person that would make humor out of almost any situation.

She was preceded in death by her daughter, Karma Kretchmer (Ron).

Mary is survived by her husband Larry; son Jake (Katrina) Cultum and daughter Janet (Adam) Bratton; siblings Carrie Snyder (Emery Hill), James Lambion (Laura), and Michele Muise; seven grandchildren, Coriana Mullinex (Tyler), Melissa and Timothy Kretchmer, Oscar, Blynn, Murphy Cultum, Asher Bratton; and several nieces and nephews.

Anyone whose life was touched by Mary will not look at things the same way. She loved God and chose to serve Him in every situation she had before her. Her Celebration of Life was held Feb. 18. Mary is now with her reward — Jesus.



Hugh McMillan

Key Peninsula community booster and beloved newspaper columnist Hugh McMillan died Feb. 10. He was 96 years old.

Born in New Westminster, British Columbia, in 1926 to Angus and Clara, his family emigrated to the U.S. when Hugh was 3. He grew up in Tacoma, graduating from Lincoln High School in 1944 before enlisting in the U.S. Navy. He went on to get his Bachelor of Arts from the University of Puget Sound in 1952 and then wed his college sweetheart, Janice Grosser, to whom he was married for the next 69 years. They had two sons, Lance and Marshall.

After college, Hugh was recruited into the CIA and over the course of his 26-year career served for extended periods in Japan, India, Egypt, Greece and Turkey. He was twice decorated for his performance as a field operative, including for organizing the evacuation of some 900 U.S. citizens from Egypt during the 1967 Arab Israeli War.

Hugh retired from the CIA in 1978 and settled in Home, where he remained for

the next 44 years. He was very active with a large number of community service organizations, including as a volunteer firefighter for Fire District 16, where he also served 14 years as a fire commissioner; a charter member of the KP Lions Club and its eighth president; a founding member of Key Peninsula Citizens Against Crime; an active supporter of Community In Schools of Peninsula; and by helping to organize and obtain start-up funding for the KP Community Council.

His service to the community was recognized many times, including by the Gig Harbor Chamber of Commerce Citizen of the Year in 2010, the Gig Harbor Rotary Star Award in 2014, and by the Peninsula School District establishing the Hugh McMillan Award for extraordinary contributions by community members. In 2019 a plaque was erected outside the Key Center fire station honoring Hugh's many contributions to Fire District 16. In 2021 the Peninsula School District named the combined gymnasium and community center at Evergreen Elementary School after him.

But in many ways Hugh is best known for his weekly column, "Kid's Corner," which appeared in the Peninsula Gateway newspaper for over 20 years. If there was a kindergarten class reading "The Cat in the Hat," or a group of students visiting the Minter Creek Salmon Hatchery, Hugh was there — camera in hand — to record the event. Highlighting children's accomplishments was his greatest passion. As he liked to say, "There's already too many negative things in our lives and letting folks know about the wonderful stuff our kids are doing is important."

His writing and photographs, as well as Janice's, were foundational to the KP News in the 1980s and regularly appeared in its pages for the next 30 years.

Hugh was preceded in death by Janice in 2021 and son Marshall in 1980. He is survived by his son, Lance, daughter-in-law Sheri and grandson Cameron. A celebration of life is planned for the summer.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to the Peninsula Schools Education Foundation or Communities In Schools of Peninsula.

LIBRARY HALL FROM PAGE 1

local people came through for the nonprofit.

"It was a real wonderful show of community support after such a horrible thing happened," he said.

Neighbors gathered last October to watch the installation of the wooden pole that originally rose out of the building's distinctive tower, with two different cranes operating to get the job done.

But what purpose did the tower and pole serve?

Wolfe said that when the hall was built in the 1890s there were few roads. Anyone coming to Vaughn likely came by water. The tower and the pole increased visibility from a distance on land and sea.

Most of the original building was built from trees cut onsite. The timber was moved down to Alfred Van Slyke's (the original landowner) sawmill at the water, milled and returned to the site to become the floor joists and framing.

"Of course, that would have included the pole," Wolfe said. "The bottom half of the original pole was still in the tower. Everything below the roofline they simply cut off when they put a shingle roof on it."

That gave the restoration team the diameter of the original pole.

"One of our members has 15 acres on the Key and he said, 'Let's walk around and see if we can find a match for that,'" Wolfe said. Once harvested, volunteers removed the bark and trimmed it down to a close replica of the original.

When originally constructed, framing was just beginning on the tower. Workers stood the pole into place and the tower was framed around it.

With several historic preservations under his belt from his practice in California, Wolfe said usually if he's lucky there might be some black and white photos to give him an idea of what it once looked like. But when he and Paul Michaels, the co-project manager, peeled back layers on the interior walls, they found the original colors.

"We're going to be able to restore this," he said. "We found all the original windows had been removed but luckily we had photographs that showed us what they looked like. As Paul and I opened the walls up, we found all the original window openings. So, we knew exactly what size they were."

"The building is starting to talk to us and the stories it has told are brilliant."

Once complete the hall will be open for public and private events for up to 200.

The KPHS museum will remain where it is and as Judy Mills, its former president, said, the Vaughn Library Hall will be the historical society's "biggest artifact." ■

NATURALIST'S NOTEBOOK

Hummingbirds Take It to the Limit and a Gallery of Hair Ice

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

Q: What's with the hummingbirds in January? Are they dive-bombing? I thought the high-pitch chirp was a squirrel, but those are hummingbirds?

— Megan Schowalter, Longbranch

A: If you have been stopped by the darn-near supersonic chirp of a male Anna's hummingbird — watch it climb again, 100 feet in the air, warbling its faint electrical song, then shoot Earthward like a bullet before giving that chirp as it pulls out of its dive — then you have seen a bird take it to the limits.

Step aside, peregrine falcon. In its dive, an Anna's hummingbird reaches the highest speed-to-body-length ratio ever recorded in a vertebrate, 385 lengths per second. (The falcon clocks in at 200.) It is a display flight, usually performed just above the head of a watching female hummingbird. It has five stages. First, it flaps straight downward, which is saying something, as Anna's hummingbirds already achieve 215 body lengths per second in level flight. Second, it tucks its wings. Third, it spreads its wings and begins to pull up.

Here it approaches 10 g-forces, the highest force due to acceleration of any voluntary flight maneuver; fighter pilots can sustain up to 9, the average person about 5. Other birds rarely break 2 g-forces. Hummingbirds have been clocked at 4 g-forces when making sudden escape flights. Researchers estimate that while an Anna's hummingbird's wing bones are unlikely to crack at 10 g-forces, the attachment points of their wing muscles are right on the edge of what they can handle.

What makes the sound? The fourth stage of the dive lasts five-hundredths of a second. The hummingbird flares its tail. When it does, two tail feathers flap like flags. The chirp they make is the musical note C, four octaves above middle C, layered with harmonics — which strangely corresponds with a prominent vocal chirp in the hummingbird's song. The mechanically produced note is 10 times louder than what its tiny voice box is capable of.

Fifth, the hummingbird flaps once, closes its tail, and glides on to whatever it wants to do next. Often it heads straight back up, to snap its entire being once again.

These display flights begin in the first



Eye to eye with a male Anna's hummingbird. Tina McKail, KP News

sunny days of January and last throughout the spring, though January is too early for hummingbirds to breed in the cool, wet Pacific Northwest.

But it is not too early in the Anna's hummingbird's ancestral home. Like barred owls, Anna's hummingbirds are newcomers to the Key Peninsula. Originally confined to the chaparral and scrub oak of Baja and Southern California, they were uncommon birds. The desiccating heat of Californian summer and fall meant that each year they had to survive several months of a nectar minimum. In the chaparral, manzanita and currants begin to bloom in November, and Anna's hummingbirds begin to nest in January, strange timing for a North American bird.

Their march northward in the last 70 years has been dramatic. All research suggests it is due to human-wrought changes in the landscape. In the early 1900s, timber companies made massive plantings of eucalyptus in California. The trees bloom from fall through spring, offering abundant nectar. Anna's hummingbirds exploded in population.

Soon they began to spill north and east. The first northwest nest was in Victoria in 1958; the first Washington nest was in Tacoma in 1976. And they did best in the landscaping around human develop-

Into the
WILD
EXPLORING WITH THE
KP NATURE GUIDE



It takes the right conditions for hair ice to form. Anna Brones

ment, with its wide diversity of blooming ornamentals. Scientists call this ecological release: When the constraining factor of the yearly nectar minimum was released, the hummingbirds responded. Now they are wintering in parts of Alaska and Idaho.

Our gardens and nectar feeders have drawn this species into close companionship with us.

Q: When the temperature dropped recently, I found some beautiful strands of ice sprouting from a piece of wood on the ground. They looked like feathery locks of hair. Can you tell us more about what it is and how it happens?

— Anna Brones, Vaughn

A: You saw something rare. I saw it that morning too. What got me was its texture, like cotton candy, airy yet resistant to melting or fracture. Another name for it is wool ice. The temperature had risen slightly above freezing and no other frost was around, making the patches of hair ice stand out like lilies on the dark forest floor.

Hair ice only forms in forests between latitudes 45 and 55 degrees north, and only when the air is damp and the temperature slightly below freezing. It only grows from the downed branches of deciduous trees like alder, and only from bare wood. Each strand is two-tenths of a millimeter thick, rooted in the pore of a wood ray.

A naturalist hero of mine, Alfred Wegener, who proposed that continents drift decades before the field of geology came around to the idea, studied hair ice and suggested it might be the creation of a fungus.

In 2015, after a century, he was proven correct. Hair ice only grows in the presence of a crust fungus, *Exidiopsis effusa*. When researchers killed the fungus, the ice that formed at the mouths of the wood rays quickly recrystallized into shapeless gobs. In the words of the researchers, "hair ice is doped with a recrystallisation inhibitor." In other words, the fungus gives hair ice its incredible properties.

Researchers remain focused on learning how. Melted hair ice is full of scattered lignin molecules. Lignin forms the cell walls in wood, which is broken apart by fungal digestion. Perhaps lignin is responsible; perhaps not.

Meanwhile, I'm tempted to ask why. As in, why would the fungus create hair ice? Such a question is always risky business — ascribing intention to things like fungi — yet if I've learned anything about this wild, multilayered world, it's that whenever we follow Wegener's lead and pursue fantastical hypotheses, we find the world to be thick with hidden purposes.

Here is my half-baked idea. What if hair ice helps the fungus get ahead in life by pushing bark away from wood, giving the fungus more bare wood to colonize? That's mostly pure speculation. But I did find several growths of hair ice that had pushed bark away from the wood, even a few where the bark had been split like a jacket unzipped. ■

Third Grade Evergreen Cancer Fighter Tells It Like It Is

How a new teacher, her third grade class and a stuffed monkey make a difference to a survivor and "a super tough kid."

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

Sometime around Christmas 2021, Evergreen Elementary School second-grader Brayden VanderDoes lost his appetite.

Then he began to vomit. Every day.

In the coming weeks he lost his energy and balance. He couldn't even ride his bike.

Then he began seeing double.

"We were going through all kinds of doctor appointments to try and figure out what was going on," said his mother, Amy. "He had X-rays and endoscopies and blood work, and he'd come to school and just feel so sick."

"And I did not like that," Brayden said.

He had a CT scan that December, which showed nothing unusual. After five months without headway, a doctor ordered an MRI scan of his skull.

"We thought we were just going to go in, get an MRI, and wait for a couple days for answers," Amy said. "But that's not what happened."

Brayden went immediately from the MRI at Mary Bridge Children's Hospital in Tacoma to Seattle Children's Hospital and underwent brain surgery that night.

"We had to stay a long time," he said.

Brayden was diagnosed with medulloblastoma (muh-dul-o-blas-TOE-muh), an aggressive pediatric brain cancer that starts in the cerebellum, which governs muscle coordination, balance and movement. While rare, striking just 500 children in the U.S. each year, it is the most common cancerous brain tumor in kids, who have a 70% survival rate.

Brayden had just turned 8 years old.

He missed the end of second grade. Instead of enjoying field day, moving-up assemblies, and other end-of-year festivities, he spent five weeks in the hospital enduring four surgeries and intensive inpatient rehabilitation to relearn how to walk and talk.

"It's like I was a big baby," Brayden said.

Then there was six weeks of radiation therapy five days a week while simultaneously doing chemotherapy.

He lost all his hair. But so did his dad, Martin.

"I got to shave it all off," Brayden said. And Dad kept it off until Brayden's started to regrow.

"For the kids that are getting radiation to their head, they get a mask that molds to their face and locks to the table," Amy said. "It's not a very fun thing and they say that even adults that go through it have panic attacks because it's so hard."

One of Brayden's doctors paints those masks for kids as their favorite superhero or



Brayden checks Buddy's vital signs. *Amy VanderDoes*

cartoon character. Brayden chose Munchlax, a Pokémon character that was his first stuffed toy. He trained with the mask in a simulator, preparing for the day.

"For all his MRIs and the different X-rays, he'd usually have to get sedated because it was a pretty scary experience going into those big machines," Amy said. "For radiation, that would be sedation five times a week for six weeks; it adds a lot. We were really trying to work toward getting him to do it without sedation."

When the moment came, Brayden decided he was going to do it without sedation.

Until he got to the real machine.

"And I was like, 'Nope!'" he said. The simulator did not look like the actual radiation machine, it was a little scarier.

"It was ginormous," he said.

And then Dad had a brilliant idea.

"He said if you do this, I'll give you \$50,"

Brayden said. "And I said no."

Then Dad pulled a special \$100 bill out of his wallet that his dad had given him, and that he had kept for many, many years. He held it in front of Brayden's face and said if you can do this, this \$100 will be yours.

"And I'm like, 'Done,'" Brayden said.

He made it through all 30 radiation sessions without sedation. "Pretty soon, he got so familiar with the process he'd pretty much get there, run to the room, run to the table, and say let's get it over with," Amy said. "They'd never seen another kid running to get their radiation done."

The family stayed at Ronald McDonald House at Children's for the duration, where Brayden met a 6-year-old boy also undergoing radiation treatment.

"He was having to get sedated every single time until he met Brayden, and they got to have a big talk about what it was like to do



Meet Brayden VanderDoes. *Amy VanderDoes*



Classmates, from left to right, Evan Larson, Josiah Gochmansky, Ronan Collins and Derek Chambers. The student sitting with the monkey is Peyton Hill. *Alena Shepard*

it without sedation," Amy said. "After that, he was able to do it without sedation too."

"Because he heard about the \$100," Brayden said.

The beginning of Brayden's third-grade year at Evergreen was approaching, and he wanted to return to school, where Amy has worked as a secretary for three years.

"He really, always wants to be at school," she said. "He doesn't want to miss out on anything."

But his treatment took a toll on his little body. He learned how to walk again without assistance, but he was unsteady, he lost weight, his face was partially paralyzed from surgery, he had lost all his hair, and he fatigued quickly. His parents had concerns



The VanderDoes family was forced out of their home by fire Feb. 17. KPFD 16.

about him going back to in-person school, even with Amy there, including that other kids would not understand. They might be afraid of him and not want to be his friend.

This is where the monkey comes into the story.

“His name is Buddy, and he does all the work for me when I’m gone,” Brayden said.

A big stuffed monkey sits in Brayden’s chair when he is absent and participates in all student activities, taking his place in class. His classmates help the monkey do anything Brayden would have done that day. It’s a program promoted by Children’s Hospital called Monkey in My Chair, created in honor of Chloe Watson Feyerherm for children who miss school because of cancer.

“It was a little bit overwhelming not knowing what he would need throughout the year,” said his teacher, Alena Shepard, now in her second year of teaching. “But I think he really enjoys learning. If I’m up there talking, he is looking directly at me, he is not distracted by anything, he’s soaking everything in, he does everything the first time I ask, and does the very best on all his work.”

The monkey makes a difference to the class. Brayden carries a smaller version of Buddy when he has to miss school, and exchanges messages with his classmates so they can let each other know how Buddy is doing.

“They take it very seriously, taking it everywhere they go and making sure he’s doing his work for Brayden,” Shepard said. “They can definitely tell what it represents.”

“He’s a super tough kid,” said Dean of Students Christy Dalby. “The monkey has really helped keep him in the forefront of their minds when he’s not there. The monkey is Brayden, so Brayden gets to go to music, to science, to recess. It’s keeping him in their thoughts.”

“It’s incredible,” said Bethany Grace

McDermott, the Evergreen counselor. “I think them being part of this journey has made a huge difference for the kids. They all want to hang out with him.”

At press time Brayden was in the middle of his fourth of eight cycles of chemotherapy. He said he’s feeling good because he’s halfway done.

“In my lunch groups (with kids) I usually start off asking them for a rose, a thorn and a stem,” McDermott said. “The rose is something great that happened that day or that week, the thorn is something not so great, and the stem is what you’re thankful for. And so many times Brayden would share his rose, and he would say ‘I don’t have a thorn.’ If anybody has a right to have a thorn right now ... I know he doesn’t feel good, he doesn’t have a lot of energy, and he’s saying I don’t have a thorn, and I just thought what an inspiration to not only other kids but to adults.”

“I wanted to share this story because Ms. Shepard and her class have really gone above and beyond to help my little boy through a tough situation that no kid should ever have to face,” Amy said. “Sending Brayden back to school was a terrifying decision for so many reasons, but it was the right decision because of them. I will forever be grateful.”

When KP News asked Brayden what readers should remember most about him and learn from his story, he didn’t hesitate.

“One hundred dollars,” he said. ■

The VanderDoes home in Palmer Lake was severely damaged in a fire the night of Feb. 17, leaving the house uninhabitable. The family of five and pets escaped without injury and are receiving support from KP Fire District 16 and the Red Cross. For more information, contact the KPFD at 253-884-2222.

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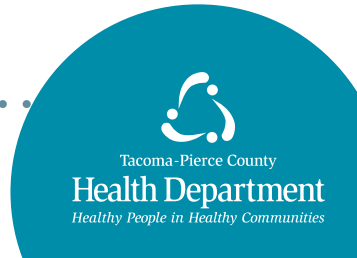
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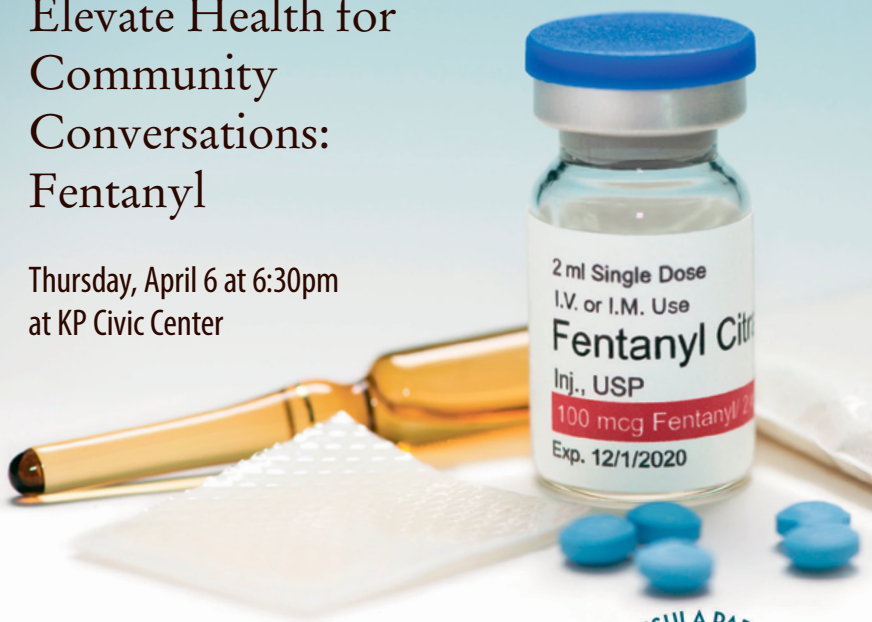
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This swarm of honeybees spotted in a tree near Home was safely recovered by experienced beekeepers last summer.

Ron Cameron

KP Beekeepers Keep Honeybees and the Art of Caring for Them Alive

A local club works to connect experienced beekeepers with beginners in a mentorship program.

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

On the Key Peninsula of old, you could hire a “beeliner” to observe the honeybees on your property and slowly, painstakingly, track them back to their hive in a hollow tree, giving you a windfall of honey and the chance to bring the bees into an artificial hive for future years.

Things don’t quite work that way anymore. Feral honeybees, as wild-nesting populations of the European honeybee are known, rarely survive due to an array of viruses that plague hives, creating a far trickier task for the backyard beekeeper.

Yet honeybees are still to be found across the peninsula, and aspiring beekeepers have a hub for all things honey and hives in the KP Beekeepers, a chapter member of the Washington State Beekeepers Association. Founder Dave Leger estimates there are more than 30 people actively keeping bees on the Key Peninsula.

That number is set to grow after the club offered a beginning beekeeping class in February that taught the basics of keeping a hive. About 18 of the attendees had never kept bees.

The club meets monthly on the first Thursday at 6 p.m. at the Home fire station. The meetings, which are open to the public, give members the chance to share techniques and equipment for tasks as varied as finding and marking the queen, telling

the difference between capped honey and open honey, preventing the hive from swarming and conducting regular patrols to check for the mites that carry viruses. This summer the club will have a teaching apiary available to members on Saturdays.

Leger said that people often start with honeybees thinking they will be like a pet when the reality is closer to farming or raising livestock. Bees attune their caretakers to delicate balances of weather and environment. Their management requires a focus on the hive as a whole rather than individual bees.

And according to Leger, the KP is one of the most demanding environments for beekeeping. Long, damp winters are not cold enough to send colonies into full hibernation. Instead, the bees overwinter with their brood, an energy-intensive process when cold temperatures do come, as the brood must be kept at 95 degrees. The adult bees form a ball around the brood and can dislocate their flight muscles from their wings to vibrate to keep warm. Some colonies opt to go broodless and spend the winter as adults. Either way, the damp and relative warmth encourages problems in the hive.

Local bees feast on maple blossoms in the early part of April then, according to Leger, can have a bit of a dearth of nectar sources until the blackberry flower

feast begins in June. Fruit trees, clover, borage, and fireweed can all fill that gap. Late summer is another time when bees can go hungry.

Bees are a superorganism, Leger said, which makes them incredible to work with. The queen does not make decisions for the hive; the entire colony makes decisions. It is pure democracy in a hive. The individuals communicate through dance and scent.

The club works to connect experienced beekeepers with beginners in a mentorship program. They connect beekeepers without suitable land to property owners who do not have the time to keep bees themselves — a quart of honey is often the only remuneration required.

The club also has a swarm team on standby from April through September, when honeybee colonies may send the majority of their members out in swarms as part of the reproductive cycle to start a new colony. The swarm will usually land in a tightly massed and harmless ball on a tree branch for several days. Beyond being equipped to collect the swarm and introduce it into a new hive, the swarm team works to teach property owners about beekeeping and will help them get started if they are interested.

Information on the monthly meetings and all of the club’s activities can be found at keypeninsulabeekeepers.com. ■

Minerva Scholarship Funds Education for Local Women: Deadline April 15

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

Created to overcome barriers so many women confront, the local Minerva Scholarship Fund has given \$500,000 over 30 years to more than 200 Gig Harbor and Key Peninsula women to help complete their education and fulfill their dreams.

Nine residents received \$55,000 last year, including two from the Key Peninsula.

Vaughn resident Sara June Gray received hers in 2018: \$10,000 toward a teaching certificate and her master's in elementary education, which she earned in 2020.

"I have a jewelry business (June Moon Jewelry) and I've done farmers markets and art events in the area for years," she said. "I ended up next to another vendor who was selling scarves and other knitted items, raising money for the Minerva Scholarship Fund. I talked to them and learned it was for women going back to school after a gap in their education, and that was way back in 2011. I had two small kids at home, and I wasn't ready, but I kept track of it for years and just waited until it was my time."

Gray now serves on the Minerva Alumni Committee to spread the word.

"Because I was a recipient, I'm constantly

looking for people who might want to go back to school," she said. "I think if more people knew there were opportunities out there, they would look into it a little bit more. Most scholarships are designed for people coming out of high school, but with this one you tell your story and really talk about your individual needs and the dream that you have for what you want to do."

The scholarship is aimed at getting women to finish their education, but can include more than tuition assistance.

"Whether they know or not specifically what their education journey is going to look like, I would encourage them to apply because they don't know how much the fund could help them," Gray said. "Sometimes people needed as little as a set of tires so they could commute to school, or getting their prerequisites. They've given out small amounts and they've given out very large amounts depending on people's needs and they're very conscientious about saving enough money so they can do that every year."

Sarah Whitmarsh of Lakebay first applied for a scholarship in 2019 after she was asked to post an advertisement for it at her workplace.

"I received scholarships each of my four years of graduate school," she said. "Minerva really wants to support recipients in achieving their goals and therefore invests in continued financial support over the course of a woman's education."

Whitmarsh had earned a bachelor's degree years earlier but then focused on work and raising her children.

"I have already completed my graduate certificate in social gerontology with a concentration in interior design," she said. Later in the spring she will receive her master's degree in social gerontology.

According to the fund history, in 1991 three Gig Harbor friends — Col. Sybil Mercer, Ruth Taylor and Col. Florence Casey — founded the Minerva Scholarship Fund as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization with \$15,000 of their own money. The American Association of University Women of Gig Harbor contributed a matching \$15,000 and by 1993 the fund began offering scholarships to women in the community.

Scholarship winners have used their awards to finish undergraduate degrees or post-grad studies, or to get vocational training. Recipients have earned certificates

and degrees in environmental science, criminal justice, gerontology, truck driving, social work, screenwriting and medicine.

Applicants must live or work in the Peninsula School District, have experienced an interruption in education of at least one year, intend to return to school to earn a certificate or degree and have a demonstrated need of financial assistance.

"Anyone who is considering applying for a scholarship will be happy to know they will find support and encouragement throughout their endeavors from a group of dedicated, kind, caring individuals," Whitmarsh said. "Some recipients have had short breaks from school, others have had long breaks; some of us are just starting off on our vocational endeavors, others have changed careers multiple times; some of us have been single moms, raising kids while working full-time and completing coursework. But all of us feel so grateful for the donors, founding members, and long-term volunteers who continue to believe in our capacity to make a difference in our communities."

The deadline to apply for the next academic year is April 15.

For more information, go to minervagig Harbor.org. ■

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- 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

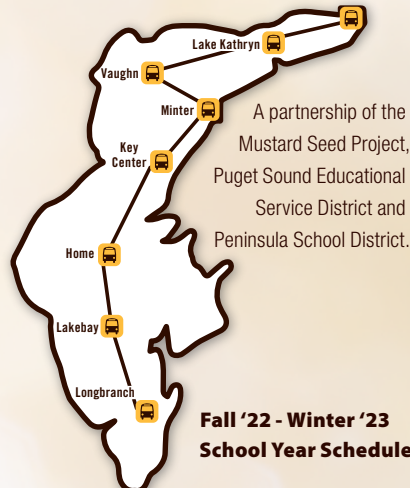
- 9:50 Vaughn Elementary School
- 9:51 Wright Bliss Rd NW @Olson Dr NW
- 9:52 Wright Bliss Road @104th St Ct NW
- 9:54 Union 76 @SR 302/4 Corners
- 9:57 SR 302 @150th Ave/Lake Holiday bus shed
- 9:58 SR 302 @140th Ave/Lake of the Woods
- 10:00 SR 302 @Charboneau Construction
- 10:03 Lake Kathryn Village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

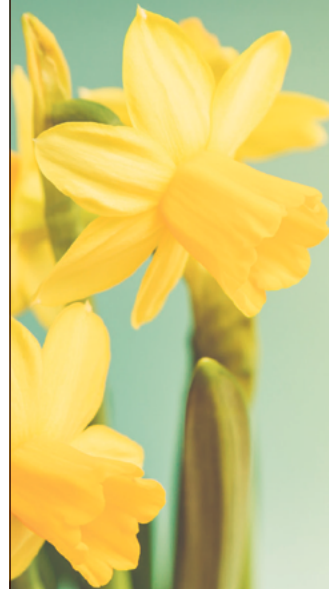


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KPFD Terminates Calahan Property Lease

STAFF REPORT

Key Peninsula Fire District 16 terminated the lease agreement for the commercial Calahan property (formerly O’Callahan’s, Buck’s and Reed’s) at the corner of KP Highway NW and 92nd Street NW in Key Center that it purchased at the end of 2021, according to Fire Chief Nick Swinhart.

The property was purchased as a

possible site for a new fire district facility in coming years, but the district intended to keep it rented until that time, together with a second currently rented residential property just to the south of Sunnycrest Nursery. The district signed a lease with a tenant to operate a restaurant at the corner property early last year, but significant repairs are needed for it to open. After spending approximately \$28,000 of an estimated \$70,000 required, the

district asked the tenant to consider paying for the work in lieu of rent.

The tenant declined and agreed to a lease termination in January. The district will reimburse the tenant a \$6,000 deposit and pay a \$2,500 “goodwill” fee to prevent further claims. The district also agreed to pay up to an additional \$10,800 for any expenses the tenant incurred upon proof of same, according to Swinhart. ■

PSD Superintendent To Speak at Citizen of the Year Award Ceremony

STAFF REPORT

The keynote speaker at the 36th Annual Key Peninsula Citizen of the Year Award banquet scheduled for March 25 was to be long-time Lions Club member, all-around KP booster and raconteur Hugh McMillan, who died unexpectedly Feb. 10.

McMillan will be honored for his service to the community and to the country during the banquet.

Peninsula School District Superintendent Krestin Bahr will step in as speaker. She became superintendent in August 2021.

Bahr graduated from Pacific Lutheran University 37 years ago and spent more than a decade as a science teacher with the Tacoma School District, where she taught AP biology, physics and chemistry. Following her first administrative job as assistant principal of a middle school she went on to serve as a middle school principal. She completed her superintendent certification in 2011. She was superintendent at Eatonville and served as president of the Washington Association of School Administrators.

For more information and tickets, go to e-clubhouse.org/sites/keypeninsulawa/calendar.php. ■

Peninsula School District Renews One Levy and Passes a New One

STAFF REPORT

Voters approved two Peninsula School District levies on the Feb. 14 ballot. At press time Feb. 15, the Replacement Educational Programs and Operations Levy passed by 64.07% and the Safety, Security and Technology Levy by 63.41%.

Turnout was 20,855 voters, or 39.49%. Final certification was scheduled for Feb. 24.

“Thank you Peninsula School District voters for continuing to support our schools by approving these important levies,” said Superintendent Krestin Bahr in a statement.

The three-year Replacement Educational Programs and Operations Levy replaces the 2020 levy expiring at the

end of 2023, accounting for about 18% of the PSD budget.

The six-year Safety, Security and Technology Levy provides a new dedicated funding source for safety, security systems and technology improvements across the district.

The total local school tax rate, including both levies and the existing bond, is estimated to be \$1.82 per \$1,000 of assessed value beginning in 2024.

“Once again, our community has shown they understand and value the importance of quality schools,” said PSD Board President Natalie Wimberley.

Election results will be certified by Pierce County Elections on Feb. 24. For more information, search for election results at piercecountywa.gov. ■

March 18 KP Community Roadside Litter Disposal — 1-Day Free Dumpster Access

STAFF REPORT

The Key Peninsula Community Council, Key Pen It Clean, Safe Streets and Pierce County will team up to provide access to dumpsters free of charge for KP residents March 18 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. to facilitate litter removal from KP roadsides.

The organizers ask residents to pick up litter in front of their property or nearby

roads and deliver to the nearest dumpster. The dumpsters will be monitored. No hazardous waste will be accepted.

Dumpsters will be placed at three locations:

1. Lake Kathryn Village parking lot.
2. Corner of 64th Street NW and Key Peninsula Highway NW.
3. Longbranch Improvement Club parking lot. ■

Penrose Point State Park Closed Until May For Septic Repairs

STAFF REPORT

All day-use areas, trails, and camping at Penrose Point State Park have been closed since January 15 for sewage system repairs and upgrades, according to the

Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. The work is expected to be completed in May.

The campground was shut down January 3. The rest of the 237-acre park was closed later because there are no

functioning toilets, and the work creates a safety hazard.

For more information, contact the parks commission at infocontact@parks.wa.gov or the park office at penrose.point@parks.wa.gov or call 253-884-2514. ■

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FORGET DUSTING THE HOUSE, SPRING CLEANING IS FOR THE YARD

Save Your Lawn By Removing Your Grass and Helping the Bugs

Spring is an opportunity to get creative with how we reinvent our landscapes to be more water conscious and habitat relevant.

KAMRYN MINCH

This time of year, the morning sun enters the house at the perfect angle to shine light on how much dust and cobwebs have accumulated in the living room, signaling that spring is almost here.

Inevitably, that means spring cleaning, which also means I'll be outside if you need me.

I head outside to my domain, where a trim of the hedge, prune of the trees, and a trip to the nursery can make a huge difference for significantly less time and energy than any interior project would require.

That is, until I get to the lawn.

I think it's time to be honest with ourselves: Grass is a pain in the you know what, especially for us forest dwellers. In the past 17 years that my family has lived out here, there hasn't been a single season where we haven't had to completely re-establish the lawn.

No matter how much amending, aerating or thatching we do, our soil remains too acidic, too heavy in clay, and generally inhospitable for whatever species of seed came in the name brand bag we bought from the local big box store. There's no other plant in the yard that needs as much assistance to survive as the grass. It must be mowed, fertilized and watered constantly, or else it dies. And to think, all this effort for a plant we can't even eat.

Naturally, it's no secret in my household that if I could get rid of the grass and turn the lawn into more garden, I would have started yesterday. However, I'm outvoted every year because apparently, we need the open space for "activities," even though nobody's busted out the bocce balls since 2010.

But thanks in part to prolonged summer droughts, there has been a shift in grass lawn sentiment over the past couple years. The ecological necessity for alternative landscaping solutions presents me with the perfect opportunity to find compromise with the ole family about how best to cultivate the lawn space.

While convincing them to let me put in more gardens has been a futile pursuit, a more palatable solution has come across my radar that I think we can all get behind. It's something that allows



A lawn laced with clover is low maintenance and good for the bugs. *Kamryn Minch*

us to keep our open spaces while also providing an opportunity to get creative with how we reinvent our landscape to be more water conscious, and all-around beneficial to us and the ecosystem at large.

Eco-lawns are gaining traction as the

perfect alternative to traditional grass lawns. There are different versions, which include bee lawns, no-mow (only twice a year is the claim), clover lawns, meadows (different from bee-lawns), and even fodder mixes for chickens and other small farm animals. Mixes are also



region- and site-specific, which means there's an eco-lawn mix available for just about any yard no matter where you live.

They're actually more of a classic revival, as the first lawns (dating as far back as 16th century England and France) were made up of a mixture of different plants like chamomile and thyme. Even clover was encouraged to be cultivated with grass due to its nitrogen fixing capabilities, but with the adoption of broadleaf herbicides in the 1950s, clover ended up classified as a weed and as a result single-species grass lawns became the cultural norm, along with the necessary purchase and application of nitrogen-rich fertilizers every year.

As opposed to a conventional bag of grass seed, eco-lawn mixes help to build a diverse and resilient turf habitat through the inclusion of various species of grasses, flowers and groundcovers. Each plant featured in a mix is meant to play a role that supports the others as well as contributes to the function of the landscape.

Eco-lawns are designed to be drought tolerant and low maintenance once established, but what does it take to make the transition? Ideally, site preparation would take a full growing season, especially if you're trying to replace an existing lawn, because you'll need to cultivate the space and cover it with a black tarp to fully kill the grass or any weed seeds in the soil. But, if your lawn is already struggling like ours, then you're already halfway there.

You can sow the seeds into an existing lawn, but it will take a bit longer for the new species to establish. If you're impatient, like me, but want better odds, you can also spread a layer of topsoil (nothing fancy) over the areas you want to reseed. Spring sowings will more than likely need supplemental irrigation over the summer to ensure survival, but after the first season, the new lawn will be able to take care of itself. And if there's anything about a lawn worth exerting effort over, it's for that glorious end goal. But also the bees, of course. ■

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March 23 Property Tax Exemption Seminar at KP Community Services

STAFF REPORT

County residents over age 61 or who are fully disabled and have a gross household income below \$45,708 may qualify for the Pierce County Property Tax Exemption program.

Newly elected county Councilmember Robyn Denson (D-Dist. 7) will be one of the presenters at a seminar about the exemption and how to apply for it March 23 from 1 to 3 p.m. at Key Peninsula Community Services south of Home, located at 1701 9th Street CT NW.

Other presenters will include representa-

tives from the Pierce County Auditor and South Sound Affordable Housing Partners, as well as other programs designed to assist people with household budgets such as Energy Assistance, Home Repair, Aging and Disability Resources, and Veterans Services.

"While knocking on doors last year, I heard from so many seniors and disabled persons on the KP concerned about their ability to stay in their homes because of rising costs, particularly property taxes," Denson told KP News. "I'm excited to make sure our residents are availing themselves of all available resources."

RSVP to Jason.gauthier@piercecountywa.gov or call 253-281-9491. ■

RETAIL FROM PAGE 1

center, and the Lake Kathryn store is leased from that property owner, Don Zimmerman of Cost Less Pharmacy fame.

"I'm very appreciative of all the community support out here and hopefully we've been a good community member," Stolz said. "We've done the 'tapes for charity' donation for years and years, where people keep their receipts, and we donate 1% to their charity."

He said Myers uses the Round Up at the Register program but picks a single charity each month.

"I would really encourage any of the organizations that we've been involved with, like Food Backpacks 4 Kids, the KP Senior Center and others that have been pretty active users to contact the store soon and ask how to get on the list to be one of those 12 organizations."

Lake Kathryn Village may also be getting another new tenant: The Gallery, part of a Washington state chain of recreational marijuana stores. The Key Peninsula Advisory Commission reviewed its application for a conditional use permit at its Feb. 15 meeting;

Pierce County had already recommended approval. The application goes before the county hearing examiner March 22 at the Pierce County Public Services Building.

Lake Kathryn Village may be getting another new tenant: The Gallery, part of a Washington state chain of recreational marijuana stores.

The Key Peninsula Advisory Commission reviewed its application Feb. 15 for a conditional use permit to move into a vacant 3,000 square foot retail space in Suite 102. Pierce County had already recommended approval.

The application goes before the county hearing examiner March 22 at the Pierce County Public Services Building.

The only public comment against included in the review of the application came from an attorney for Sweet Jane LLC, a marijuana retailer located at The Harvest Time Country Store and gas station complex one-quarter mile east of Lake Kathryn Village on State Route 302. The comment said that "a religious facility was located within 1,000 lineal feet to the newly proposed retail marijuana location." ■



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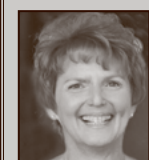
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Key Peninsula Community Connection

Peninsula School District - March 2023

Grant Funding Supports Robots and STEM at PSD Elementary Schools

The Peninsula School District received two science education grants from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), which will fund innovative learning in our elementary schools.

PSD received over \$25,000 in funding from the ClimeTime Grant, which will fund robotics in each of PSD's elementary school buildings. The district also received nearly \$10,000 in funding from the Content Integration Grant, which will help build integrated STEM curriculum in K-5 classrooms.

ClimeTime Grant

The ClimeTime Grant has been available for years to support climate-focused education in the classroom.

PSD's STEM Specialist Team was awarded over \$25,000 to bring robotics to all of the district's elementary schools. The robots, provided by Edison Robots, will be used by students to find solutions to climate-related problems.

Content Integration Grant

The PSD STEMScopes Implementation Team, which works to train teachers on STEMScopes Curriculum, was awarded nearly \$10,000 from OSPI as a part of the Content Integration Grant to create integrated STEM units for the district's elementary teachers.

An integrated unit will allow students to learn skills from multiple content areas. One example could be a lesson that encompasses math, science, and reading comprehension. The Content Integration Grant from OSPI will fund professional development time for PSD

staff and teachers to learn about integrated STEMScopes units, and to provide more resources for teachers to use in their classrooms.



Upcoming Events

•Wednesday, 3/1 - 2023-2024 Enrollment Opens

•Sunday, 3/12 - Daylight Savings Time

•Friday, 3/17 - Trimester Break - No School

•Saturday, 3/25 - Gig Harbor Has Talent 2 p.m., Swift Water Elementary

PHS Key Club prepares over teddy bears for children in Ukraine

The Peninsula High School (PHS) Key Club was challenged with a goal of 500 teddy bears donated to send to children affected by the war in Ukraine. Halfway through the school year the club has collected over 1,000 bears, which they will start to ship this week overseas.

Key Club advisor Spencer Abersold approached the club, which focuses on leadership and community service, with the goal of 500 bears donated. There are over 1,000 bears donated and a few thousands in monetary donations from community members and local groups to cover the cost of shipping. The club is working with the Voices of the Children Foundations, based in Kyiv, which provides psychological help to children throughout Ukraine.

On Tuesday, Feb. 7, students gathered all of the bears in Carolyn Gutmann's classroom, also a Key Club Advisor, and spent volunteer time after school tying ribbons with messages of support written in Ukrainian to the bears. Then they packed the bears into boxes to prepare for their travels overseas.

"We've done a lot of good here. You've made the world a better place and somebody is going to receive this gift and know we care," Abersold told the students over a giant pile of bears.

I just think it's a great thing our community can get together and collect so many bears," Key Club member Alec D. said. "I'm really proud and grateful that Key Club could do that."



PSD's 2023-2024 School Calendar Available online

The 2023-2024 and the 2024-2025 Peninsula School District calendars are available online. Check school holidays, important dates, and more.

Visit our calendars page to download printable calendars - <https://www.psd401.net/about-us/calendar>.

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Rep. Michelle Caldier Reveals Sight Impairment and Introduces Bill to Help Others

The Gig Harbor state representative opens up about living with a disability and doing something about it as she entered her fifth term in the House.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

In early December 2016, Washington State Rep. Michelle Caldier (R-26th) was awakened by a crushing pain on the side of her head. She suddenly lost vision in her left eye from acute glaucoma, a problem where pressure suddenly builds and damages the optic nerve. Caldier already had poor vision in her right eye following an injury at birth; it was adequate for reading, but not distance.

Overnight she was faced with only near vision in one eye and loss of depth perception. “I had to learn to walk, to cut my food. I couldn’t drive. I lost my dental practice overnight,” Caldier said. “It was devastating.”

Despite early intervention and at least 100 procedures, Caldier never regained vision in her left eye. In early 2020, she had a prosthesis placed to help shield her eye from the pain caused by light.

And she began thinking about the future. “I needed to create a plan and figure out how I am going to get around, prepare food. How to do a job that requires you to give tours.”

She chose not to go public about her disability. “I am always careful about my personal life, and I have kept it very quiet. I was embarrassed. I had to prove I could do my job first,” she said.

Caldier was elected to her fifth two-year term last fall with more than 56% of the vote.

“I am blessed to have the support of friends and family,” she said. They offered both emotional and logistical support, especially her father and daughters. Her 28-year-old daughter lives in Lakebay with her husband and 9-year-old. Her 26-year-old lives in Bremerton. Although she gave up her active role as a short-term foster mother a year ago, she maintains relationships with several foster daughters.

But over the last few years, she grew frustrated as she tried to get even small accommodations to help with her work. “It was hard just to get a PowerPoint emailed to me so that I could read it on my phone,” she said. When committee meetings or votes on the floor occurred in the early morning hours, there were no options for transportation by bus, taxi or ride share.

She found herself asking colleagues for rides. Although that had the benefit of establishing good relationships with legislators from both sides of the aisle, the rides were not a sure thing, and she felt that there should be a better way. “I would never have



Caldier was elected to her fifth two-year term last fall with more than 56% of the vote. *Tina McKail, KP News*

asked one of my employees who couldn’t drive to work until five in the morning,” she said.

Her bill, HR 1463, came out of that frustration. It applies only to state employees or officials and would require that when a person who is not able to drive must be physically present at work, if hours are unpredictable and transportation is not available, the state will provide transportation to their home at no cost.

Caldier worked with legislative staff from the Office of Public Research to ensure the language and references in the bill were consistent with state law. She found a bipartisan group of sponsors. The committee for State Government and Tribal Relations was assigned to review the bill and decide whether to hold a hearing on its merits.

After a hearing is held on a bill — none for HR 1463 was scheduled at press time — the committee chair and house speaker decide whether it will move forward. If it does, it goes to the rules committee and finally to the house floor for a vote. If it passes, the bill then moves to the senate for a similar process. Once the senate approves it, the bill goes to the governor.

Laws typically take years to pass, Caldier said. She does not expect hers to be successful this year. In the meantime, she is planning to get more support by meeting



Not just a face in the crowd, Caldier has helped many KP causes including the Mustard Seed Village, where she attended the opening in November 2022. *Tina McKail, KP News*

with the state nonprofit Disability Rights of Washington and several unions. She wants to continue to work on transportation issues for those with disabilities in general. “If we can provide even a few services that allow people to stay in their own homes and be as independent as possible, it saves the state money,” she said.

Caldier stopped caucusing with her party in January and is not currently serving on any committees, but says she is still a Republican. She did not explain what issues lie between her and party leadership, but said “I am grateful I have great working relationships with my Republican and Democratic

colleagues. I hope I can work out issues with my leadership and rejoin the caucus.”

Republican House Leader J.T. Wilcox told KP News, “Michelle has been an effective legislator. And I’m sure we can work together in the future.”

Caldier said she hopes to continue to serve in public office. “I would be honored to continue to serve as long as the people will have me. Part of that is coming out in public with these challenges,” she said. “I know that I am not alone in facing challenges and some people are afraid to ask for help. I want to be a voice for individuals with disabilities.” ■

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

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

Mar 2 Mobile Mammogram Unit 10 a.m. - 2 p.m., Mustard Seed Project. Call 253-722-1765 for appointment.

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

Mar 4 PenMet Parks Summer Camp Fair 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., Volunteer Vern Pavilion, Sehmel Homestead Park.

Mar 4 Empty Bowls 11 a.m. - 2 p.m., benefiting Altrusa Gig Harbor. Chapel Hill Church.

Mar 4 Pier Into the Night 7 p.m., Harbor Wildwatch, Jerisich Dock.

Mar 7 GH Literary Society 6 p.m., Gig Harbor History Museum. "Deep in the Woods" by Bryan Johnston.

Mar 10-12 Dragon Boat Flea Market Fri and Sat 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Sun 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Gig Harbor Eagles.

Mar 14 TacomaProBono Legal Aid Pop-Up 10 a.m. - 12 p.m., KP Community Services. Free civil legal help.

Mar 15 Cribbage Club 2 - 4 p.m., Mustard Seed Project. Everyone is welcome - no experience required.

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

Mar 18 Shamrock'n the Harbor Fun Run/Walk 8:30 a.m., register online. Greater Gig Harbor Foundation.

Mar 18 Free Dumpsters for Road Clean-Up 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. for roadside litter. Dumpsters will be monitored. No hazardous waste accepted. Three locations: Lake Kathryn Village parking lot; the corner of 64th St NW and Key Peninsula Hwy. NW; and the Longbranch Improvement Club parking lot.

Mar 18 Story Time at WayPoint 10 a.m. - 12 p.m., WayPoint Church. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

Mar 20 KP Democrats 7 p.m., Home fire station. Guest is Pierce County Executive Bruce Dammeier.

Mar 21 KP Kids Maker Fun 3:30 - 5:30 p.m., Key Center Library. STEAM and science activities.

Mar 23 KP Book Club 11 a.m., KP Historical Society. "Jude the Obscure" by Thomas Hardy.

Mar 23 Property Tax Exemption Seminar 1 to 3 p.m. at KP Community Services. Residents over age 61 or who are fully disabled and have a gross household income below \$45,708 may qualify for the Pierce County Property Tax Exemption program. RSVP to Jason.gauthier@piercecounitywa.gov or call 253-281-9491.

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

Mar 25 Citizen of the Year Banquet 5:30 p.m., Key Peninsula Lions Club. Tickets available online.

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, 253-884-9814. Stay Active and Independent for Life.

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

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

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

T-SA KP History Museum 1 - 4 p.m., KPHS Museum behind KP civic center. New 2023 exhibit - "A Salute to Our Veterans of All Times" on display through November.

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

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

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, 253-884-4440.

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

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

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

MONTHLY MEETINGS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key Pen Parks Commission Board meeting, second Monday, 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 Thursday, 7 p.m. KP Civic Center, Whitmore Room, 253-884-2283.

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

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

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

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department Tues & 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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Upper left, Center and Mid-right: As spring approaches, lambing season is well underway at Kaukiki Farm in Longbranch.

Tina McKail, KP News

Upper right: Charcoal portrait of Janice and Hugh McMillan.

See page 9. *Chris Bronstad*

Mid-left: Early blooming Camellia buds swell before bursting in color.

Tina McKail, KP News

Lower left: A Northern Shoveler drake.

Tina McKail, KP News

Lower right: A newborn goat named Darkstar.

Tina McKail, KP News

