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Of life, family and friends

Remembering Amanda

By Scott Turner, KP News

It's always a tragedy when someone is killed in a traffic accident — especially someone young and full of promise and life.

And when there are questions and controversy about just how the accident happened, the grief goes even deeper.

Such is the case in the Nov. 1 death of 23-year-old Longbranch resident Amanda Hamlin.

She was headed home to watch the Seahawks game that rainy Sunday when she lost control of her car and crashed into a power pole on the Key Peninsula Highway.

According to police reports, several witnesses said Hamlin was passing on curves going 75 mph.

"Speed was the factor that caused that accident," said Pierce County Sheriff's Department spokesman Ed Troyer.

"We had multiple witnesses who said she

(See **Amanda**, Page 4)



Photo by Scott Turner, KP News

During a family gathering after a recent car crash took the life of Key Peninsula resident Amanda Hamlin, 23, family and friends came together to support each other.

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A heron on the hunt for some fish
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Local vet paying it forward from heart, honor and grit

By Scott Turner, KP News

Gordon Alexander Graham is an advocate for military veterans. The 64-year-old Vaughn resident, who goes by Alex, peppers his conversations with names of faraway places — some long-forgotten, some totally unfamiliar.

They're names of towns in Vietnam where Graham served in the early 1970s — Ban Muong Soui, Ban Na, Ban Sam Thong, the Plain of Jars and a place simply called "L.S." which stood for "Laos Site."

Graham followed in the footsteps of his father who had been an ace fighter pilot in World War II.

But he hadn't planned it that way.

After graduating from high school in 1969, he was ready to register

at Hartwick College in New York.

"Four days into my summer vacation, I got a little buzzed and my buddies and I started throwing eggs at a bunch of cars," Graham said.

"One of them happened to be a police car. I got charged with a bunch of things but most of the charges were dropped — [if] I signed up for the military."

He quickly signed up for the U.S. Air Force, went to basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, and then was sent to technical training to learn telephone maintenance and cable splicing.

His first overseas assignment was in Thailand, near the Laotian border.

(See **Vet**, Page 2)

(From *Vet*, Page 1)

"The war was really hopping when I got there in 1970," he recalled. "It was a real war zone and as soon as I got there I sort of had to learn to dodge aircraft."

When the Air Force learned that Graham could speak French, his orders were changed from participating in the invasion of Cambodia to an assignment at Tan Son Nut AFB, near Saigon, where he "was all set to go on Operation Rustic" — a classified operation.

"I was going to be a back-seater, instructing Cambodian Air Force pilots where to drop their bombs along the Ho Chi Min Trail," he said.

"I was on the flight line poised and ready to go and I was suddenly told that my orders had been changed and I was being sent to Laos as an interpreter."

That was July 1970.

"Two days a week, I was assigned to USAID — the United States Agency for International Development. I didn't wear a uniform and I had a USAID ID card saying I was a French teacher," he said.

His job was to fly with the Royal Laotian Air Force, finding targets and telling the pilots where to drop their ordinance.

In September 1970, Graham took a bullet in the leg from enemy fire. He was on a classified mission in a place called Palace Dog, technically working for USAID that day.

"We were in the air when we got hit by Pathet Lao, an indigenous force that was in league with the North Vietnamese communists that were trying to take Laos back from the U.S. We were near a tiny village called Ban Na. That meant 'building' or a village in Laotian," he said.

"My job was to have a microphone and a stack of propaganda leaflets and throw the leaflets down into the villages and encourage the people to switch over to our side.

"I didn't even feel it when the bullet hit me."

Later, in a small field unit hospital where Graham was treated, he was given two pints of blood from local indigenous people, as was customary.

Not long after that, he came down with hepatitis.

Soon it was learned that Graham's father was a lieutenant general in the U.S. Air Force "so I wasn't even supposed to be in a combat zone because I was the sole surviving son of a military person," he said.

As it turned out, that didn't matter much given the circumstances, and Graham was sent to another secret base to fix telephones and drop telephone wires out of the bottom of a low-flying plane to string them over the jungle canopy.

On one of those flights, Graham's plane crashed into a mountain. Everyone survived, but there were serious injuries.

When Graham got back to the United States, he didn't get a hero's welcome.

"The military told me my hair was too long and my shoes weren't shiny enough and that I wasn't military material.

"Well, where I had been (in Southeast Asia), we were more like Terry and the Pirates and the important thing was how well you shot — not how well-polished your shoes were.

"They wanted us to be like Casper Milque-toast and I just couldn't do it. So they demoted me a stripe and busted me down from E4 to E3 and kicked me out on Feb. 23, 1973 and said I was an antisocial personality with



By Scott Turner, KP News

KP Vietnam veteran, Gordon Alexander Graham, is still on a mission to help other brothers and sisters in arms.

passive-aggressive tendencies. Of course, they were full of crap," he said.

He received a general discharge under honorable conditions, but when he got his Certificate of Service paper, it was an empty sheet.

He was given only one medal, which basically showed that he had served in wartime. "Everybody got that medal," he said. "There were a whole lot of other medals that I had earned and should have gotten — like a Purple Heart — and I didn't get them."

As a civilian, Graham became a journeyman electrician and started his own electric business.

In 1989 he moved to the Key Peninsula and started building houses. He also discovered that he had several Agent Orange-related diseases and that medication he had been given for hepatitis had exacerbated his

Crohn's disease. "The VA rated me 100 percent disabled for two different diseases," he said.

Still, he didn't have his medals.

He started filing claims against the VA, and his wife, Debbie, suggested he write a book about his situation. It was called "Veterans Administration Claims: What You Need to Know to be Successful."

With help from Rep. Derek Kilmer, Graham got most of his medals in 2014 — except for his Purple Heart and his air medal. "Apparently, that's because when I got hurt I wasn't technically flying for the U.S. Air Force, but for USAID," he said.

Now he's working on a second book called "Win or Die" and he's growing things in a new \$150,000 greenhouse the VA gave him under its independent living program.

"The new book talks about all the things that have transpired for me with my VA claims since the end of the first book," he said.

"What I'm doing is advocating for veterans, helping my fellow veterans get the medals they deserve — especially the vets that don't know how to do this stuff for themselves.

"It's not about me. It's about veterans, all veterans, even the ones that serve during peacetime. Now that I've won, it's even more important to me to share what I know and to help others," he said.

His message to others is simple: Never leave anyone behind. "The hardest thing I ever did was have to leave a fellow airman behind in Laos because we're almost out of gas or whatever. That's what I'm doing with my advocacy work — trying to make sure no one is left behind," he said.

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Photo of Mount Rainier in the masthead was taken from the dock in Longbranch by Thomas Morgan, a KP News reader and Key Peninsula resident.

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2. The objective of Key Peninsula News is to support and create community by reporting news and features and providing a forum for local information. News and editorial coverage focuses on the Key Peninsula and immediately adjacent areas within Fire District 16.

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Santa Claus is coming to town...

brought to you by the **Key Peninsula Business Association,**
the Fire Fighters Union,
Pierce County Fire District 16,
and Key Pen Parks

Santa will fly from 5:30pm to 7:30pm* each night. Please keep in mind that times are approximate and due to temperamental reindeer. Santa will stick to main roadways. Listen for our sleigh bells to signal our arrival!!!
 *Due to Weather and Reindeer Games, exact times are not possible

Sat, December 5 5th Annual Santa Breakfast at Key Center Fire Station 9-11am Pre-Register with Key Pen Parks Lake Minterwood	Thu, December 10 Greentree	Sun, December 13 Home Jackson Lake Joemma Beach Farms	Sat, December 19 Lake of the Woods Bel Ridge
Sun, December 6 Tree Lighting - Key Center Wind and Tides Bel Mar Emerald Shores	Fri, December 11 Horseshoe Lake - 5:45pm Creston Heights - 6:45pm	Mon, December 14 Horseshoe Lake Estates	Sun, December 20 Lake Holiday
	Sat, December 12 Palmer Lake	Fri, December 18 Skate Night at KP Civic Center Vaughn	



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By Ed Johnson, KP News

On Nov. 14, many community members, family and friends came to the Longbranch Improvement Club pay their respect during Amanda Hamlin's celebration of life memorial.

(From **Amanda**, Page 1)

was going extremely fast, passing multiple cars and she lost control on a corner," he said. Troyer added that the speed limit "is already high enough there and if you start passing other cars there's not a lot of places you can go if you have a problem. You're going to hit a pole or tree."

Hamlin's family says the police report simply is not true.

"She was not like that. She would never endanger anybody," said Howard Hamlin, Amanda's father.

"She was the most caring person in the world. She always wore her seatbelt even as a little kid. She planned on being here for a long time," he said.

Cory Mason, Amanda's fiancé, thinks she must have hydroplaned.

Beth Hamlin, Amanda's sister, speculated that she may have hit a rough spot in the road.

"She was supposed to be home to watch the Seahawks game," Mason said. "I went looking for her and I came across the scene and recognized the car. She hydroplaned on the highway going into Home heading toward Longbranch. They had to cut her out of the car."

Lisa Hamlin, Amanda's mother, had a similar experience.

"I was driving home and I drove past this wreck and I thought it looked like my daughter's car," she said tearfully. "I tried to call her cell phone but all I got was a busy signal so I

called Cory and he said 'Yeah, it's Amanda.'"

"She was an extremely bright kid with an independent streak," said Howard Hamlin. "She was real — like a real country girl with no makeup or fancy clothes."

"I called her Big Red and she called me Daddy-O. She used to work with me doing construction work when she was just 15," he said, surrounded by family in his kitchen, just days after the crash.

Amanda was studying to become a Jehovah's Witness and had planned to attend their upcoming convention at the Tacoma Dome.

"She was five months pregnant with a little girl," Mason said. "We were going to name her Harper."

The Hamlins have lived on the Key Peninsula since 1996. Amanda went to Evergreen Elementary and Key Peninsula Middle School and attended Peninsula and Henderson Bay high schools. She earned her GEID when she was 16, Lisa Hamlin said.

"She was the sweetest kid. She always got up early in the morning and always liked to go to school," Lisa Hamlin said. "She would lay out her clothes the night before all by herself."

Amanda and Cory had been friends since they were kids, Cory said, and about three years ago they decided to get married. "She was so kind and considerate, she was never about me-me-me."

"We've been a team ever since we were to-

(See **Amanda**, Page 5)

2015 general election results

By Rick Sorrels, KP News

Washington state has 3,974,978 registered voters, with 38 percent of those casting ballots. Pierce County has 450,961 registered voters, with 34 percent casting ballots. Gig Harbor Peninsula has 32,362 registered voters, with 43 percent casting ballots. Key Peninsula has 10,890 registered voters, with 37 percent casting ballots.

The following results for the 2015 general election identify only the winners, along with the number of percent of votes cast for that winner.

Pierce County

Referendum No. 2015-1 to stop construction of county administrative building: Passed (construction to stop) (59 percent).

Charter review commissioners: Martha Lantz (65 percent), David Olson (61 percent), Katherine Baird (61 percent).

Port of Tacoma commissioners: Don Johnson (71 percent), Chare Petrich (69

percent).

Peninsula School District directors: Marsha Harris (53 percent), Deborah Krishnadasan (99 percent — unopposed), Rand Wilhelmsen (53 percent), Leslie Harbaugh (56 percent).

Fire District 16 commissioners: Stan Moffett (99 percent — unopposed), Sheila Hunt-Niven (99 percent — unopposed).

Key Pen Parks commissioners: Shawn Jensen (98 percent — unopposed), Ed Robison (98 percent — unopposed).

Washington state

I-1366: Limits tax increases: Passed (52 percent).

I-1401: Outlaws trafficking in endangered species: Passed (70 percent).

Advisory vote No.10: Tax for oil spill response: Maintain (51 percent).

Advisory vote No. 11: Tax on medical marijuana: Maintain (59 percent).

Advisory vote No 12: Tax on motor vehicle fuels: Repeal (64 percent).

Advisory vote No 13: B & O tax: Repeal (63 percent).

(From Amanda, Page 4)

gether. She always wanted to help anybody that needed anything.”

Amanda’s grandmother, Tanya Allen, was one of those people. “She was very helpful to me when I was sick for two years. She came and cleaned house for me and just visited me and she called me all the time,” Allen said.

Many people in the community knew Amanda, Howard Hamlin said, because she did caregiving for many elderly women and cleaned houses for many of the older people near Longbranch where she lived.

Amanda also was the one who remembered birthdays and holidays and the one who brought the family together to do things, Howard said.

“She was kind of the glue that held her and her sisters together. She was the one who always tried to cheer us up,” he said.

The family expressed gratitude for the many friends and neighbors who stopped by to help and offer condolences.

“We had so many people stopping by our house, her old friends, neighbors, people from the local stores, Linda from the Home gas station,” Lisa Hamlin said. “The community came out in force and also a lot of

people from the Jehovah’s Witnesses church came out.”

Memorial services were held Nov. 14 at the Longbranch Improvement Club.

Key Peninsula Fire Department’s Chief Guy Allen expressed the department’s sympathy.

“These types of incidents are challenging for our people in many different ways,” Allen said.

“It’s difficult for us seeing people who are critically injured like that and then trying to do our job as best we can and get them to definitive care.

“And when it doesn’t end up being a positive outcome, sometimes there’s a little element in your mind that maybe you failed in doing what you’re trained to do.”

As to what actually caused the accident, Allen wouldn’t speculate.

“All we know is what was reported by several people. We don’t know for sure if at the time of the crash was she driving at a high speed. Maybe yes, maybe no. Only she knows.”

Amanda’s aunt, Harmon Stewart, has set up an online fundraising account to help the family. To contribute visit youcaring.com/cory-mason-462329#.Vjqrkh5_aZV.facebook.



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December 2015



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Breakfast with Santa

December 5, 2015

Key Center Fire Station

Advance tickets (\$5 per person) are available through our website or in the Key Pen Parks office. Tickets at the door will be \$10. Breakfast, crafts, time with Santa & Mrs. Claus!
www.keypenparks.com/breakfast-with-santa.html

CAMPS!

We’re lining up some terrific camps for spring and summer 2016! Check out what’s on the schedule so far. Registration begins soon!

Woodland Fairy Camp

10 am to 1 pm, July 11-13
Miss Fairy, Jacqueline Brulotte, will flutter by again to lead arts, crafts and other fun to satisfy your very fairy side!

Carnival Camp

10 am to 1 pm, July 18-21
Learn how to be a carnival entertainer! Juggling, magic, balloon twisting, etc.

Log Timber Sale Clean up Bid

Key Pen Parks seeks bidder for log butt clean up from recent timber sale. We estimate there is at least 20 cords of wood, minimum bid of \$500. Visit www.keypenparks.com for details.



JOB OPENINGS WITH KEY PEN PARKS

OFFICE & RECREATION SUPPORT ASSISTANT
Key Pen Parks is taking applications for a part time Office and Recreation Support Assistant. This position provides general and specific information to visitors, performs a variety of clerical support duties as assigned, and assists in leading recreation programs and special community events.

SEASONAL MAINTENANCE
Key Pen Parks is taking applications for Seasonal Maintenance. This position performs the routine maintenance of park buildings, facilities, athletic fields and grounds. Work is performed during a 40-hour work week for six months. Application deadline is February 4, 2016.

To view the entire position descriptions or to download an application, visit the Employment page of our website at www.keypenparks.com or stop by the park office during business hours.

After initial playground committee, community and landscape architect reviews, several playground concepts for the new Gateway Park playground have been narrowed down and a selection of playground drawings have been posted on our website. The public is invited to choose their favorites and provide comments.

GATEWAY PROJECT PLAYGROUND



An RV caretaker spot will be available soon at Volunteer Park. Details soon on our website!

Peninsula Views

Tips for planning next year's garden

I've already started receiving seed catalogs in my mailbox. They are a reminder that, although this year's garden has been harvested, next year's garden needs to be planned. As the days grow colder and darker, the seed catalogs look more appealing.

I find myself daydreaming about seeds to buy and new garden projects to begin. If you're already planning like me, I'd like to offer you three tips for designing a winning garden next year.

Grow What You Eat

It's easy to get caught up in the exotic fruits and vegetables littering the pages of your favorite seed catalog. It can be fun to grow plants you haven't grown before. However, it's more practical and cost-effective to plant what your family actually eats.

Food is expensive and time is scarce. Use your time wisely and plant the food that will reduce your grocery bill. Not only will you save money, but you will feed your family homegrown, organic veggies instead of the irradiated, pesticide-laden food from the market.

Plan for the Weather

The best thing I did last year was check the Farmer's Almanac for weather predictions. It told me the summer would be hot and dry. Knowing this, I chose plants that would thrive in those conditions. I grew a bumper crop of cayenne peppers.

The almanac predicts that next April and May will be cooler and slightly rainier than normal. The summer will be warmer and rainier than normal, with the hottest temperatures in mid- and late July and early August. September and October will be cooler than normal with above normal rainfall. This means summer will be humid, and harvest time will be cold and wet. Powdery mildew and blight will probably

Monica Rakowski Living Close to Nature



be common next year.

Do your research and find strains that are resistant to fungal diseases. Try beans, melons, peppers and eggplants, which tolerate heat and humidity well. Be sure to treat your plants preventatively with an organic fungicide. Plant as early as possible so that you harvest before the rains begin in September.

Use Beneficial Microbes in Your Garden

Beneficial microbes should be a mainstay in your garden. These little critters have a symbiotic relationship with plants. Each strain performs different jobs. They recycle nutrients, increase nutrient uptake, improve your plants' immune systems, prevent pests and disease, increase drought resistance, increase root mass, increase vegetation and yield and even convert nitrogen from the air into a form plants can use.

There are a variety of ways to include microbes in your garden. Amend your soil with humus and compost, both of which contain thousands of strains of beneficial bacteria and fungi. Add mycorrhizal inoculants to the root zone of any plant when you put it in the ground. These can be purchased at most garden centers. Regularly water your garden with compost tea to replenish and grow microbe populations.

As they say, proper planning prevents poor performance. Take the time this winter to properly plan next year's garden. You'll be a happy gardener come harvest.

Monica Rakowski owns KP Indoor Garden Store in Key Center and blogs at thenaturelifeproject.com.

Rethinking the 'Christmas' surprise

"Please help me find a free puppy for my loving 4-year-old son for Christmas."

The Craigslist ad writer further said she had little money, and her son had wanted a puppy for "so long." So long? Four-year-olds are barely out of the toddler stage, and from my motherly recollections, pretty much live in the moment, as do puppies. Both are consummate explorers of their worlds — what holds interest on Tuesday is forgotten Wednesday when something yet undiscovered beckons.

Recently, I overheard a young man selecting dog cookies from open bins excitedly tell a companion he was "stocking up" on treats for a "Christmas surprise" puppy he was giving his girlfriend. "She will be out-of-her-mind happy," he said, adding that she "always wanted one." His companion asked if their apartment allowed pets, and I cringed when the treat-selector shrugged his shoulders. The exchange conjured a young couple with little knowledge taking on an absolutely dependent canine baby without thought for its future.

I'm no Christmas Grinch; just a dog lover and trainer, and lady farmer whose animals are all other people's failed experiences. The thing is, puppies, kittens, bunnies, parakeets and all the other creatures we welcome into our homes each have specific needs not often considered before the "cute" wears off and reality sets in with "What have we

done?"

Shelters, sanctuaries and websites see an influx of toddler-age puppies and kittens arriving in varied degrees of wellness and socialization in late winter/spring. These are the "Christmas surprise" sentient creatures given like trinkets and toys to people unprepared for the responsibility of caring for a new life for years that well-meaning family or friends gifted them.

A kinder gift is a book or other guide about the species a person thinks he/she most desires. Sometimes real-world information changes minds; much better to know before bringing a new life into a poor match.

Need something warm and fuzzy? Stuffed animals represent nearly every species these days, easily hinting at a soon-to-arrive pet, after preparation for its needs are met and commitment to its lifelong care has been demonstrated. This is especially crucial for children and is our best hope for ending the "disposable" animal sadness in our world.

Another population sometimes receiving an unexpected Christmas surprise are

(See **Fitzgerald**, Page 7)

Chris Fitzgerald Guest columnist



Letters Policy

The opinions expressed herein are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the publishers or staff. All letters to the editor must be signed and include a daytime phone number for verification. No anonymous letters will be published. Submissions are used on a space available basis and may be edited if used. The Ken Peninsula News reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and content. Mail letters to: P.O. Box 3, Vaughn, WA 98394, or email to news@keypennews.com.

Dancing in the darkness

My friend's son passed away last spring. He was a young man, whose life was taken by cancer far too soon.

My friend texted me a picture from his son's memorial service. In the picture, friends and family sit smiling in their church pews, each holding a shiny, white helium balloon at the end of a silver string. It was, according to my friend, not so much a funeral as a party.

The next day, I stood in front of the people at the Lakebay Church and told them, "Death thinks it has power. The grave thinks it has the final say, but we have balloons. We win."

I was reminded of that picture in the wake of the terrorist attacks on Paris. We all watched in horror as violence and destruction rocked the City of Light; we mourned with the French people, if even from a distance.

Within a few days, the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo published its next edition. The cover showed a dancing man, riddled with bullet holes, holding aloft a bottle and gulping from a glass. The accompanying text said, "They have weapons. . . we have the champagne!"

It's ludicrous, of course. Champagne in the face of automatic weapons? It's as silly as balloons in the face of death.

It's almost as preposterous as the Christmas story. Herod had an army. Rome had the might of empire. The forces of hell stalked the dark night, bringing death, destruction and violence. Against all of that came a baby.

This baby, the story says, was the ultimate weapon, sent to overthrow powers of evil and death itself.

Later this month, Christians worldwide will be remembering and celebrating a tiny infant, born in a stable, announced

Dan Whitmarsh
Writing by Faith



by angels and greeted by shepherds. One small child, yet the terror of tyrants and terrorists alike.

In the darkest night, we will sing "Joy to the World." Choirs will cry out "Hallelujah!" Families will gather around tables to feast and celebrate. Champagne will flow. Lovers will dance. Children will delight at all the sights and sounds of Christmas.

It's exactly what we need. This world can be a dark, painful place, with danger and grief waiting around every corner. If we're not careful, we'll get sucked down into the endless cycle of anger, blame and retribution.

If we allow grief to take away our joy and hope, then we've lost. Instead, we need balloons. We need champagne. We need to dance. We need to remember the baby who was also a Savior.

We must celebrate, laughing in the face of death with our silly balloons, our drinks held high. We must remember that love wins the day, because that baby was the demonstration of the greatest love. We spite the darkness when we dance and sing and rejoice.

We say to those who would do us harm, "You may have guns and bombs, but we have balloons. We have champagne. We have Christmas. And so we win."

On behalf of the KP Ministerial Association, I wish you all a peaceful, joyous, and merry Christmastide.

Dan Whitmarsh is pastor at Lakebay Community Church. He can be contacted at dan@lakebaycovenant.net.

(From Fitzgerald, Page 6)

seniors. Energetic juvenile pets can overwhelm older people. And every shelter has senior animals waiting for welcoming homes.

Pets are as dependent as children, as devoted as lovers, as loyal as family. It is within

our power to gift them with good lives and compassion. The choice is always ours. Please choose wisely.

Chris Fitzgerald is an educator and empathic therapist. Her lifework is in service to animals in need of greater human understanding. She can be reached at cfitzgerald@centurytel.net.



CIVIC CENTER

CORNER

Winter Warm-up Crafts Fair & Chili Competition Wrap-up

A **BIG thank you** to our Key Peninsula Community - you made our 8th Annual Winter Warm-up Crafts Fair & Chili Competition a huge success! The Civic Center would like to give an extra special thanks to:

Spencer Abersold, aka the Walrus, from **KGHP** radio who kept us entertained throughout the day, with music, commentary and his expertise in announcing our many events;

Staci Webb and her students from **Key Peninsula Middle School** - The **Jazz Band** was amazing and the **Choir** was wonderful!

Lisa Mills and her energetic students in the **Whole Note Huskies** from **Vaughn Elementary!** Great Job!

Our illustrious Chili competition judges and **Key Peninsula Fire Commissioners**, **Claudia Jones**, **Sheila Niven**, and **Keith Davies** - Thank YOU!

The seven **Chili Competitors**, who competed with valor and culinary talent. Congratulations to the winners:

- First Place, **Sarah Anderson**;
- Second Place, **Ron Schillinger**;
- Third Place, **Jack Crockett**.

The **Key Singers** who got us in that holiday spirit.

The **Bluegrass Minstrels** - whose music and talent rounded off a wonderful day.

The **Cat Tales 4-H Club** - We were so very proud of you - comments from a vendor couldn't say it better... "I want to give a huge THANK YOU to the 4-H Group that took such great care of us vendors. You all were so polite, attentive and respectful!" WE agree!

Sherri LaGood and her family - who ran the kitchen and kept us all fed - morning 'til we closed! What would we have done without you?

OUR wonderful Vendors who donated nearly 40 items for our Winter Warm-up raffle! You were generous beyond our expectations and made the raffle very successful.

The **Boy Scouts** who did the heavy lifting of helping set-up and tear down the event in record time...



Darin Gilman, for a lot of hand-holding, as the new Facilities and Marketing Coordinator muddled through planning this event for the first time. AND for helping get our signs out the week before the event.

The **LIC** for lending us those needed extra tables;

And finally, our **KPCCA Board**, who always rises to the occasion, by volunteering throughout the day.

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you!

The Key Peninsula Civic Center Association through its facility and the effort of its members, fosters and promotes the civic, social, cultural and general well-being of the Key Peninsula community.

The Key Peninsula Civic Center is a 501(c)3, not-for-profit organization.

State, county representatives meet with KP constituents

Sara Thompson, KP News

Elected officials representing the Key Peninsula came to the November Key Peninsula Community Council (KPC) meeting to talk about what they have been doing and to hear from residents.

Pierce County Councilman Derek Young and state Reps. Michelle Caldier and Jesse Young attended. Sen. Jan Angel was at a conference but sent a staff member who commented that she was present to listen to residents, but she did not have a report.

The three said they have met together to help coordinate funding priorities and strategies between the state and the county. They each spoke of the projects they have supported that benefit the region.

Rep. Young, who serves on the Transportation Committee, discussed the importance of the 302 corridor in the economic development of the region and said it should be a top priority. Chuck West, speaking for the KPC, endorsed that view and said that for the Key Peninsula, just completing the 302 long-term study was critical.

Rep. Young also spoke about energy policy. He said that Washington is lucky to have access to clean and cheap energy. The Bonneville Power Administration supplies most of the energy for Peninsula Light, but he noted that others, like California, would like to purchase that energy. He wants to ensure that the state has a diverse energy portfolio.

West, again speaking for the KPC, said that mental health services were a local concern. Caldier, who serves on the Healthcare and Wellness Committee, spoke at length about her own family's experience in dealing with mental-health issues and the interface with the criminal justice system.

Councilman Young discussed mental-health funding. First, he noted that Congress may soon pass a mental-health bill. He noted that Washington state has the lowest bed-per-capita rate for mental health in the nation. Pierce County is the only urban county in the state that has not passed a sales tax to help pay for mental-health services. He worked to get a county-wide mental-health analysis performed and the results will be available in March.

It is likely that the study will recommend increased resources. To get tax funding approved by the county council will require a 5-2 vote. Young thinks it will be possible to get that approval but that the council will need to hear from the voters. For that reason, he will call for an advisory vote for a sales tax to pay for mental-health services. With voter approval, he thinks the council will move forward.

Councilman Young also discussed funding of projects affecting the Key Peninsula. A total of \$100,000 was allocated to parks — distributed to the Gig Harbor and Key Peninsula areas. That funding included \$30,000 for Key Peninsula Civic Center repairs. The Red Barn has received \$2,000 from the Family Resources Center. Young said he understands that as the Red Barn serves more teens, the organization must depend less on volunteers and begin to hire staff. He hopes to help with grant applications.

He addressed concerns about property crime on the Key Peninsula, which he said is among the highest rate in the state. Noting that "20 percent of the perpetrators commit 80 percent of the crime," he sup-

ported formation of the Property Crime Unit that will focus on data-driven law enforcement.

At a countywide level, the health department desperately needs a new building, according to Young, who would support a bond to pay for it.

He also recognizes a growing disparity between rural and urban access to technology. Education and business depend on fast and dependable internet access. To that end, he is working on recommendations for countywide broadband policies.

The audience then asked questions.

One member was concerned about the number of pot shops on the Key Peninsula. County Councilman Young said that he and others are working to bring regulation to the legal market and to get rid of the black market. The council just created a fund to enforce the laws.

The state representatives were asked about school funding. Rep. Young said that there is no plan for an additional special session. Caldier, who serves on the Education Committee, talked at length

(See **Representatives**, Page 9)

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Lakebay man sentenced to 31 years for murder

By Rick Sorrels, KP News

William Jason Grisso received a 380-month prison sentence for the premeditated murder of his live-in girlfriend, Nancy Gardner. Sentencing occurred before Superior Court Judge Elizabeth Martin on Nov. 2.

Premeditated murder, also known as Murder 1, requires a minimum sentence of 20 years with a maximum sentence of life in prison. The standard sentencing range is between 240 and 320 months.

Grisso received the standard maximum of 320 months plus an additional 60

months for a weapons enhancement (Gardner had been shot in the head with a gun). The judge ordered these to be served consecutively, bringing the total to 380 months.

The judge also ordered that the sentence be served as “flat time,” meaning that there will be no credit allowed for good behavior. Washington law normally allows an automatic reduction of one-third of the sentence for good behavior.

Grisso received credit for 481 days in the Pierce County jail between his arrest and

his sentencing, which means he will not be released for 31 years. Grisso will be 74 years old in 2046.

Grisso was also ordered to pay a total of \$5,000 in court costs, DNA registration fees and restitution to the crime victims fund to be collected by Department of Corrections from the wages Grisso might earn while working in prison.

On Nov. 3, Grisso’s attorney filed a notice of appeal, and the court found Grisso indigent and eligible for attorney and appeal

costs at public expense. Jodi Backlund has been appointed as his attorney for the appeal.

There were no eyewitnesses to the crime. Reports state his conviction was based upon circumstantial evidence. Grisso has claimed to be innocent since his arrest in July 2014.

For more details, see the front page story published in the Key Peninsula News, Nov. 1 edition, available online at keypennews.com.

(From **Representatives**, Page 8)

about her own personal interaction and frustrations with school repairs at her daughter’s school. She also said that a bipartisan group of eight (four from the Senate, four from the House and equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans) will be working on the response to the Supreme Court’s call for adequate school funding.

Trial date set for alleged marina ‘bomber’

By Rick Sorrels, KP News

Russell Beery, who fired his shotgun and threatened to set off a homemade bomb at the Lakebay Marina on Aug. 4, now has a jury trial date set for Feb. 18, 2016.

On Aug. 5, Superior Court Judge Thomas Felnagle had doubts as to Beery’s competency to “understand the charges made against him and to assist in

his own defense.”

Beery had since been confined at Western State Hospital for evaluation and determination of competency. Washington law does not allow a criminal trial if the person charged does not meet this standard.


On Nov. 4, Judge Jack Nevin reviewed the report from Western State, and found that Beery now meets the state standard for competency. He set bail at \$25,000,

determined that Beery was eligible for assigned counsel, entered Beery’s plea of not guilty, and set the trial date.

Beery was arraigned on a threat to bomb or injure property and felony harassment.

Beery will remain in the Pierce County jail if bail is not posted.

Information obtained from the Superior Court case file.



Join The Key Peninsula Civic Center and its Board for

EL SOMBRERO NIGHT

December 7th

Join board members Phil, Pat & Jud and enjoy this wonderful evening.

The De La Cruz family has graciously offered the Key Peninsula Civic Center a portion of its dinner proceeds to support the Civic Center, 5 pm to closing. Support El Sombrero support its community! See you there!

The Key Peninsula Civic Center Association, through its facility and the effort of its members, fosters and promotes the civic, social, cultural and general well-being of the Key Peninsula community.



Key Pen Parks Foundation is a 501(c)3 member of the Land Trust Alliance whose primary focus is preserving and enhancing the quality of life on the beautiful Key Peninsula.

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Return your donation by Dec. 10 to be entered to win one of two \$100 gift certificates to Sunnycrest Nursery visit our web site:
www.keypeninsulaparksfoundation.org to donate!

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New and returning educators ready for classrooms at Vaughn

By Scott Turner, KP News

There are some new faces in the teaching ranks at Vaughn Elementary School this year, along with another familiar one making a return.

Katherine Moore, who taught kindergarten for 24 years at Vaughn, left last year to teach in Federal Way, but found she missed her classroom and the family bond that she had with parents, students and staff at Vaughn. So she came back, taking on a fourth-grade class.

Her two children attended Vaughn, Key Peninsula Middle School and eventually graduated from Peninsula High School. Her son went on to graduate from Western Washington University in Bellingham and her daughter graduated from the University of Washington.

She had always advised her children that “change is good; try something new,” she said, and they reminded her that she could apply that philosophy to herself. So she did and found a job last year as an intervention teacher in the Federal Way School District, teaching high-needs students.

Instead of moving, she commuted from Vaughn. Moore found the commute to be challenging.

“I learned a lot and grew a lot, but missed Vaughn, my family there and my classroom so much,” she said. She talked with her son about her new job and he knew she was struggling to make the adjustment, she said. He told her, “You love your classroom so much” and advised her to think about going back to Vaughn.

“I found out there was an opening in the fourth grade and I feel so blessed to be able to come back,” Moore said. “The grass is not always greener on the other side.”

Two new faces to the staff are kindergarten teacher Emilie Marchio and second-grade teacher Kasey O’Brien.

For Marchio, this is her first classroom assignment after subbing the past three years in the Peninsula School District.

Last year, she had a chance to sub for a

length of time in a class for a teacher on maternity leave and she finished the year with a six-week stint subbing in kindergarten at Purdy Elementary. She enjoyed the longer stints.

“It was fun to get to know the kids in the class,” which spurred her to seek out a permanent assignment in a classroom, she said.

A Vaughn resident for the past 12 years, she was happy to be hired to fill one of the new full-time kindergarten roles, working with Cecily Novotney and Judy Nelson.

Marchio’s oldest daughter attended Vaughn and is now at Key Peninsula Middle School while her son is a third-grader at Vaughn.

“My kids both went through the Title 1 program here,” Marchio said. “As a parent, it was so nice to come through the system. And now it’s so nice to see the other side.”

It’s been a whirlwind since she was hired Aug. 3. Marchio started the following day with training, “and I had one day off in August,” she said.

But the transition has been smooth and she credits her fellow kindergarten teachers for that.

“They have had a great system for years and I’m so lucky to be able to insert myself into that system,” Marchio said. “They have made the transition so smooth.”

Having her own classroom for the first time was overwhelming. “As a parent and volunteer, I had no idea how much the teachers do,” she said.

She’s looking forward to working with a new districtwide program, called WaKIDS (Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills) that will be used to track each child’s progress from K to 12.

And she’s excited to work with the wee ones. “They want to be here and are so excited to be here,” she said.

For O’Brien, teaching is part of her family tradition, as her mom, Molly

(See Educators, Page 11)

(From Educators, Page 10)

O'Brien taught at both Purdy and Artondale elementary schools in Gig Harbor.

"I always wanted to be a teacher," she said, "since I was about 4 or 5 and saw her mother in class reading to her students."

A product of the Peninsula School District herself, O'Brien was excited to get a contract in the district. "I think I would do this even if I wasn't getting paid," she said.

Even her interview for Vaughn had a familiar feel, as the principal, Susan O'Leary, was her teacher at Artondale.

"I feel so welcome here," O'Brien said of Vaughn. "It can be so scary coming to a new school. Within the first two days, I felt so welcome." Like Marchio, she credits her team of second-grade teachers, Cassi Dilley and Carianne Ferencik, with giving her assistance in transitioning to the school.

She loves working with second-grade students, saying, "the coolest thing about kids, a lot of people think of them as a different species ... but they're real people and when you take the time to get to know them, they say such incredible things. They are so small, yet they have



Scott Turner photo, KP News

Returning and new Vaughn Elementary school teachers, from left, Katherine Moore, Kasey O'Brien and Emilie Marchio are happy to be back in school and surrounded by their Vaughn family.

such insight on the world around them."

She's also impressed with their parents. "I met some of them at our ice cream social before school started and others during the first day of school and they want

to be involved in their kids' lives. They said, 'We're here to support you.' That's so cool because I feel like I'm here to support them."

All three are eager to inspire young

minds, with Marchio summing it up best. "Vaughn is a diamond that no one knows about," she said. "It's nice, the class size is low, there is community support, and the faculty support is incredible."

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What are you asking for this Christmas?

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COMMUNITY PAGES

Submit calendar items to news@keypennews.com • Deadline is the 15th of the month

NOW

Mentors needed

Communities In Schools of Peninsula (CISP) is looking for volunteer mentors for schools on the Key Peninsula; Evergreen, Minter Creek, Vaughn, KP Middle and Peninsula High. Volunteer opportunities vary by grade level and every volunteer receives training prior to working with youth. If you are interested in learning more about CISP programs, please call Laurel Shultz at 884-5733 or email to Laurel@cis-ofpeninsula.org.

ABE classes

Tacoma Community College offers adult basic education classes for individuals 16 years of age and older. Complete a high school diploma, prepare for the GED, increase job skills, or prepare for college or vocational programs. Classes are \$25 (tuition waiver available for those who qualify) and are hosted at the Red Barn Youth Center in Key Center on weekday mornings. Call 460-2424 for more information.

DEC. 3 and 17

Tech help

Tech help is hosted 3 to 4:30 p.m. at the Key Center Library; Dec. 3, offering "email for beginners." Register at piercecounitylibrary.org/calendar, or call 548-3309.

DEC. 3, 10 and 17

Cat tales

Children, ages 5 to 18 in 4-H, learn all about cats from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the VFW Room at the KP Civic. Contact Diana at 884-4182 or email cat.tales4h@gmail.com.

DEC. 4, 11 and 18

Skate night

Skate Night is hosted at the KP Civic Center 6 to 9 p.m. Admission is \$5. Call 884-3456.

DEC. 5

Santa breakfast

Have breakfast with Santa at the Key Center Fire Station. There are three seating times. Tickets are \$5 per person in advance,

\$10 at the door. Limited seating; tickets do sell out. Enjoy crafts, yummy food and time with Santa and Mrs. Claus. More details and ticket information: keypenparks.com. Event sponsored by Key Center fire station and Key Pen Parks.

Holiday concert

Celtic singer Erin McNamee presents a holiday concert, 2 p.m. at the KC Library.

DEC. 6

Barter fair

Key Peninsula Barter hosts the Holiday Barter Fair, 2 to 4 p.m. Doors open at 2 and bartering begins around 2:30 p.m. at Lake Holiday Clubhouse, 14926 Holiday Drive KP N. Contact Alice Kinerk 884-2723 for more information or join Key Peninsula Barter on Facebook.

Tree lighting

The annual tree lighting and arrival of Santa happens at the Key Center Corral beginning at dusk. This event is sponsored by the KP Business Association.

DEC. 7

Fundraiser

El Sombrero Night is hosted from 5 p.m. to closing. The De La Cruz family will donate a portion of the dinner proceeds to the KP Civic Center. Support a local restaurant and the community.

DEC. 7 and 21

Senior shopping

Seniors have an opportunity to grocery shop and attend any scheduled Gig Harbor doctor's appointment with transportation provided; a "Dutch" lunch is included. Call 884-9265.

Dec. 7, 14, 21 and 28

Bloodmobile

The bloodmobile is at Albertsons 11:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

DEC. 8

Crochet or knit

The Loving Hearts group knits and crochets for charities and meets 1 to 3 p.m. at WayPoint Church. Yarn donations are

To submit an event

To submit an event for the Community Works calendar, please email Connie Renz at connierenz@hotmail.com, or mail to P.O. Box 3, Vaughn, WA 98394. Briefs must be submitted by the 15th of the month.

always needed. Call Virginia at 884-9619 or visit lovingheartsonkp@gmail.com.

DEC. 9

Ashes meet

The Ashes support group for Fire District 16 meets 10:30 a.m. at the fire station in Key Center. Call 884-3771.

Garden club meets

The Bayshore Garden Club meets 1 p.m. at the fire station in Longbranch. Call Francine at 569-1381.

DEC. 10

Christmas dinner

The board of the KP Civic Center Association invites the community to join their potluck dinner at 6 p.m. Bring a dish to share.

DEC. 12

Gingerbread houses

Build a Gingerbread House from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the KC Library. Register at piercecounitylibrary.org/calendar or call 548-3309.

Bluegrass music

The Bluegrass Minstrels present a Festive Christmas Revelry of music at 6 p.m. in the hall of the Lakebay Church, 11 Cornwall Road KP S, Lakebay. Suggested \$5 donation benefits the Red Barn Youth Center. See bluegrassminstrels.com.

DEC. 13

Key concert

The annual Key Singers Christmas concert, "our gift to the community," is hosted 3 p.m. at McColley Hall, KP Lutheran Church. A variety of music, from traditional to contemporary, sacred to whimsical (Fa-la-la), will be presented by the cho-

rus, small groups and individuals in cabaret seating, with light refreshments. Food and money donations for the KP Food Bank gladly accepted.

DEC. 16

Pet neuter program

The Northwest Spay and Neuter Center animal shuttle will be at the Key Peninsula Civic Center 7 to 7:30 a.m. Appointments are required. Call 253-627-7729 ext. 217 or email shuttle@nwspayneuter.org for questions or to schedule an appointment. The Northwest Spay and Neuter Center offers affordable spay and neuter services for cats and dogs including special programs for feral cats and pit bull dogs. Check with nwspayneuter.org.

DEC. 17

Community forum

The Mustard Seed's Third Thursday Community Forum meets at 10 a.m. at the Key Center Library. Transportation is available by prior arrangement. Call 884-9814.

DEC. 19

Crafting

Craft a Christmas card with Anna 2 to 4 p.m. at the KC Library. 548-3309.

DEC. 20

Sunday bluegrass jam

Bluegrass Gospel Jam session is hosted at Longbranch Church (16518 46th St. KP S) 6 to 8:30 p.m. for all acoustic instruments, ages, and skill levels. Everyone is welcome to play, sing or simply listen. Bring music stand and finger food to share; music and beverages are provided.

DEC. 22

Robots!

Build and program a robotic vehicle using LEGO Mindstorms, 2 to 4 p.m. at the KC Library. Register at piercecounitylibrary.org/calendar or call 548-3309.

DEC. 24

Candlelight service

Grace Church (corner of McEwan Road and KP Highway) hosts a 5 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight service.

WEEKLY EVENTS

MONDAYS, WEDNESDAYS & FRIDAYS

Senior exercise class

The S.A.I.L. program, taught by Marilyn Perks, meets 10 to 11 a.m. at the KP Community Services in Lakebay. Participants must register with Marilyn, Call 884-4440.

TUESDAYS

Key Singers Sing

The Key Singers rehearse at 7 p.m. for their annual Christmas program at KP Lutheran Church. Annual dues are \$10: that covers costs of music, rental and scholarships. No auditions required. Call 884-5615.

Story times

Every Tuesday, discover books, learn nursery rhymes, sing songs, play with blocks and do arts and crafts at the Key Center Library. Music/Motion Story time (ages 0- to 2-year-olds with an adult) is at 10 a.m. and Preschool Science Story time (ages 2- to 5-year-olds) is at 11 a.m. Call 548-3309.

TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS

Senior tai chi

Senior tai chi meets 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. at the KP Community Services in Lakebay. Call 884-4440.

Preschool play time

Beginning Sept. 15, the Children's Home Society KP Family Resource Center offers a

preschool/toddler indoor park program 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the KP Civic Center. Caregivers must stay with child. Drop-ins are welcome; stay for as long as you wish. A \$1/child donation is suggested. Call Tami, 884-5433.

TUESDAYS & SATURDAYS

KP Museum closed

The KP Historical Museum will re-open in February with a new display on the Delano family. Books of local history by local authors and other gifts will then be available for purchase. 888-3246.

WEDNESDAYS

Writers meet

The Lakebay Writers meet 1:30 to 4 p.m. at the KC Library. Call 884-3931.

Writers' workshop

The Watermark Writers present a free writers' workshop 5 to 8 p.m. in Vaughn. Call 778-6559.

WEDNESDAYS & FRIDAYS

Senior meals

Nutritional meals for seniors ages 60-plus are served at noon at KP Community Services; a \$2 donation is requested. Guests (ages 50-59) of senior attendees are requested to donate \$2.50. Call 884-4440.

THURSDAYS

Toastmasters

The Toastmasters meet 8 to 9 a.m. at the KC Library. Join the fun and improve your speaking ability. Call 858-5761 or 548-3511.

Seniors' lunch

The Key Peninsula Senior Society meets at 11 a.m. for a potluck, fellowship and games in the Whitmore Room at the KP Civic Center. All are welcome. Call 884-4981.

Bingo

Free Bingo 7 to 9 p.m. at the KP Community Services in Home. Call 884-4440.

FRIDAYS

Story time

Families with young children enjoy art activities, stories, singing and finger plays at the KC Library 11 to 11:30 a.m. Call 548-3309 for information.

STEM

STEM at 2:30 p.m. at the KC Library for preschool and kindergarten kids. STEM is for science, technology, engineering and math. Call 548-3309.

SATURDAYS

Writers' Guild

The Writers' Guild meets the first and third Saturdays 10 a.m. to noon at the KC Library. Call 884-6455.

EVERY OTHER SATURDAY

Blues Jam

O'Callahan's Irish Pub Blues Jam, 6 to 9 p.m. hosted on Dec. 5 and 19.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

KP Lions' dinner, program

Dec. 2 and 16, 7 p.m. at Key Center fire station; call 853-2721.

Peninsula School District Board

Dec. 3 and 17, 6 p.m. at Peninsula High School library.

KP Veterans

Dec. 7, 7 p.m. at KP Lutheran Church; membership is open to veterans and military service members and families ages 16 and older. Call 253-509-8656 or email keypenveterans@outlook.com.

KP Fire Department

Dec. 8 and 22, 5 p.m. in meeting room, Key Center Fire Station; see keypeninsulafire.org.

Key Peninsula Council

Dec. 9, 7 p.m. at Key Center fire station.

KP Civic Center Association Board

Dec. 10, 7 p.m. meeting in Whitmore Room, KPCC; call 884-3456.

TWAA Board

Dec. 10, 7 p.m. in VFW Room of KPCC; contact kathybauer100@gmail.com.

Key Pen Parks

Dec. 14, 7:30 p.m. at Volunteer Park administrative office; public is encouraged to attend.

Longbranch Improvement Club

Dec. 15, dessert potluck, 7 p.m. at Longbranch Improvement Club; contact 884-6022 or longbranchimprovementclub.org.

KP Advisory Commission

Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m. in VFW Room of KPCC; contact Toni Fairbanks, 253-798-7156 or tfairba@co.pierce.wa.us.

KP Citizens Against Crime

Dec. 17, 7 p.m. at Key Center fire station.

KP Farm Council

Dec. 28, 6:30 p.m. at Home sire station; call c.wiley@mac.com.

OFF THE KEY

DEC. 3

Democrats meet

26th Legislative District Democrats meet 7 to 9 p.m. at Givens Community Center, 1026 Sidney Road, Port Orchard.

DEC. 4-12

Play presented

Paradise Theatre presents "Scrooge, the Musical" Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. and Sundays at 3 p.m. Call 954-PLAY.

DEC. 5

Concert

Joyful Noise, a community choir, presents a free Christmas concert 3 p.m. at Agnus Dei Lutheran Church, 10511 Pea-

cock Hill Ave. in Gig Harbor. Songs of Jesus' birth and other joyous songs of the season, with narrations by Mary Buell are presented. Jean Kopta is choir director, Joyce Fischlin is pianist, and Pat Constantino is guest flutist.

Tree lighting

Gig Harbor lights the community tree accompanied by live music, refreshments and Santa's arrival. See gigharborguide.com.

DEC. 10-13

Harbor holiday

Candlelight Christmas in the Harbor is hosted by downtown merchants with music and special events. See ghhwa.org.

DEC. 12

Boat parade

The annual lighted boat parade circles the harbor after dusk. View from Skansie Brothers Park or along the waterfront. See gigharboryc.com.

DEC. 12, 15-17

Bloodmobile

The bloodmobile will be at the former Haggens Northwest Fresh, 4831 Point Fosdick Drive, 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Dec. 12; at Henderson Bay High School 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Dec. 15; at Peninsula High School 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Dec. 16; and at Kiwanis Club of Peninsula-Gig Harbor 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Dec. 17.

New PSD board members address KP Democrats

By Hugh McMillan, KP News

Monday, Nov. 16, members of the incoming Peninsula School Board addressed the Key Peninsula Democrats Club during its meeting. Each shared campaign experiences and what they hope to accomplish as board members.

Reelected PSD District 3 school board member Rand Wilhelmsen, joined newly elected District 1 member Marcia Harris, District 2 member Deborah Krish-

nadasan, District 4 member Leslie Harbaugh and David Olson, current District 5 school board member, for the presentation. All, save Olson whose term has two more years, will be sworn in during the upcoming PSD board meeting Dec 3, at 6 p.m. at the district office.

"I am very happy with the new board and the new energy it has," said Wilhelmsen.

"The incoming board is very dynamic and diverse. The members bring strong involvement in PTA and VPOs, IT, communications and community development, school district leadership, banking and finance, and other community services," Olson said.

Hiring a new school district superintendent to replace retiring Chuck Cuzzetto was one of the highest priorities of each board member.

"Building off of Chuck Cuzzetto's and the district's great work, we look forward to the opportunity of bringing in a superintendent with new energy and a new vision to help meet the needs of a growing community," said Krish-

nadasan. "The board looks forward to reaching out to its stakeholders to get feedback on what community members are looking for in a leader and what questions they would like asked of the candidates."

Another key priority for the new board is the upcoming renewal of the educational programming & operations levy.

The current levy approved by voters in 2011, will expire the end of 2016. Board members explained that local levy dollars account for approximately 24 percent of the district's operating budget. The majority of these funds are used for basic education costs including staffing and professional development needs, classroom textbooks, technology and some routine repair projects on school facilities.

The current board approved a four-year continuation educational programs and operations (M&O) levy after seeking community input. It will continue to fund about 24 percent of the district budget. The proposed continuation levy has a lower estimated tax rate of \$2.19

for 2017, decreasing each year with an estimated tax rate of \$2.16 in 2020.

Olson explained that "the school board has made a strong focus to reach out to all citizens within the Peninsula School District to educate them on the purpose of the operations levy."

Additionally, the board released a cover letter to the committee signed by all five current members with the intent of holding incoming board members accountable to the community's stated priorities.

This continuation levy will be put before voters at the Feb. 9, 2016, Special Election.

This is a very important levy for day-to-day operations in our schools and directly impacts the educational experience of our children, said both Harris and Harbaugh. To help promote the levy, Krishnadasan has taken on a community role outside her school board position.

All five members of the incoming board voiced strong support for the upcoming levy.

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‘Indoor Park’ still drawing crowds of youngsters, parents

By Scott Turner, KP News

When the weather turns chilly and wet — as it does in fall and winter on the Key Peninsula — parents often yearn for a safe, warm, dry place for their young children to play.

The Indoor Park at the Family Resource Center meets those needs to a T.

Tami Miller-Bigelow, a family advocate with the Children’s Home Society Key Peninsula Family Resource Center, has been in charge of the Key Peninsula Civic Center-based Indoor Park for about eight years.

She first learned about the Indoor Park when she was a young mother with a 3-year-old. Since then, all her children played there and her 16-month-old granddaughter comes regularly.

Now Miller-Bigelow serves as the official welcoming committee to Indoor Park and also answers questions and helps connect parents to community resources they might need.

Indoor Park follows the Peninsula School District schedule, Miller-Bigelow said. “We run it Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9:30 to 11:30 and everyone is welcome,” she said.

She said it’s a good social thing for parents and kids.

“Sometimes parents of small children feel kind of isolated out here and this is a way they can meet other parents and their kids can meet other kids that they will probably be going to kindergarten with,” she said.

Indoor Park welcomes all children from birth through age 5.

“Once the kids are old enough to go to kindergarten, they leave the Indoor Park program because the toys aren’t appealing for older kids and they get bored,” she said.

But then they can join other Children’s Home Society programs for older kids such as Little Buddies or Little Toasters, she added.

The “rules” at Indoor Park are simple: “Parents can come for five minutes or 30 minutes or two hours or however long they want to stay,” Miller-Bigelow said.

“We have balls and slides and bikes and other toys that kids like to play with. Parents can play with their kids or just sit and watch their kids play but they can’t just drop them

off. It’s not daycare.”

CHS asks for a \$1 donation to use the Indoor Park, but it’s not mandatory, she said.

“Last year, we had more than 200 different kids and more than 100 parents that came to Indoor Park. The parents are really great. I just sort of oversee everything and the parents are good about watching their kids. We seldom have any problems,” Miller-Bigelow said.

There’s also a resource table in the room filled with information about other CHS programs and community resources such as the Holiday Helper program that provides help with utility assistance and other things.

Cathy Mauerman often brings her child to the Indoor Park. “I come here because my child needs interaction with other kids during the day. It’s very inviting and there are lots of toys and different activities. It’s different every week so it’s a way to meet other parents,” Mauerman said.

Jud Morris, Key Peninsula Family Resource Center director, recalled that at first, there was no staff person at Indoor Park. “We just took the toys out and put them around and left,” he said.

“I realized it was very important to have a staff person present to show our commitment to the program and Tami wanted to do it and has the ability to do it so she was a natural.”

Over the past 10 years, Indoor Park has grown and thrived under Miller-Bigelow’s supervision. “The parents like Tami and the kids get very involved and they really enjoy being with her,” Morris said.

Indoor Park serves the Key Peninsula community in three ways, he added.

“It’s a program that gives children a chance to play with other children. It’s a way that parents can play with other children especially during bad weather and it gives parents a chance to network and talk with other parents about what’s going on in their lives. And at the same time, it assures them that their kids are in a safe, warm, fun environment,” Morris said. “We know it’s important and that it’s really working because at our fundraising events, we’ve had many parents tell us that the way they got involved with us in the first place was through Indoor Park.”

For information call (253) 884-5433.



Brooklyn Grannes and father Derek Grannes spend some quiet time on the floor of the Key Peninsula Civic Center during a recent Indoor Park play day.

Photo by Scott Turner, KP News

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WayPoint church is calling all women to 'Sparkle' event

By Scott Turner, KP News

The women's group at WayPoint Church wants Key Peninsula women to know about the things they're doing to bring local women together.

According to Kim Anderson, executive assistant at the church, the Women of WayPoint ministry was launched in August of this year "as a way to point women to Jesus."

"We have Bible studies and ladies' night out where we just hang out together and do fun things," Anderson said.

On Dec. 5 Women of WayPoint is sponsoring a free Christmas luncheon called Sparkle.

The luncheon is designed so that anybody is welcome, Anderson said.

"Our church is about being a place where people can come if they don't already have a church home. We want peo-

Want to go?

WayPoint Church will host a women's Sparkle luncheon Dec. 5, noon to 2 p.m. in the fellowship hall. The event is free. The church is located at 12719 134th Avenue KPN. For information call (253) 225-2640.

ple — especially women — to come on over."

Ministering to women has been Anderson's passion since 1983.

"My husband, John and I started as a youth-pastor-and-wife team. He'd do the whole youth group and I'd work with the young girls. That's where the fire started in my heart. And it's grown," she said.

The couple moved to the Key Peninsula in 2012, and Kim Anderson immediately got involved with WayPoint.

Since there was not a women's ministry at that time at the church, WayPoint pastor Tim Stobbe suggested that Anderson might start a new group.

"We're all about reaching out to the women of the community in sisterhood,"

she said. "WayPoint wants to be relevant and provide a place where people can learn about Jesus."

The Sparkle luncheon is a chance for Key Peninsula women "to all get together and get to know one another," she said. The event is free.

There will be activities, music by Leslie Reed and a lunch catered by Snuffin's Catering from Gig Harbor.

Karen Cedarland, associate director for Thrive Ministries, is the featured speaker.

"Karen knows a lot of Key Peninsula people so she might be a familiar name," Anderson said. "She's going to speak about Christmas and what that means to women and how we can keep the real meaning of Christmas in our hearts."

In addition to food, fellowship, music and the Christmas program, every woman who attends the Sparkle luncheon will receive a small gift.

WayPoint also will host a women's retreat in February.

"We're not trying to hook people in," Anderson said. "We just want people to know that we're here and we have a lot of fun."

For information about WayPoint or the Sparkle event, call (253) 225-2640.

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"Gettin' Ready For Baby Jesus"

Three friends enjoy the trip of a lifetime

By Colleen Slater, KP News

Arlene Babbitt of Vaughn enjoys her Swedish heritage and hoped to someday visit her grandparents' homeland.

Gunnel, first cousin of Arlene's mom, Violet Visell, visited the family here when Arlene was a young teen. Gunnel was daughter to Alfred, a brother of Arlene's grandmother Berta Lindgren.

Gunnel's son Lars came to visit in 1983, so the family kept in contact with some Swedish relatives.

Arlene's sister Judy Bradshaw and husband Cliff took Violet to Sweden, but Arlene, in a new job, couldn't go at that time.

"I cried," she said, "because I was sure I'd never get to go."

Arlene's husband, Martin, suggested she contact his cousin Judy Hunt, who'd married a Swede and they went back to his country regularly.

"You go, meet your family, have fun," he'd say, but he wasn't interested in accompanying her.

One year prior to a Peninsula High School class reunion, Arlene and friends put together a memory booklet for their classmates who sent photos, updates and other information to share.

Arlene included in hers a lifetime dream to visit Sweden. She hoped classmate and friend (and cousin by then) Judy Hunt would read it and extend an invitation.

Judy didn't attend that reunion and perhaps never received a copy of the booklet.

The dream continued to exist, but without real hope of it coming true.

Earlier this year, Arlene's children told her she needed to have a special celebration for her 75th birthday.

"Like what?" she wondered.

"You should go to Sweden!"

"Oh, no, I couldn't go to Sweden by myself," she said.

"We'll go with you!" her daughters told her.

Arlene thought that a wonderful plan, and in August she, daughters Laurie and Bonnie and son-in-law Roy flew to Copenhagen and took a train to Hjarup in southern Sweden where cousin Sofia picked them up.

Sofia is related through Arlene's grandfather Helmer Lindgren.

Lars was a main contact for planning this trip.



Photo courtesy Laurie Parkinson

Laurie Parkinson, Arlene Babbitt and Bonnie Warren having fun at the Royal Palace, Stockholm.

Glasrikt, a glass factory and clothes shopping were highlights of their southern stop, but visiting family was the top priority.

Arlene and Laurie took notes on Swedish spelling and pronunciation and rattled them off with familiarity. Arlene also kept a brief journal where she noted the food they were given, including Swedish meatballs that were so good, "I went back for more and didn't care if I didn't eat anything else," she said.

They met Lars' brother Nils and family and slept in a four-story 1880 windmill Lars is restoring in Loftahammar, near Västervik.

They drove to Stockholm and flew north to Umeå, a large city near where both Helmer and Berta were born and raised.

Arlene and family were met and taken to Peder Jonsson's home for dinner. A marvelous smorgasbord buffet was shared with about 30 relatives, including Gunnel, now 92.

"This woman is so lovingly amazing," said Arlene.

Many hours later they went to Gunnel's summer stuga to sleep. This is a summer cottage on the Gulf of Bothnia.

At another cousin's stuga, the hostess said, "Ven ve finish eating, ve can go across the road and take a bath."

The Americans looked at each other and wondered about that, but learned bath was the word they used for a swim.

Laurie especially enjoyed meeting a cousin who could "speak American" and Laurie said, "I stuck with her so she could explain what everybody was saying"

They visited the church in Bygdeå, built in 1539. It was where Berta was confirmed Mjösjön, as well as the farm Berta was born and raised; plus, it was also the Selfors area, Sjöstrom house and Overklinten Mill. The Sjöstrom home is still owned by descendants.

They attended a small reunion of rela-

tives on Grandpa Helmer Lindgren's side.

In Umeå as in other cities, bicycles are common and streets were lined with them.

"These 80-year-old women on bikes, their skirts flying, going shopping," said Arlene. She asked Gunnel if she did that at 80, and Gunnel inquired of her daughter when did she put her bicycle away at 85.

Back to Stockholm for more visits with Lars and Nils, "They gave us a tour of the little islands that make up the Stockholm archipelago, and took us to Gamla Stan, which means Old Town," said Laurie, "the Royal Palace, several churches and a tour of Prince Eugene's home and gardens."

Arlene and her daughters felt immediately accepted and "we talked and laughed all the time, just like at home," she said.

"It was an amazing trip and we enjoyed it so much," said Laurie. "The most wonderful part was the complete abundance of family love received there."

Home again, they love sharing the photos, the stories and the memories. Not only did Arlene get her trip of a lifetime, but she was able to share it with part of her family.

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Marijuana dispensaries on the Key Peninsula

By Sara Thompson, KP News

Editor's note: This is the second article in a three-part series on marijuana and the Key Peninsula. The first provided historical background. Here the focus is on some of the risks and benefits as well as the impact of recent legislation on Key Pen dispensaries. The final article will cover cultivation.

For those whose exposure to marijuana is limited, or ended several decades ago, the cannabis landscape presents a whole new world, and the Key Peninsula is in the middle of that changing landscape. For now, those who qualify for medical use can make purchases at one of the six medicinal marijuana dispensaries along the KP Highway.

That will change next July, when dispensaries will be required to meet stricter regulatory requirements and will also serve customers buying recreational pot. The Pierce County Council is expected to approve an ordinance to allow recreational stores in unincorporated areas. But only one local dispensary will qualify to convert based on county zoning requirements — KP Healing Center, next door to the 76 station within the Lake Kathryn Village Rural Activity Center.

Passage of the ordinance requires four of seven votes from the council. At the Nov. 10 meeting, the council passed a budget amendment to establish a marijuana enforcement fund-in that provides the sheriff's department and the prosecuting attorney's office the resources needed to close the illegal dispensaries and prosecute violators. It will be funded by excise tax income from marijuana sales.

On Dec. 8, the council is expected to approve the ordinance, clearing the way to licensing a store on the Key Peninsula that could sell both medicinal and recreational marijuana.

By July 2016, all medical dispensaries must meet the same requirements as recreational shops to qualify for a license, as set by the Washington State Liquor Control Board. This includes zoning restrictions. Stores must be in rural activity center (RAC) zones and cannot be less than 1,000 feet from public spaces where children are present, such as schools, libraries and

parks.

Councilman Derek Young, who represents the Key Peninsula and co-sponsored the ordinance, said that it is possible but very unlikely that zoning exceptions will be made.

KP Healing Center, which opened in early 2013, is the oldest of the current dispensaries. Nick Hetterscheidt, who runs the business, said, "We fully intend to continue to provide services to our medical patients, and will open our doors to the recreational market as well."

Feelings and opinions about marijuana use are strong and divergent. Some see marijuana as dangerous and a gateway drug. Others see real benefit for medical patients who would suffer if unable to access what has made a big difference in their health and well-being.

But there is common ground as well. Law enforcement and the medical dispensary owners speak with a single voice on the issue of use by adolescents — they should not use it.

Present owners acknowledge that up until now regulation of their industry has been absent and that some regulation is warranted. But they also worry that the new rules will significantly decrease access, cost and choice for their patients. All the current operations say they have established patient registration, keep careful records to follow their clients

and are passionate about the service they offer as well as the quality of their products.

Clint Pipkin, who along with his wife and brother owns the two Herb N Wellness dispensaries, is passionate about the benefits of medical marijuana. He was grateful when medical marijuana was decriminalized.

"We have come out from under the radar and people are beginning to understand that it can really be helpful," he said.

When asked about recreational marijuana, he said, "We treat it like alcohol. It is not for everyone and certainly not for children."

His stores currently do not meet zoning requirements for licensing. The shop in Key Center is less than 1,000 feet from the library and his second store is zoned as rural neighborhood center, not a rural activity center. Pipkin plans to appeal.

None of the other three local dispensaries plan to apply for licenses. KP Health and Wellness, near KP Healing Center, will close. Tony McGriff, who opened KP Medicinals in Home, said that his business has been slower than expected and he does not plan to apply for a license.

Bruce and Michelle Williams opened Purdy Farms Veganic in Key Center in July 2014. Their marijuana is not fertilized with animal products and they feel it is superior for those with immune deficiencies. They hope to qualify for a license to grow but plan to close their store by next July.

Safety Concerns

According to the University of Washington Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute, "Adults who don't have heart disease or psychiatric conditions, don't get high during pregnancy or when it's dangerous, and use pot occasionally probably aren't at risk of any harm to their health."

But there are concerns around use in adolescence and pregnancy, in large part because of the sensitivity of the developing brain. And the National Institutes of Health says there is strong evidence of a "link between marijuana use and psychotic disorders in those with a preexisting genetic or other vulnerability. ... Other, less consistent associations have been reported between marijuana use and depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts among teens, and personality disorders."

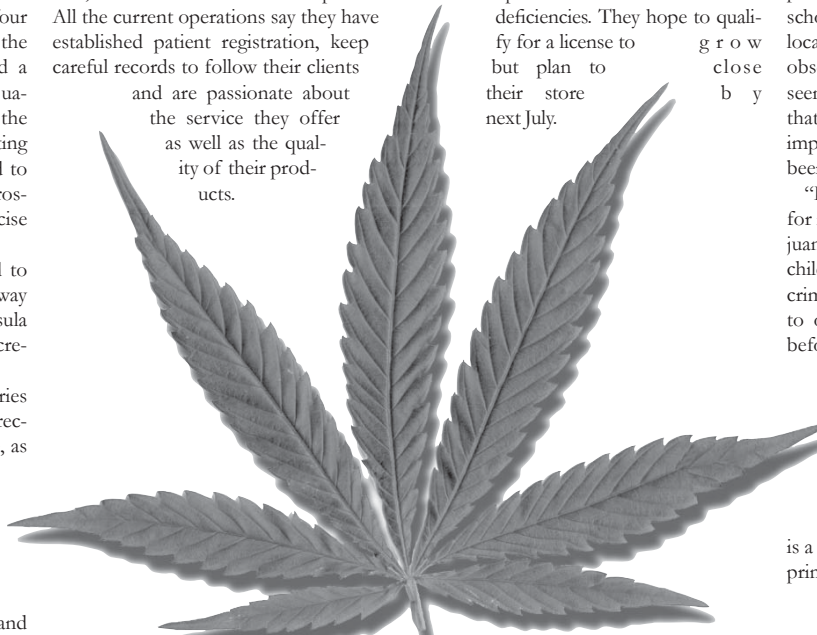
According to a study in *Lancet Psychiatry*, a respected medical journal, no increase in use by teens was found in states that legalized medical marijuana.

A recent report by the Drug Policy Alliance showed no increase in adolescent use since legalization of recreational marijuana.

But the experience of the local sheriff's department may reflect a different picture. Sgt. Brian Ward spoke with the school resource officer who is primarily located at Peninsula High. The officer observed that since legalization, he has seen a shift in attitude about marijuana — that teens are more likely to shrug off the impact of marijuana use. There have also been more reported incidents of dealing.

"Having been assigned to the drug unit for nine years in the past, I consider marijuana a 'gateway drug' when it comes to children," said Lt. Larry Minturn. "Decriminalization sends the wrong message to our children. I personally think that before we as a society decide to loosen drug restrictions, we need to take into account what might be the effect on our kids, short term and long term."

According to the NIH website, more research is needed to determine whether or not marijuana is a gateway drug. In animal studies, it can prime the brain for enhanced responses



(See **Marijuana**, Page 19)

The biology behind the cannabis

By Sara Thompson, KP News

Although marijuana was introduced to this country in the early 1900s, it took decades for researchers to understand how it worked.

Cannabinoids are the components of most interest in marijuana — the two most studied are tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD). According to HistoryLink, an online resource for Washington state history, cannabinoid receptors in the brain were first discovered in 1990. In 1992, it was discovered that the body produces its own cannabinoids. They affect how humans relax, sleep, eat, forget and protect.

There are two species of marijuana — Indica and Sativa. Indicas are higher in CBD content; THC dominates Sativas. Hybrids have been bred to offer different balances in CBD and THC content. It is available for use in three forms: dried buds and flowers, as a compressed resin (hashish) and as an oil. It can be smoked, ingested or applied topically.

Cannabis sold now is not what it was 40 years ago. According to the University of Washington Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute, it is, as measured by THC levels, two to seven times more potent than it was in the 1960s. This is in part because of selective breeding but also because what is now sold is flower buds rather

than stems and leaves.

The National Institutes of Health website notes that THC is the psychoactive cannabinoid. It increases appetite and reduces nausea. The FDA-approved, THC-based medications are used for these purposes. THC may also decrease pain, inflammation (swelling and redness) and muscle control problems.

CBD is not psychoactive. It may be useful in reducing pain and inflammation,

controlling epileptic seizures and possibly even treating mental illness and addictions.

Researchers are exploring the possible uses of THC, CBD and other cannabinoids for medical treatment. Scientists are also conducting studies with marijuana and its extracts to treat numerous diseases and conditions, such as autoimmune diseases, HIV/AIDS, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's disease, pain, seizures, substance use disorders and mental disorders.



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(From Marijuana, Page 18)

to other drugs. But so do alcohol and tobacco, and most people who use marijuana do not go on to use other "harder substances."

It is possible that people who are vulnerable to drug-taking are simply more likely to start with more readily available substances and their subsequent social interactions with other drug users increases their chances of trying other drugs.

Ward said that in terms of crime on the Key Peninsula in general, butane extraction, which can result in explosions, has been more prevalent. He noted that there have been thefts both of crops and from the stores, but he did not feel that these have had a big impact on the work of his department.



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New Directors Elected to the Key Peninsula Community Council

Sara Thompson, KP News

The Key Peninsula Community Council (KPC) elected three new directors along with three incumbents at its meeting Nov. 11.

The KPC was established in 2004. As described on its website, the primary roles of the council are to:

- Facilitate interactions between agencies, residents, businesses and nonprofit groups in an effort to develop solutions to resident concerns
- Act as a resource for Key Peninsula residents, businesses and nonprofit organizations
- Serve as a liaison to county, state and federal government
- Assist in fundraising and volunteer recruitment efforts on behalf of other community agencies and groups.

KPC bylaw amendments produced a new election process for 2015.

Board director terms remain at two years. Candidate applications are accepted any time during the year. At the annual meeting in November, current board members vote to elect new members.

Prior to this year, ballots were distributed through the KP News and residents of the Key Peninsula could vote via mail or at a voting booth in the Key Center Food Market. Poor voter turnout and the expense of running the election, both in dollars and volunteer time, prompted the change in bylaws.

Directors are elected by geographic location, as determined by census tracts. Geographically the areas are named from north to south, with Area 1 northernmost.

The newly elected directors are:

Area 1: Neil Sampson and Leona Lisa (both new to the council)


Area 2: Jeremiah Saucier (new) and Danna Webster (incumbent)

Area 3: Chuck West (incumbent)


Area 4: Rion Ticino (incumbent)

Cindy Worden was appointed to serve at large for a one-year term due to the resignation of Carol Opalinski.

Newly elected directors join the seven who were elected last year: Ruth Bramhall and Phyllis Henry from Area 1, Danna Burnett and Irene Torres from Area 2, Tim Kezele and Don Swensen from Area 3, and Marcia Harris from Area 4.



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KEY PENINSULA FIRE NEWSLETTER



Santa and Mrs Claus

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December 1, 2015

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OBITUARY NOTICES

The Rev. Charles Philip Schiller

Charles Schiller, 86, passed away peacefully at his home in Tacoma surrounded by his loving family after living with the challenges of Parkinson's disease.

Born in Oakland, Calif. he spent his childhood years in San Rafael. He graduated from Whitworth University in 1951 on the same day that he married Shirley Ann Gilson, his devoted partner in ministry and adventure. He attended San Francisco Theological Seminary and accepted his first pastorate in Salmon, Idaho. Since then Phil and Shirley have had a fruitful ministry in many Presbyterian congregations in Washington state, including Grace Presbyterian on the Key Peninsula and as visiting pastor for Historic Vaughn Bay Church.

His love of music overflowed into his ministry through choirs, hymn sings, youth camps and more. Phil loved people. He greeted new faces with his smile and gentle spirit. He asked questions to draw out common interests. In his retirement, he volunteered at Allenmore Hospital for 10 years.

Schiller is survived by his wife, Shirley, and



their four children, Steve of Kent, Sandy Smith (Andy) of Seattle, Tom (Elena Knight) of Ft. Myers, Fla., and Susan Engels (Martin) of Tumwater. They enjoy the growing families of eight grandchildren, Lynne Smith, Katy Smith (John Hower), Shawn Schiller, Justin Engels (Michelle), Zach Engels, Michelle Nedzweckas (Mike), Peter Schiller and Anika Engels; plus two great-granddaughters, Emma Lynn and Makayla. He was preceded in death by his parents, Carl and Ruth Schiller; and sister, Dorothy (Dede) Simpson (Gary), but is survived by his younger sister, Merilee Bramham (Jack).

The celebration of his life was held at Skyline Presbyterian Church on Saturday, Nov. 21. In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to Skyline Presbyterian Church for their Peanut Butter and Jelly Ministry for the homeless or the Ruston Senior Center.

Theodore Earle Saxer

Born on Aug. 16, 1928 in Fort Scott, Kan. to Theodore E. Saxer and Iva Belle Saxer (Purdy), Theodore Saxer died Nov. 14 in Tacoma.

Saxer worked as a machinist for Standard Pressed Steel in Jenkintown, Pa., and Liquid Air in Tacoma.

After he retired, he volunteered at Key Peninsula Community Services and was president and member of the board of directors. He drove the food vans, worked fundraisers and helped make the facility a better place.

Saxer loved John Wayne movies, playing poker, fishing with his son and spending time with his grandchildren and great grandchildren. He is survived by his wife, Hellen; sons Timothy Saxer, Thomas Saxer and Jack



(Bonnie) Saxer; stepchildren Patricia Medveckus, Glenna (Bill) Saft, Donald McGeary and Judy Glasco; 20 grandchildren and 34 great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by sister Louise Marsteller and stepbrother Roy Lee. Saxer lived on the Key Peninsula since 1982.

Memorial services will be held at Key Peninsula Community Services, Dec. 5, at 2 p.m. In lieu of flowers please make donation to the Key Peninsula Community Services.

POET SPEAK

KP poetry corner

Editor's note: The KP News is offering a spot for poems submitted by Key Peninsula residents. Please keep them under 200 words and send them to Ed Johnson at edj@edjohnson.net. We will try and run a poem in every issue.

Autumn Awakening

By Dayl Minch

I stopped yesterday. I stopped here. I stopped and admired the beauty before me.

I breathed. I took in a breath. A very large breath. I held it and released it slowly.

I thought of these trees. I thought of these leaves. I wondered what those leaves were feeling knowing they were close to their end.

Did they know I appreciated them? Did they know how incredibly beautiful they were? Did they know the happiness

they brought me all through the year? The wind blew. The rain started. The fall leaves fell to the earth.

With that I went home and pondered... What would I do if I knew I only had one season to make a difference?

Live your life the way you want. Be happy. Be kind. Be beautiful. Be the person who's remembered for living life to its fullest.

You never know when your fall leaves will fall. Today's the day to start living.

Journey

By Linda Whaley

I stand, not at a crossroad, but at a way station

this road of life is convoluted.

I climbed,

I skated,

sometimes I skipped,

or tripped,

or crawled,

or rolled down a grassy hill

for no particular reason other than I wanted to.

I look back and see a well-worn path that I have blazed

razed,

been crazed by.

It needs no signs for others to read

it is a sign itself

that says I was here.

I look forward at the unfamiliar road ahead,

waiting for me,

challenging me,

daring me to best it

test it,

embrace it as I race to its end.

Bring it road,

I may be older,

and wiser,

and slower,

but I'm still here.

Bring it.

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Out & About

To see more Out & About photos, visit our website at www.keypennews.com and follow the Photo Gallery link. See more of your neighbors out and about, Key Peninsula scenes and happenings.



Photo by Ed Johnson, KP News

Above: A heron checks out the view (or lunch) from a fern-covered log next to Joe's Bay.

Right: Artist Merri Peterson Sutton, left, with Irene Torres, held a reception at the Blend Wine Shop recently to celebrate her photography exhibit at the landmark hangout.



Photo by Ed Johnson, KP News



Photo by Hugh McMillan, KP News

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Karen Lovett poses for a photo with her issue of the KP News at the 92nd American Rabbit Breeders National Convention which was held in Portland, Ore., Oct. 31-Nov. 4, 2015.



Photo by Ed Johnson, KP News

Halloween was celebrated at the Longbranch Improvement Club with a haunted house, games and refreshments inside, and ghosts and goblins in the parking lot, handing out treats in what they call "Trunk or Treat." Shown here are Cassidy Mack, Lilly Matue and Isabella Matue.

Left: During last month's Winter Warmup at the Key Peninsula Civic Center, the Bluegrass Minstrels (from left) John Day, Duncan Fisher, Dan Whitmarsh, Bill Lloyd, Tim Stobbe, Bob Breeze, Nicole Johnson, Doug Paterson, Dorene Paterson and Lynn Lloyd dazzle the many. The group will be performing its free Festive Christmas Revelry music Dec. 12, at 6 p.m. at Lakebay Church, 11 Cornwall Road, Lakebay. The public is welcome to attend.