

Pierce County Releases Draft of Comprehensive Plan

The plan could eliminate the rural bonus that allows more than one home in R10 zones on the Key Peninsula.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

Pierce County released its updated comprehensive plan for public review in January.

Erika Rhett, Pierce County long-range planning supervisor, met with the Key Peninsula Land Use Advisory Commission Jan. 25 to discuss the draft.

The only recommendation in the plan that would impact the Key Peninsula is the elimination of the rural bonus. The bonus allows two houses to be built on 10 acres in R10 zones if half the land is set aside as open space, or to cluster houses — for example, four homes on 20 acres if 10 acres remain open space.

“Generally, KPAC is in favor of the plan,” said Kristen Zink, the commission chair. “Most of the changes or potential changes really focus on where the high transit areas are in the county, and they don’t have much effect on the Key Peninsula.”

KPAC unanimously approved a recommendation to eliminate the rural bonus option in the current area plan at the January meeting. “We want to avoid sprawl,” said Kip Clinton, secretary of the commission. Other members cited concerns about water quality and availability.

“We thought getting rid of the rural bonus was good,” Zink said.

The first county comprehensive plan was written in 1991 in compliance with the Growth Management Act, passed by the state legislature in 1990 to counter the threat of uncoordinated and unplanned growth to the environment, quality of life,

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Standing before the Kindness Wall, 7-year-olds Gael, David and Brandon are not only eager to share their individual strengths but ready to ask about yours. *Tina McKail, KP News*

Encouraging a Sense of Belonging at Vaughn Elementary School

Staff and students at Vaughn Elementary make a next-level effort to support each other.

VICKI BIGGS, KP NEWS

Principal Abbie Barabe returned from winter break with a game-changer in mind.

In addition to supporting the Peninsula School District goals for school improvement, as stated in the policy and strategic plans for the district, Barabe wanted to take some extra steps to improve the learning environment at Vaughn Elementary.

The Month of Belonging project was created to do just that. Building on the “sense of belonging” theme for the district, the Month of Belonging aimed to celebrate the uniqueness of individuals, connections with other students, and an overall connection with PSD.

“There is a feeling that we are separate, but we belong — we are part of the district,”

Barabe said. “I don’t want my children to feel any different. They’re a part of who we are at Peninsula. That connection with Peninsula High School is so powerful.”

To reinforce that connection, seven PHS students, past graduates of Vaughn, created

videos shown at the beginning of the program to help launch the Month of Belonging Jan. 29.

The Vaughn Elementary web page features Barabe giving viewers an overview of the close-knit culture of the school. The video introduces viewers to the staff, PTA, and Communities in Schools participation, and the emphasis each day on respect, responsibility and safety.

Studies show that when students feel safe and secure, they can achieve more academically. With the help of Kristin Winters, the Communities in Schools site coordinator for Vaughn, and school leadership team members, three weeks of positive and engaging learning

were planned.

Barabe said, “I’m trying to reach 77% of students, that means students feel they are valued by adults, peers and everyone. We looked at data and as a team we built the Month of Belonging.” The project engaged students in vocabulary, writing skills, listing

“THEY STARTED WITH FRIENDS AND THEN EXPANDED OUT TO OTHERS. AMAZING TO WATCH KIDS RECOGNIZE OTHERS. KIDS WANTED TO PARTICIPATE.”

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GIFTS BETWEEN STRANGERS

Here's What He Thinks About That

TED OLINGER,
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

My dad had a British colleague who owned an old house somewhere in northern France. We paid him a lengthy visit one summer when I was 12, back in 1976. There was nothing special about the locale that I could see. No castles or monuments, just simple farms among aging battlefields still alive in memory, a sleepy canal where I fished with his two sons and two daughters, and a lot of loose cows roaming the countryside demanding to be milked at all hours. I was given the use of an old bicycle, and I rode everywhere by myself including a daily trip to the village with some net bags to buy the local bacon and cheese and, of course, bread.

It was a mission I would scarcely assign to a 12-year-old now but back then, with my few words of French, it seemed normal. The merchants sized me up with blank expressions, hand-rolled cigarettes glued to their lips, and charged me accordingly. But I remember one elderly woman, all in black, habitually sitting in a corner of one local shop next to a pile of newspapers and an overflowing ashtray. One day she summoned me into her presence with a crooked finger and croaked, "Garçon, ici."

I stood at attention before her. "Bonjour madame."
"Vous êtes Américain?"
"Oui, madame."

She held out a small can of what the Brits call potted meat, enveloping my hand in both of hers as I received it. "J'adore les Américains," she said. "Merci, madame. J'aime la France."

I didn't mean to say that. It just came out. I felt embarrassed.

The faces of everyone around me lit up, warm and smiling from that day forward. "Au revoir mon fils, à demain!"

Back at the house, our host examined the tin and looked skeptically at me over his glasses.

"This is foie gras. You didn't pay?"

I related my adventure. No one

believed me.

But it happened. It was an act of generosity I could not appreciate until later recognizing how the woman was trying to inoculate me against the many indignities still to come in life, and that we all must face.

It was a small but powerful spell.

Our host and his wives are long gone now, like my own parents and so much of the family, but his children and I maintained our friendships. They visited me repeatedly when I lived in L.A. and New York City and attended my wedding in Seattle; I ushered at one of theirs in London. And we occasionally met in more remote areas for more strenuous adventures.

In 1990, I was on my way to points east when one son invited me to a dinner at Oxford University where I was seated next to a mathematics professor. She was quite irritated by the close proximity of an American and had a good deal to tell me about U.S. policy in Central America where she had traveled and about which she harbored grave concerns (remember Ronald Reagan and the Contras?).

I acquitted myself fairly well, though mathematicians have a peculiar facility for logic. I tried to parry her attacks on the American character with the record of Margaret Thatcher, then still in office, but my companion had even more contempt for her nation's international misbehavior than my own, as she saw it, and it was a losing battle.

Some weeks later, she wrote me

a letter.

She had reconsidered some of the things she had to say at dinner and went to the trouble of fact-checking me to confirm my claims, hoping that I would come up short. Instead, she said, I had succeeded in changing her mind, at least about Americans if not American foreign policy.

It was another gift — a small but powerful spell — except this time I had cast it,

unknowingly, and she had the integrity to act on it. (There's that talent for logic again.)

We have corresponded for years, not least because she ended up marrying my Oxford friend.

I received an email from her just a few days ago, suggesting that my family join theirs for a grueling bike ride across some desperate stretch of Australia next summer. She lost

me at "grueling," "desperate," and "biking," I said, but if they wound up at the edge of some ocean I might be convinced to meet them with a rented sailboat and a large cooler of beer.

Hearing from her again reminded me of

that elderly woman, all in black, coolly smoking her hand-rolled cigarettes in the corner of a village shop so long ago, casually working magic on the character of any hapless youth fate sent her way. I realize now that I have met her many times since, in many forms, in some unlooked-for act of acceptance that spanned a chasm between strangers.

It is a powerful spell. One we would do well to practice on each other, if we can find the courage. ■



WSU Extension Brings Flagship Forest Management Course to KP

A nine-week class to be held at the Crandall Center will be a first for Pierce County, but future funding is uncertain.

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

Forestry education is coming to the Key Peninsula.

Beginning April 4, Washington State University's extension forestry service will offer its flagship nine-week forest stewardship course to local landowners. The course is broad-based, covering topics like tree biology, soil, wildlife, disease, thinning, safe harvest, invasive weeds and fire risk. It aims to introduce landowners to resources and research that are grounded in the particular challenges of managing Western Washington forests.

According to Kevin Zobrist, the WSU forestry professor who organizes the course, landowners with less than an acre to more than 500 acres will find value in the class — whether their objectives are related to ecosystem health, wildlife, natural beauty, harvest income, or privacy.

The course has been offered for years in other counties. This is its first offering in Pierce County.

"Part of the point of Extension is that we get university faculty and public education courses into the community," Zobrist said.

While many people are aware of the relationship between a state university and agriculture, where local extension offices research new crops and pests according to local growers' needs, it is a different model for forestry.

"For farmers, that's their day job," Zobrist said. "Forest owners, forestry isn't their day job. They don't have forestry background and expertise, and that's where we come in."

The course will be held on Thursday afternoons at The Mustard Seed Project's Crandall Center in Key Center. It includes a weekend field trip and a digital library of how-to guides.

For each participant, the course culminates in a consultation site visit from a professional forester. "We give a lot of content in our classes," Zobrist said. "People say it's like drinking from the proverbial firehose.

"Then participants go and walk their property with a forester, and they can see how the course concepts apply to their specific property," he said. "The forester can do assessments. This stand is overstocked and needs to be thinned. This stand is fine. You have root rot pocket over here; these are your options for dealing with it." He said the course prepares landowners to ask good questions.

The course can also qualify a landowner to write a forestry plan, a requirement for an undeveloped parcel to be classified as designated forest land, a tax category with greatly reduced property taxes.



Most forests in the area face similar issues as this scene from YMCA Camp Seymour where stewardship practices encourage healthy old growth forests of the future. *Tina McKail, KP News*

Martha Konicek of Longbranch took the course via Zoom in 2018. "Ongoing value can't be overstated for this course," she said. "It provided deep and evidence-based information on so many topics."

Konicek called the course a launchpad. Her 20-acre forest is now a certified tree farm, and she is involved with the Washington Farm Forest Association and Woodland Fish and Wildlife Group.

"One of the values of having a local course would be the networking of fellow forest stewards on the KP," she said. "I personally would value knowing local forest owners, maybe create our own working group going forward."

Ryan Barringer, manager of Silverbow Farm in Lakebay, also took an online version of the course. For someone who grew up in the woods, he said, with a rich family logging tradition, the course put words to many things he knew intuitively.

"For basic nuts and bolts, it would be tough to beat that course," he said. "Their goal is just to educate you on what the problems are. What's nice about it is it's the collective whole of what they're seeing in the Northwest.

"What the class drove home for me was the need to actually go in and thin."

Barringer said it removed an aspect of guilt from cutting trees. The goal of his current work is long-term forest health. "Everybody

has a different view of the forest, and that's fair, but typically the people who see the forest just a few times a year and have a great love for it, they're the hardest people to convince." He said the course laid out for him the science and data behind Douglas fir monocultures and how they are susceptible to a host of problems that are less of an issue in older mixed-species forests.

Zobrist said, "The question is, why do we need to do anything in the forest when forests took care of themselves for millennia? The answer is these aren't the forests of yesterday. The forests of yesterday didn't have to deal with the invasive vegetation. The forests of yesterday were diverse. That helped them self-manage density. We have uniform, dense stands. They need some help."

"My hope for the class," Barringer said, "would be for people to take it who would want to go in and just clearcut their property. Okay, property taxes are killing me, I can put my property into ag or forestry and rather than clearcut all of this, I can go in and do a little bit of thinning each year that would offset the property taxes and keep my farm going."

Zobrist said, "We want to get to people before there is nothing but stumps left. There's nothing wrong per se with growing a crop for harvest, but if you do it right, you can do it in a way that's

environmentally sensitive."

Even if participants do not plan on cutting any of their own trees, Zobrist said, they will be trained in harvest techniques. They will be prepared to help neighbors who are considering having their properties logged to ask the right questions, avoid unscrupulous operators, and be paid fairly.

"Your trees have been growing for decades. A little bit of education so that you know what you're doing is a reasonable investment."

WSU Extension operates in all 39 Washington counties. It is jointly funded by the USDA, the state university and individual counties. In each county, the specific programs it offers — such as master gardeners, 4H, agriculture, and forestry — are determined by the funding decisions of county officials.

Zobrist says there is pent-up demand for the course, and it spreads primarily through word of mouth. "There is a ton of need in Pierce County, and it has just been unserved for years now."

While other Puget Sound counties have long invested in WSU forestry programs, Pierce County leadership did not until a two-year pilot was approved in 2022. The extension worked out a deal with the county to extend funding into 2024, but continued funding is tenuous at best and depends on whether county leaders see forestry education as beneficial to their constituents. ■

Retired Paralympian Megan Blunk Returns to the Key Peninsula

Always the champion, the KP native once again proves how grit and persistence pay off in her long battle with depression.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

Megan Blunk's life is full of triumphs.

She was a star athlete from kindergarten through high school. After a motorcycle crash left her wheelchair-bound in 2008, she took up paracanoeing and wheelchair basketball. She won two silver medals in the 2013 Paracanoe World Championships. She joined the Paralympian wheelchair basketball team, taking home a gold medal in 2016. Blunk was the first in her family to go to college and went on to earn a master's degree in social work, funded by a scholarship for wheelchair basketball. She has mentored and coached young athletes with disabilities.

Her greatest victory, though, is her triumph over a longstanding battle with depression.

Blunk has been open about her mental health issues for years, sharing her story through blogs and podcasts.

A month after graduating from Peninsula High she accepted a ride on a motorcycle and within minutes was thrown down an embankment. She broke her back and 18 bones. Her dreams of a full recovery and running in the Olympics collided with reality when she returned home in a wheelchair with just partial use of her hip muscles.

"People in the grocery store would either say I was an inspiration or look at me with pity," Blunk said. "I told myself I want to be an inspiration if I'm going to be called one. I'm going to do something bigger than I would have done if it hadn't been for the accident and make it worth it. I didn't want anyone to look at me with pity again."

She connected with a wheelchair basketball team that scrimmaged in Tacoma. "I had an everyday wheelchair at first," Blunk said. "It wasn't the greatest experience." She learned about Seattle Adaptive Sports — they brought some basketball wheelchairs to try — and she connected with the Challenged Athletes Foundation. The foundation purchased her first basketball wheelchair.

Her drive earned her a scholarship to the University of Illinois to play wheelchair basketball. It was a grueling five years of classroom work, practices and tournaments.

Blunk trained for the Paralympics Games and made the team, but she constantly worried she was not good enough. She was on and off antidepressants, trying to balance dosing, benefits and side effects. "I cried every day," Blunk said.

The successes of 2016 did not bring joy. "I had worked so freaking hard for eight years," she said. "We won gold, I had my degree. I moved back home, and I was more depressed



Blunk hopes to get a truckload of adaptive wheelchairs, take them to schools, and give students the experience of playing wheelchair basketball in PE classes. *Tina McKail, KP News*

than ever. I didn't know how I was supposed to make it better if that didn't do it."

The years since have been a journey to recovery.

In 2018, Blunk moved to Los Angeles and then to San Diego for work, and her life had all the trappings of success. She was sponsored by several businesses, including The Hartford, Nike and Quickie Wheelchairs. She spoke at events. She appeared in promotional videos alongside Colin Kaepernick and Kobe Bryant.

She joined Wolfpack, the otherwise all-male military wheelchair basketball team for two years. "It was like having 13 brothers," Blunk said. Playing with them prepared her for the Paralympics tryouts. "I was so ripped!" she said. She made the 2020 Paralympic team, and she made lifelong friends along the way.

But the depression never really lifted.

"I thought I could show the weak side balanced by the strength of being on the team. But more attention meant more eyes on me when I played, and I was worried about not being good enough."

The pandemic delayed the 2020 games and took the pressure off. Blunk decided to go off antidepressants. "I wanted to know who I am without medication," she said. She considered electroconvulsive therapy but decided she didn't want to risk memory loss.

She worked with a therapist. She left the Paralympic team. She got a dog. And she decided to move back to Lakebay, close to her father.

Her new house needed improvements, including a better walkway.

"When people try to help someone with a disability there are struggles," Blunk said. "My dad had built a brick parking area, but it wasn't where I wanted it. Able-bodied me would not have needed help to move it. I can't make everything better, but I want to learn how to do the work."

She was determined to do the work herself. She couldn't use a wheelbarrow and she couldn't always work from her wheelchair. She got pants with a reinforced seat and scooted around, tossing bricks one by one to the right location. Her dad helped when he could. She worked rain or shine four to 12 hours a day for the next year and a half to excavate a path using the claw end of a hammer and moving twelve tons of dirt bucket by bucket to level the terrain.

"I am so efficient now," Blunk said. "I know what it takes. I have a brick path all around my house."

Blunk's depression has lifted. "Digging in the dirt is grounding," she said. "I am passionate about life. Taking myself out of

the competition from sports has helped." Slowing life down and a low-dose antidepressant have also made a difference.

All those hours outside also added an important person to Blunk's life. She met her boyfriend, Dustin Letellier, when he was running by her house and stopped to talk. "He's been amazing," Blunk said. "He has taught me so much about trust and day-to-day stability."

Blunk continues to work with athletes with disabilities. She coaches the Tacoma Jr. Titans. She hopes to get a truckload of adaptive wheelchairs, take them to schools, and give students the experience of playing wheelchair basketball in PE classes. Adaptive sports can include people with knee or ankle issues, she said. They are not limited to people with spinal cord injuries or amputations.

She has an agent who works with adaptive athletes, and she may continue to have sponsorships. In February she was selected to be part of "Year of the Blonde," a new campaign for the hair color company Schwarzkopf. The campaign includes tennis star Venus Williams and gymnast Aly Raisman. The opportunity meant a color change for her waist-long dark brown hair, but Blunk was game. "It can always grow out," Blunk said. ■

Home-Delivered Meal Program Comes to the Key Peninsula

A grant to the KP Partnership will fund collaborative meal delivery programs and more for KP seniors.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

In January the Key Peninsula Partnership received a \$95,000 grant to bring home-delivered meals to seniors on the Key Peninsula. The collaborative program, named KP Connects Through Food, includes Key Peninsula Community Services and The Mustard Seed Project, and its goal is to deliver nutritious food and also access to resources that will allow people to remain safely in their own homes.

“The program builds upon established programs and partnerships to provide immediate benefits of nutrition, wellness and resource access,” said Susan Paganelli, co-director of the KP Partnership. “We are working to bring resources and money to the Key Peninsula that require collaboration. It is not in competition with other nonprofits.”

The grant was funded by CommonSpirit’s new Community Health Improvement Grant program. CommonSpirit is a healthcare system that includes Virginia Mason Franciscan Health.

“This is a new opportunity for us,” said Stephanie Christensen, community integration program manager for VM Franciscan. The system’s eight hospitals donated a total of \$1.7 million to fund grants of up to \$100,000 where at least two nonprofits collaborated to address community health needs.

“Being able to fund the local nonprofits that do the work to address those priorities is really important to us; it will help create a healthier community for all,” Christensen said.

“When the Partnership approached Community Services with the idea of a food delivery program, we were all over it,” said Willow Eaton, executive director of KP Community Services. “It was right in line with the services we want to provide and the need we know is out there.”

KPCS has provided group meals at their site in Lakebay for years, but that program shifted to drive-through pick-up and home-delivered meals during the pandemic. “We learned a lot about what a home-delivered program looks like during the pandemic, including the demand on volunteers,” Eaton said.

“One of the things that we ran into during the pandemic is that people needed food but didn’t feel comfortable reaching out to an organization,” Eaton



Longtime KPCS Volunteer Judy Jesse began delivering meals with door-to-door service in February. *Tina McKail, KP News*

said. “But they might feel comfortable reaching out to a neighbor or family member. People know when they have somebody near them who is struggling.”

The KPCS program is called Neighbors Feeding Neighbors. The chef will prepare frozen meals, packaged in reusable microwaveable containers, every Monday. Anyone 60 and over is eligible for three meals per week. Friends or family members can

call or come in during office hours to place or pick up orders. The first meals were delivered Feb. 15.

KPCS asks for the recipient’s name, address, and age bracket to assess the program and plan for the future, but providing information is not required. The Mustard Seed Project is in the planning stages for its program and hopes to deliver its first meals this spring. “We have not delivered meals before, so

getting everything in place takes time,” said Carolyn Benepe, nutrition manager at TMSP.

Benepe worked as the nutrition director of the Sheridan Senior Center in Wyoming where they prepared 100 home-delivered and 300 congregate meals.

“As a dietician probably the most meaningful work I did was making meals for older adults,” she said. “I loved when they got together to eat, but it was the home-delivered meals that kept them in their homes.”

“We have named the program Mustard Seed Meals,” said Program Director Julie Crane. “It brings in the community, our transportation and café volunteers, and all of our staff to be sure all the wheels are turning.”

Benepe and Crane describe both Neighbor Feeding Neighbor and Mustard Seed Meals as nontraditional since they are open to anyone 60 and over who needs the meals and are not limited to low-income households.

The other nontraditional aspect of the programs is that they will provide more than just a meal. The visits themselves will decrease social isolation and build trust. Each household will get information about resources that might allow seniors to safely remain in their homes — services like home repair or modifications and tax relief — along with contacts to help.

“It is about relationships, Paganelli said. “The hope that as relationships form and trust builds, recipients will agree to quick meetings, or health checks, to help them identify the people or organizations that can help meet their needs, including home safety and internet access.”

“We want to be able to help inform medical and other resource providers about what infrastructure or digital equity barriers need to be addressed to fully go in the right direction,” said Ben Paganelli, co-director of the Partnership. “We see this as being something that will inform rural healthcare for years to come.”

For information or to sign up for Neighbor Feeding Neighbor contact Community Services at info@yourkpcs.org; by calling 253-884-4440; or in person.

To get on the interest list for Mustard Seed Meals, email information@themustardseedproject.org, or call 253-884-9814. ■

“BEING ABLE TO FUND THE LOCAL NONPROFITS THAT DO THE WORK TO ADDRESS THOSE PRIORITIES IS REALLY IMPORTANT TO US; IT WILL HELP CREATE A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY FOR ALL.”

Richard Gelinás

EMPIRICALLY YOURS



Outgrowing Hydroelectric Power

We in the Pacific Northwest have lived in a paradise of low-cost electricity for decades. It's a mix of hydroelectric power (75%) supplemented by wind power (10%), natural gas (10%) and nuclear energy (5%). Peninsula Light Co. delivers us 90% hydro-power and 10% wind.

During the extreme cold weather we experienced in January, the consumption of electricity around the Pacific Northwest nearly exceeded the supply. Puget Sound Energy asked its customers to voluntarily conserve. Our comfortable blend of power sources was maxed out. While hydroelectric and nuclear sources contributed without problems, scant wind, and very low temperatures posed big problems for wind farms and natural gas generation facilities.

We are now experiencing the challenge faced by the rest of the nation: the demand for power, aggravated by extreme weather, is greater than supply. It is made worse by the loss of traditional sources of electricity generation like CO₂-spewing coal plants, aging transmission systems, stubborn for-profit monopolies and ossified permitting processes.

For decades, the climate and the terrain of the Pacific Northwest gave us the gift of clean, renewable hydroelectric power. It's easy to forget that our hydropower infrastructure was built about 90 years ago by Seattle City Light and the Bonneville Power Authority. Thanks to renewable hydropower, we pay pennies per kilowatt-hour, while others pay much more.

So what are our options to get more power needed for population growth during increasingly unpredictable weather due to planet-wide climate change? Well, there's nuclear, wind, solar, gravity-based generation (hydro), and maybe geothermal generation.

Texas planners are now confronted with the same dilemma. Their solution is to install renewables, mostly wind, with storage. They don't want to repeat long, widespread blackouts in the winter of 2021 that directly led to the deaths of 240 people. Texas now leads the nation in installed wind power.

Then there's nuclear energy, but we know this song. Remember when the Washington Public Power Supply System (WPPS; pronounced Whoops!) proposed building five nuclear power plants in the

early 1980s? Ultimately, only one reactor was built, and it has been working well since it was turned on in 1987. WPPS itself disappeared. For financing, WPPS sold bonds, but their market timing was tragic. WPPS had to offer coupons as high as 15% because of the inflation and recession in the early 1980s. WPPS defaulted on much of this debt and disappeared just ahead of angry investors with pitchforks.

Pros: nuclear energy can provide stable, base-load electricity while creating jobs to build and operate the plants. Cons: recent experience in the state of Georgia shows that construction and certification of new reactors can take two to three times as long and cost three to four times more than estimated; nuclear plants are designed to be safe, but accidents still happen (Three Mile Island; Chernobyl; Fukushima); fuel can be purchased on the open market, but the sole provider for years has been — wait for it — Russia; and highly radioactive spent fuel is stored “safely on-site in barrels.”

Nuclear would not be my first choice. I include the trendy idea of small nuclear reactors that would be made in a factory and shipped to a customer. These have been in the press recently, not because there are happy customers, but because some of the start-up companies have run out of money. As for fusion energy, until they can show me the neutrons, fusion power will always be, as has been said before, “20 years away.”

We do need more electricity. Expanding wind and solar continues to make sense, especially since the costs of these renewable sources continue to decline. Utility-scale renewable installations built these days usually include on-site battery storage, silencing “the wind-doesn't-blow-sun-won't-shine” critics.

Most new utility-scale wind and solar projects nowadays include enough battery storage for the entire plant for a day or more. A farm of lithium batteries at Moss Landing, California, can power an estimated 136,500 homes for several hours during periods of high demand.

Even better, a newer type of battery called a flow battery has emerged that is both safer and less expensive than lithium batteries. It works by storing electricity in a solution of metallic salt in one tank and releasing it by pumping it to another tank. I think of it as reversible rust. There is no lithium, cobalt, or any other expensive, rare or hazardous material. A 2-megawatt, 8-megawatt-hour (about enough for 500 homes) vanadium redox flow battery has been working well for the Snohomish County Utility District for several years now.

Here are two options for carbon-free renewable electricity that rely on gravity.

First up is making electricity with dams and lakes, like the Grand Coulee Dam. The dam and all the water above it can be thought of as a natural water battery. Electricity is generated as water moves downhill. This is the basis for “storage generators” where water is pumped from a storage lake at a low elevation to a lake hundreds of feet uphill. When water is released on demand, its kinetic energy turns a generator at the base of the hill, and the water is saved in a lake. When demand is low, the water is pumped back uphill to be used again. A pumped storage project has been proposed for Goldendale.

Then there's the moon and its gravitational pull on us, including all the water in Puget Sound. At least one tidal generator is in operation in Europe. This idea has been modeled for the tidal flow under the Tacoma Narrows several times. The models suggest that carefully designed underwater turbines would not harm salmon and would generate a great deal of energy.

Last year was the hottest recorded in human history. To cope with the weird weather that we know is coming, we can rely on renewable electricity combined with storage to stay alive, as we learn to shift everything else toward zero carbon released. That's our only future.

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

Dan Whitmarsh

WRITING BY FAITH



Down in the Dirt

It is almost spring, and spring gets me thinking about summer, and summer makes me think about camping. As I sit and write this, the ground outside my window is covered in a blanket of fresh snow, but I cannot deny that spring is just around the corner, with summer close behind, which means it will soon be time for camping.

Let me clarify what I mean by camping. I do not mean packing up the RV or spending a weekend at a glamping resort. I mean real camping, in a sleeping bag in a tent in the dirt, preferably beside a mountain stream winding its way amid towering Douglas fir. I mean cooking over the green Coleman stove, relaxing around the evening bonfire, and falling asleep to the sounds of nature. I mean waking up to fresh mountain air, even if sore from a cold night sleeping on the ground.

I come by it honestly. Ours has been a camping family for generations. My great-grandparents set up camp in the shadow of Mount Rainier; my grandparents took my mother and her brothers on early outings to Troublesome Creek, and my parents hauled us off to the Mountain Loop Highway and the Big Four Ice Caves. There are generations of trips captured in black-and-white film, replete with canvas tents, bamboo fly rods, and the ubiquitous kerosene stove. This heritage lives on in me.

Today, we spend a lot of our time in a sanitized and digitized world. We leave our air-conditioned homes and drive in our air-conditioned cars to our air-conditioned offices or movie theaters. Our food comes prepackaged in boxes and cans. Our entertainment streams from the cloud and our human connections are often distanced through social media and digital servers.

In this sterile and virtual world, it is important to be intentional about getting outside and touching what is real. Studies have shown that working in the soil of a garden releases serotonin in our brains, and harvesting fresh produce causes a dopamine release, both of which lead to happiness and well-being. Studies in Japan have proven that the practice of forest bathing — walking mindfully amidst trees — contributes to lowered stress in our bodies and better mental health. Getting outside is good for us.

At the end of March, Christians will gather to greet the Easter sunrise, retelling the story of an empty tomb in an ancient garden. As I ponder the life of Jesus, I am always struck by the physical nature of the biblical accounts. They tell of people getting dust in their sandals while walking along the seashore. People go about their work of mending nets, collecting taxes and working in the fields. Jesus puts his hands in mud, and he cooks breakfast over a morning bonfire. The crux of the story is memorialized in a loaf of bread and cup of wine.

This, to me, is a reminder that the Christian story, as with all great stories, is an embodied story, an incarnate story. It tells us that our Creator cares about creation, that God cares about dust. God honors a boy's lunch, a widow's metal coin and the fruit of the vine. The real stuff of life matters because it is where life is found.

Further, this is a reminder to me to embrace the real wherever I can. There is goodness in the world, from the tartness of a rich red wine to the sweet aroma arising from baking sourdough. Life is better for the warm skin of a freshly picked tomato, the embrace of a lover's arms, and the vibrating resonance of plucked guitar

strings. We are held by sunshine and rain. Our feet find their home in the dirt.

Our Easter morning will be marked by the fragrance of bonfire smoke mingled with the scent of cinnamon rolls and hot coffee, serenaded by the alleluias of seagulls overhead, all clasped in the cold chill of an early spring morning. Soon it will give way to summer and gardening and camping and dirt. The glory is that it all matters. Let us embrace it.

On behalf of the Key Peninsula Ministers Association, I wish you a blessed Easter, hoping that you find yourself in touch with divine love, along with the beautiful people and this inspiring place we all call home.

Award-winning columnist Dan Whitmarsh is pastor at Lakebay Community Church.

Krisa Bruemmer
IRREVERENT MOM



Fun and Games

Grandma got my 8-year-old daughter Violet a checkerboard for Christmas. She was giddy the first time we got it out, enthusiastic right up until the point when I jumped one of her pieces and removed it from the board. Her face fell and she begged to undo her previous move. Since it was our first game, I let her, then took it easy for a few turns. After leaving a few of my pieces where they could be jumped, I watched Violet's confidence and understanding of the game grow.

Within 20 minutes Violet trapped my final kings in a surprise attack and won. Then she did it again. And again. The kid is clever.

When Violet wins, her joy is palpable.

But when I dare jump one of her pieces, there's a scowl and a groan. I noticed her cheeks turning red after I jumped one of the three kings she had left on the board. Then it was four kings against two, with me in the lead.

"You OK?"

"I'm fine," Violet mumbled, more growl than words.

A quiet tear rolled down her fiery cheek.

"Wanna take a break?"

"No!" She glared at the floor. "Just go."

Fast forward five minutes and Violet's sobbing and begging for a rematch while her dad's calling out that it's bedtime. They argue and I wish I hadn't pulled out the game at all.

"You can't cry every time you lose a game," Dad says, not unkindly, but not helpful in the moment either. "Would you cry like this on a playdate with Ella if she won?"

"I'm not crying!" Violet shouts while crying.

As she storms down the stairs I think back to our mid-pandemic outdoor preschool days when Ella won every running race and Violet developed a habit of sprinting into the woods sobbing with every loss. She usually came in second place while Amelia, not far behind, would gleefully jump up and down at the finish line unfazed, just happy to run and play outside with her friends.

Violet's dad and I each sigh before heading downstairs for post-checkers-meltdown bedtime. She's not crying anymore but there's a pillow over her face and she refuses to come out.

"Buddy, it's OK to feel upset but Dad's right — it's important to work on your calm-down strategies, like breathing and the finger counting thing you learned at school."

"It's called 'smell the flowers, blow out the candle,'" Violet grumbles from beneath the pillow, naming but refusing to do the thing.

Bedtime books don't go well. When Dad leaves the room I try again: "You know, it's OK to have strong feelings."

"I don't."

"I have strong feelings," I said. "I'm just older so I've worked longer on handling them."

Or maybe I've just gotten good at hiding them.

"I don't have strong feelings. I'm like Dad."

Oh boy.

"Dad has big feelings too. He just doesn't show them the same way."

"Fine."

"Having strong feelings isn't a bad thing; we just need to work on calming down rather than ending up so mad, OK?" I try to take Violet's hand but she pulls it away, then grabs a small sketchpad and starts drawing.

Stifling the urge to look at the page, I take a deep breath and sit in the silence.

A minute or so later Violet says, "I'm mad at myself."

Ouch.

I think back to myself at 15 years old. Sophomore year I decided I was going to become perfect. After ghosting my troublemaker friends and quitting minor teenage vices, I spent hours at the library most evenings, counted calories obsessively, argued shamelessly with any teacher who docked me even a single point on a test, got straight As and won nearly every track race I ran.

Until State.

There's a photo of my 4-by-400m relay team on the podium at the State Championships in Spokane wearing 6th place

medals. Most of the girls are smiling. My face is red, scowling, and dripping with tears.

I was so mad at myself.

"Violet, you're in the perfectionist trap."

She's quiet. We've talked about this before.

Then in barely a whisper, she asks, "Tic-tac-toe?" and hands me her sketchpad.

She wins. Then I win. Then she wins again. There are no more tears, not that night anyway.

As I leave her room, I worry I'm not doing this right.

The door's almost closed when I hear, "Mom."

"Yeah?"

"Checkers rematch tomorrow?"

I go back in and reach for a hug. Violet hugs me back and I'm mostly telling the truth when I say, "I can hardly wait."

Krisa Bruemmer is an award-winning writer. She lives in Vaughn.

Dan Clouse
THE OTHER SIDE



Cartography Old and New

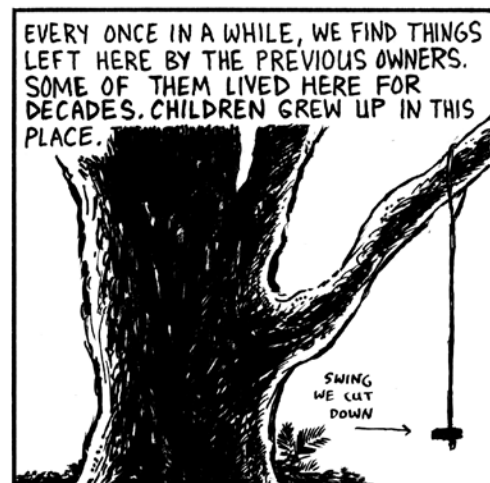
Emerson observed in one of his early essays that when we reflect on our lives, "behind us, as we go, all things assume pleasing forms, as clouds do far off." He was 40 years old.

At that age, I wasn't looking back at far-off clouds behind me. Satchel Paige had warned, "Don't look back. They might be gaining on you."

Mrs. Fisher, the elderly character

CONTINUED PAGE 8

José Alaniz WE LIVE HERE: EXCAVATION GHOSTS



in Elizabeth von Arnim's novel "The Enchanted April," outlived all the famous people she knew as a child. In a sense, she'd outlived herself. She wanted only to be left alone to sit and remember. I get it: some drizzly February days on the KP are best spent sitting and remembering.

Once you're old enough to have a past, but still young enough to remember it, the people you've lost loom large behind you. Their presence, after all, was a big part of what made the past so good. Pleasing forms, indeed.

Technological innovation has left us with boxes of discarded gadgets that were superseded by new, improved ones. Remember transistor radios, typewriters, cordless phones, modems, roach clips, remote controls, VHS tapes, DVDs and all the other archaeology out in the home midden? Even a rusty coffee can full of bent nails is more likely to have something usable in it.

Last winter, A. and I drove around Florida for a week. We hadn't been in The Sunshine State since 1972, when we slow-poked along at 45 mph in a VW bus rigged out as a camper, with money enough for gas and food, but not an overnight stay at a 6 Dollar Motel.

Fifty years later, we found ourselves rocketing in battery-powered silence down the interstates in a rented EV. It came with that big display on the dash where the little GPS arrow crawls up the screen. The she-who-must-be-obeyed female voice firmly prompted every turn en route to the next destination.

Satellite technology saved us from wandering around lost in terra incognita. It was great.

But still, we couldn't help missing something from the old trips. Back when Tricky Dick was still recording everything in the Oval Office and this long-haired driver was on the lookout for state troopers wearing mirror shades, the passenger would have held an open road map.

"How far to Fort Myers?"

"What if we took Florida 41 instead of I-75?"

Looking back through the mist of memory, I see the pleasing form of a beautiful passenger holding a folded-out road map.

Time travel whiplash back to 2023: "Let's get a map!" she said.

Our lives hanging by a thread, I careened across two lanes of traffic for the exit with a big gas station sign, cutting off a pickup flying a Confederate flag. Fortunately, we weren't Wyatt and Billy in "Easy Rider." The gracious truck driver

tipped his Skoal baseball cap respectfully at the crazy white-haired guy who may have been virtue signaling but sure hadn't used turn signals. Hey! It was 21st-century Florida, so he was used to senior citizens' antics on the highway.

Inside the convenience store, the young immigrant at the cash register flanked by the lottery tickets and ponies of 5-Hour Energy Shots didn't seem to understand the question, "Do you have a Florida road map?"

I thought it might be a language issue. He looked like someone whose native language was Urdu or something.

Then his eyes lit up in sudden comprehension. "Ah! Peppa map? Sottie. No. Not here."

I might as well have been asking for a museum exhibit. Like a buggy whip. Or an Allman Brothers cassette tape.

It took a while to sink in that paper maps had gone the way of ashtrays, the three-martini lunch, sharkskin suits, sock garters and the Republican Party.

We took turns dashing into gas stations and tourist offices looking for a good old-fashioned road map. No luck. People smiled indulgently, pitying the absurdity of such a request by the hopelessly outdated.

For the rest of the sunny trip, the GPS display was our road map. It was trustworthy, and it got us everywhere we intended.

It turns out, though, that maps are more than just tools for getting you there.

The online maps in our cars and phones are actually navigation tools, an upgrade to the celestial navigation used by the Phoenicians. The best you can say for GPS is that it's functional — at least when you're navigating.

On the other hand, every paper map is potentially a treasure map. With it, daydreaming is never far away. Your imagination traces the roads you've traveled and the ones you might follow to who knows where. It's not so much about where you are as where you might be. There are realms of gold on that road map. Among its paper folds are the roads not taken that have made all the difference.

Getting lost looking at a road map is a feature, not a bug.

It's a familiar story about us and our tools. It takes a new, improved one to show us what the old one was good for.

"You don't know what you've got 'til it's gone." Sometimes it takes a new parking lot to uncover the paradise you didn't notice while you could.

Dan Clouse lives in Lakebay.

Letter to the Editor

SHOULD PURDY BE AN URBAN AREA?

It came as a surprise to me when I recently learned that under the current Pierce County Comprehensive Plan, Purdy is designated as an Urban Growth Area (UGA). This means that it can be developed to the extent of areas like Gig Harbor North. We have recently heard that one or more developers would like the City of Gig Harbor to annex the Purdy area so that they could pursue intensive residential development in Purdy.

This should be a matter of particular concern to residents of the Key Peninsula because of worsening traffic congestion and increasingly dangerous conditions at the intersection of the westbound exit ramp from State Route 16 and Highway 302. Allowing Purdy to be developed as

a UGA, or having it annexed to the City of Gig Harbor, will make the traffic conditions more onerous and dangerous given the proposals being floated for high-density residential developments, not to mention any additional commercial growth. And, as we all know, permanent solutions to the Purdy Bridge and intersection are not planned for any time in the near future.

If you believe as I do, please submit comments to Pierce County (CompPlanUpdate@piercecountywa.gov) that Purdy should be removed as a UGA and to the Gig Harbor City Council and mayor (mayorandcouncil@gigharborwa.gov) that Purdy should not be annexed to the City of Gig Harbor.

John Nichols, Lakebay

Obituary



Michael A. Smith

Born at Saint Joseph Hospital on Easter Sunday 1961, Michael A. Smith of Lakebay died from previously undiagnosed cancer Dec. 12, at Saint Anthony Hospital in Gig Harbor. He was 62 years old.

Mike attended school in South Tacoma. He managed two newspaper delivery routes while in junior high. He was good at it and made lots of friends.

After earning his GED, he went on to Clover Park Vocational Technical School where he learned the construction trade. Like his grandfather before him, Mike made his living

working to build residential houses and commercial office buildings. He took pride in his craftsmanship and was especially proud of the way he could hang a door.

The years in construction took a toll on his body. Between bad hips and a bad back, and a lifelong struggle with his weight, Mike ended up on disability. He spent his last 20 years living with his mother, Alberta Ramsdell, at her home in Lakebay.

Mike loved his sweets and Mom's homemade fruit cobblers.

He had many close and long friendships. He was very good to his mother. He enjoyed maintaining and mowing a beautiful lawn.

Mike always felt lucky enough to buy lotto tickets now and then, and even won a couple hundred bucks a few times. He was absolutely crazy about NASCAR events and thoroughly enjoyed the sport of car racing. Last but not least, he loved his cat, Kitty.

He leaves behind his mother, Alberta Ramsdell; sister-in-law Robin and their four children; younger brother Jerry and sister-in-law Heather; niece Lexi and nephew Blake; and many others.

Making History: Sonnen, Parker and Seahawks Girls Wrestling

In just their eighth year, the Peninsula girls are making a statewide statement. "This is so ground-breaking and inspirational – it means everything."

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

For all those Peninsula High School trivia buffs out there: Who was the first-ever Seahawks girls wrestler to win a state championship?

That answer and honor goes to Mira Sonnen.

Sonnen, Bailey Parker, and the rest of the Peninsula Seahawks girls wrestling team made school history at the 2024 WIAA State Wrestling Mat Classic Feb. 17 at the Tacoma Dome. In just its eighth year of existence, the Peninsula girls wrestling program crowned its first individual and team state champions.

"This is so ground-breaking and inspirational — it means everything," said Seahawks girls and boys wrestling coach Gary Griffin. "They earned it."

The girls won the 3A/4A state team title, scoring 122 points. Junior Mira Sonnen (140 lbs.) and sophomore Bailey Parker (145 lbs.) each won individual state championships. Sonnen (38-7) went up against defending state champ Flor Parker-Borrero (9-2; Graham Kapowsin High School).

It was a rematch of the Region 3 tournament championship from just a week earlier in which Sonnen pinned Parker-Borrero in less than two minutes. Two different matches, same result: Sonnen once again pinned Parker-Borrero, this time in 1:30. Parker-Borrero had beaten Sonnen the first three times the two met, but both of Parker-Borrero's losses this year came at the hands of Sonnen.

"Mira puts her heart and soul into wrestling, and it shows," Griffin said.

Parker took her 36-1 record into the state championship match. She quickly won the lopsided matchup by pinning Oksana Galiant (26-14; Kent Meridian) in 1:19. Destiny Woodruff from Bethel, whom Parker pinned for the regional championship Feb. 10, ended up taking third place at state.



PHS state champions at the Tacoma Dome. *Peninsula School District*

This is only Parker's second year of wrestling, and she took fourth place at last year's Mat Classic. Her only loss this year was Dec. 22 to three-time state champion Ruby Clark from Toppenish. Clark competes in the small school division.

"Bailey dominated the field. We are in awe of her and her hard work, dedication and great attitude," Griffin said.

Olivia Griffin (41-15), the coach's daughter, finished in fifth place in the 100 lbs. class by avenging an earlier loss to Gig Harbor's Ellanor Nimrick with a 4-1 decision. Freshman Paige Powers also placed seventh by pinning Natalie Marcyes-Weeks from Auburn Mountainview in 1:34.

"This was an extra special day because of Olivia's performance," said Coach Griffin. "I know how bad she wanted

GRANDORFF, PHIPPS FINISHING IN SEVENTH, EIGHTH PLACE FOR PHS BOYS

PHS senior Justin Phipps (38-10) finished his high school career with an eighth-place finish at Mat Classic XXXV. Phipps lost an 11-5 decision to Billy Weisberger from Mead in the 120 lbs. weight class. This was his second time placing at the state level. Seahawks sophomore Nehemiah Grandorff (37-13) won by pinfall over Hayden Larson (23-13; Hermiston) in the 150 lbs. class to take seventh place.

to avenge that loss."

Georgina Johnson (33-18) took a close 11-10 decision over Eastlake's Rylan Miller in the 105 lbs. bracket to earn seventh place. Freshman Paige Powers also placed seventh by getting a pinfall victory over Natalie Marcyes-Weeks from Auburn Mountainview in 1:34.

Lindsay Shipp and Kylie Michalke were both one match shy of placing individually for the Seahawks but contributed

to the team score.

The Curtis girls wrestling team finished in second place overall as a team and Glacier Peak came in third.

A repeat seems likely next year as Sonnen, Parker, Johnson, Shipp, Powers and Olivia Griffin will all return. "I thought we were on a two-year plan, but we are ahead of schedule. These girls are each other's biggest fans, and it was just a fun season," Coach Griffin said. ■

Adison Richards Makes Second Run for State House for the 26th LD

STAFF REPORT

Attorney Adison Richards (D-Bremerton) launched his campaign in December 2023 and began fundraising to win the seat he barely lost to Rep. Spencer Hutchins (R-Gig Harbor) by less than 1%

of the vote in the 2022 election.

Richards is now running for what just became an open seat for House of Representatives Position 1 representing the 26th legislative district (See p. 16).

At least Richards won't have to run against his friend, Spencer Hutchins, who declined

to run for the office a second time in 2024. The two developed an unlikely friendship after being on the campaign trail two years ago.

Richards told KP News his focus is making sure the Key Peninsula has a voice in Olympia. He said he wants to lower the political

temperature using his skills to work through difficult situations and protect democracy.

"I've lived in every part of the district from Gig Harbor to the Key Peninsula and now as a homeowner in Kitsap County," he said.

No Republican challenger declared at press time. ■



"There's a lot of negative energy around running, so if we can show them at a young age that it can be fun, I feel like they'll want to do it more." *Tina McKail, KP News*

PHS Star Athlete Gives Elementary Kids a Running Start

Seahawks Junior Elektra Higgins is trying to build an interest in running for fourth and fifth graders.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

It was 34 degrees at 4:15 p.m. on the activity field at Swift Water Elementary School Jan. 9. The 15-mile-per-hour winds made it feel more like 28. The rain had stopped about an hour earlier and the sun was dipping below the fir trees near the Tom Taylor YMCA.

Standing in the middle of the field wearing shorts and a t-shirt was Peninsula High School junior Elektra Higgins, barking instructions.

It is an odd choice of attire for the weather, but the perennial top-10 finisher at the cross-country state championships seemed to know what she was doing.

That is probably why the parents of more than 20 fourth and fifth graders at Swift Water Elementary in Gig Harbor signed their kids up to learn how to run from one of the best long-distance runners in PHS history.

Higgins, along with her mom, Teasha Buckland, a fourth-grade teacher at the school, leads the Swift Water running club twice a week. "We run rain or shine," said Higgins, a Wauna resident who finished third at the state cross-country meet in November, ninth in 2022 and seventh in 2021. Every Tuesday and Thursday the elementary schoolers spend an hour picking up the basics of running.

Higgins and Buckland volunteer their time and offer the club for free.

"Running and cardio is part of every sport, so my goal is to give these kids a good general base understanding of it," Higgins said. "There's a lot of negative energy around running, so if we can show them at a young age that it can be fun, I feel like they'll want to do it more."

To do that, Higgins and her mom spend only about 15 minutes of the hour-long session running around the track. The rest is spent playing active games and learning the important extras like stretching, staying hydrated and, especially in cold weather, keeping the muscles warm.

"(Elektra is) showcasing running in a way that's fun and not just about winning a race," said Nick Lascheck, who has two kids — Waylond and Daphne — in the running club. "It's smart how she is training these kids. It's really thinking outside the box."

Tyler Nugent, Higgins' cross country and track coach at PHS, said it's this type of effort that will ensure these kids are ready for running sports sooner. "So often by the time they arrive in middle school or high school, young athletes identify with a ball sport because they've been playing it since

they were little," he said. "I'm so proud of Elektra for her leadership of young runners."

Lascheck has another daughter, Ascher, an eighth-grader at Harbor Ridge Middle School. Ascher, who is a runner, attends some of the PHS meets and regularly eyeballs some of the school records Higgins has at the middle school. Lascheck is excited Ascher will get the opportunity to run alongside Higgins next year when Ascher is a freshman and Higgins is a senior. "I hope having Ascher see someone who is older and volunteering will encourage her to try to help out."

Buckland agreed. "It would be amazing if we could have other high school volunteers teach the sports they love at elementary schools," he said. "Can you imagine all the amazing clubs we'd have? It would take a lot of teenagers to make that happen."

Buckland gives all the credit for the successful club to her daughter. She is just there for "classroom management" but Higgins leads all the instructions. "Sometimes I'll translate what Elektra says into words kids can understand," Buckland said.

Right now she is just enjoying watching Higgins develop into a leadership role. "It's fun to see how excited the kids get learning from her," Buckland said. "Regardless of

her accomplishments, they know she is a teenager and in high school and they find that just awesome."

Michelle Clemens got her son, Camden, involved in the running club after she saw an email from Buckland. "He is at an age where competition is starting to be important and he's learning how to run correctly from someone who is at the top of the sport."

Clemens said she can already tell that Camden's posture and running form have improved from the running club. "And he sleeps a lot better after running around for an hour."

Their third six-week session wrapped up in February and Higgins and Buckland may try for another before the school year ends. But for now, Higgins is turning her attention to the track where she runs in the 1,600 and 3,200 meter races, as well as the 4-by-400 meter race. Even though she had a successful season on the cross-country course earlier in the school year, Higgins' sophomore track season was hampered by an iron deficiency.

The boys and girls track season kicks off Thursday, March 14 with the Peninsula Jamboree. They host Central Kitsap on Friday, March 22. The state championships are the last weekend in May. ■

Legendary “Ghost Bread” Mushroom Discovered on the Key Peninsula

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

To hear Adam DeLeo describe his astonishing recent discovery of agarikon on the Key Peninsula is to eavesdrop on a moment of hard-won epiphany that could probably be described as spiritual, though DeLeo would be the last to describe it in those terms.

“The profile just jogged me,” he says as we trek through Key Central Forest in search of more. “You see that elephant trunk — you have to do a double take. Like oh my, that is what that is. That mushroom’s been somewhere in the back of my mind for so long.”

DeLeo, owner of Adam’s Mushrooms in Key Center, grew up on the KP and knows its mushroom communities and their backwoods haunts as well as anyone. It was around New Year’s when he made the discovery. Cabin fever propelled him into a local forest he had only visited once or twice and wanted to know better.

He says it was his legs that made the critical decision. They detoured him onto a weird little side trail. “The tree itself caught my eye because it was a big old tree.”

I’ve seen the tree. Not only is it big and old — and I mean old-old, true old-growth — it leans at a wild angle and has a stunted mop-top of fat limbs like an ancient fisherman bent into a permanent huddle

against the wind after a lifetime of being caught out in storms. It is 110 feet tall. Halfway up, a hearty young

body of agarikon shelves out. Seventy-five feet up is the meat of the epiphany, a fruiting body that pours out of the tree’s deeply furrowed bark and hangs in a shape that can only be called absurd, for it is a laughably familiar shape. Though its surface is weathered and chalky, pallid, tinged with green — Northwest Coast peoples once called it “ghost bread” and associated it with a shaman’s power to pass between worlds — it looks to me like a tall stack of pancakes. Which I guess is fitting. Pancakes have inspired their fair share of epiphanies.

Agarikon, also known as quinine conk, is a shelf mushroom like the familiar red-belted and artist’s conks. But it grows almost exclusively on ancient trees. It is rare even in untouched old-growth forests, hence almost unheard of in our thrice-logged lowlands. This find is a big deal.

Like other conks, agarikon is a wood-rot-



Drone shot of the rare and mystical agarikon safely out of reach on an old growth fir. Adam DeLeo

ting fungus. It infects trees through wounds like sheared-off limbs. To fruit it takes decades at a minimum. Once it does fruit, it adds a new layer of spore tubes to its fruiting body each year, eventually creating a distinctive hanging hoof shape, the pancake tower. All the while the tree survives, ever so slowly decaying from within.

Agarikon lives in the Pacific Northwest and across Eurasia, where it is even more rare. It has been harvested for millennia and used by herbalists to address ailments from tuberculosis to cancer and as a poultice to reduce inflammation. In many European countries, its remaining localities can be counted on one hand.

A few modern scientists, including Kitsap-based researcher Paul Stamets, have delved into agarikon’s complex mix of molecules and found a number of compounds that have immunomodulating, anticancer, antimicrobial, even antiviral properties. Stamets, who has made it a personal mission to culture tiny samples from 100 agarikon, a venture that involves boat trips to remote parts of British Columbia, writes that the strains he has studied vary widely in their medicinal properties, suggesting that the genomes of such ancient fungi are pharmaceutical storehouses.

Natives of the Northwest Coast used agarikon in poultices and medicines. In several American museums are large figurines carved from agarikon, with gaping mouths and the look of guardians, collected

by early anthropologists from shaman grave sites. They are fantastic. A few masks also exist.

DeLeo and I have come to Key Central Forest because it is one of the few places on the Key Peninsula where big old trees can still be found. Hidden in blocks of Douglas fir managed by the Department of Natural Resources for timber revenue, these trees wait, most of them knotty or curved enough that they were spared the saw the first few times around.

Since 2006, statewide, DNR has ceased to harvest any tree more than 150 years old. We are here a week before the kickoff of the large timber harvest that will be in full swing by publication time. Flagging is everywhere. We try and fail to decipher it as our trails wind through stands. Where are the boundaries? Will these trees stand or fall?

We do know that blue means leave. Around each blue-flagged old-growth tree, DNR has marked a cluster of younger trees as additional leave trees for protection.

DNR always leaves at least eight trees per acre, old-growth or not. The practice aims to avoid the creation of ecological deserts by preserving local tree genetics and giving animals at least a few refuges. DNR foresters have told me they see the practice clearly paying off: DNR forests regain their structural complexity faster than straight clearcut company land. They also pointed out that a few isolated old-growth trees are not the same as an old-growth forest,

which is an entire ecosystem.

DeLeo has a practically epicurean eye for trees. He spies interesting specimens through impossible corridors of young trunks. Though we find no new agarikon, he is happy. One old-growth has what he deems a trout profile, its trunk skinny at the base then fattening then tapering again. Elsewhere he stops cold to remark on a tree’s bark, woven like latticework. Strange branching patterns get critical examination. He comments on subtle variations in hue.

“It’s pretty cool,” he says. “You end up with a couple of old-timers in here to spread their germs.”

We pass into an older mixed-species area. A yew stands next to the trail. The flagging remains mysterious. In a pocket where stands of alder, maple, cedar, and fir meet, the column of a tremendous fir rises, hardly tapering to where it has sheared off 100 feet above. A huckleberry plant grows way up there. Soon shelf mushrooms will sprout from the fir’s bark. Ants and beetles will come, woodpeckers will hammer away, chickadees will use the holes for nests. When I move in close to measure the trunk — it is five feet in diameter — I find old scars: black fire marks and faint remnants of blue paint.

The location of the agarikon tree will remain secret. But mushrooms get around. Their spores travel the stratosphere. Given enough time, perhaps more agarikon will appear among the KP’s oldest trees. ■

Local Animal Rescuer Tom Bates Home From Ukraine

The retired long-haul truck driver returned from three months shuttling supplies to frontline areas and getting abandoned animals out on his third trip to the war.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

Tom Bates of Lakebay, 70, returned home Jan. 19 after three months in Ukraine as a volunteer delivering food and equipment to people in need and evacuating abandoned or injured animals. It was his third trip to Ukraine since first setting foot there less than a month after the Russian invasion Feb. 24, 2022. All told, Bates has spent more than a year in Ukraine over the last two.

This was the most difficult trip yet.

“I was fighting a car and the weather for three months,” he said.

After working with different organizations at the beginning of the war, Bates volunteered for a small U.K.-based charitable foundation called K9 Rescue International, which now has a counterpart called K9 Rescue International Ukraine. He’s spent the war hauling donated food and supplies across Eastern Ukraine and moving rescued dogs, cats, birds and farm animals to safety in an aging delivery van.

That van finally died shortly after his second visit. The K9 Director Nick Tadd picked up a temperamental 2004 Nissan Patrol SUV in Poland last November to replace it.

“It used to be owned by a nun who liked to go bird hunting with her dogs,” Bates said. “It’s been bounced around a lot. The heater went out for three days in subzero temps. The fuel tank was leaking and had to be replaced — that took six weeks. But it did start, it did work, just not always happily. The capacity is not much, so we do have a trailer but without brakes in the winter on ice it’s a bit weird. But we use it anyway.”

Bates said he transported many more dogs on this third visit than previously.

“I collect them from all over, then I’m always going to Lviv or Kyiv, getting them ready for transport out of the country,” he said. “One of my passengers was Alena Tolmacheva, a refugee from Kramatorsk. She had five Dobermans, two cats, three chickens, and an owl with one wing. The owl wasn’t hers; the military rescued it. That was a fun ride.”

Bates has a regular place to stay in Kharkiv, though the street he lives on sustained repeated rocket attacks just a year ago.

“Most of my time is driving between relatively safe places with a few exceptions, like Nikopol. This time I saw two dead people from a rocket attack that had just happened



Alena Tolmacheva, a refugee from Kramatorsk, with one of her five Dobermans. All photos by Tom Bates



before I got there. I was on my way to pick up some dogs in an abusive situation. That one was hard, they were pretty messed up. I was talking to the neighbor, and we could hear a rocket whistle. When you hear the whistles, then at least you know it’s going somewhere else, not right on top of you. It hit the block behind us.”

Gretchen Roosevelt, who has been



FAR LEFT: Kharkiv cat.

LEFT: Roman Kharchenko with a rescue in Dolnya.

“Roman was a soldier but now he has three girls and he’s exempt. So he became an orthodox priest and animal rescuer. His wife, Valeria, and him have basically a zoo in their house.

They have aquariums full of turtles that they’ve rescued; birds, chinchillas. I saw a rat there that just had surgery with some kind of brace on it. Oh, and hedgehogs. Anyway, really good people.”



Rocket damage to a home two doors down from Bates' safe house in Kharkiv. The mother and son living there rebuilt it with cinderblocks.

married to Bates for 30 years, said "I'm always glad when he gets home in one piece, relatively. Tom knows what he's doing, he has always been an independent agent, and he can make a huge difference there.

"I do worry for his safety with repeated trips — you're increasing your odds of a big problem. But I would never say 'You can't go.' He's making such a contribution, maybe one dog or one owl at a time. But when he sends the pictures of the dogs, you know, loaded up in the back of the car, it's like, 'Oh my God, they've all lost a wing.'"

On this last trip, Bates and Tadd cofounded K9 Rescue International Ukraine based in Poltava, between Kyiv and Kharkiv, run by a local former marketing director named Luda Khomenko, to simplify logistics.

"We are tied together but they are two registered foundations, one in the U.K. and one in Ukraine," Bates said. "I know Luda quite well; I've been working with her for a long time now. She knows how to navigate the systems."

Donations have dried up, Bates said, what's left is mostly from the U.K. and Scandinavian countries. "We don't have the 501(c)(3) option in the U.S., it's just

too expensive for us to do," he said. "We get enough to keep limping along. This last time, I funded my entire trip. I didn't ask the foundation for anything. The nine months before they completely paid my expenses, which is the only way I could have done it."

Bates left the Nissan in Poland for repairs when he returned home. Its condition will factor into whether or not he returns to Ukraine at the end of April for another three months, the limit of his visa.

"If there's no vehicle, there's no point in me going back unless I want to hop trains and just go," he said. "Number two is always funding." He recently sold his camping vehicles at home in case he decides to return. "You know, that's been the way of it," he said.

Recalling his first trip in March 2022, Bates said he had no plan.

"The only motivation I really had was that I saw I could help," he said. "I was organizing warehouses and establishing a centralized distribution center for aid organizations sending in food from all over, and we managed to get that accomplished. I can remember that feeling; it was 'I can go now.' The system was built, working, and there were competent people there."

He's looking for the same feeling now. "We're accidentally accomplishing our goal, which is empowering the locals to help the animals and the people. The Ukrainian people don't want to be handed things; they want to do things. They want to help. They want to be a part of the solution," he said.

"But I feel like I need to go back and tie up some loose ends," he said. "We have a warehouse near Kyiv. People that donate our supplies don't want to go further. This last delivery from the U.K. was three pickup trucks that were going to the military, but they filled them up with our supplies. I have some people in Kharkiv that are distributing for me, and I just want to strengthen the relationship a little bit more. These are all volunteers."

Bates said the mood in Ukraine is positive. "The McDonald's are all open, there's new construction everywhere," he said. "When the youth, the 20-year-olds, come up and start running things it'll be part of the European Union."

But there are exceptions.

"Food aid, whenever I get it, I get it out and I have a contact in Sloviansk, which is a pretty desperate city," he said. "A lot of elderly people, those are the ones that



Tom Bates with a grateful aid recipient near Sloviansk.



The owl Bates transported was rescued from the front line by Ukrainian soldiers. It was missing a wing and received treatment in Dnipro from Veronica Konkova, a refugee from Crimea. Bates took it to Kyiv for rehabilitation.

are left behind. They don't have the funds to leave."

On his way to Sloviansk, he stopped to visit two elderly sisters.

"I'd met them the year before, I'd brought some aid to them and would stop in to see them," he said. "All the homes around them were destroyed. It was an emotional visit. One told me about a girl across the street, a young teenager, who died in her arms after a rocket attack. There was more sobbing than talking that time."

Bates said, "I get a lot of messages from people, comments on Facebook, and I just got one that's a good indication of how the Ukrainian people feel about international help. They were thanking me for something, and this person said, 'Tom, come back. We can't win it without you.' What they mean is they can't win it without us. It's basically a plea to the United States and the international community.

"Those are the real stories, what they're enduring. I'm just trying to make it more enduring."

For more information, go to <https://k9rescue.international/projects>. ■

Peninsula Lacrosse Takes Aim at State Title

Senior captains Robby Akulschin and Elliot Gilliam lead an experienced and consistent team this season.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

For Robby Akulschin, the parallels between his stick skills on the field and in the air are uncanny.

Maintaining situational awareness. Navigating unexpected twists and turns. Mastering control and maneuverability. Making confident split-second decisions. Remaining calm under pressure.

And, in Akulschin's case, a connection to the title "captain."

"I've been with a stick in my hands my whole life," said Akulschin, Peninsula High School Boys Lacrosse senior co-captain, who also is an aspiring airline pilot taking flying lessons at Tacoma Narrows Airport.

"Stick skills" takes on multiple meanings for the Akulschin family. Robby's parents, Paul and Dani, helped start Peninsula Lacrosse years ago, and both of Robby's older brothers played for the program. Paul and Robby's uncle are both pilots, and Robby and his older brother are working on getting their pilot's license. Akulschin said he continuously applies the multitasking aspects of what he learns on the ground to what he does in the air, and vice versa.

"On offense, you're not just looking in front of you. You have to keep your eyes up and see what your defender is doing and what the defender behind him is doing," Akulschin said. "In the air, you're not just flying the plane: you're checking the rudders, adjusting the engine speed, looking at your altitude. The similarities are so interesting."

The 6-foot 2-inch Akulschin, a first-team



Peninsula High School Boys Lacrosse Co-Captains Elliot Gilliam and Robby Akulschin during practice. *Tina McKail, KP News*

All Puget-Pierce Conference attacker last season, and Peninsula Lacrosse are coming off a loss in the semifinals at last year's state tournament. The team lost former captain Bo Clark and Brendan Kolbaba to graduation last June.

"We lost a lot of skills from last year's team, but we have a much more consistent team, which will be better for us," Akulschin said. "Sometimes with the new guys, we

start off a little slow, but once we start connecting as a team it's really something awesome."

While Akulschin leads a rebuilt offense, "Over and over again, defense wins games," said senior co-captain and defender Elliot Gilliam.

Both Gilliam and Akulschin expect big things from the defensive side this year. Gilliam will play alongside his brother

Thomas, a midfielder, and is excited they have a pair of equally capable goalies in junior Tyler Givot and freshman Brett Farr. "They are both so good and will just continue to get better," Gilliam said. Freshman Asher Epstein is a skilled defender who has good footwork, according to Akulschin, and Gilliam singled out midfielder Phillip "Trey" de Maine as the player who "gives the most effort out of anyone on the team."

"We're a good unit together," said Gilliam, who was also named first-team All Puget-Pierce Conference last year. "But it's easy to be a leader of a good group of guys." Gilliam plans to play club lacrosse at Boise State next year and major in mechanical engineering.

As for Akulschin, he plans to put his love of flying in front of his love of playing when he attends either San Jose State or Montana State to pursue his pilot's license.

"I hope to always be a part of this sport, but I know what I want to do. As much as I love lacrosse, I will choose time in the cockpit over lacrosse any day," he said.

Peninsula Lacrosse faces off with Bonney Lake Friday, March 15 at 7:30 p.m. at Roy Anderson Field for their first home game of the season. Akulschin said they have lost the first game of the season for the past three years and he wants to end that streak. He scored four goals in the season-opening loss to Bonney Lake last year. They face Gig Harbor twice: once on March 22 at 7:30 p.m. and again at the annual Baggetaway Bowl, lacrosse's version of the Fish Bowl, on Friday, April 26 at 8 p.m. ■

Seahawks Swim Team Sees Success at State Meet First Time in 10 Years

Jonah Bergerson, Zachary Ruckle place fourth individually; team takes 16th place.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

Peninsula junior Jonah Bergerson (100-yard backstroke) and sophomore Zachary Ruckle (1-meter diving) both took fourth place in their respective events and the Seahawks boys swim team finished in 16th place at the WIAA boys state swimming and diving championships Feb. 15 through 17. It was the first time in 10 years the Peninsula boys swim team put someone on the podium at the state meet.

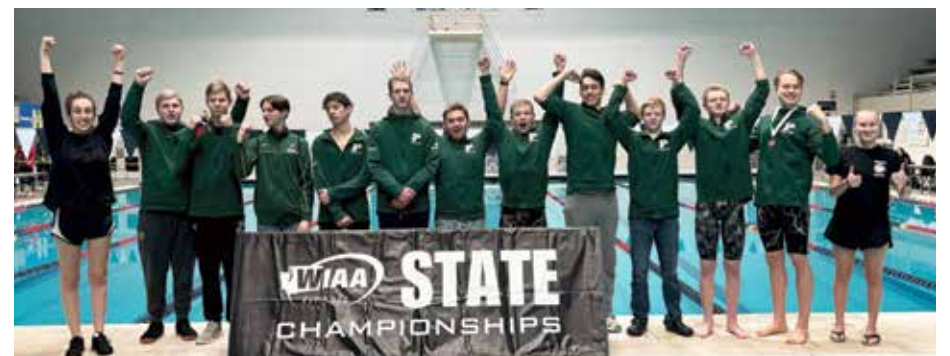
Bergerson finished his final race in 51.63, which would have been a new Peninsula boys swim record had he not broken it the day before swimming the same event in 51.31 to qualify for the finals.

The 14-year-old school previous record in the 100-yard backstroke was 52.2.

"I'm so incredibly proud (of Bergerson)," said first-year coach Athena Petterson. "To see him on the podium today is an inspiration to us all." Bergerson also took 12th place (22.25) in the 50-yard freestyle race.

Ruckle scored 273.90 points to earn the fourth-place spot in the diving competition. He was the first Peninsula diver to make the podium since 2018. With two years left of high school Ruckle is expected to jump in ever in the following years. Gig Harbor High School sophomore James Ferrier took second in the event scoring 297.35.

The 200-yard medley relay team of



The Peninsula boys swim team made it to the podium for the first time in 10 years at the state meet. *Tina McKail, KP News*

Bergerson, Tyler Givot, Ethan Berard and Aidan Miller took 13th place, finishing the finals in 1:42:37. The 400-yard freestyle relay team made up of Bergerson, Miller, Givot and Henry Moore ended up in 15th place with a 3:28:29 time.

"We had so much new blood on this team this year and their hearts were all the way in it," Petterson said.

Caleb Riggs was the last Seahawk swimmer to make it to the podium at the state meet back in 2014. ■

Peninsula Girls Basketball Falls After Third Year Going to State

Peninsula took third in South Sound Conference, eighth in District 3/4 to get to the 3A state tournament, but lost to Ridgeline Feb. 20.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

For the third year in a row, the Peninsula Seahawks earned a spot in the 3A girls basketball state tournament.

It took a bonus game and a pair of wins over Gig Harbor in less than 48 hours for Peninsula to secure third place in the South Sound Conference. After losing to North Thurston in the opening round of the District 3/4 Girls Basketball Tournament, the Seahawks won two of their next three games to take the seventh and final spot for the district in the state playoffs.

The No. 19-seed Seahawks could not overcome a cold night of shooting from the field and the free throw line and lost to No. 14-seed Ridgeline, 49-39, in the opening round Feb. 20 near Spokane. Peninsula failed to reach beyond the first round of the state tournament each of the last three seasons.

The Seahawks, 14-10 overall with a 9-5 SSC record, had an interesting year teeter-tottering between third and fourth place during conference play. Other than the disappointment of not repeating as conference champs, this season pretty much went according to script: Peninsula won the games they were supposed to win, lost some games they were expected to lose, and battled in games that could have gone either way, namely against the Gig Harbor Tides.

Second year Seahawks coach Hannah Lekson tested her team early by adding non-conference games with 4A powerhouses like Woodinville, a team that went 22-2 overall this year and was undefeated in the King County League and a 22-1 Sumner team that won the South Puget Sound Conference. Both games were lopsided losses for the Seahawks, but that wasn't the point. Lekson felt she didn't offer her team much challenge early on last season, and it was noticeable when the Seahawks dropped their last three postseason games to stiffer competition. Though the record between the two seasons are vastly different (18-6 overall last year with 13-1 conference record), the Seahawks have seen more postseason success this year.

Lekson is 32-15 in her first two seasons as head coach and was an assistant on the 2021-22 state playoff team. She is getting herself and Peninsula girls basketball the necessary experience to build a successful program into the future.

She will likely face her first major hurdle at the end of this season as she loses



Head Coach Hannah Lekson has led the Seahawks to the state tournament in both of her first two seasons. *Tina McKail, KP News*



Peninsula High School Seahawks after their win Feb. 15. *Tina McKail, KP News*

key seniors Kaylia Heidelberg, the team's leading scorer (18.9 points per game) and three-time All-SSC members, Daisy Peay, Irene Segura and Audrey Walker, to graduation. Going away with those seniors is about 60% of the team's scoring.

On the other hand, on tap to come back for Lekson is junior Grace Richardson, a two-time All-SSC first-teamer who should compete for league MVP honors next season. Richardson almost averaged a double-double this season with 15.1 points and nearly 10 rebounds.

She is the floor leader and an impressive ball-handler who consistently commands the lane to get the defenses to collapse on her. Richardson's first idea is to pass, as indicated by her 5.3 assists a game, but she is a capable scoring inside and outside of the paint. She is equally skilled on reading the defense and forcing turnovers (3.4 steals per game). Junior starter Maci Miller also returns, and Lekson has high regards for freshman Olivia Furor, who played in 11 games this season, including some



Junior Grace Richardson, seen here Feb. 17, had 14 points, seven rebounds and three steals to lead the Seahawks in their final game Feb. 20. *Tina McKail, KP News*

crucial minutes in the postseason.

The reigning SSC league champion North Thurston is the early favorite to win it again next year as the Rams return league MVP Soraya Ogaldez and Grace Lee, another first team all-conference performer. Timberline, who placed second in the conference, also returns a pair of first-teamers, Brandi Standford and conference defensive player of the year Shayla Cordis. North Thurston and Timberline both joined the Seahawks in the state playoffs this year. ■

Assessing the Threat of a Tsunami to the Key Peninsula

The last major earthquake to impact the KP happened 23 years ago last month, but that doesn't mean it can't happen soon.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

Last month marked the 23rd anniversary of the Nisqually earthquake, a magnitude 6.8 convulsion that shook much of the Puget Sound region for nearly one minute in the late morning Feb. 28, 2001.

The epicenter near Olympia was close enough to the Key Peninsula to damage portions of State Route 302 heading toward Allyn, triggered some local landslides, and damaged chimneys and foundations on the KP.

The area hasn't had a decent-sized shake for a while, especially one that resulted in a tsunami, but experts warn: don't get too comfortable.

First Warning

Strong shaking is the earliest warning a tsunami may be on its way. Don't wait for confirmation — get to higher ground immediately.

"That should be the only clue you need to get moving," said Elyssa Tappero, the tsunami program manager for the Washington Emergency Management Division. "It's tricky, because you won't know immediately if it's caused by a (Puget Sound) fault or the Cascadia Subduction Zone."

The difference is timing. The KP could see the first wave within 30 minutes if a quake happens underwater in the Puget Sound. A tsunami caused by a large earthquake within the CSZ would take nearly 3 1/2 hours to reach the KP.

"You also won't know right away if the earthquake caused landslides nearby that would generate damaging waves," Tappero said. "Good thing about the inner coastal areas is we have a lot of high ground nearby."

The Shake is Worse Than the Splash

The KP is certainly at risk of tsunamis, but the biggest destruction would come from the shaking. If anything good came from the Nisqually quake, it is that it made Washington state officials reassess building codes and emergency response strategies. Newer buildings should be able to handle a bigger earthquake, but some of the older infrastructure peppered throughout the area may have issues.

Not many people know this, but the Tacoma Fault runs basically along SR 302 as it goes across the Key Peninsula. The Washington Military Department has models on its website showing the potential impact a 7.1 magnitude event would have on the KP and surrounding area.

"You live in a rural area and if something big happens be prepared to be on your own for a while," Tappero said, referring to a possible lack of emergency services. "Make sure you can take care of yourself and others in your community."

Run, Don't Drive

When an earthquake happens, road conditions may change rapidly. If last month's windstorms are any indication, expect there to be trees and power lines cutting off major roadways.

If already on higher ground, be prepared to hunker down. If not, don't rely on a car to get there.

Chris Moore, director at the NOAA Center for Tsunami Research said, "Most of the deaths that happened in the (2011) Japan earthquake were from those in cars."

Tappero urges those able to move on their own to do so and leave the roads open for emergency vehicles and those who can't evacuate by foot.



Taking the Hit

The many spits, coves, bays and marinas will take the brunt of the tsunami waves. Moored boats will get pummeled and docks will likely detach. Penrose and Joemma Beaches will be inundated. Being at the head of Henderson Bay, water will funnel underneath the Purdy Bridge and over the roadway, making a mess of Burley Lagoon.

"Waves are attracted to the shallowing that forms a spit," Moore said. "The area around the Key Peninsula has a lot of passages and inlets that increase the velocity of the waves."

Moore said damage is made worse because the waves will keep pushing more water into those small areas. As for the Purdy Bridge, "Unfortunately, like all bridges, we won't know how it holds up after an earthquake until after an earthquake," Moore said.

Get to High Ground

Just get to higher ground quickly and stay there. There's no need to leave the Key Peninsula altogether in the event of a tsunami threat. But if it's necessary to leave, head north. Don't cross the Purdy Spit after an earthquake. It's not a place

to get caught in a traffic jam. Tappero said that her department is looking to get grants to buy and install more evacuation signs to areas around the KP — especially the spits and state parks — and other inner coastal communities that may be impacted by tsunami waves.

Boaters Beware

"The biggest threat of a tsunami in our area is to the maritime community," Tappero said. "You don't want people on the water, in the water, or near the water."

Save yourself, don't try to save your boat. Puget Sound is not the open ocean and there really isn't a safe place to avoid the effects of a tsunami wave. "Boaters have a hard enough time navigating the normal tidal currents of the Puget Sound," Moore said. DNR maps show currents, mainly in the passages, surpassing seven knots during a tsunami. Tappero said tidal anomalies will occur anywhere from 24 to 48 hours after an earthquake.

Fascinating To See, But Dangerous to Watch

"You don't want to go to the shore to see a tsunami," Moore said, pointing out that it only takes a foot or two of rushing water to knock someone down. "Once you're off your feet, you're chances of survival go way down."

Preparation is Paramount

State and county officials have resources to help prepare for potential disasters like earthquakes and tsunamis. Learn about tsunami preparedness at www.dnr.wa.gov; how to be "Two Weeks Ready" at www.mil.wa.gov; and sign-up for Pierce County ALERT by calling 253-798-6995 or text "PCALERT" to 253-888-777. ■

One and Done for Rep. Spencer Hutchins (26th LD); Richards Steps Up

The one-term state representative said, "I will continue to work hard for you until my last day in office." Democrat Adison Richards will run (See p. 9).

STAFF REPORT

Rep. Spencer Hutchins (R-Gig Harbor) announced his decision not to seek a second term serving the 26th legislative district in the state House of Representatives in a press release Feb. 6.

Hutchins said he learned the hard reality: Although the legislative work is part-time, the demands of the role are full-time. He

said representing his community was one of the most profound honors of his life but the effect on his livelihood took a toll.

"As passionate as I am about our community — and about bringing goodwill, balance and bipartisanship to the polarized politics of today — my family's well-being must come first."

Hutchins expressed gratitude for his seatmates, Rep. Michelle Caldier (R-Gig

Harbor) and Senator Emily Randall (D-Bremerton). He took pride in the bipartisan collaboration of the 26th district, noting it is one of only two in the state represented by both Republicans and Democrats.

"Michelle, Emily and I try to model bipartisanship intentionally," he said. "We work together whenever we can for the best interests of our community. And we

respect each other even in our differences."

He called out Caldier for special appreciation as his valued partner, trusted ally and personal friend, "for always having my back." Hutchins said, "I will miss being in the trenches with her."

After completing his term, Hutchins said he would return to his real estate business with his greatest priorities being "faith and family." ■

Metal Detectorist Seeks What's Lost on the Key Peninsula

A local metal detectorist (not "metal detector") searches for cell phones, keys and jewelry while "dirt fishing" all over the KP.

VICKI BIGGS, KP NEWS

Ralph Brahos and his wife Arlene swallowed the anchor. That is to say, they gave up the sailing life they enjoyed for most of their lives together in exchange for an existence on dry land. Their sailing odysseys took them the equivalent of 10 times around the globe. After raising four children on a trimaran based on Vashon Island, they built a business of delivering multihulled boats to their owners around the world. This kept them busy for 30 years.

They have not given up on adventures, however. The thrill of discovery and mystery has taken a different form.

In 2006, they bought property on the Key Peninsula to be closer to family. They are in the process of building a home.

Ralph said he always dreamed of being an archeologist. About 15 years ago, he began metal detecting, which both fuels and satisfies the dream. There is always the hope of finding that important artifact.

"I love history," he said "One of the things about metal detecting is that I get to do lots of research. Always looking for old home sites, and what happened in an area. When I find things, I research the article and who had it last."

Metal detectors send an electromagnetic pulse into the ground. Metal reacts and bounces back. They are sophisticated devices, he said. "You can get approximate depth, possibly what it is. So you get a range."

Most often, a day's detecting results in a pile of random metal that can include pop cans and nails, the detritus of everyday living.

Sometimes, however, there are significant discoveries.

DeAnne Charles of Home lost her wedding ring about 12 years ago while gardening. She and Ralph were already acquainted when she asked him for his help finding it. She gave him a couple of likely search options on her property, and he found the ring quite quickly in a flower bed.

"I can't believe he found it," Charles said. "I thought it was in the back garden and it was in the front." She has since learned to use care wearing rings when gardening. "I think I had garden gloves on, and it came off when I pulled my gloves off. I have heard this from others, too."

Ralph belongs to a group called The Ring Finders (www.theringfinders.com) based in Vancouver, B.C., with over 500 members around the world. Anyone who has lost a ring may contact the organization and be put in touch with the closest detectorist. The detectorists will use their equipment to search for the lost ring at no charge, although they will



Ralph and Arlene know what lurks beneath. "One of the things about metal detecting is that I get to do lots of research. Always looking for old home sites, and what happened in an area. When I find things, I research the article and who had it last."

Tina McKail, KP News

accept a reward for items returned.

There is even an online album of Ring Finder photos showing people whose rings have been found and returned, including Ralph's discoveries. The joy of having a prized possession, the symbol of a relationship, returned is clear on their faces.

Rings are a commonly lost item. Detectorists also search for cell phones, keys and other jewelry. While every lost item has a story, rings in particular often have a great emotional



attachment for the people who have lost them.

When a ring is found, "everyone is so happy and that makes it worth it right there," Ralph said.

Tom Morgan of Longbranch lost his wedding ring while cleaning up debris from a windstorm, which had caused a tree to fall on his car. "Ralph came over and spent quite a bit of time, but did not find the ring. We had a delightful time and became friends."

Ralph and Arlene express great satisfaction

in restoring lost rings to their owners. "The joy of that, to give something back, is really astounding."

They recently recovered a ring on Joemma Beach. It appears to be an engagement ring created in the '90s.

"We are hoping that someone will read the article and identify it," Ralph said.

Anyone with information about the ring may contact Key Peninsula News for more information at editor@keypennews.org. ■

KPFD Gears up for More Rescues on Land and Sea

Key Peninsula volunteer firefighters were eligible for a grant. New and smaller engines are less expensive to buy and maintain.

STAFF REPORT

The Key Peninsula Fire Department added two pieces of equipment in early February, beefing up its rescue arsenal.

The new mini-pumper is a small fire engine that is less expensive to purchase and operate than the engines KPFD currently runs. It was custom-built by Fouts Bros. in Milledgeville, Georgia, on a 2023 Ford F-550 chassis.

At a cost of about \$380,000, it is a fraction of the price of a regular-size structural fire engine that can run anywhere between \$600,000 and \$800,000, according to KPFD Chief Nick Swinhart.

“It’s a huge savings and not just on the upfront costs,” Swinhart said. “The operational costs like fuel and outfitting, things like tires, all those things are much more efficient and less expensive to operate and deploy.”

When EMS calls go out, a medical aid unit responds with backup from at least two firefighters on an engine.

Assistant Fire Chief Chris Beswick said this smaller and less expensive style of fire engine will allow personnel to respond to medical calls but retain some firefighting capabilities in the event of



The new rescue boat. KPFD

a fire call while the crews are out of the station.

The mini-pumper sports several advantages over a traditional engine, such as a shorter wheelbase, lower overall height and four-wheel drive capacity. Beswick said this makes it especially suited for the narrow roads and driveways, low overhead clearances, and the rough, muddy conditions first responders commonly confront on the KP.

The Puyallup Tribe of Indians awarded a \$50,000 grant to the nonprofit Key Peninsula Volunteer Firefighter Association to acquire and outfit a 21-foot rigid hull inflatable for fire department use.

“This boat will be used for water rescues, access to Herron Island and the many miles of shoreline in our district,” Beswick said.



The 4WD mini pumper should be well-suited to KP terrain. Lisa Bryan, KP News

The department previously responded to water rescues using two personal watercraft with a separate small inflatable to tow victims to shore.

KPFD continues to rely on assistance from McNeil Island, Anderson Island or West Pierce fire districts whenever a full-size fire and rescue boat is needed.

Beswick said the plan is to have the boat fully outfitted with upgraded radar, GPS, and lights for safer navigation.

“All the upgrades are covered by the grant from the Puyallup Tribe. The boat should be ready for service with trained personnel by late spring or early summer.” ■

PLAN FROM PAGE 1

and sustainable economic development. It serves as a 20-year policy document with updates every 10 years.

The new plan focuses on policy changes affecting areas of the county with higher population density because that is where the county both expects and wants to encourage growth.

The draft offered three alternatives for managing growth.

The first alternative is described as “No Action.” It would accommodate growth without making significant changes to current policies. If implemented, larger homes could be built in locations farther from services, there would be a shortage of low-income housing (about 5,000 units), and increases in transportation emissions would continue.

The second alternative, “Centers and Corridors,” encourages growth in urban areas. It would increase housing density in urban unincorporated areas, with smaller units in already developed areas, and building enough low-income



Timeline from the Pierce County Draft Comprehensive Plan. Pierce County

housing to meet expected needs. The plan would invest in transit as development occurs, adding 6.6 miles of sidewalks and 23.7 miles of bike trails. It would conserve 50,000 acres of land and lead to 3,500 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent reduction in transportation emissions.

The third alternative, “High-Capacity

Transit,” rapidly shifts growth to high-density neighborhoods near transit and limits capacity elsewhere. It could lead to a shortage of about 5,200 low-income housing units. The plan calls for proactively building 9.6 miles of sidewalks and 34 miles of bike lanes. It would conserve 150,000 acres of land and lead to 4.636 billion tons of carbon dioxide equivalent

reduction in transportation emissions.

This alternative recommended removing Purdy as an urban growth area and reclassifying 44 acres there from mixed-use to rural. Some residents have expressed support for the change; developers are opposed.

Rhett said the final recommendation will probably include elements from the second and third alternatives outlined in the draft.

The planning commission will bring that final recommendation to the Pierce County Council for a decision before the end of June. County staff will meet with KPAC this summer. Staff will prepare the draft including an environmental impact statement with approval by the council scheduled in December.

“I’m interested to see what the county does as they move forward with the process,” Zink said. She encouraged anyone interested to review the plan and make comments.

The plan, process and documents are online at piercecountywa.gov/950/Comprehensive-Plan. ■

BELONGING FROM PAGE 1

characteristics, and giving names to actions. Barabe sends parents a weekly newsletter each Sunday evening, helping to prepare families for the week. The Month of Belonging was featured in the newsletters.

Each lunch hour during the three-week project, a different adult reads aloud to the student body. One reader was visitor Assistant Superintendent Gregory Daniels. "I don't often visit the elementary schools; this has been a treat."

"Many of the kids are really looking forward to the reading each day," says Barabe.

The three-week program is multifaceted. Classroom time and teacher effort were not impacted. The PTA provided support by creating paper hearts and handouts, and Communities in Schools provided rewards and snacks. All activities were done at lunch recess and all supplies were provided and ready to go.

Week one introduced the idea of students celebrating themselves as unique and valuable people. Week two encouraged connections with other students in the school. Celebrating others is supported by students writing on Husky Paws to notice other students (the school mascot is a husky).

"I think one of the greatest things was celebrating others the second week," Winters said.



"The Month of Belonging means we don't bully; we take care of ourselves and take care of other people." Tina McKail, KP News

"The Kindness Wall is part of the lunchtime focus. Kids could get heart-shaped stickies and put someone's name on the wall, someone who had been kind. They started with friends and then expanded out to others. Amazing to watch kids recognize others. Kids wanted to participate. Kids take a second to pause, think, and take action."

"The Month of Belonging means we don't bully; we take care of ourselves and take care

of other people. We make sure that all people are happy and not sad," said student Allie.

Week three emphasized the connection with the district at large. A giant tree is constructed at the entrance of the school, made of the hearts students had made earlier. "Kids are loving the tree made of hearts; the Sense of Belonging Tree," Winters said.

Students received a bracelet at the end of the project with the words "We are Vaughn, I belong." The seven high school students returned to hand them out.

The project saturated the school with the Belonging theme beginning with a school-wide Zoom video, letting students know what the challenge for the day was. In addition, all students read the same books each week, reflecting on the theme of belonging.

Books and writing about the books were displayed in hallways.

"Month of Belonging has been a celebration of kindness and making sure that every student knows they have a place at Vaughn," said fourth-grade teacher Beth Stitt. "Even though we try to practice these principles every day, it has been great to see kids take initiative. Celebrating is so important, and this month we celebrated kids, which is a beautiful thing."

"We are a quiet, steady school, not often recognized," she said. "Our reading scores should be at 60%, we are at 108%."

"The goal is for students to know that each one is unique and special — to have kids value kids and that peers have strengths like them," Barabe said. ■

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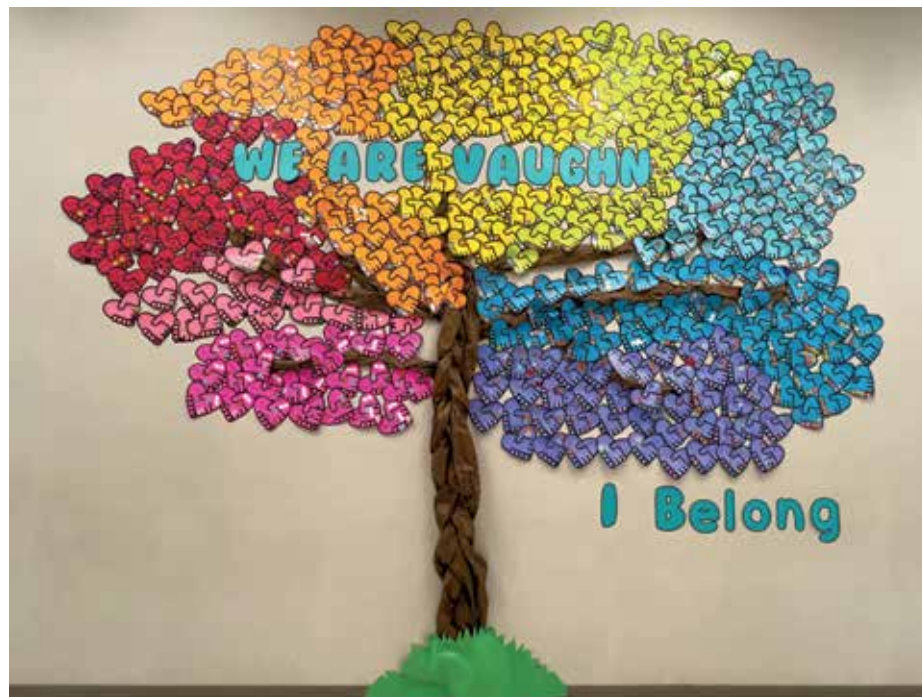


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"Kids are loving the tree made of hearts; the Sense of Belonging Tree." Tina McKail, KP News

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A FULL CONTINUUM OF CARE

Good Bread for Bad Cooks: It's Not You, It's Everything You're Doing

KATRINA HERRINGBOTTOM

As with most people who are good at eating, I also cook a bit. And like most of those people, there are a few things I cook well, more I do OK, and some I should never try again.

Bread was one of these.

But every decade or so I overcome my self-loathing and “discover” some “easy homemade bread for beginners” and make the mistake of trying again.

I did it just last Thanksgiving with an “easy sourdough loaf.”

The horror show that followed looked, smelled and tasted like a halibut dead on the beach for a week. My friends were enthralled. They posted pictures of the atrocity on a social media site for demented bakers. But even the trolls and serial killers dwelling there were so aghast they could find no words more offensive than the reality of “the halibut loaf.”

There was one friend who took pity. I'll call her “Abbie,” which is an acronym for what she is: Actual Bread Baker I Envy.

Abbie assured me there were too many variables of infinite nature for me to blame myself. The oven, the weather, the water and — something I'd never considered — the flour.

I knew that flour came in at least two colors, like wine, but I hadn't given it any more thought.

Abbie explained that producing quality flour was as complex as making a good wine.

She knew how to reach me.

After I gave her some wine she gave me some virtuous flour from her private stash, an Old World wheat grown in the Midwest, “unbrutalized” she said by chemicals and bleaching and more expensive than our wine by volume.

I was skeptical but Abbie was, after all, an Actual Bread Baker I Envy, so I did something unusual for me: I ignored my self-loathing long enough to follow her instructions. Probably the wine helped.

It was a no-knead dough that sits out overnight to ferment. There are a million of these recipes out there, Abbie said, but the key is repetition and customization.

My first loaf with the virtuous flour was not pretty, but it wasn't a dead halibut.

“More yeast, more salt,” Abbie said, without looking at it. But that's not what the instructions say, I said. “That's what I say,” she said.

This produced a French-looking almost boule that was as dense as a brick.



The bread is modest, but I am not. *Katrina Herringbottom*

“More water, more kneading,” Abbie said over the phone.

“It's a no-knead recipe,” I said.

“Just fold, shape and leave it a couple times over a couple hours.”

Eventually, I got something that looked and tasted like bread. The French kind.

I have a friend with celiac disease, which means he's gluten intolerant, but this thing looked too good not to try, so he did.

I thought he was going to cry. It didn't take much, but he'd forgotten what bread tasted like.

“It must be the unbrutalized flour,” I said.

No-Knead Crusty Cloche Bread With Flour of Untrammelled Virtue

Just under 1 1/4 cups (280 grams)

warm water, 110 degrees or so out of the tap. Some will insist on filtered and chlorine-free, so knock yourself out.

2+ teaspoons instant yeast. You'll have to experiment, gradually increasing until it's right over many loaves.

Proof it in the warm water with some sugar if you think it might be past its prime. If nothing happens, it is.

1+ teaspoons granulated salt or a bit more if using kosher.



3 1/4 cups (430 grams) of the most virtuous flour you are willing to buy. Abbie says to weigh everything, but I just do the flour because I fear success.

1. Mix flour and yeast, then add water and salt. You might want to add a bit more flour or water to get a dough that's smooth but slightly sticky, meaning like you want to touch it but not really.

2. Transfer to another bowl generously coated with olive oil to enrich the crust. You'll want to soak the mixing bowl immediately for a loved one to clean later. Cover and let rise someplace warm for two or three hours. You can proceed with Step 3 to bake or leave overnight to develop flavor, or it can go into the fridge for a few days for more tang.

3. Pull dough out onto a floured counter with a bench knife or whatever. You might need to oil your hands. Fold one side of the dough over onto itself three or four times. I often want to throw it out at this stage, but let it sit for a couple hours then do it again, if you can bear it, and shape into a boule with the seam down

on parchment paper. Try not to deflate. Cover loosely with something it won't care about, like oiled plastic wrap or your broken dreams. Let rise for an hour.

4. While it's doing that, preheat a Dutch oven or something similar with a lid in your actual oven at 450. You'll have to experiment because, like flours, ovens behave differently, but start with a high temp. You can bake without a pot but using one to trap the steam coming out of the dough makes for a chewy crust so just do that.

5. Make one or two cuts on top of the dough with a serrated knife; don't skip this step — the bread needs to expand instead of deforming (rotten halibut, anyone?). Put dough in the Dutch oven (it's easier to lift with that parchment paper underneath), cover and bake for 30 minutes, then bake for maybe another 10 or 15 uncovered. Without a Dutch oven, place on a baking sheet or in a loaf pan and start checking at 20 minutes.

6. If you've got an instant-read thermometer the center of the bread should be 195 to 210 degrees but if it looks like it's done, it's done.

7. Cool on a rack for 15 minutes.

8. Repeat until you get it right. Your friends will think you are a superhero, and they will be right. ■

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37th Annual Key Peninsula Citizen of the Year Award Is March 23

The KP Lions Club has encouraged and honored local volunteers for decades.

STAFF REPORT

The Key Peninsula Lions Club will hold its 37th Key Peninsula Citizen of the Year Award recognizing outstanding community members at the KP Civic Center March 23 beginning at 5 p.m.

The keynote speaker will be Eric Blegen, executive director of The Mustard Seed Project.

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

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

The KP Lions Club provides eyeglasses and hearing aids to KP residents, awards the KP Lions Memorial Scholarship to high school students, organizes highway cleanups

and an annual Volksmarch, volunteers its labor and expertise to maintain and improve KP parks, distributes free dictionaries each year to every third-grader on the KP and to Key Peninsula Middle School and makes grants to local nonprofits.

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

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

2023 Citizen of the Year Award Nominees

- Dawn Barnes
- Kellie Bennett
- Stephanie Brooks
- Lisa Caskin
- Robert Fisher
- Jessica Gamble
- Bob and Barbara Green
- Kathy Lyons
- Lisa Mills
- Rachel Pittman
- Tina Whittemore

Citizen of the Year Award Winners

- 2019 Marcia Harris (awarded in 2023 for 2022)
- 2018 Karen Jorgenson
- 2017 Dee Dee Kerkes
- 2016 Anne Nesbit
- 2015 Matthew Mills
- 2014 Jud Morris
- 2013 Danna Webster
- 2012 Jeff Harris
- 2011 Ed Robison
- 2010 John Biggs
- 2009 Mike Salatino

- 2008 Edie Morgan
- 2007 Chuck West
- 2006 Phil Bauer
- 2005 Tim Kezele
- 2004 Christi Watson
- 2003 Erlene Twidt
- 2002 Nancy Lind
- 2001 Marge Adams
- 2000 Tracy Manning

To see the list of all winners dating to 1984, go to: <https://keypennews.org/stories/veteran-educator-is-key-peninsula-citizen-of-the-year,6546> ■

Lakebay Community Church

Prayer for the World: Mondays, 5 p.m.
 Bible Studies: Thursdays, 10 am and 6:30 p.m.
 Harvest Share Food Ministry: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.
 Men's and Women's Breakfasts, 1st Saturday of every month
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March 28th

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5:30pm - Root Soup Supper & Communion Service

GOOD FRIDAY

March 29th

LAKEBAY COMMUNITY CHURCH

11 Cornwall Rd SW, Lakebay
7:00pm - Good Friday Tenebrae Service

WAYPOINT NORTH

12719 134th Ave NW, Gig Harbor
7:00pm - Good Friday Service

EASTER MORNING

March 31st

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LAKEBAY COMMUNITY CHURCH & WELLSRING FELLOWSHIP
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@ Camp Woodworth

LAKEBAY COMMUNITY CHURCH

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www.lakebaycovenant.net 884-3899

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www.waypoint-church.org 853-7878

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www.longbranchchurch.net 425-492-4177

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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 1 Washington Old Time Fiddlers Association 3:30 – 6 p.m., Crandall Center. All fiddlers, banjos, mandolins, guitars, and string basses are welcome to play.

Mar 2 Bird Walks 8:30 a.m., rain or shine. Meet nature guide Chris Rurik at Gateway Park pavilion.

Mar 2 Empty Bowls Fundraiser 11 a.m. – 2 p.m., Chapel Hill Church. Sponsored by Altrusa Gig Harbor, purchase a bowl and enjoy a lunch donated by local restaurants.

Mar 2 Pier Into the Night 5 p.m., Gig Harbor Maritime Pier, Harbor WildWatch. Underwater divers livestream what they encounter below the surface.

Mar 3 Chick Catapult 10:30 a.m., Gig Harbor Library. Catapult construction program where children utilize creativity and engineering skills, for ages 5-10.

Mar 4 Brunch and Bingo 11:30 a.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Open to the community, \$5 for brunch and suggested donation of \$1 per game for bingo.

Mar 5 Gig Harbor Literary Society 6 p.m., Harbor History Museum. "A Fever in the Heartland" by Timothy Egan.

Mar 6 KP Readers: An Hour of Coffee and Conversation 10:30 a.m., Key Center Library. "The Library Book" by Susan Orlean.

Mar 6 Veterans Assistance 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m., Key Peninsula Community Services, 253-884-4440.

Mar 6 Peninsula Community Health Services Mobile Clinic 1 p.m., Key Peninsula Community Services, 253-884-4440.

Mar 7 Pierce County Social Services 11 a.m., Key Peninsula Community Services, 253-884-4440.

Mar 9 ChowderFest 11 a.m. – 5 p.m., downtown Gig Harbor waterfront. Featuring waterfront restaurants and retailers, tickets available at ghdwa.org.

Mar 10 Harbor Winds Young Artists Concert 3 p.m., Gig Harbor HS Auditorium. Featuring soloists from Gig Harbor and Peninsula High Schools.

Mar 12 TacomaProBono Legal Aid 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., Key Peninsula Community Services. 1 – 3 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Free civil legal help.

Mar 14 MultiCare WIC Program 12 – 4 p.m., Key Center Library. The WIC Clinic helps pregnant people, new and breastfeeding moms, and children under 5.

Mar 14 Property Tax Exemption Seminar 3 p.m., KP Civic Center. Presented by Pierce County, for residents over 61 or fully disabled and a gross household income at or below \$64,000.

Mar 16 Suds and Spuds 5 p.m., Longbranch Improvement Club. Open to the public. Family fun including contests, entertainment and food.

Mar 19 Baby Story Time 10:15 – 11 a.m., Key Center Library. For children ages 0-2 and their caretakers.

Mar 19 Hootenanny 2 – 4 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Folksong sing and play along.

Mar 19 Maker Fun – Drop in Art and Science for Kids 3:30 – 5 p.m., Key Center Library. For elementary-aged children and their caretakers.

Mar 20 All Hazards – Personal Preparedness Presentation 2 – 3 p.m., Key Center Library. Learn how to be prepared for disaster in four easy steps.

Mar 20 Cribbage Tournament 1 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Call to reserve your spot, 253-884-9814.

Mar 22 Jerisich Dock Walk 4 p.m., Jerisich Dock at Skansie Park. Presented by Harbor WildWatch, gather at the picnic tables for this free 30-minute tour.

Mar 22 TGIF 5:30 p.m., Longbranch Improvement Club. For members and guests. BYOB.

Mar 23 Easter Egg Hunt 10 a.m., Gateway Park. Hosted by Key Pen Parks, eggs are first come and first found.

Mar 23 "How to Write a Family Portrait" 2 p.m., Gig Harbor Library. Generative writing workshop, Presented by essayist Kristen Millares Young in conjunction with Humanities Washington.

Mar 23 Gig Harbor Has Talent 2 p.m., Swift Water Elementary School. Youth talent showcase

featuring students from Gig Harbor and the Key Peninsula, free admission.

Mar 23 Lions Club Citizen of the Year Dinner 5 p.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center, 37th annual celebration recognizing Key Peninsula volunteers. Keynote speaker Eric Blegen.

Mar 23 Open Mic Café 2 – 5:30 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. All ages welcome, performers need to be at least middle school age. Beer, wine and snacks available.

Mar 26 Baby Story Time 10:15 – 11 a.m., Key Center Library. For children ages 0-2 and their caretakers.

Mar 28 Family Story Time 10:30 – 11:30 a.m., Key Center Library. For children ages 0-6, Bring the family for a story.

Mar 28 KP Book Club 11 a.m., The Mustard Seed Project. March's book selection: "The Covenant of Water" by Abraham Verghese.

Mar 28 Tales at the Boatshop 10:30 a.m., Gig Harbor Boatshop. Nautical storytelling for children.

WEEKLY EVENTS

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

Monday Yoga at the Civic Center 7 – 8 p.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center. Schedule classes online at the civic center website.

Monday REFIT Workout 7 p.m., WayPoint South, heartfitwp@gmail.com. Women's free fitness classes.

Monday Beginner's Knitting Class 11 a.m. – 1 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Sponsored by Two Waters Arts Alliance, \$8 per class.

M-W Yoga at the Civic Center 9:30 – 10:30 a.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center. Schedule classes online at the civic center website.

M-W SAIL 4 p.m., KP Community Services, 253-884-4440. Flexibility and balance for those over 60.

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

M-F Tai Ji Quan 11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Exercise training program for improving balance and preventing falls.

Tuesday Pickleball and Board Games 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., Longbranch Improvement Club. Open to the public. Coffee and games in the foyer.

Tuesday Beginning Tai Chi 10 a.m., The Mustard Seed Project, 253-884-9814. Drop-ins welcome, \$5 a class.

Tuesday Women's Bible Study 12:30 p.m., WayPoint North Church. Precept Bible Study on Daniel every Tuesday through June 11.

Tuesday Friends of the Key Center Library Book Donations 1 – 3 p.m., Key Center Library.

T-W REFIT Workout Tuesday 6 p.m., Wednesday 5:30 p.m., WayPoint North, heartfitwp@gmail.com. Women's free fitness classes.

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

T-TH Indoor Toddler Playground 9:30 – 11 a.m., KP Civic Center, 253-884-4440.

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

T-SA KP Historical Society & Museum 1 – 4 p.m. Open through November. keypeninsulamuseum.org

Wednesday Cards and Games 9:30 a.m., KP Community Services, 253-884-4440.

Wednesday No Tears Tech Help 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., not available Mar. 6. Key Center Library. Call the library to book an appointment, 253-548-3309.

Wednesday Open Pickleball 10:30 a.m. – 2 p.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center. Open to the public. Waiver required to play; donations accepted.

Wednesday Gentle Yoga for Older Adults 11:15 a.m., The Mustard Seed Project, 253-884-9814.

Wednesday Chair Yoga 1 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project, 253-884-9814.

Wednesday Cribbage Club 2 – 4 p.m., first and third Wednesdays, The Mustard Seed Project. Everyone is welcome; no experience required.

Thursday County Council District 7 Constituent Office Hours 11 a.m. – 2 p.m., Councilmember Robyn Denson and her staff. Contact 253-798-6654 for information.

Thursday Senior Bingo 12:30 p.m., first and third Thursdays. KP Community Services, 253-884-4440.

Thursday KP Toastmasters 8 a.m., WayPoint Church, 253-514-2836.

Friday Movie Screening 12:30 p.m., second and fourth Fridays, KP Community Services, 253-884-4440.

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

Saturday Amateur Radio Club of Burley 9 – 11 a.m., Located behind Burley Post Office at 14831 Burley Ave SE. <http://w7jq.org>

Sunday WayPoint Community Dinners 6 p.m. Free community dinners at WayPoint North and WayPoint South churches.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

26th LD Democrats First Thursdays, 6:30 p.m. Meeting locations vary, check 26d.org for monthly updates.

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

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

Friends of the Key Center Library Board Meeting Third Fridays, 10:30 a.m., Brones Room of the Key Center Library.

Key Peninsula Advisory Commission Fourth Thursdays, 5:30 p.m. piercescountywa.gov/5937

Key Peninsula Beekeepers First Thursdays, 7 p.m. Home fire station.

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

KP Business Association Business meeting. Feb. 6 at 6:30 p.m. March location: Key Peninsula Council office in the Corral. kpbusinessassociation@gmail.com

KP Community Council Second Thursdays, 6:30 p.m. Key Center fire station, keypencouncil@gmail.com. Zoom link available on Key Peninsula Council Facebook page.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Key Free Clinic First and third Thursdays, 4:30 – 7 p.m. (check-in from 4:30 – 5 p.m.). KPC Office in the Key Center Corral.

Key Pen Parks Board of Commissioners Meeting Second Mondays, 7 p.m., Home fire station, 253-884-9240.

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

Lakebay Fuchsia Society First Thursdays, 7 p.m., KP Civic Center - Whitmore Room, 253-549-3015.

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

Medicare Assistance Second Tuesdays, 12 – 2 p.m. KP Community Services, 253-884-4440.

Peninsula Emergency Preparedness Coalition Second Wednesdays, 6 p.m. Check pep-c.org for meeting location.

Peninsula School District Board Meeting First and third Tuesdays in March, 6 p.m. Swift Water Elementary School.

Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department Tuesdays and Thursdays, 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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Key Peninsula Civic Center, 17010 S. Vaughn Road 253/884-3456 www.kpciviccenter.org The Key Peninsula Civic Center Association, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, fosters and promotes the civic, social, cultural and general well-being of the Key Peninsula community.

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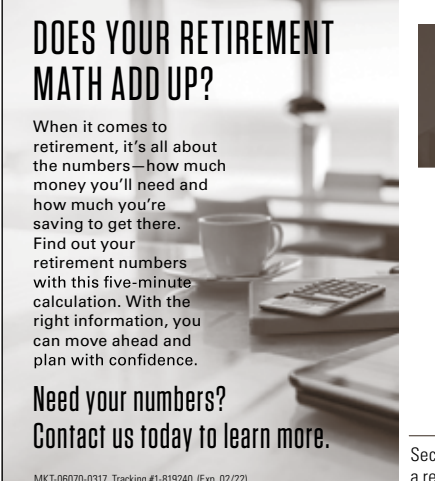
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TOP: The Vaughn Library Hall awaits its grand reopening.

Tina McKail, KP News

MID LEFT: An eye-catching male hooded merganser.

Tina McKail, KP News

MID RIGHT: A male downy woodpecker eager for spring.

Tina McKail, KP News

BOTTOM LEFT: A laminated note from Oshin, age 11, to foresters currently harvesting in Key Central Forest — "Please save this memory-filled tree."

Chris Rurik, KP News

BOTTOM RIGHT: A long train runs along the water's edge in the foreground of Mount Rainier.

Tina McKail, KP News

