



KEY PENINSULA NEWS



Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 1

POSTAL CUSTOMER

www.keypennews.org

THE AWARD-WINNING VOICE OF THE KEY PENINSULA

Dec 2021 Vol. 48 No. 12



Ted Olinger, KP News

Evergreen Elementary Open House

The new replacement school opened Sept. 7, 2021, a year ahead of schedule but only days after completion. The public got its first look inside last month.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

The Peninsula School District officially welcomed its third of four new buildings this year with a formal ribbon-cutting and public tour at Evergreen Elementary the evening of Nov. 8. It is the first new school built on the Key Peninsula in decades.

The master of ceremonies was fifth-grader and Evergreen lifer Tabitha Baker. She welcomed district officials and visiting dignitaries while sporting a richly sequined facemask whose exuberance was surpassed only by her own eloquence.

“As Evergreen Eagles,” she began, “we are the smallest of all the elementary schools, which we believe supports strong relationships. Those connections among staff, students and families allow us to know each other well and work together to make Evergreen a better place every day. Now that we are all under the same roof, instead of in portables, we truly feel like a school community that

can overcome any challenges and accomplish any goals.”

The original Evergreen, built in the 1950s, was 26,000 square feet with eight classrooms and six portables. The new building is 46,000 square feet, has two stories, high ceilings, broad hallways, 19 classrooms with big windows, a gym, an enormous commons room, a full kitchen, a large library and new playfields on 7 acres. The original gym was preserved as a community center re-named for longtime PSD boosters Hugh and Janice McMillan.

There are 230 students and a total staff of 50, according to Hugh Maxwell, in his ninth year as Evergreen principal.

“I love the openness, the light; there’s so much natural light, which was the No. 1 focus of the planning committee,” he said. “It’s such a contrast to how the portables felt. It was just dark and dreary. Now our rooms are bright and full of energy.”

“I was in a portable 12 of my 16 years at Evergreen,” said third grade teacher Therese Souers. “I’m thrilled with being in the new school and being back in the class with my kids. I was all remote last year.”

The playfields and landscaping are also an improvement, according to paraeducator Kristina Butorac.

“We spent years on the blacktop and sand on a playfield with holes and mud, and now we have real grass,” she said. “We can lead groups out there, or just roll around on the ground — the children do that frequently. They are in love with it; they’re very excited about everything.”

“We’re used to the old coziness,” said Office Manager Bette McCord, now in her 31st year at Evergreen. “I used to be able to yell down the hall for some teacher and they’d yell back, and now we’re all scattered. But the kids love it, they’re so proud of it.”

Dean of Students Christy Dalby said staff has had to adjust or create new procedures to accommodate the much bigger space and learn new technology. “It took us a while to smooth out parent pickup for this building, that was a big one,” she said. “And we still aren’t unpacked. But there are so many good things here, they outweigh the things we need to fine-tune.”

“We’ve been adapting even though it’s
CONTINUED PAGE 3



Even Santa Claus needs a good old-fashioned salon treatment to get dolled up for Christmas. Gaye Williams See Santa’s story on page 16

Interim Fire Chief Appointed as District Faces Major Expansion Decisions

Fire Commissioners explore options with department leadership change and more than \$2.2 million Key Center real estate acquisition for new headquarters.

LISA BRYAN, KP NEWS

Pierce County Fire District 16 Board of Commissioners appointed Assistant Chief Hal Wolverton interim fire chief for Key Peninsula Fire Department effective Dec. 1 by unanimous vote at the regular board meeting Nov. 23. Wolverton served as interim fire chief once before, in the time between the retirement of Fire Chief Guy Allen in 2018 and the arrival of Dustin Morrow in April 2019.

Key Peninsula Fire Department Chief Dustin Morrow signed a 5-year employ-

ment agreement for the position of Fire Chief at Central Pierce Fire & Rescue Nov. 8 and reports for duty Dec. 1 at district headquarters located in Spanaway.

The idea that Morrow may be able to continue to provide chief services through an interlocal agreement (ILA) between Central Pierce Fire & Rescue and Key Peninsula Fire Department received strong support from Doug Gelsleichter, president of the Local Firefighters Union No. 3152.

“On behalf of the Local, I want to thank
CONTINUED PAGE 4



253-884-4699

www.keypennews.org

www.facebook.com/KeyPenNews

editor@keypennews.org

PO Box 3, Vaughn WA 98394

EXECUTIVE EDITOR: Lisa Bryan

ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Ted Olinger

STAFF CONTRIBUTORS: Krisa Bruemmer,

Ed Johnson, Tina McKail,

Joseph Pentheroudakis, Chris Rurik,

Dave Stave, Sara Thompson

CONTRIBUTORS: José Alaniz,

Jack Dunne, Dan Whitmarsh

CALENDAR EDITOR: Meredith Browand

calendar@keypennews.org

SOCIAL MEDIA: Joseph Pentheroudakis

WEB EDITOR: Caleb Galbreath

OPERATIONS MANAGER / DESIGN EDITOR:

Tim Heitzman

BOOKKEEPER: Linda Grubaugh

AD SALES: Deanna Hunter

sales@keypennews.org

DISTRIBUTION: James Allyn, Anna

Brones, Norm Brones, Bill Dietz,

Bruce Macdonald, Jay Stewart,

Bob Wilkins

PUBLISHING BOARD: Sara Thompson,

president, Michele Gorman, Bruce

Macdonald, Jeff Minch, John Nichols,

Dave Stave, Bob Wilkins

UNDERWRITTEN WITH SUPPORT FROM:

The Angel Guild

NewsMatch/Miami Foundation

Rotary Club of Gig Harbor

Member WNPA and INN

Copyright 2021 Key Peninsula News, all rights reserved. Financially and editorially independent, KP News is mailed at no charge to Key Peninsula residents and is available at local merchants. **Support your newspaper:** The nonprofit KP News is made possible by advertisers, donors and subscribers; annual subscriptions are \$30 for first class mail delivery. **Share your thoughts:** Send community information, concerns or complaints. Signed letters to the editor published as space allows, include daytime phone number. KP News reserves the right to edit all submissions. Deadline 15th of month.

GIVING THANKS

Here's What I Think About That

LISA BRYAN,
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Thanksgiving was a day of talking a little too loudly, gesturing a little too broadly and experiencing all the good feelings of true belonging that we've missed over the past two years. It marked for us the first nearly normal family gathering since New Year's Day 2020. We survived pandemic isolation with FaceTime, phone calls and lots of text messaging. But all the love and laughter, the unrestrained, unmasked bear hugs were, in a word, priceless.

My brother-in-law, sporting an impressive gray beard I'd never seen, looks and sounds more like his dad than ever. The tone of his voice, his easy-going mannerisms, even his posture reminded me of his late father. In a way it was almost as if part of him was still with us. That's family. These familiar holiday rituals make it all the more apparent.

Some days I look in the mirror and see my father's eyes staring back at me. I was always so grateful to have my mom's looks. In my advancing years, my face labels me as my father's daughter. In recent months, I distinctly hear my grandma's laugh in my mother's, and it brings me a smile.

That wisp of unruly hair, the almost-snarky tone, an overfilled glass or

tendency towards tears were all inherited from experts and practiced with the

brood over meals just like the one we shared at my sister's this Thanksgiving.

Squeezed around the almost-large-enough table, we each took a moment to say what we were thankful for this year. On the dining room walls hung framed black and white photos of generations past that each of us shared.

"Grateful that I only have 20 more credits left of college," "... to be alive," "...that I joined the electricians' union instead of going to college," "... knock on wood no Covid," "...my health, my family, my spouse, my children, oh, and of course our pets."

There is so much to be thankful for. And setting aside a whole day to get together, whether with family or with friends and a roasted turkey with cran-

berry sauce is something to be thankful for in itself.

If you, like me and a few of my friends, struggle with depression you are not alone. This, however, is the season to prepare yourself for the "merriest" time of all. It's dark, it's frantic, it's a time to feel left out without even trying.

I can say from experience that sharing your feelings with family or trusted friends can help even if they can't relate or understand exactly what you're going through. Depression can feel like a personal flaw, a dirty little secret best kept to yourself, but it certainly is not. Saying the words aloud, "I am hurting," to another human being, even a perfect stranger on a call-in help line can bring some relief. And a little relief can be all it takes to make a difference.

A few tips from a practiced holiday survivor: Take it easy on the expectations, most especially of yourself. Taking a walk outside always helps so take every chance you get for some fresh air and movement. If you know

someone who is struggling for any reason this season, reach out to check in on how they are doing. Helping someone else when you're not feeling so great yourself can work wonders.

If you struggle with alcohol or other addictions, staying sober during the holidays can be quite the challenge. But stick with it — it eventually gets easier, as will your life. Again, acknowledging how hard it can be and talking about it in safe company is powerful medicine in itself.

Most cultures honor the darkest days of the year with rituals evoking renewal and rebirth. Our Advent calendar tradition, along with those of others, spreads the celebration over weeks instead of a single torn-wrapping-paper morning.

Our consumer culture becomes absolutely chronic in December, kicking

off the holiday season with the aptly named Black Friday, leading into a month of shopping excess. Dark rainy days, crowded stores filled with (hope-

fully) masked shoppers anxious to find just the right presents to wrap and stuff under the tree. As for patience and common courtesy? Expect none and you may walk away pleasantly surprised.

The traditions we embrace, the things we do and make together will far outlast any

mountain of store-bought gifts.

This year, I'll be in my kitchen mixing butter, sugar, flour, nuts and cinnamon for my mom's favorite Jänhagel Christmas cookies to share. I have all the ingredients ready to start baking loaves of Reni Moriarity's fruitcake too.

My hope for you is a time filled with fun and games, love and happiness, comfort and peace. ■

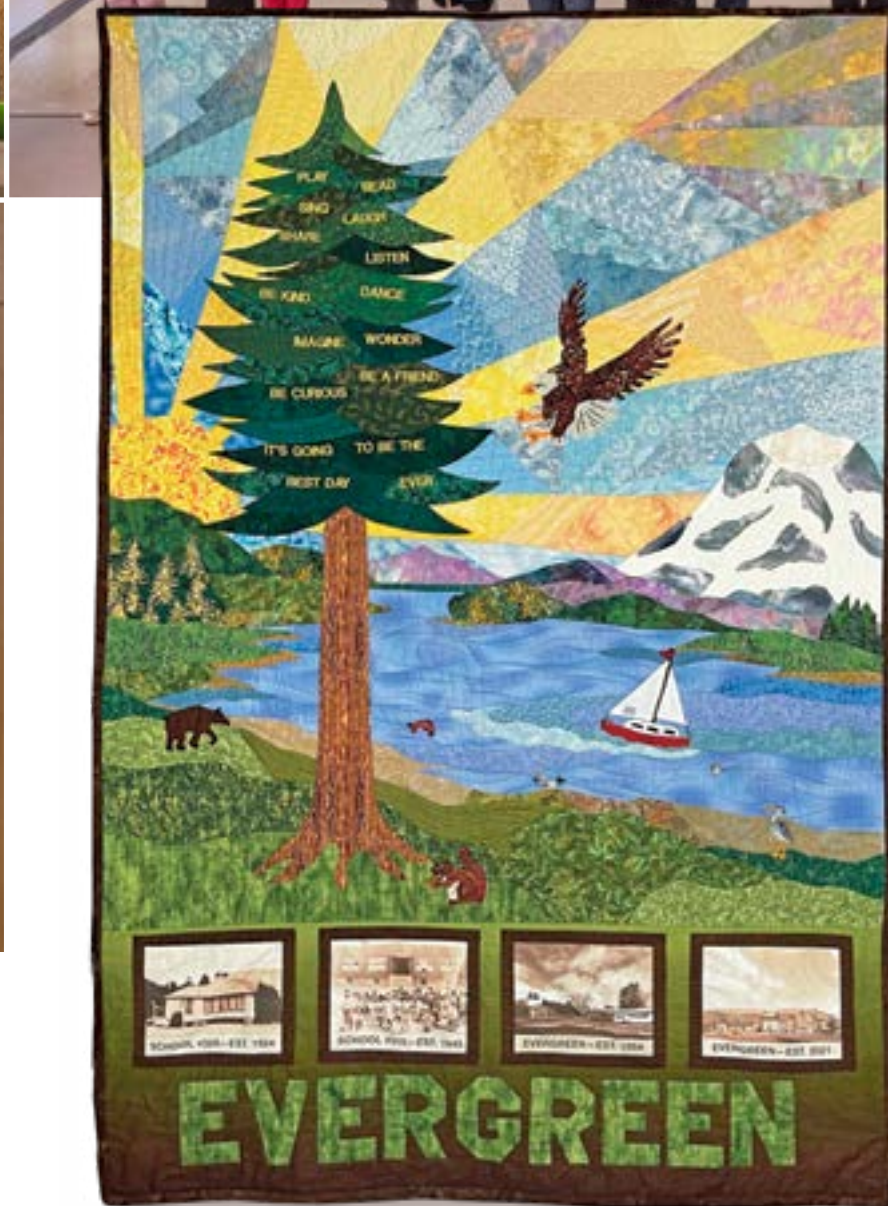
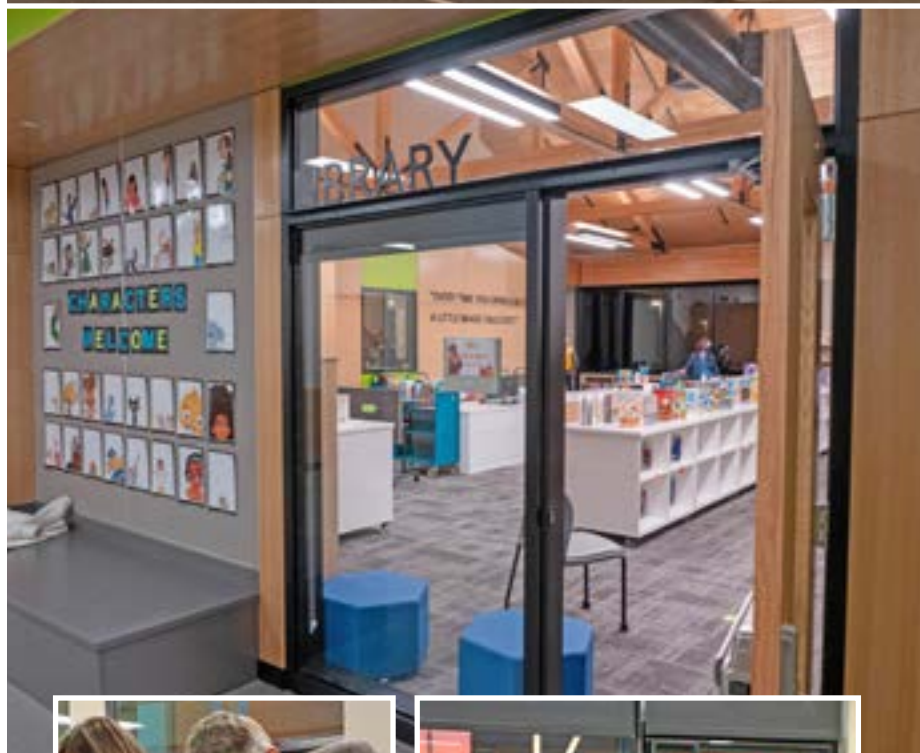


Itching to get out and do something?

Check the Key Peninsula Events Calendar at keypennews.org

It's free for local organizations and a great way to get the word out for your next community event.

Look for the return of the calendar listings to these pages soon.



EVERGREEN ELEMENTARY FROM PAGE 1

been a tough year working on the social distancing and keeping kids safe and healthy,” Maxwell said. “But because we’re in a new building and the staff are so excited and so appreciative, I think it’s been easier for us than it has for other schools with the challenges we’re still facing.

“Hopefully we’ll get to the point soon where people who are interested have a chance to stop by and we can safely do a little tour,” he said.

“Every community is a little bit different, but when it makes this big of an impact, it’s pretty cool,” said Brian Ho, the managing principal of TCF Architecture, who grew up in Gig Harbor and graduated from Gig Harbor High. He designed the Evergreen and Pioneer Elementary schools, as well as the ongoing modernization of Kopachuck and Key Peninsula Middle schools.

“The comment from a mom that struck me the most was, ‘This is not a KP School.’

It wasn’t like she was saying, ‘This doesn’t belong here,’ but that it was way more than she or anyone would have expected. That was way cool to hear.”

Construction of the new building was made possible by a \$198,550,000 school construction bond approved by voters in 2019, the first to pass in decades. The bond funded replacement of Evergreen and Artondale elementary schools and construction of two new elementary

schools in Gig Harbor, Swift Water and Pioneer. Cost-saving steps and additional state funding allowed for upgrades and additional classrooms at Key Peninsula and Kopachuck Middle schools.

Absher Construction, a Puyallup-based company, won the \$24,851,000 bid for Evergreen. The project was managed by Greene-Gasaway Architects.

The new school is located at 1632 Key Peninsula Highway SW in Lakebay. ■

Top left exterior, top right ribbon cutting, center left library: Peninsula School District Lower left ribbon cutting: Lisa Bryan, KP News Lower center: Teacher Kristina Butorac excited about the new grassy play field. Ted Olinger, KP News Commemorative quilt presented by The Longbranch Foundation. Polly Robinson

GIFT SUBSCRIPTIONS



Share the KP joy, twelve times a year.

For friends and family who love the Key Peninsula but live elsewhere, a gift subscription delivers a fresh taste of 'the 253' every month.

First-class mail subscriptions are \$30/year. Mail to PO Box 3, Vaughn WA 98394 or sign up online at keypennews.org

**FIRE CHIEF FROM PAGE 1**

Chief Morrow for the last couple of years and the direction he has pushed the department and fully support his decision and what he is doing," Gelsleichter said. "We would like to urge the board to consider working with Central Pierce in some form of chief services or ILA. Congrats to Hal Wolverton, we look forward to working with you."

Commissioner Frank Grubaugh said he wanted to reiterate to Morrow that he leaves behind a better board and that he will be missed. "Once again, Hal is interim chief. He's done a good job before and he'll do a good one now. Thank you, Hal."

Firefighter Paramedic Adam Morse said that consolidation of administrative services in the fire service both here and nationally is inevitable and needed to trim operational costs to ease the growing burden on taxpayers. In his view, while talks of a merger are a long way off, if even a possibility, "we are currently faced with a catalyst opportunity here."

"Chief Morrow has voiced to us, multiple times, how he did not seek out the chance to leave our district but was presented with an opportunity," Morse said. "He saw an opportunity for this department and the area as a whole."

"Chief Morrow wants to take us, the department, with him and maintain chief services to the district," Morse said. "If he believes he can manage the two departments at one time, I'm inclined to believe him."

Similar testimonials from career firefighters and paramedics were made two weeks earlier when 40 people, largely district personnel, attended the Nov. 9 commissioners' meeting via Zoom.

Firefighter Paramedic Nate Jean said, "I would never have thought that we would be going from eight people on duty and 24 line staff to now, less than three years later, having 33 line staff coming up here with 11 people on shift. That's just unheard of."

Commissioner Keith Davies said he was not ready to dismiss the ILA at this time. "The decision tonight to put an interim chief was the fact that things were happening so fast that rather than go into

a wrong decision in an ILA we wanted to take more time and evaluate where it's really going."

Davies agreed with Morse that the long-term survival of the fire service depends on figuring out how to join up and become part of something bigger. "But I also understand the unique community that's very passionate about its identity," he said. Davies suggested finding ways to inform and educate citizens. "If they don't want



KP News graphic adapted from Apple Map

to be a part of it then they need to know what that's going to look like as opposed to what it would be like if we became a part of it."

KP resident Joel Prybylski said he is familiar with regional fire authority (RFA) and interlocal agreements and they typically begin by identifying what you have in common with that district, like adjoining boundaries.

"As I sit here ... I don't really see much that the KP has in common with Central Pierce, other than the fact that the chief you guys hired 30 months ago is leaving for them," he said. "As a resident, I don't like the idea of being in a RFA or ILA with Central Pierce. You do that because of the other district, not because the person you hired is leaving to go to that other district."

Prybylski said he understands it's depressing that the chief is leaving, "but it seems like we are going about this backwards."

At the KPFD commissioner meeting Nov. 9, Commission Chair Stan Moffett directed Morrow to "draft an interlocal agreement for the board to review and discuss in detail at the Nov. 23 meeting

and likely vote to approve at the next board meeting," Moffett said.

Commissioner Jensen said the comments made were good points, that it doesn't have to be with Central Pierce, but to find those common elements preferably between neighboring districts to expand on mutual aid and the like.

"It's just the nature of the beast the way the fire service is going," Jensen said. You have to stay open to those conversations when they come, and make sure, not only for our citizens and our taxpayers, but what makes the most sense for our district operationally. That's an element for me about why I don't think the conversation about an ILA is off the table."

Fire commissioners have been active in other areas beyond exploring options for fire chief. The former site of O'Callahan's Restaurant located at the intersection of Key Peninsula Highway NW and Olson Drive NW now belongs to the fire department for a purchase price of \$950,000. The department has several parties interested in leasing the building to operate a restaurant until such time as commissioners decide whether to pursue the construction of a new head-

quarters to replace the existing Station 46.

A second parcel the department refers to as "The Loy property" is scheduled to close in early December at a purchase price of \$1.2 million that includes the single-family residence sandwiched between Sunnycrest Nursery and Sound Credit Union, across the street from the current fire headquarters.

Commissioners retained the services of the Bremerton-based architecture firm of Rice, Fergus, Miller, the same firm that designed The Mustard Seed Project assisted living facility on the hill above Key Center.

Morrow informed commissioners that "Rice, Fergus, Miller indicated that we're in the phase where decisions will have to be made. Staff will present a report to the board to drive the decision that says, 'Please price out these options.'"

The staff presentation will likely take place at the upcoming Dec. 14 fire commissioners' meeting. Information on how to attend the public meeting via Zoom is available on the district website at keypeninsulafire.org. ■

LEARN ABOUT OUR MATCHING BENEFACTORS AT NEWSMATCH.ORG

We all love our Key Peninsula News.

Producing the KP News takes more than love or money. It takes talent, perseverance, generosity and time.

Every month, you get another look at life on the Key Peninsula with award-winning stories, colorful photos and thoughtful insights.

It's not what some might expect from a "little community newspaper." But being judged as a statewide Newspaper of Excellence was unexpected, too.

It wasn't a surprise to our loyal readers and generous supporters.

We receive notes from readers like Dawn Rickey: "Congrats on all the awards! Very much deserved. Thank you so much for providing us with the best newspaper."

And, "We read the KP News front to back. Now that we support it with a monthly donation, we love getting 'our' paper even more,"

from a Lakebay reader.

There's still time to add your voice to the applause and accolades.

NewsMatch will match personal donations received in December.

Matching magnifies the impact of your support of independent nonprofit news. It amplifies your gift and supports *our mission to provide free, unbiased and independent news to everyone living on the Key Peninsula.*

Mail your check in the handy green envelope or give online at keypennews.org.

Your donations make the paper possible. Your readership makes it worthwhile.



CHARGE IT! GIVE ONLINE AT KEYPENNEWS.ORG

Krisa Bruemmer IRREVERENT MOM



Holiday Magic

My daughter, Violet, has been waiting for Santa since last January.

It feels like she's asked, "How much longer until Christmas?" just about every single day.

I was the same as a kid.

Mom always drove us over the pass to her childhood home in Yakima for the holidays where Grandma would make all our favorite pies — pumpkin for Mom, lemon meringue for my little brother, and banana cream for me. A banana hater, Mom said the sight of my pie was enough to make her gag, which pretty much sums up how I felt looking at Violet's hoard of Halloween candy this fall.

Sometimes parents just don't get it.

And sometimes kids don't get it either.

On Vashon Island in the 1980s and '90s, my mom always worried about money. We lived in a two-bedroom doublewide where my brother and I shared a room. Around the time I turned 11, I fiercely complained until Mom moved to the living room, her bed became my brother's, and I got my privacy.

Looking back, I can see how hard my mom tried to make Christmas special. She worked a holiday job at Maury Island Farm and barely slept, busy decorating or cleaning, wrapping gifts for us when she wasn't wrapping gifts at work. Not to mention, one of us was always sick.

Day to day, we didn't have a whole lot when I was little. But every December, Grandma and Grandpa spoiled us rotten: American Girl dolls, cassette tapes and a Walkman for me. Matchbox cars, Nintendo games and GI Joes for my brother. Their TV had no limits, there was always too much food on the table and I loved their cat, Lioness. Grandpa was always up for pulling a sled or

building a snowman, and anytime I asked, he'd plunk a second piece of banana cream pie onto my plate with a wink and a smile.

Although I loved every minute we spent in Yakima, our drive home always felt off-kilter, not quite right. Like clockwork, Mom would panic at the top of the snowy pass, worried we might not make it in our rattletrap jalopy, jam-packed with rich-kid gifts. I understood that a new car would cost a lot more than our presents. But it didn't make sense that I had expensive clothes and more than one \$100 doll, while Mom complained about not being able to afford both gas for the car and electricity to keep us warm.

Now that I'm all grown up with a child of my own, I notice that lots of adults, parents especially, seem overwhelmed at the holidays. Whether it's pressure to provide a perfect Christmas, seasonal depression, colds and flus, or simply the lack of magic we feel compared to holiday memories from childhood, life gets harder as the sky darkens, and the chill seeps in.

Last January a friend texted me that she feels depressed every winter, worded like a shameful confession. I was like, duh, of course. We all get that way, don't we? No need to apologize.

But when you're in deep, feeling depressed is lonely, sometimes isolating. And for some, it hits hardest around the holidays. We remember better years, more magical times, and it can feel like everyone around us is living a dream while we're locked out. As parents, it's a tricky balance to ride your way through that, while at the same time trying to create joyful, memorable moments for your kids.

But as my mom used to say, we "trudge onward." We do our best.

When Violet was three months old, I called my grandma at Christmastime and we got to talking about the dreamlike holidays of my childhood.

"I grew up during the Depression, you know," Grandma said, reminding me she'd lived through what for me had been a chapter in American History class. "We didn't have much, but your grandpa's parents always gave him a very good Christmas. Birthdays went by without a fuss, but Christmas was big. Your grandfather loved Christmas."

Somehow, I'd never known. Kids only know what you tell them, plus a few things they manage to work out on their own. Grandpa passed away in 2007 after a long bout with kidney failure and I regret never asking much about his childhood, his Christmases, even his winter moods. But it never occurred to me until it was too late.

My grandfather was a real-life Santa Claus. Kind, gentle, generous and jolly, every December he gave us whatever our hearts desired, always reminding us that we were very good kids. I miss him the most at Christmas. Especially now.

As we all trudge onward through this second pandemic winter, tell your children how good they have been. Enjoy your friends, your pets, whoever you love, however you can. Tell your stories. Do your best. Dark days will lead us back to spring and summer, as they always do.

And remember, it's not all about the presents. It's also about the pie.

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

Dan Whitmarsh WRITING BY FAITH



Giving Gratitude

The Christmas season is upon us once again. Even in this second winter of Covid, it is a time for celebration, family, and feasting. Dancing lights twinkle merrily while carolers serenade our streets with songs of snowfall,

Santa and Silent Nights. Christmas trees stand tall in living rooms across the land, evoking hope and wonder in every child for presents that will soon arrive.

Christmas means many things to many people, but surely gift giving is an essential custom for almost every family. Finding the right present for a loved one is both a challenge and a delight. Markets and catalogs do their part in offering the perfect gift, be it a toy, sweater, power tool or diamond necklace. As tiring as it all can be, the delight in the eyes of a child or lover as they rip open the wrapping paper to find a treasure inside makes it all worthwhile.

Every culture has its practice of gift giving. For Christians, giving presents at Christmas is inspired by the story of the Magi and their visit to Jesus. Drawn by a star announcing the birth of a king, they found Jesus, Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem. Worshipping Jesus, they presented him with gifts before returning to their homes in the East. As the story unfolds throughout the gospels, the one who received these gifts becomes the Gift of life for the world.

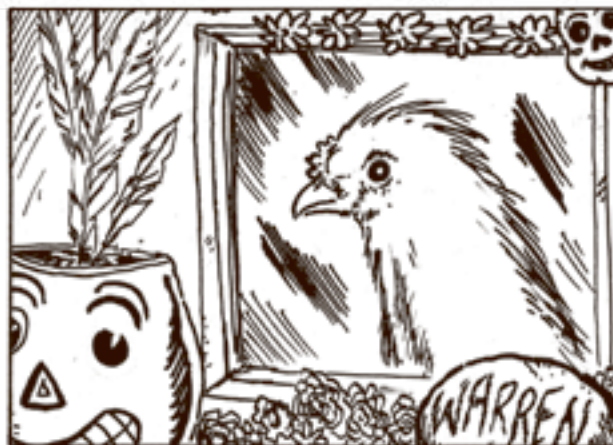
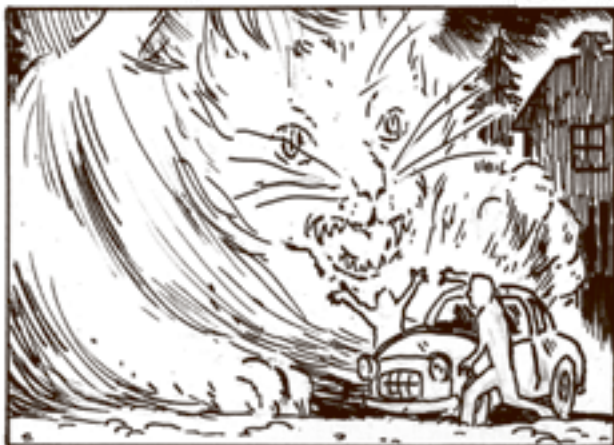
As I listen to these ancient stories, I am reminded that everything in life is a gift. It would be nice to think we earned any of this or that we deserve it but, in the end, it is all a gift. The land upon which we walk, the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, friends and neighbors, even the spark of life itself are all gifts given freely into our hands.

In her book "Braiding Sweetgrass," Robin Wall Kimmerer observes how much everything changes when we recognize the world and all it contains as a gift rather than a commodity. Gifting calls forth gratitude, reciprocity, and an open hand toward one another instead of a relentless drive to acquire more while violently defending what we have.

A gift received plants a desire to share

José Alaniz WE LIVE HERE: YULE

IT SOUNDS LIKE THE SETUP TO A JOKE: HOW DO A PAGAN, AN AGNOSTIC AND 20+ ANIMALS CELEBRATE THE YULE SEASON? WITH HUMILITY, WE HOPE. THE DARKEST TIME OF YEAR CALLS FOR SOME PERSPECTIVE ON ONE'S PLACE IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF THINGS. IN TRUTH, OUR PLACE IS SMALL. ANCIENT PEOPLES KNEW. THEIR YULETIME RITUALS CALLED FOR APPEASEMENT (LIKE OF THE GIANT YULE CAT), SO WE GIVE OUR FELINE'S GIFTS THEY MARKED THE TRANSITION BETWEEN GREAT POWERS, AS WHEN THE HOLLY KING YIELDS TO THE OAK KING (WE DECORATE WITH HOLLY AND OAK LEAVES). WE DRINK GLOGG (WARM MULLED WINE), EAT RAISIN



and to pass our joy along to others. Gifting creates an interconnectedness between humans and the earth. Gifts are treasured and cherished, carrying memories of the one who gave them. Gifts create a bond of love that affirms a worth far beyond something we purchase for ourselves.

Kimmerer writes, “The essence of the gift is that it creates a set of relationships. The currency of a gift economy is, at its root, reciprocity. In Western thinking, private land is understood to be a ‘bundle of rights,’ whereas in a gift economy property has a ‘bundle of responsibilities’ attached.”

If all of life is a gift, then we on the Key Peninsula are particularly blessed. The gifts are too many to name, but include forest, sea, sky, salmon, shellfish, blackberries, farms, educators, public servants, a library and a strong community. We bring ourselves and offer our gifts and labor, and with open hands, receive all the nourishment we need to thrive.

If we began to look upon life as a gift, responding with gratitude and seeking opportunities to share, then the carols of Peace on Earth and Goodwill to All might have a chance of coming true. If we lay down our demand for rights and our weapons of protection and instead live out the responsibilities bundled into our many gifts, this time of division and confusion will be transformed into a season of sharing and caring.

I have found what I believe to be the greatest gift of all, the new life promised in the birth of Jesus. I pray you all receive gifts of love, laughter, peace, friendship and light in this Christmas time. However you celebrate, I hope you receive the very thing that will bring joy to your heart, and that you find an opportunity to share that joy with those around you.

On behalf of the Lakebay Church and the KP Ministers, I wish you a Merry Christmas.

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



Jack Dunne
FROM THE CITIOT DESK

The Miracle of Boats

Crabs think fish fly. I can hear them, muttering and grumbling, stumbling about on the barnacled rocks along the shores of Puget Sound. The fish too look up jealously at the bottom of my boat as I sail about in the sun and fresh air, cruising like Pharaoh down the Nile. Only the birds look down and show their disdain for my false flight with their surprisingly loud cries and occasionally more substantial offerings. But my boat is flying high.

As I look at the Sound, I often see what looks like a shallow lake, or even a big pond, but I remind myself this thing is huge, 400-plus feet deep in many places. You could sink the Tacoma Narrows Bridge upright and the towers would be submerged. There are worlds down there with many layers of temperature and salinity, each with its own lives and stories, each looking up and down and wondering. And I glide above, in my boat.

The Sound is a delightfully open space available to all if you can get to a boat, any boat. We see so many kinds of boats here and they are all wonderful.

Boats take us into a fluid world. Air and sea both offer smooth gliding across their interface, but boats had been taking us off the ground for thousands of years before Kitty Hawk aircraft, and our mastery of the invention is a human splendor. Poled, paddled, sailed or motored, boats get us beyond solid earth into another world filled with danger and beauty and life and commerce.

Especially here on the Sound, the shortest distance between friends is often across the water, and the trip can be primordially satis-

fying. If you are quiet and slow enough, you won't be alone for long. Maybe a family of porpoise will rise for a few deep breaths before they dive back to the safety of the deep. Likely a seal will bob up, clearly curious about these monkeys out here and what they may want. I am fascinated by our jellyfish, barely more viscous than the salt water that makes us all, floating up slowly, heavy with unborn life, riding the summer tide to Olympia or Shelton or Joe's Bay; they don't really care. And maybe orcas, tremendous, in case you had any doubt about who is the guest in this house.

People who know how to boat are a special club; even more so are the people who know how to make boats. I recommend a Saturday afternoon at the Gig Harbor Boat Shop. Spend an hour or so with resident shipwright Tom Regan or any of the other old coots with years of experience at the boat shop any given Saturday: machinists, woodcrafters, sailors, merchant marine and Navy who volunteer their time building and repairing boats. There are no straight lines on a boat. Design is all about fluid efficiency and when expertise is apparent, the results are very satisfying.

If you can get to a boat, any boat, you can slide out into an adjacent world. From this new vantage, you can look back on the land, where all that stuff is going on.

Looks a little smaller, doesn't it?

Sailing is my favorite. There is magic in riding the difference between ocean and air. But who can't love the silent slice of a kayak or the screaming delight of kids towed on a float by loving grandparents with a cool ski boat? There's nobility in the monstrous freighters out of Tacoma or the tugs hauling through the Narrows.

But most of the time, boats wait. Look down onto any marina, the overgrown part of the yard on a trailer, out in the shed up

in the rafters, and there they wait; stabled horses, unplayed guitars. An old friend used to say, “patient as a box of bricks,” but so much more alive than that. Even just waiting, boats are graceful, maybe even hopeful.

The waiting boats need our help. So, shove off, power up, unmoor, set sail, pilot, navigate, bring the beer, bring to life. We are the souls of the boats, they our vessels. Where shall we go? Like our jellyfish cousins, I don't really care.

Jack Dunne lives gratefully in Lakebay.



Ted Olinger
ANOTHER LAST WORD

Hiroshima

I spent a couple of years back in the 1990s working for a small tutoring company in Seattle. The job was to help teenagers academically, but some needed more. We found them better schools, scholarships, jobs, and sometimes homes. (I've written about it here before: “A Remote Student,” Nov. 2020.)

There was this one girl who wasn't a client but rather a friend of the boss's family. She was a senior at a prestigious private school, a painter, a poet, a musician, and she was brilliant, as her career would later prove. I chatted with her whenever she stopped by to reassure myself there was hope for humanity.

So, I was surprised one day when I found her name on my schedule to discuss some schoolwork issue.

She was in this ultra-AP literature seminar where each student not only had to read each book and write essays on them, but also had to lecture and lead discussions on two of the titles. She'd already done that once without a problem but now she was

CONTINUED PAGE 8

TAMALES, BAKE LA BEFANA CAKE, BURN THE YULE LOG WITH OUR WISHES, AND THROUGH OUR OFRENDA REMEMBER THE DEAD, LIKE MY GRANDMOTHER AND HER X-MAS BUÑUELOS. WE DRAW FROM MANY TRADITIONS — THEY ALL PARTAKE OF THE GREAT WISDOM. IT ENTHRALLS AND AMAZES ME HOW MUCH OUR ANCESTORS UNDERSTOOD — THROUGH OBSERVATION AND MEMORY AS WELL AS FAITH — IN THE SHIVERING DEPTHS OF WINTER. A KNOWLEDGE LIKE THE TRILLIUM SLEEPING IN THE EARTH, WAITING TO POP UP IN UNEXPECTED PLACES IN SPRING, AS FAIRIES DO. IN THE DARKEST TIME OF YEAR, THEY KNEW THAT WITH THE SOLSTICE THE LIGHT WAS COMING BACK.

SEE WWW.KEYPENNEWS.ORG FOR COLOR BY DAVID LASKY



IEWS, FROM PAGE 7

up again, and she was terrified.

The book was “Hiroshima” by John Hersey.

In 1946, The New Yorker commissioned Hersey, a decorated war correspondent and prize-winning novelist, to go to Hiroshima to report on the state of that city one year after it had been destroyed by the first atomic bomb. His book recreates the day by profiling six survivors in what was then the new approach of using classic narrative structure for nonfiction reporting. The magazine had planned to serialize his story over a year but instead devoted a single oversized issue to it. The book was published just two months later, sold more than three million copies, and has never been out of print.

It also must be one of the most studied books in American literature. I read it in high school myself and then again when I wrote about it as part of my thesis on World War II.

I didn’t see the problem. There could be no question of her not getting it.

She did get it. That was the problem.

Her dad was in the middle of months of radiation therapy for a disease still so little understood it’s called non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. He’d already done a year of chemo, which had taken its toll on him and the family. It didn’t help that he was a physician and understood better than most what was happening to him and what was going to happen.

She spoke through long tears about the survivors’ stories in the book, but she knew herself well enough to understand the book was not the issue. She recognized her father’s suffering — and her own — in those stories. His slow diminishment by radiation, the burns, the cancer; the destruction it wrought on her family, the destruction of those other families, all melted into her. She saw herself in those lives ruined in a flash, and in a lost innocence that mirrored her own.

And she felt guilty because of it. How could she compare her pain to the trauma of Hiroshima? How dare she make that event about herself?

She insisted there was no time to find an alternative. Everyone in class had read the book, everyone had been subjected to the stress of lecturing and she would not undergo the indignity of getting out of it. She didn’t know what to do.

“I just wish John Hersey was here to see what a good book he wrote,” I said. “Because you’re supposed to feel this way.”

I’d done my own time on chemo just a few years earlier for a different version of the same disease her father was fighting,

followed by the same long stretch of radiation, which left its mark, and I had come through the other side.

She knew that; it’s why she’d come to me. But that’s not what she needed to hear.

She needed to hear about the hidden country in between.

She had let the pain of strangers reach her and that made her eligible — it is the only word — to honor it. That is what survivors do. They protect the living.

“Tell the class what you told me,” I said. “Show them what this book showed you. It will help you and it will help them too.”

I still remember the look she gave me because I couldn’t quite read it. Some combination of acceptance and defiance. Maybe just courage.

I gave her a bunch of Kleenex and we stood up and shook hands. We were fellow travelers on the same unmarked landscape.

She aced her seminar, of course. I saw her once or twice afterward before she graduated and went to the Ivy League on a full ride and earned her Ph.D. Last I heard she was teaching grad students out there.

Her father survived.

Ted Olinger is an award-winning writer. He lives in Vaughn.

Letters to the Editor

COMMERCIAL GEODUCK OPERATIONS TOO DESTRUCTIVE

I have lived in the area over 40 years and walked the beaches and forests of the Key Peninsula. I see firsthand the damage that commercial geoduck harvesting does to the beach. I was at the Haley property this summer and witnessed the process in action at a nearby parcel. They use high powered water pressure created by what looked like a generator to blast the sand bed around the geoducks to pull them out, destroying and displacing the sand bed for any creature. On my walk there at low tide, I found small fish, crabs, spider crab, moon snails, moon snail eggs, horse clams and some sea grass. All these things would be destroyed from the practice of commercial geoduck harvesting.

We also have critically endangered sunflower sea star invertebrates in the area that require a stable sea floor. I have not seen endangered sunflower stars for quite some time. Stable sand beds are vital for the small creatures and larvae to live safely and mature, especially the seagrass beds that are being depleted worldwide.

The opinions expressed by columnists and letter writers are not necessarily those of the KP News. We neither endorse nor oppose issues or proposals discussed on these pages and present these views for public information. Letters to the editor must be signed and include a daytime phone number. Anonymous letters will not be published. Letters are printed on a space-available basis as a community service. All submissions will be edited. Email to editor@keypennews.org.

I primarily eat sustainable seafood as my protein source but have never seen geoduck for sale in the stores I frequent. Geoduck is primarily exported to Asia. Geoducks live to over 100 years old and improve water quality through their siphoning.

It would be to our advantage to leave them to grow and not harvest them to improve quality in our bays that are suffering from sewage runoff that comes from increased population and unmanaged systems. I pick up litter when I walk the beach and frequently find the plastic mesh used in geoduck production. In my opinion this practice of farming geoduck in our area is all about money and not in the best interest of the health of Puget Sound and the beautiful beaches of Key Peninsula. I encourage you to watch YouTube videos of the destructive practice of harvesting commercially farmed geoducks to see for yourself.

Jenny Balman, Wauna

FIRE CHIEF’S DEPARTURE

Thank you for your coverage of the leadership debacle at the Key Peninsula Fire Department (“KPF Chief Poised to Leave for Central Pierce Fire & Rescue,” Oct. 2021).

With several friends on the fire district board, I take no pleasure in pointing out the lack of leadership exhibited by the board in handling Chief Morrow’s decision to leave the KP for greener pastures in Central Pierce.

I was not a fan of the board using taxpayer dollars to fund the search that brought Chief Morrow to the KP. In my experience, most of these candidates are great job-shoppers with no real interest in a long-term connection to the community. The board members are presumably capable of performing their own due diligence in finding chief applicants. If not, voters should find commissioners that can actually do the job.

That the board would even consider keeping the chief on the payroll while also being paid by CPFD is testament to its complete abdication of its responsibilities.

My advice to Board President Stan Moffett is to say goodbye to Chief Morrow and get on with the business of finding — by the board, not an outside contractor — a full-time fire chief who wants to stay here in our community, even if it means that person’s resume may not have all the bullet points as that of a job-shopper.

Take your time and find the right fit this

time. In the meantime, Assistant Chief Hal Wolverton will do a fine job in the interim. I’m pretty sure Hal has no plans to move off the KP.

John “Pat” Kelly, Gig Harbor

OBITUARIES



Lila Lee Abraham

Lila Lee (Smith) Abraham born Nov. 22, 1930, in Yakima to Jim and Betty Smith, passed away quietly in the company of her family Oct. 23. She was raised in Kellogg, Idaho, and Yakima as her father transferred jobs with the Union Pacific.

Young and energetic, Lila grew up enjoying skiing, ice skating, hunting and fishing. She achieved the highest rank and honors in the Campfire Girls. During her summers Lila worked as a cook on the family homestead in Sprague where she enjoyed the company of many cousins. In Yakima, she was active in the Saint Michael’s Episcopal Church. She loved music and became quite proficient in a variety of woodwind instruments before graduating from Yakima High School in 1949.

Lila attended Eastern Washington State College in Cheney, near Sprague, where she soon met Jacob Rufer. They were married and settled in the Seattle area. She gave birth to three children: Jacob Rufer, Kathleen Rufer and Elizabeth Mann.

Lila volunteered with the American Red Cross, assisting children with disabilities in summer programs. She taught swimming and scuba diving. She eventually joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

With her children fairly well grown up,

Lila set out on her own. She moved back to Yakima, pursuing a career in bookkeeping. Since she loved sewing, she went to work for Bernina Sewing Center. She eventually retired from Bremerton Bottling. In her retirement she became passionate in doing temple work for the church, where she met her eternal companion, Bill Abraham. They were married in the Bellevue Temple in 1999 and established their home on the Key Peninsula.

For many years, it seemed that Bill and Lila spent more time on the road traveling than at home. They enjoyed hunting and fishing together from Alaska to Arizona. When they were home, they could be found attending church together, where they made many fond memories and friends. Between them, they have a large family with numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren. Mom, Grandma, and adoring wife will be missed by all.



Clifford "Buck" England

Born Oct. 10, 1942, in Morton, Washington, to parents Alfred and Helen Jorgenson England, Clifford B. England aka "Buck," age 79 of Home, died Nov. 11 at St. Anthony Hospital following complications from cancer treatments.

Buck played piano at dance halls and armories, including The Spanish Castle Ballroom in Seattle, for teen dances in his early career. From there he discovered the "mighty Hammond B-3" and never looked back.

In his 65-year career of traveling, he appeared and recorded with countless performers both here and abroad. He garnered many awards and honors, including the Washington Blues Society Hall of Fame, Washington Blues Best Hammond B3 player, Washington Blues Joe Johansen Memorial Award for Excellence, Tacoma Blues Grand Summy Award Blues Master, Black American Blues Historical Society of Canada Award, and the honor of master keyboardist in the Fraternal Order of Celesta Musicians.

Buck loved being with his family and friends, gardening, and was an avid reader.

Buck is survived by his wife Quirina England of Home; children Jeffrey England, Dylan England, Dory England, Denise Lennon and their respective spouses; six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; three sisters and one brother. He was preceded in death by his parents and daughter-in-law Laura England.

Services were held at Immanuel Presbyterian Church Nov. 28. In lieu of flowers, please donate to your favorite charity.



Randy Bart Hindman

Randy Bart Hindman of Gig Harbor died Oct. 15 at the age of 66. A warrior throughout life, Randy triumphed whenever life threw him a curve ball and persevered despite the odds.

He loved hunting, fishing and spending time engaged in conversation with close friends, although he was known to strike up conversations with just about anyone. He was an avid outdoorsman and enjoyed sightseeing across the country.

Early on he pursued a career in carpentry from which he eventually retired. From there he traveled the U.S. as a truck driver and touched down at least once in every state. After retirement, Randy bought property on the Key Peninsula and built a home where he spent the rest of his life comfortably.

Randy is survived by his life partner and fiancée Dawn "DD" Greenwood; children Shane, Randy Jr., Kristi and Jason; sisters Shari Armstrong and Christi Alverez, Marilyn Stanford, Patti Fuller; and his loving stepmother Kita. He was preceded in death by his parents, Alice Fidler and Charles "Chuck" Hindman.

Genuine and filled with life, Randy had a big heart and would do anything for anybody. His presence and energy will be forever missed. While he did not wish to have a service, a celebration of his life will be held in the future.



Marianne Irene (Nordquist) McColley

Marianne was born in Lakebay to Ernest and Irma Nordquist Sept. 2, 1936. She died peacefully in Renton, surrounded by family Nov. 10.

Marianne graduated from Peninsula High School Class of '54 and soon married Phillip D. McColley. They lived in a variety of places and loved to travel the world, especially with family.

The couple joined the Lutheran Church while living in Davenport because a member asked them to sing in the choir. Subsequently, they both sang with Lutheran church choirs in Portage, Wisconsin, Wenatchee and Lakebay. Marianne often served as liturgist or assistant minister during church services.

Marianne graduated from the University of Wisconsin at Madison and began teaching in Wenatchee. Her 20-year career included music, third grade and fifth grade before retiring in 1996. She enjoyed participating in community and church activities. A talented pianist, Marianne often accompanied various choirs and community theater productions. She participated in Music Theater of Wenatchee as an actor, director, producer and accompanist. She sang with a barbershop chorus, assisted with Short Shakespeareans and directed the Applearies Women's Chorus.

Following retirement, Marianne returned to Home where she was recognized for her service to the community. She directed both the Key Peninsula Lutheran Church choir and Key Singers, a community group. She volunteered at the Angel Guild. She was active with Paradise Theater in Gig Harbor, serving at various times as a board member, actor musician coach and musical director. She was a gifted musician who enjoyed helping others find their voice. In her words, "There is no one who cannot sing."

Marianne was deeply loved by her daughters Devon and Britt; sons-in-law Warren and Mark; grandchildren Katharine, Arianna, Laura and David; and

great-grandchildren McColley, Brayton, Pearson, Lindley, Egan and Mercer. She was preceded in death by her beloved husband Phil, who died in 2002 shortly after their 48th anniversary.

A memorial service will be held at Key Peninsula Lutheran Church in Lakebay in spring of 2022. In lieu of flowers, a donation to a community theater or choir is suggested.

What's Going On Here?

Find the latest
online at

keypennews.org

KP Events Calendar

Don't miss out. Get all the latest details for Key Peninsula public events. Add your nonprofit event online or email details to calendar@keypennews.org

Look for the Calendar's return to these pages soon.



Join the Festivities at Sunnycrest!



Holiday Open House

Saturday, Dec 4
from 9 to 4

Sunday Dec. 5 11 to 4

Treats, drinks
and drawings
for prizes. You could
win a free fire pit!

DECEMBER DEALS

30% OFF

Gift items, ornaments,
candles, wall décor,
pillows. Garland,
pointsettias and live
evergreen trees

25% OFF

Houseplants
Birdseed & Birding items

50% OFF

Spring Bulbs & Onions
while supplies last

Save more! Redeem your
SUNNYMONEY

Clearance Event
starts day after Christmas.
Up to 60% off select items.

• Custom wreaths, door swags, hanging baskets and centerpieces available for pickup or delivery • Gift Certificates make great gifts for gardeners • Happy Holidays! We're closed Christmas Day and New Years Day



SUNNYCREST NURSERY
FLORIST & DECOR

IN KEY CENTER OPEN MON-SAT 9 to 4 SUNDAY 11 to 4 253 884-3937
sunnycrestnursery@yahoo.com www.sunnycrestnursery.com



William Smitherman, First Black Legislator from the 26th, Dies at 78

The legislator did more in eight years in Olympia than most accomplish in a lifetime.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

William Conrad "Bill" Smitherman, the former state representative and senator for the 26th legislative district, which includes the Key Peninsula, died Nov. 3. He was 78 years old.

In 1982, Smitherman became the first Black man elected to the Legislature from the 26th, which at that time included part of Tacoma, Gig Harbor and the Key Peninsula, west to Gorst.

Smitherman was elected to the state Senate in 1986, where he became chair of the Higher Education committee and was instrumental in getting the UW Tacoma branch campus started. He was also vice chair of the Commerce and Labor committee, sat on the Transportation, Energy, and Utilities committees, represented the Senate on the Washington Housing Council and helped pass the Growth Management Act.

In 1989 Smitherman was named the Washington State Labor Council Legislator of the Year.

"He was a standout who did a lot for the KP and our whole region — not least, setting an example of upright public service," said Larry Seaquist, who represented the 26th in the State House of Representatives from 2007 to 2015. He first met Smitherman in the early 2000s at the annual Fourth of July celebrations and confabs hosted by KP boosters Hugh and Janice McMillan at their home in Home.

"I met Bill on the campaign trail back when he was running for the House," said Hugh McMillan. "Any kind of legislation that we wanted on the Key Peninsula, Bill did everything he could to make it happen. And let me tell you, he was very persuasive."

"We met in about '79; he was an urban planner, so he understood zoning," said longtime KP resident Norman McLoughlin, himself an urban planner and onetime housing director of the Pierce County Housing Department. He worked with Smitherman to protect KP shorelines and shellfish from pollution.

"He created a new classification in the county for sensitive areas," McLoughlin said. "They drew a boundary around Rocky Bay and Minter and Burley, and it brought a lot

more attention to what needed to happen. Now we have water quality meetings with people from the county and the state; all sorts of different agencies."

Smitherman bought property on the south end of the peninsula at Devil's Head. "He had it for many years; he'd come and visit, but eventually sold it," McLoughlin said.

Smitherman grew up in Lakewood and graduated from Clover Park High School

in 1962. He graduated from Langston University, Oklahoma, in 1966 with a Bachelor of Arts in sociology and education, then went to work at West Seattle High School until 1971, where he taught sociology and anthropology, coached track, and created a program with the UW to support students with adverse childhood experiences.

He went on to teach race relations at the University of Puget Sound, volunteered in the community, and helped establish the first neighborhood councils in Tacoma.

In 1973, Smitherman earned a degree from the University of Washington Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning. In 1993, he earned another graduate degree, this time from Gonzaga University Graduate School of Education.

He and his wife Karen, now a retired Tacoma public school teacher and administrator, were married in 1974 and have two daughters.

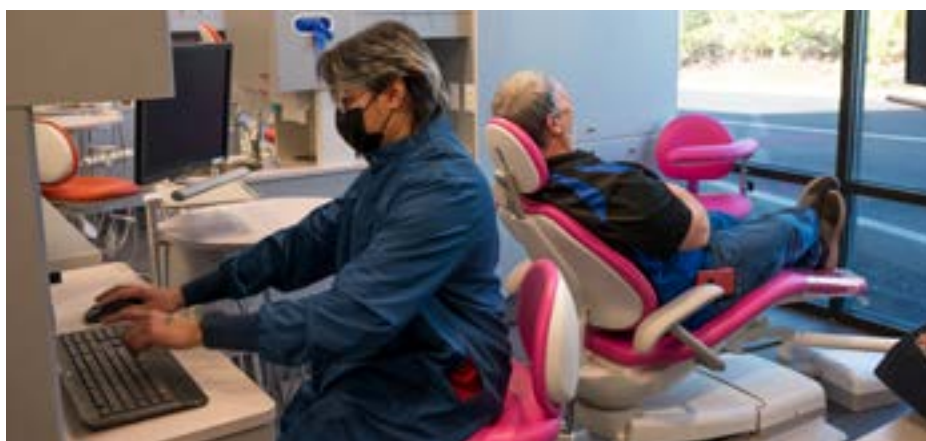
After his political career, Smitherman returned to teaching

"He was just a great guy," McLoughlin said. "He was charming and disarming and had one of the best senses of humor of anybody, which is one of the reasons he got elected. And he listened to people at the same time. Everybody liked him. His students loved him. He was a great teacher."

"My main recollection has less to do with the admiration for being the first Black legislator, but just as a legislator," Seaquist said. "He modeled the kind of elected official that was calm, thoughtful, obviously tuned into you. He was a thorough human being."

"It's important not just to celebrate his life in memorial, but to actually apply those models to people we're looking to elect in years to come," he said. ■





Dental suite at the new clinic *Tina McKail, KP News*

New Medical and Dental Clinic Opens on the KP

Peninsula Community Health Services expands options available on the Key Peninsula.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

Peninsula Community Health Services opened the doors to the Key Peninsula Clinic, its eighth site, November 17. The clinic is located in the former Artbeads.com facility on 137th Avenue NW, off KP Highway NW.

The clinic will provide primary care for children and adults. It houses a dental clinic and on-site pharmacy and plans to integrate behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment.

PCHS established its first community clinic in Bremerton in 1987 and became a federally qualified health center in 1995. “That means we will never turn anyone away based on insurance status or ability to pay,” said PCHS Chief Executive Director Jennifer Kreidler-Moss. “Whether you have Apple Health, Medicare, insurance through your employer, or no insurance at all, we’ll work with you to make sure you get the care you need.” A navigator, someone trained to help sort out payment options, will be on staff.

Leah Boyd, who completed her training at the University of Washington as a physician assistant and has worked at a PCHS clinic in Bremerton, will be the clinic’s first provider. “I grew up in the Midwest, but fell in love with the Pacific Northwest,” she said. “When I’m not working, I love to spend my time outdoors hiking and exercising with my husband and our fur-baby, Belle. I also love to travel and enjoy trying new things.”

The medical wing of the clinic includes 10 exam rooms, a minor procedure room, a classroom, offices for behavioral health and substance use disorder counseling, and a lab. The clinic will add providers and services depending on demand and hopes to include obstetrical services. “Everything at PCHS is driven by the needs of our patients and the communities they live in.

We’re always looking for new opportunities to help, and if additional services are needed on the Key Peninsula, we’ll find a way to meet that need,” Kreidler-Moss said.

The dental wing has seven seats and a consultation room. A dental hygienist is currently on staff and two dentists should join within a month. PCHS worked with Sen. Emily Randall (D-Bremerton) and Rep. Michelle Caldier (R-Port Orchard)

“WE WILL NEVER TURN ANYONE AWAY BASED ON INSURANCE STATUS OR ABILITY TO PAY.”

to secure \$490,000 from the state capital budget for dental equipment. “We’re very grateful for their help,” Kreidler-Moss said. “There is a lot of unmet need in the area, and this means that more people will be able to get more timely appointments closer to home.”

The impetus for opening a clinic on the Key Peninsula came from one of its board members, Port Orchard resident Beryl Cochran, who died in October. The PCHS board, Kreidler-Moss said, is made up of patients and community members. “They make sure that we stay responsive to our patients and local needs. Beryl spent her whole career in community health and joined our board after she retired. She was a fierce advocate for establishing a clinic on the Key Peninsula, and for well over a year she helped guide and oversee the project.”

PCHS has clinics in Bremerton, Shelton, Belfair, Port Orchard, Poulsbo and Kingston. In addition, they run several school-based clinics and have a mobile medical clinic that travels throughout Kitsap County to provide primary care to patients with transportation or other access issues. Their mobile dental unit and the mobile medical unit both provided services from the new clinic’s parking lot during the remodel period.

Register with PCHS to receive medical care or use the pharmacy. Dental services are available without registration. ■

INDEPENDENT, LOCALLY OWNED. FROM OUR FAMILY TO YOURS.

SHOP FROM OUR GREAT SELECTION OF PUZZLES FINE CHOCOLATES (new truffle flavors) A LOCAL SECTION LEGOS METAL EARTH BARBIES POP-ITS SLIME HOT COCOA & HOT COCOA BOMBS CHRISTMAS DÉCOR AND MUCH MORE!

Your Family Pharmacy is stocked with LOTS of gift ideas for your loved ones.

PHARMACY 253 857-7797 M-F 9am-7pm, Sat 'til 6pm, Closed Sun
STORE 253 857-7944 M-F 9am-7pm, Sat 'til 6pm, Sun 'til 5pm
COSTLESSPURDY.COM

Purdy COSTLESS

LOWEST RX PRICES IN AREA WE MAIL PRESCRIPTIONS

TRADITIONAL QUALITY, NEW-FANGLED TECHNOLOGY



GLEN COVE REPAIR 253 884-1838

Ted & Bertha Mills on Christmas tree hunt in Vaughn : Photo courtesy Key Peninsula Historical Museum

Join us! Community Volunteer Network
Senior Ride Program | Key Senior
Information Center | Assisted Living Project
Support Groups, Forums and Classes

Building an Elder-Friendly Key Peninsula

Santa for Seniors!

**RSVP now for
Dec 14** by phone
or email. Enjoy
a take-home
meal, holiday
music, gifts
and activities.

Space is
limited,
reserve
yours now.



COMMUNITY FORUMS

Join our free, informative forums

Pierce County Services for KP Seniors

Judy Olsen presents in-person
Thursday **Dec. 2 at 1 pm**
at The Mustard Seed Project.

COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic

Pfizer and Moderna 1st, 2nd and
boosters available — Tuesday
Dec. 28 from 10 am to 2 pm
at The Mustard Seed Project.



The Mustard Seed Project

253 884-9814

Office open M-F, 10 to 4

info@themustardseedproject.org

www.themustardseedproject.org

Follow us on Facebook

Redistricting Commission Fails to Meet Deadline

The Washington State Supreme Court will make the final decision.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

The Washington State Redistricting Commission failed to meet the deadline to submit its plans for new congressional and legislative district maps Nov. 15. Responsibility for redistricting now goes to the state Supreme Court, with a deadline of April 30.

The commission, with Republicans Paul Graves and Joe Fain, Democrats April Sims and Brady Walkinshaw, and nonvoting Chair Sarah Augustine, began its work nearly a year ago. It held 17 public meetings and 22 business meetings, received thousands of comments and provided a mapping tool that allowed the public to submit third-party maps.

Redistricting is required by law once the census is completed every decade. Because each district must have the same number of people and population growth is uneven, boundaries must be redrawn. Legislatures are responsible in some states, often resulting in gerrymandered districts that protect the party in power. Washington has had a bipartisan commission appointed by each of the state house and senate caucuses and a non-voting chair since 1983. This was the fourth time a commission has met and the first time it failed to meet the deadline.

Commissioners could not start mapping until the census data, historically available in April, was released in mid-August. Each commissioner posted their initial map recommendations on the commission's website, www.redistricting.wa.gov, in September.

Those attending the virtual meeting Nov. 15 watched a silent screen with brief appearances by the commissioners, who reported that they were making progress.

Minutes before midnight, Augustine appeared to take a vote where all commissioners approved both redistricting maps, and then abruptly adjourned the meeting.

A press conference scheduled for the following day was canceled and late that night, nearly 24 hours after the deadline, the legislative and congressional district maps were posted on the website with a statement from Augustine.

"While we acknowledge we missed the deadline for our maps to be considered by the Legislature, we see no reason why the court can't do so," Augustine said. "These maps reflect the input of the thousands of people who took part in the process with us. It would be a shame to see these maps go unconsidered simply because the clock struck 12."

At a press conference Nov. 18, the commissioners said they had all endorsed the maps and hoped the court would accept them. Commissioners also blamed the last-minute crunch on the pandemic-related delay in receiving census data as well as technical issues, including computer failures.

All commissioners praised Augustine for her role. "When negotiations broke down, her mediation skills brought us back together," Sims said.

Graves said that five incumbents would lose their positions with the commission's redistricting.

If the posted maps are accepted, the Key Peninsula will remain in relatively unchanged 6th congressional and 26th legislative districts.

"I was pleasantly surprised to see the Key Peninsula and Gig Harbor will stay together," said Pierce County Council Chair

Derek Young (D-7th). Two of the proposed maps separated the two peninsulas and moved the Key Peninsula to the 35th LD, which includes all of Mason and parts of Thurston and Kitsap counties.

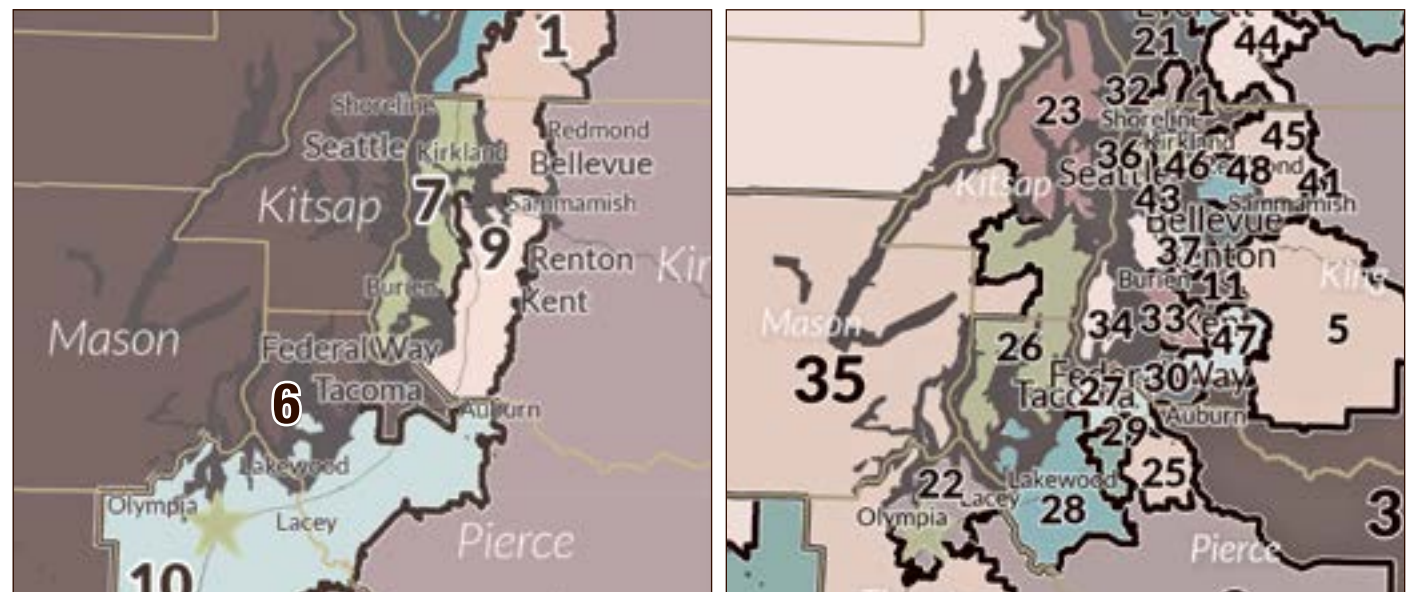
Young said he thinks the court will be inclined to accept the proposed maps, but that there might be additional considerations. The court may want to confirm that the population numbers are accurate. Sometimes lines are drawn to protect incumbents, and those could be changed.

Rep. Michelle Caldier (R-Port Orchard) said she is hopeful the court will accept the maps submitted by the commission. "There is so much at stake. I look at how much time and energy all the commissioners spent."

Sen. Emily Randall (D-Bremerton) said she was frustrated by the final stages of the commission's process. "They did a good job of soliciting public comment, more than any previous redistricting commission, but at the end it felt non-transparent and potentially non-compliant with the public meetings act."

Both Caldier and Randall said that if final maps are not released by the court until April 30, it would be a nightmare for candidates, who must register their intent to run for office between May 2 and 20. Both said they hope final decisions come well before the required deadline.

Pierce County will complete its own redistricting plan by the end of the year. Young said there are not likely to be big changes. The 7th Council District, which includes the Key Peninsula, Gig Harbor and part of Tacoma, will probably expand into a small part of central Tacoma. ■



If proposed redistricting maps for Congressional District, left, and Legislative District, right, are accepted, the Key Peninsula will remain in relatively unchanged 6th congressional and 26th legislative districts. *Washington State Redistricting Commission*



Naturalist's Notebook

Into the
WILD
EXPLORING WITH THE
KP NATURE GUIDE

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

A BEAVER POOP MYSTERY

The dam is deep in a thicket and quite small. To reach it I'm forced to crab-walk into the lively creek below it. Salmonberry canes extract the small blood offering required for me to enter the world of the beaver.

Behind the dam, floodwaters stretch like a mirror in a disorienting terrain of many-stemmed bushes and branches. The reflection heightens my claustrophobia. I'm glad to see the creek pouring from several divots in the dam. A seasonal flood spreads its arms far from this dam whenever rain is prolonged, and the recent run of atmospheric rivers has filled several pastures. How high will the water go? Will it become a permanent wetland?

Crouched here I'm reminded that not all beavers are aggressive about expanding their waterways. In this case, it seems there is a good reason. To build the dam any higher, the beaver would have to extend it hundreds of feet in either direction. It has chosen the one small notch where the wetland funnels back into a creek, built its small dam, and left it at that.

In fact, I cannot find any freshly chewed sticks in the dam. Maybe the beaver truly has left.

Ah! But then I see something strange. Beaver poop! In three places atop the dam are squat greenish pellets full of wood slivers, so waterlogged they look ready to dissolve. I have never seen beaver poop in person. Lucky me! All of the literature says that beavers almost always take care of their number-two underwater. What's going on here?

In spring and summer, beavers eat small herbs and aquatic plants. In fall and winter,

when they do most of their tree-felling and dam-building, their diet is mostly leaves they have stockpiled underwater, small branches and the inner bark of trees. It is a diet heavy in cellulose, the molecule that gives strength to the cell walls of plants. We cannot digest cellulose. To us, it is dietary fiber. Only a few animals have the ability to produce the enzyme that breaks down cellulose: termites, silkworms, some earthworms, some weevil larvae, a wood-boring clam and a fish called the grass carp. No mammals.

But many mammals have a workaround. In various formats, rabbits, cows, deer and others have specialized chambers in their digestive tracts to house the bacteria that are able to break down cellulose into energy.

Because of the beaver's diet, researchers have studied its ability to get calories from cellulose. Certain aspects of a beaver's blood chemistry more closely resemble that of cows — which are highly efficient at processing cellulose — than that of their rodent brethren. But research so far suggests that beavers do not have any special capability in this regard, and two-thirds of the cellulose they chow down comes out the other end unchanged. This puts them far behind cows and sheep and more in league with horses and rabbits.

Interesting, sure, but anyway, why here? Out in the open. It's unheard of. Could it be the artist's signature? A territorial marker? Or simply floated here by the current? Have any of you seen beaver poop on a dam or elsewhere? Theories and stories appreciated. In the meantime, I'll try to get a motion-triggered dam camera to learn more.

SPEEDY METEORS FROM A STRANGE SOURCE

It is one of the best shows of the year. This year's Geminid meteor shower is December 4-17. They peak on the 14th.

First observed from a Mississippi riverboat in 1833, the Geminids have grown in intensity since. How's that? How can an astronomical event begin during recorded history and grow from 10-20 meteors per hour to over 120 per hour?

The Geminids are bright, speedy meteors so named because they radiate from a point within the constellation Gemini, The Twins. They are white and yellow in color. Most meteor showers are the result of Earth passing through the debris trail left by a comet. When a comet approaches the sun, its surface ice is vaporized, sending out clouds of dust and rock. When Earth barges through the debris cloud, the particles become meteors.

The Geminids are a little different. They also come from a debris trail, but this one is from a mysterious asteroid named 3200 Phaethon. The 3.6-mile-wide asteroid is weirdly blue and has a comet-like orbit, even brightening as it nears the sun. Asteroids don't typically brighten or throw out debris. And 3200 Phaethon passes close enough to the sun that its surface temperature hits 1300 F. Any ice would have been vaporized long ago.

This year astronomers have proposed an interesting solution to the mystery of 3200 Phaethon's debris trail. They suggest that instead of ice, it is sodium deep in the cracked asteroid that is vaporizing and fizzing. According to their models, it would not take much fizzing of sodium to dislodge

bits of rock and dust from the asteroid's weak gravitational field. This idea explains the color of the Geminid meteors. Space rocks with sodium burn orange. Only rocks from a source depleted of sodium would burn pale.

With each passing year, Earth's orbit intersects 3200 Phaethon's debris trail more squarely. Because the shower's peak lasts a full 24 hours, the Geminids can be seen as soon as it gets dark, which is great for families with kids. Only one variable threatens to spoil the show. Is it too much to ask for a cloudless sky?

MISSION FOR KIDS: ADOPT-A-MOSS

Hey kids, remember this summer, when walking in the woods felt like walking on paper, it was so dry? Where were the mosses then? Here's a word for you: poikilohydrous. Mosses are poikilohydrous. It means they can dry out completely, shriveling into little brown fire tinder, and yet when water returns they suck it in and come back to life, right as rain. Regular plants can't do that!

Your mission this month is to find a moss cushion near where you live and adopt it. Examine it. Measure it. Is it growing? Talking with other plants? If you have a microscope, pick a tiny branch and inspect it. Do you see mites? Other moss creatures? Or cut off a corner of the cushion, take it inside, dry it out and then bring it back to life with a few drops of water. What does this superpower mean for the forest?

Let me know what you find. I plan to write more about mosses soon. I can promise one thing: adopting your moss will be much more interesting than adopting a pet rock! ■



Deck the Halls: When the KP Grew Holly

Brush picking has a long history on the Key Peninsula.

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

The Key Peninsula once worked hard every December to deck the halls of America with boughs of holly. For a brief decade in the 1930s, one of the most promising crops in the South Puget Sound area was holly. The excitement for the holly industry went so far that its proponents sought to change Washington's nickname from The Evergreen State to The Holly State or The Christmas State.

A number of enterprising peninsula farmers planted holly orchards to cash in on the demand for holiday decor. Some of these orchards persist untended today.

It was seasonal work. Starting around Thanksgiving, when the trees' red berries ripened, crews would go

BY THE 1930S THERE WERE 200 HOLLY ORCHARDS IN WASHINGTON.

into the orchards with ladders and gloves to cut sprigs of the spiky and shiny leaves with berries attached. The greenery was dipped in a hormone to keep it fresh. In barns and community halls, tables were covered with boxes and packing paper. Shifts of mostly women worked late into

the evening to grade, trim, pack and label the product. Much of it was shipped to wholesalers on the East Coast.

This added to a makeshift brush-picking industry that existed year-round on the peninsula. Brush pickers paid for small leases to landowners to gather salal, huckleberry and ferns for use in flower arrangements, as well as fir and cedar for wreaths and swags. Brush sheds dotted the peninsula's roads where anyone in need of extra cash could sell greenery.

The Pacific Northwest's first holly trees were planted in Oregon in the 1870s. Some early success in shipping sprigs to California prompted others to try, and the Meeker homestead in Puyallup was the first to plant holly in Washington in 1891. The trees bore their first harvest in 1898.

By the 1930s there were 200 holly orchards in Washington. The single most important was in Gig Harbor and could be seen by boat from the Narrows: Phillip Peyran's Hollycroft Farm, which by then boasted 10,000 trees of seven varieties on

20 acres. Peyran planted his first 35 trees in 1914. He had already had a career in the paint industry, but when doctors warned him that he needed to get into the woods more, his research led him to conclude that holly gives off the most oxygen of any tree — and could be marketed.

He started breeding his own cultivars and giving presentations to real estate organizations and booster clubs with the claim that holly farming was the most lucrative agriculture possible in the area. Demand seemed to be unlimited, the cool marine air kept the trees happy, and the profit to be made from each tree "pyramided itself every year." He shipped large baskets of 100 10-cent sprays, 75 15-cent sprays or 45 25-cent sprays. He also shipped holly wreaths in red boxes for \$3 each. His goal was to have all the East Coast buyers associate quality holly with the Gig Harbor area.

Part of the appeal of holly was that it grew well on clearcut land, where alder

tended to root quickly and choke out any other way of making a profit. For this reason, Aberdeen also made a play to become the holly capital of the world. Along with poultry, the holly industry was supposed to "go a long way toward solving the problem of the use of logged-off lands," according to the Tacoma Daily Ledger in 1930.

But it was not only industry boosters who spread holly across Washington. Early

BY THE 1970S THE GIG HARBOR AREA'S HOLLY ORCHARDS HAD ALL BEEN ABANDONED DUE TO INCREASING TRAFFIC AND DEVELOPMENT.

conservationists played an equally large role.

The effort was spearheaded by Seattleite Lillian McEwan, who was a founding member of the Seattle Garden Club and the first president of the Washington State Conservation Society. McEwan was also involved with the Garden Club of America, and she chafed at that organization's national program to remove billboards from highways. In search of something more interesting "to carry the idea of conservation," she initiated an intensive effort to plant English



Photos: *Tacoma Public Library Northwest Room, Richards Studio* Holly for Christmas ad from Dec 1953 TNT

to increasing traffic and development. Yet the Tacoma News Tribune could still run a story about an enterprising woman who leased an untended orchard and ran a holiday business making wreaths and shipping holly boughs.

In the mid-1980s there were an estimated 1,800 acres in Washington and Oregon producing 85% of the world's holly crop. The industry's old driving force, Peyran's Hollycroft Farm, was turned into the Dolphin Reach luxury condominiums, selling "view and value." Today there are about a dozen commercial holly farms left in the Pacific Northwest.

Holly germinates readily in peninsula forests and fields. Birds love its berries and carry them far and wide, and despite the lack of active planting it remains firmly established as an invasive species. In 2010 Washington's Noxious Weed Classification Board reviewed holly and decided not to classify it as a noxious weed, saying it is unclear whether or not its impact on native forests is negative.

The tree is dioecious, meaning male and female trees are separate. Bees are the primary pollinators. The size of the berry crop fluctuates from year to year. The wood is hard and white with a grain pattern that is nearly invisible. It has traditionally been used to make piano keys, snuff boxes, mathematical instruments and — because of its resistance to fire — beams near fireplaces.

Abandoned holly orchards persist on the peninsula at the corner of Rouse Road and 174th Street and on Silverbow Farm. To walk through a publicly accessible orchard, visit Wilkinson Farm Park in Gig Harbor. ■

holly in Puget Sound parks and forests that lasted a full decade.

In reflecting on the conservation society's aim she said, "The charm of our great outdoors is due to the abundance and beauty of our native flowers, trees and shrubs ... But the interests of the Society are broader than that. We would not only keep what we have but we would add to it."

Much of the work was done by school kids. A common post-holidays class project in the 1930s was to gather discarded holly wreaths and strip them of their berries. The conservation society then hosted elaborate galas in Seattle at which many hundreds of students would bring berries to be gathered, crushed and buried in sand to germinate into thousands of holly seedlings. Classes later went out to plant them. The effort only fizzled because the events grew too large for the all-volunteer conservation society to manage.

By the 1970s the Gig Harbor area's holly orchards had all been abandoned due

We are always grateful to our volunteers, staff, and the KP community for your generous support



**KEY PENINSULA
COMMUNITY
SERVICES**

FOOD BANK/SENIOR CENTER

keypeninsulacommunityservices.org or call 253 884-4440

When people help each other, amazing things happen.

Buying or selling? We will take good care of you.

At Windermere Key Realty, we know the local market better than anyone, that's why we're the market leader.

Our agents are devoted to delivering personal service, backed by the largest network in the region.

Selling, buying or just looking, make us your personal connection for real estate.



Windermere Key Realty 253-857-3304 11615 State Route 302

LARGEST IN THE AREA, BIGGEST IN THE REGION

Our new board room seats up to eight and is available as a courtesy for local community service organization meetings. Call Rob for your free reservation.

A Century of Giving.

Since 1921, Longbranch Improvement Club volunteers have brought the “betterment of the community” mission to life.



Driven by the spirit of giving, members contribute diligence, donations and labor supporting events and activities that benefit, delight and engage. This spirit thrives year-round in their dedication and commitment.

In this season of giving, we would like to thank LIC volunteers, past and present, for their generous support of our community.

For more information on our history and how to join, visit us at licweb.org



Photos courtesy of KP Historical Society



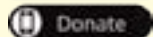
The Longbranch Improvement Club | 2021 CENTENNIAL
CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF SERVICE

Feeding Hungry People



Key Peninsula Bischoff
FOOD BANK

Open 2 to 6 Tue-Fri, 2 to 5 Sat
12402 134th Ave NW at KP Highway NW
www.kpbfoodbank.org 253-884-1997
Mail donations to PO Box 554 Vaughn WA 98394



Naughty or Nice, Santa Claus is Coming to Town

CAROLYN WILEY, KP NEWS

Most of the year, Santa Claus can go about in public without a single child noticing him. But come autumn, he breaks out his red fedora and starts waxing his moustache; he is no longer incognito.

Children recognize the snowy beard and moustache, the rosy cheeks and twinkling eyes. They stare, walk backwards, and bump into things trying to keep an eye on him.

Jerry Nebel, the KP Santa, got his start somewhat south of the North Pole in Kodiak, Alaska, 35 years ago when he was asked to fill in for another Santa at a local hospital. “I had the basics,” Nebel said. “A Santa suit, a big round belly, no beard but a moustache.”

Nebel and his wife Patty later moved to Seattle, where he worked for a tugboat company. One August, his boss told him about their big annual company Christmas party and said, “Jerry, I can’t be Santa this year. Would you do it?”

Other employees stopped by to tell him about the party and how special it was. Nebel agreed and soon was in possession of the boss’s “1995 Walmart Santa suit complete with vinyl spats.”

The first thing Nebel did was reject the spats and have his rubber boots polished so they would gleam. His entrance to the party was perfect — he parked his reindeer on the roof and descended a sweeping staircase.

“One little kid grabbed my leg and never let go,” Nebel said. He recently received a photo from the dad of that little kid, who is now a young man.

Another employee reported that afterward his youngest daughter told her sisters, who had stayed home, “You really screwed up! This year they had the real Santa!”

After that party, Patty, alias Mrs. Claus, said, “I’ll make you a suit.” She has made several Santa suits since that first Victorian version.

For the past 13 years, Jerry and Patty

have lived a quiet life on the Key Peninsula, but around mid-October the pace accelerates when Santa’s agent starts scheduling personal appearances and photo sessions.

This Santa derives a great deal of joy working with baby photographers who like to capture the child’s surprise when they catch their first glimpse of Santa Claus. To prepare for the job, Santa does a lot of leg lifts and other exercises to be in shape for the kneeling, crawling, and ups and downs needed to get the best shot.

Santa also does online visits for his high school alumni group so grandparents can listen in on Santa visits and has a regular engagement with children in Ireland. He has developed Zoom visits complete with slide show tours of his home, reindeer barns and workshops. Static interruptions are blamed on heavy snow and ice storms at the North Pole.

Santa makes time to help the KP fire department and visits the offices of The Mustard Seed Project. He will also sometimes show up on a local street corner to spread a bit of Christmas cheer.

In the offseason, Jerry is a speaker and regular participant at the annual Santa Clause conference at Great Wolf Lodge, as well as national Santa conventions. One seminar featured what he referred to as “a little speech on the principles of Santa that you should have in your business. Santa knows how he is different from the Grinch.”

In recent years Jerry has taken his personal elf, granddaughter Hazel, to the conventions. No elf ears, leotards or pointy shoes for her. She wears Mrs. Claus-made “special, fancy, red Christmas dresses.”

Jerry said the very best work a Santa does is to “bring joy to children.”

One skeptical child asked him once how to tell who the real Santa is.

“When you meet the real Santa you will know,” he said, “because Santa comes through the heart, not down the chimney.” ■

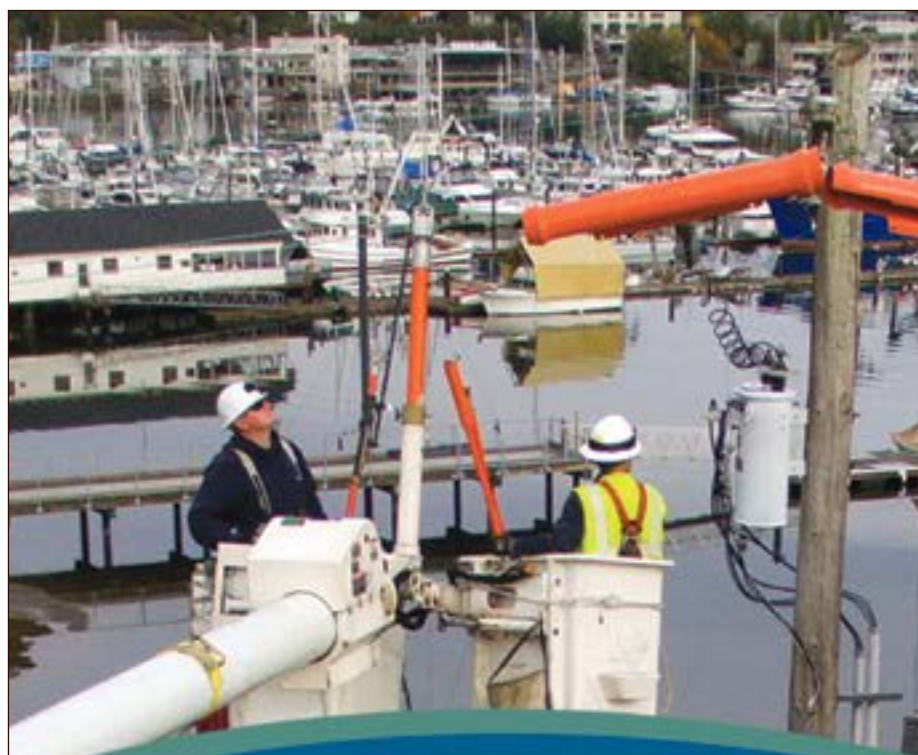


Lisa Bryan, KP News

In October, Angel Guild awarded \$1,810 to Vaughn Elementary School and \$3,500 to Two Waters Arts Alliance.



Open 10 to 4 Thur-Sat hours may change
Key Center Corral 253 884-9333



Great Things for a Great Community

Founded in 1925, Peninsula Light is your member-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperative, providing reliable power throughout Gig Harbor and the Key Peninsula. We are dedicated to continually improving the quality of life in this great community through system reliability, helping you conserve and use electricity more efficiently and rising to the challenges of a rapidly changing industry.

Call 253-857-5950 or toll-free 888-809-8021

Open Monday-Friday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM
13315 Goodnough Drive Gig Harbor, WA 98335



www.penlight.org

Peninsula Light Co.
a mutual corporation • since 1925
The power to be...



Auto Home Life Renters Business
Motorcycle Recreational Condo

One-call full-service insurance.

We can handle your entire insurance program — and save you some money by pairing your auto, home and life policies. With us, you're family.



Chuck Davis, KP resident, KPCCA board member, Coast Guard veteran. Check us on Facebook, LinkedIn, Google and Instagram.

Call (253) 432-1063 for a free quote now.



FARMERS
INSURANCE

Davis Agency LLC.

6720 Regents Boulevard
University Place 98466

HOME

EXCAVATING & DOZING



NATURE TRAILS,
BEACH ACCESS,
SITE CLEARING & PREP.,
LOGGING,
ROCK WALLS & STEPS,
DRAINAGE SYSTEMS,
ROAD GRADING,
DEMOLITION,
STUMP REMOVAL,
GRAVEL &
TOPSOIL DELIVERIES,
& MUCH MORE.

DIFFICULT JOBS ARE OUR SPECIALTY!

(253)884-5798



1 senior housing campus with 30 apartments now under construction



324 problems solved by Information and Referral volunteers



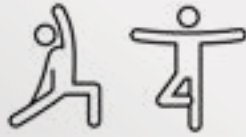
308 registrations for 2 vaccine clinics; 337 COVID-19 test kits; 2 mammogram pop-up clinics



1,826 YouTube and Vimeo channel views; 1,305 Community Forum views



2,133 rides given; 16,326 volunteer miles driven



277 participants for movement, art and community forums



23 seniors assisted 92 times with yard care and light chores



47 box fans and air purifying kits distributed



1,832 meals delivered



3,077 volunteer hours; a \$87,818 value



199 Spring gift bags; 201 gift cards distributed



\$10,000 match funds for your generous December donations.



We're working on even better numbers for next year.

Thanks to everyone who gave in 2021 to help our seniors thrive. There's still time to help with a year-end donation.



best of both worlds:

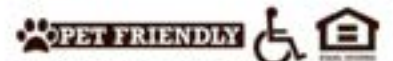
ASSISTED LIVING AND MEMORY CARE ON THE BEAUTIFUL PENINSULA.

Penrose Harbor offers the area's most progressive concept in personalized care. The innovative home-like design features all-private suites with private baths. Plus, as part of the welcoming Heron's Key senior living community, Penrose Harbor is a natural extension of the small-town Gig Harbor lifestyle.

SEE THE DIFFERENCE. CALL 866-765-8076 TO SCHEDULE A VIRTUAL TOUR.



4340 Borgen Blvd.
Gig Harbor, WA 98332
PenroseHarbor.org



AS TRADITIONAL AS SANTA'S BEARD, INDULGE IN A BATCH OF SWEDISH MEATBALLS FOR THE HOLIDAYS



The Heavenly Swedish Meatball

BARBARA VAN BOGART

Growing up in southern Minnesota, the holiday season for our family centered on the run up to Christmas Eve. Holiday baking began as soon as the Thanksgiving table was cleared, with a variety of cookies being stirred up from then until Christmas. Along with spritz, pepperkakor and cut out sugar cookies, we made julkaka, a candied fruit and raisin-studded bread we made each December. My dad was Swedish and my mom was German, so we blended both food cultures during the holidays.

Christmas Eve dinner, however, tilted decidedly toward the Swedish side of the family. Every year we had oyster soup, homemade rolls, lutefisk, Swedish meatballs, rice pudding with lingonberries, and peas. While I enjoy lutefisk once in a decade (being sure to smother it with melted butter and cream sauce), the star of Christmas Eve dinner was always Swedish meatballs. We've continued the tradition ever since, using the same recipe Mom used back then. There are many different recipes for these meatballs; our favorite is below.

It's interesting to note that Swedish meatballs apparently did not originate in Sweden. In the 18th century, King Charles XII spent five years in Turkey, bringing the recipe

back with him where it quickly became absorbed into Swedish culture. Nevertheless, this delicious main course will forever be associated with Sweden. Some people serve lingonberries alongside the meatballs, adding a sweet and tart tang to the dish. We prefer to serve our lingonberries on top of rice pudding, or the following morning with Swedish pancakes.

While it might be tempting to make an IKEA run for their version, the recipe below is guaranteed to keep you at home, making them each winter and savoring the experience — and the meatballs.

SWEDISH MEATBALLS

Serves 2-4 — Feel free to double or triple.

- ½ pound each of ground beef, pork and veal, mixed together well
- 2 cups soft, whole wheat bread cubes, crusts removed
- ½ cup whole milk
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard
- ¼ teaspoon white pepper
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 1 teaspoon poultry seasoning
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 onion, chopped fine

- 10 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- ¼ cup flour
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 14-oz. can beef broth
- ¼ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup sour cream

Soak bread cubes in milk, squeeze dry and add to meat mixture. Sauté onion in 2 tablespoons butter and add to meat together with salt, seasonings and eggs. Form into rounds approximately the size of golf balls. Fry in remaining butter until browned on all sides (may need to do this in batches). Remove meatballs as they are done and put into a separate bowl, keeping them warm.

Once the meatballs are done, stir flour into pan drippings and continue to stir for a minute or two. Blend in tomato paste. Add enough water to the beef broth to make 2½ cups of liquid. Slowly add to pan drippings, stirring until thickened. Just before serving, add ¼ teaspoon soda (this keeps the sauce from curdling) and sour cream.

Return meatballs to sauce, heating through. Serve with or without a side of lingonberries.

JULKAKA

Bonus recipe: delicious toasted and slathered with unsalted butter.

- 1¼ cups whole milk
- ½ cup white sugar
- ½ cup unsalted butter
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4½ to 5 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 packages yeast
- ¾ teaspoon cardamom
- 1 egg
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup chopped, candied fruit

Heat milk, sugar, butter and salt to lukewarm. Add 2½ cups flour, yeast, egg and cardamom. At this point, it smells divine and it only gets better! Beat with electric mixer to blend, then on high for three minutes. Stir in raisins, fruits and enough flour to make a soft dough. Turn out onto lightly floured surface and knead for about 10 minutes. Place back in bowl.

Cover and let rise for about 90 minutes, then punch down. This is a sturdier dough so it won't rise as much as a normal loaf of bread. Let dough rest for 10 minutes, then divide in two, form into loaves and place into greased bread pans. Cover and let rise about an hour. Beat one egg with a little water and brush top of loaves. Bake at 350 for 35-40 minutes. ■

NEW FALL/WINTER SCHEDULE

Welcome aboard!

FREE KP BUS CONNECTS

VAUGHN TUE/THUR MORNING

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

VAUGHN WEDNESDAY MORNING

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

EVERGREEN TUE/THUR MORNING

- 8:50 Evergreen Elementary School
- 8:59 Palmer Lake public access 24th St SW
- 9:00 Palmer Lake 21st St SW @193rd Ave
- 9:05 KPCS Senior Center & Food Bank
- 9:06 Home Gas Station @KP Hwy N
- 9:09 167th Ave Ct NW @KP Hwy N
- 9:13 Food Market in Key Center
- 9:15 KP Hwy N @Minterwood Dr NW
- 9:21 Lake Kathryn Village
- 9:29 Purdy Park & Ride

EVERGREEN WEDNESDAY MORNING

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

TUE/WED/THUR AFTERNOON

- 4:42 Purdy Park & Ride
- 4:47 Lake Kathryn Village
- 4:50 SR 302 @Windermere Realty
- 4:52 SR 302 @140th Ave/Lake of the Woods
- 4:53 SR 302 @150th/Lake Holiday bus shed
- 4:55 4 Corners gas station @SR 302
- 4:57 Wright Bliss Road @104th St Ct
- 4:58 Wright Bliss Road @Olson Dr
- 5:00 Food Market in Key Center
- 5:01 KP Hwy @84th NW Red Barn
- 5:04 167th Ave Ct NW @KP Hwy N
- 5:08 Home Gas Station @KP Hwy N
- 5:10 KPCS Senior Center & Food Bank
- 5:13 Palmer Lake public access 24th St SW
- 5:14 Palmer Lake 21st St SW @193rd Ave
- 5:18 Evergreen Elementary School
- 5:29 KP Hwy @84th NW Red Barn
- 5:34 SR302 @140th NW Lake of the Woods
- 5:36 SR302 @150th Lake Holiday bus shed
- 5:48 Purdy Park & Ride



253-884-BUSS or keypennews.org/kpbus for interactive map and downloadable schedule

FREE COMMUNITY TRANSPORTATION FOR ALL AGES TUES/WED/THUR AM & PM

PLEASE ALLOW ±10 MINUTES
YOUTH UNDER 12 MUST BE WITH ADULT
NO BIKES

A partnership with the KP Community Council, Puget Sound Educational Service District and the Peninsula School District.

We have qualified buyers ready to buy

Your one & only local real estate experts.

We cover waterfront properties, homes, acreage, and farms. When it's time for a new beginning, call the New Beginnings team, your local real estate experts. www.new-beginningsre.com

NEW BEGINNINGS Real Estate, LLC

call 253 **858-7053**
in Key Center at 9121 KP Hwy (at the light)

Rental property professionally managed by local experts.

Property management for owners and renters. We handle it all for you. Looking to rent? See what we have at dkpropmgmt.com

DK Property Management, LLC.

call 253 **884-2076**
in Key Center at 9121 KP Hwy (at the light)

Qualified renters ready to move in now

Warm and bright holiday wishes to all

With scholarships for local kids, stewardship initiatives and more, The Longbranch Foundation helps preserve, improve and grow what's good about here. Our shared home.

Join us with your support, your suggestions and your tax-deductible donation.



www.longbranchfoundation.org

Free Delivery!
with purchase of one ton or more Olympus Wood Stove Pellets



DRIVE THRU FEED ON THE KEY
KEY PENINSULA'S DRIVE THRU LIVESTOCK FEED SUPPLIER

Complete selection of livestock feeds including XCel, Payback, Equis, Scratch and Peck, Haystack and Earth First brands. Rewards bonus: Earn a point for every dollar spent, accrue 400 points, take 10% off purchase.

- Order online, now with bulk options**
Visit website store for pickup or delivery
- Topsoil or gravel delivery?** Call for affordable delivery, up to 5 yards per load.
- Large animal burial service**
Call for details now

Call (253) 303-1260 www.drivethrufeedonthekey.com

Open Tues-Sat 11 to 6, Sun 10 to 4 Closed Mon Veteran family owned & operated

at 16915 121st St. NW/Hwy 302 On Facebook @drivethrufeedonthekey

ASK ABOUT DELIVERIES, ONE TON+ BULK PRICING AND QUALIFIED FARM BUSINESS TAX EXCEPTIONS.



Riders and guides head out to hit the trails. *Kellie Bennett*

Guided Mountain Biking for Local Teens Inspires More

"Everyone went home muddy, which I actually think is the point of mountain biking sometimes."

LISA BRYAN, KP NEWS

Red Barn Youth Center teamed up with Key Pen Parks to take nine students from Key Peninsula Middle School for a guided mountain bike ride Oct. 27 at 360 Trails.

It was a ride they won't soon forget.

One teenaged girl said, "I want to do this every day, every single day for the rest of my life."

Kellie Bennett, executive director of Red Barn Youth Center, said the schedule meshing to get everything coordinated for the ride was complex for a drop-in youth center. But that didn't stop her from trying. She said they managed to pull it off once before in 2019, with only four students and a van for transportation provided by WayPoint Church, but the pandemic delivered a real blow to future planning. "We never really know on a day-to-day basis who will show up," she said.

When Peninsula School District reopened for in-person classes this fall, Bennett reconnected with Key Pen Parks Commissioner Mark Michel to find a window of opportunity that might work.

"Every October, KPMS parent teacher conferences mean that middle school students get out before noon," Bennett said. "Red Barn Youth Center again offered to open early that week, from 11:30 a.m. until 6 p.m." That timeline gave students a chance to get out on the trails and back to the youth center in time for parent pick

up, which varies daily between 3 and 6 p.m.

There are many hurdles, like getting kids to commit to coming with signed parental permission slips, arranging for appropriate transportation, plus making sure there are enough mountain bikes that fit the student riders.

Once at Gateway Park, the group gathered for proper bike fitting with the technical guidance of volunteer Eric Holsinger. After going over the basic safety rules, trail guides watched the students ride a bit to get a feel for their experience level. Students were then split into two groups.

"Volunteers John Reich and Gary Robertson took the more experienced riders, students who had been on their bikes outside their cul-de-sacs," Bennett said. "Mark and I took students who had perhaps only sat on their cousin's bike at their house or said, 'I think I was on a bike once three years ago.' Our focus was to give them an understanding of their bikes and why you have the gears that you do."

Bennett said in the beginning they didn't understand the gears, so they did a bit of walking at first.

"But then we hit the pump track at 360 Trails where the idea is to go and get your speed up and then you don't pedal the entire rest of the time. It's just learning how to move your body backwards and forwards," she said. "It was a lot of fun and we hung out there for a while getting used to it. Some of the kids started out

a little unsure, but before long we heard lots of happy squealing."

It was a day of pouring rain that Bennett said miraculously cleared long enough for the group ride. "They went home muddy, which I actually think is the point of mountain biking sometimes," she said.

After the ride, Robertson led students in sharing their favorite part of the ride and something they learned during their experience. Robertson is passionate about seeing students get outside more often.

"We live in this beautiful area with extraordinary recreational opportunities in our parks," Key Pen Parks Executive Director Tracey Perkosky said. "But how can we help more kids experience all that our community offers?"

Bennett said the numbers at Red Barn are about half of what they had pre-pandemic. "We're all rebuilding and I think with Tracey's help and Mark and Gary's excitement, we can get some traction."

"I think developing a model where we do an hour of trail maintenance before we ride is important," she said. "I really feel strongly that the kids understand that this is fun for us to do, but there are people who are doing the work to make it happen."

Another group for local youth is the KP Pirates Mountain Biking Team whose interest goes beyond the student league and mountain bike racing. Their focus includes outreach and the daily riding, trying to get kids involved. ■



Top: Mud-splattered KPMS students Venicia Robles (left) and Danica Cuzick Middle: On 360 Trails *Kellie Bennett* Group above: *Susan Arends*



The Peninsula's only community offering true Life Care.

Now you can continue to enjoy the active Northwest lifestyle you love with full confidence in the future. That's the beauty of Life Care at Heron's Key in Gig Harbor. Our forward-thinking senior living community combines independent living today plus the security of unlimited lifetime access to on-site assisted living, skilled nursing care or memory care, if ever needed.

It's a smart plan for the future—freeing you to make the most of your active, independent lifestyle today. At Heron's Key there's something for everyone. Our diverse selection of resident programming paves the way for healthy living alongside your vibrant Heron's Key neighbors.

WANT TO SEE WHAT LIFE WOULD LOOK LIKE FOR YOU AT HERON'S KEY? CALL 866-860-4821 FOR A VIRTUAL TOUR.



A MEMBER OF EMERALD COMMUNITIES

4340 Borgen Blvd.
Gig Harbor, WA 98332
HeronsKey.org



Key Center Library Welcomes Visitors

A world of wonder and connection awaits inside this beloved library where everyone belongs.

KRISA BRUEMMER, KP NEWS

After over a year of adapting to changes brought on by the pandemic, including building closures, curbside service, materials quarantine, online service and virtual programs expansion, and the suspension of overdue fines and print charges, the Pierce County Library System has reopened its buildings to the public. The Key Center Library began providing very limited in-person services in late April 2021, then fully reopened on July 8, 2021, welcoming visitors inside to browse for books and movies, pick up holds, use the computers and printers, and connect to Wi-Fi.

“The first people to come through the door, there were happy dances and celebrations,” said Key Center’s Supervising Librarian Tim Sage.

“More than one of our adults were a little teary-eyed. Getting to browse library material in the building, just being physically in the building was an emotional moment for some users,” said Youth Services Specialist Barbie Swayze. “Within the first couple weeks of us opening, one young man, probably young elementary age, stood in the

door and said, ‘It’s just like I remember it.’”

Key Center Library is now open 42 hours a week and continues to offer curbside service, as well as online and virtual programming. Back in 2019, the library was open 43 hours a week and an average of 187 people visited each day it was open. In October 2021, an average of 121 people visited the library each open day.

“These numbers only include people who actually come through the door, so it doesn’t count people using curbside services,” said Sage, who joined the Key Center Library staff in March 2021, bringing with him 27 years of library experience.

Sage grew up in Michigan where he began his career in high school as a page, an entry-level library position. He later fell in love with the Pacific Northwest while visiting the area with his wife. Four years ago, they moved to Puget Sound and Sage became branch manager at the PCLS Parkland-Spanaway location.

“That first year, my wife and I visited all the libraries and just kind of fell in love with Key Peninsula, the Key Center Library, and always had it in the back of my mind

that this might be someplace I wanted to end up,” he said.

Sage said “the connection that the community has with the library has been amazing to see” since the building reopened. “It was very intimidating the first couple of months. Every person who came through the door, it felt like every other staff knew exactly who they were, what they like to read, what their kids were doing, the name of their dog.”

Like Sage, Swayze began her library career as an entry-level page and brings years of experience to her position at Key Center. Before transferring from the Steilacoom branch in December 2020, she had worked at various PCLS branches as a customer experience specialist and spent 12 years in the IT department.

“When I’d had enough of thinking technically, I got a wild hair and put in for a storyteller position,” she said. “I got a job at Steilacoom and worked there for about a year and a half and then Covid happened, and the transfer began, but every day I would go to work and think, ‘I am getting paid to read picture books to small children!’

“I feel a little disconnected from that same

level of joy that I felt before because I’m not able to do the in-building programming with the children,” she said. “We all know it’s coming back at some point, but there’s no date to see the light at the end of the tunnel.”

Even though steps remain before PCLS is back to its pre-pandemic level of service, Key Center Library staff are ready to help. Whether it’s with technology or printing needs, placing a hold or finding a book, handing out free at-home Covid tests, or providing information about online services and virtual programs, they look forward to welcoming more visitors and continuing to see long-time patrons returning to the library.

“There’s an eagerness to solve people’s problems, answer their questions, be the person who helped them that day,” Swayze said. “I see that in all of our staff, happy to be interacting. Almost every day someone mentions how thankful they are to be back in the library,” she said.

Masks continue to be required inside PCLS buildings for ages 5 and up. Wi-Fi access was recently expanded to the edges of the parking lot, allowing visitors to connect from their vehicles. ■

‘Tis the season to stay healthy

Start the new year off right by scheduling an appointment with one of our providers.

Community Health Care patients have access to our **complete health care system:**

- Medical care
- Dental care
- Pharmacy
- Urgent care
- Pediatrics
- Women’s health services

COMMUNITY
HEALTH
Care

KEY MEDICAL CENTER

Learn more at: www.commhealth.org

15610 89th St Ct NW - Lakebay, WA 98349

Call us at (253) 722-2161

Season's Greetings!  **December 2021**
 www.keypenpparks.com
 253-884-9240
 Facebook



Letters to Santa!
 December 5th from 4:30 - 5:30 PM
 at KP Fire Station in Key Center
 Drop off your letters and see Santa!
Free, Drive-thru Event!

Upcoming Volunteer Opportunities
 December 4 & 18 at 360 Trails
 Focus on trailwork and clean up!
 For more information and times contact: jakeg@keypenparks.com

ho ho ho

WINTER SOLSTICE
 Walk, Run, or Ride the loop
 at 360 Trails
Saturday, December 18, 2021
 4 - 6 PM
Free event for all ages. Take a walk, a run, or a ride on the main trail (the loop) at Gateway 360 Trails



Free event for all ages! It'll be cold, but we'll have cocoa! Bring a flashlight or headlamp. Go to our website or Eventbrite to register!
www.eventbrite.com/e/winter-solstice-walk-run-or-ride-the-loop-at-360-trails



Hire Matt and Jo.

You'll be hiring a community of resources with the knowledge and experience to make selling or buying real estate a positive experience.

Matt Means
 253-370-0260
MattMeans.com

Jo Jensen
 I live on the Key!
 253-988-2231
jojensen.com



Positive parenting. Happy kids.

Bring out the best in your children.

Join Triple P—the Positive Parenting Program. Learn the best ways to encourage behaviors you like and positively manage behaviors you don't.

Learn more at tpchd.org/triplep or call (253) 649-1011.



Choose what works best for you.

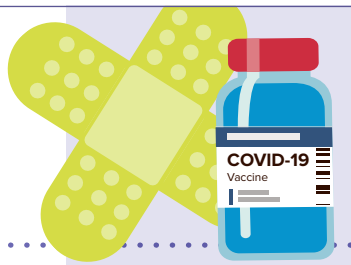
- 8 weekly group sessions.
- Online course at your own pace.

Triple P is FREE to families with children 0–17 years old.

Available in English and Spanish.



COVID-19 Vaccine



Come connect with healthcare professionals, ask questions and get vaccinated!

December

3, 10 & 17

3–7 p.m.

It's simple. It's free.
 You don't need insurance or ID.


Need a ride?
 Pierce Transit offers free rides to and from vaccine appointments. Tell your driver you're getting vaccinated and your driver will let you ride for free.

Key Peninsula Community Council
 9013 Key Peninsula Hwy. NW, Suite D
 Lakebay, WA 98349

No appointment needed!
 Moderna • Pfizer • Johnson & Johnson

Questions? Need help?
 Call us at (253) 649-1412, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Monday–Friday (except holidays).

Learn more at tpchd.org/vaxtothefuture



Tacoma-Pierce County
Health Department
Healthy People in Healthy Communities

New Leadership at Food Backpacks 4 Kids

Staff assumes leadership and continues to transform caring for hungry families.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

Last spring new leadership stepped in at Food Backpacks 4 Kids.

“After two wonderful years as executive director I realized that with my other commitments there weren’t enough hours in the day,” said former executive director Richard Miller. “FB4K was in a very strong financial and organizational position so it was a perfect time to step away.”

Zaida Woodworth and Michelle Johnson, the two paid staff, took over the administrative work. “Michelle and I did some soul-searching and talked about doing it jointly because we do work very closely in our partnership,” Woodworth said. “The lines are blurred because there are only two of us. I was promoted to director, but we really are a dual partnership.” Woodworth said. She continues to manage operations and now also administers the grants. Johnson focuses on communications and development.

“The leadership, creativity, compassion and energy that Zaida and Michelle have brought to FB4K has completely transformed this program,” said board member Tricia Endsley. “They quickly adapted to the current needs of the community during unstable times and have implemented a program that supports our families at a different level from the traditional FB4K.”

The pandemic and school closure changed how the organization served its families last year. Rather than sending students home with food in backpacks and stocking food pantries in schools, FB4K shifted to running a drive-through pick-up service, doubling the amount of food delivered and expanding the number of families served (“Backpacks for Kids Steps Up in Time of Need,” KP News, Jan. 2021).

Woodworth said the drive-through service allows FB4K to get closer to and better understand the needs of the families and to modify its services. The

needs, she said, have not abated. FB4K now serves over 700 students, up from 567 a year ago.

“Most of our families are not destitute but they struggle with a shoestring budget,” she said. Federal government guidelines recognize that a family of two with an income of \$69,000 or a family of four with an income of \$106,000 qualify to receive food from federal programs, incomes much higher than most people expect, she said.

When school resumed, local middle and high schools reopened their on-site food pantries stocked with nonperishables for students to take home. Several elementary schools now have pantries as well.

FB4K ended its drive-through food distribution program in September and replaced it with a family food pantry in Key Center that families can visit four days a week for nonperishables. Boxes of dairy and produce, packed according to family size, are also available. FB4K distributed more than 125 Thanks-

giving dinners to families in boxes decorated by high school students. FB4K will distribute Christmas dinners this month.

“We are for our community by our community,” Woodworth said. “Our support network includes Communities in Schools, Children’s Home Society, Red Barn, the civic center and the school district, including counselors and advocates at the schools.” A core crew of about six volunteers and nearly 50 others carry out the work. “We are blessed to have a group of fantastically

smart dynamic volunteers to help us out,” she said. “We have put a lot of energy into developing the families we serve as part of the volunteer work force,” Woodworth said. “That give-back rewards everyone. Our families’ voices are heard, and we have a better understanding of what families are looking for.” Johnson created a closed Facebook group for the families where they can share resources, recipe ideas and help each other out.

Woodworth grew up on the Key Peninsula and attended Evergreen Elementary. She credits her mother’s community involvement with her own commitment. When she left as a teen she vowed never to return, but, she said, once she had kids, she knew of no better place to raise a family. She worked at several nonprofits and in 2018, after leaving a very stressful job, she began volunteering at FB4K. When a position opened two years later, she didn’t hesitate. “This is where I needed to land,” she said.

Johnson, too, comes from a “service heart.” She grew up in the military and experienced some food insecurity during her early years. The military, she said, led her to understand the importance of community. She lives in Gig Harbor and worked in communications for the University Place and West Pierce fire departments. “I wanted to work within my own community. I began

volunteering for FB4K and discovered (its founder) Karen Jorgensen. When a position opened in 2018, I joined the staff and Zaida came as a volunteer soon after. It was fantastic.”

Food comes largely through sources developed by FB4K. A local farm regularly donates produce, “a true gift,” Johnson said. They are always on the lookout for donors with good dairy products. Rather than request general food donations they now run food-specific drives publicized on the FB4K Facebook page.

Send donation checks to P.O. Box 173, Gig Harbor WA 98335. FB4K accepts PayPal online but pays a fee. For questions, call 253-857-7401 or email info@Food-Backpacks4Kids.org

Families living within the Peninsula School District with children 18 or under can receive food by registering with FB4K. Registration includes name, number of children and school name if relevant. Income information is requested but not required. ■

“WE ARE FOR OUR COMMUNITY BY OUR COMMUNITY.”

“THE LEADERSHIP, CREATIVITY, COMPASSION AND ENERGY THAT ZAIDA AND MICHELLE HAVE BROUGHT TO FB4K HAS COMPLETELY TRANSFORMED THIS PROGRAM.”



Top: Renee Cassidy, a frequent FB4K volunteer. Center: Michelle Johnson unloads a van full of bread. Above: Executive Director Zaida Woodworth. All photos Tina McKail, KP News

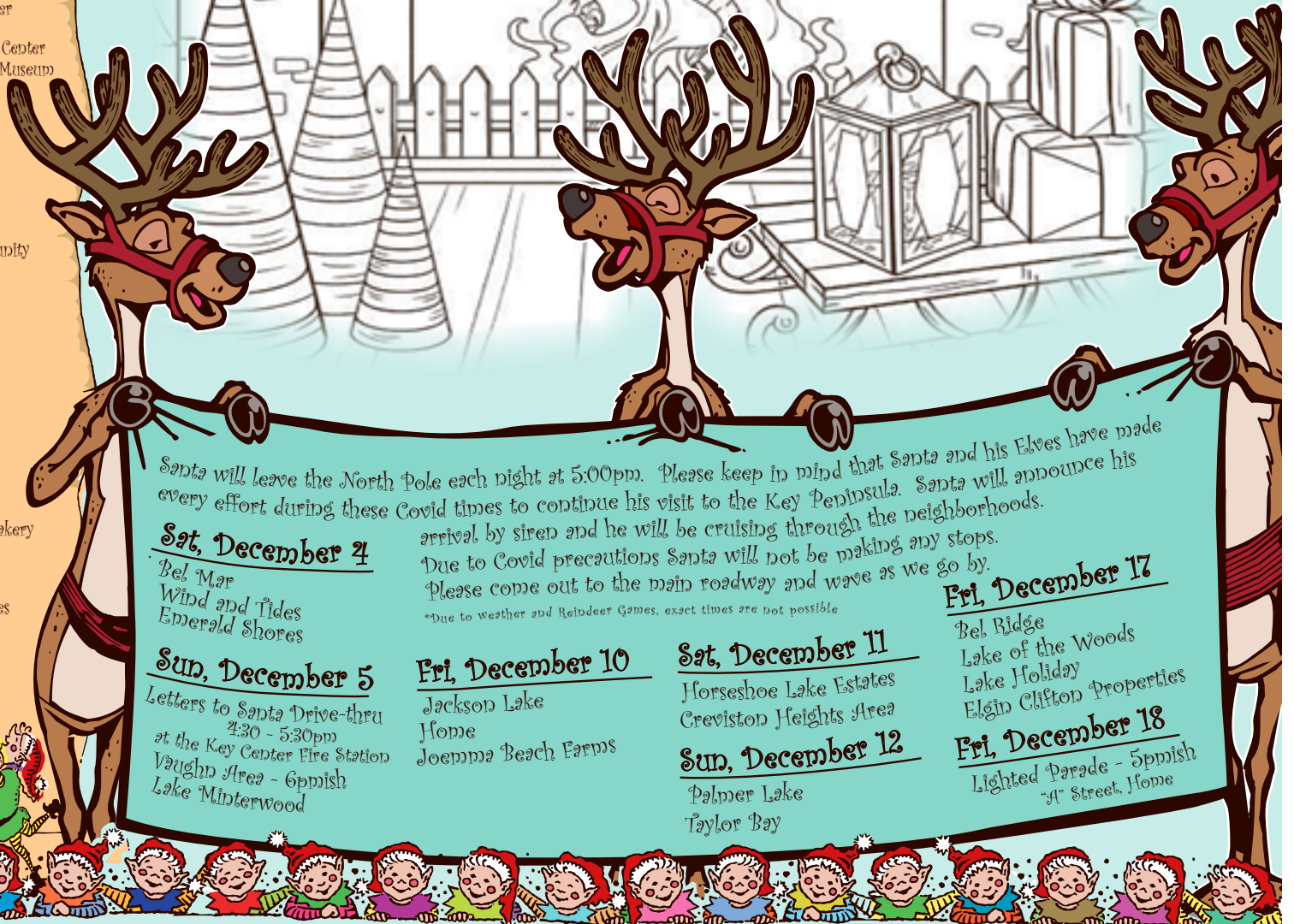


- All Around Gutters
- Angel Gull
- Aspen Land Surveying, LLC
- Benla Water Heaters
- Blend Wine Shop
- Bret Price, ARNP
- Chuck West Construction, LLC
- Close to Home Espresso
- Communities in Schools of Peninsula
- CostLess Pharmacy - Lake Kathryn Village
- Custom Dentures Direct
- DK Property Management, LLC
- Drive-Thru Feed & O-Haul
- E&L Civil Engineering
- El Sombrero Family Mexican Restaurant
- Ellis Accounting & Taxes
- Figaro's Pizza
- Food Backpacks 4 Kids
- Food Market in Key Center
- Four Winds Riding Center
- G/H KP Suicide Prevention Coalition
- Gig Harbor Chamber of Commerce
- Goin' Postal
- Greater Gig Harbor Foundation
- Home Base Washington Real Estate
- Home Excavating and Dozing
- Honey-Do
- Key Center Auto Repair
- Key Center Chiropractic and Massage
- Key Center Family Dentistry
- Key Center Pierce County Library
- Key Free Clinic
- Key Pen Parks
- Key Pen Parks & Rec Foundation
- Key Peninsula Civic Center Association
- Key Peninsula Community Council
- Key Peninsula Community Council Office
- Key Peninsula Community Services
- Key Peninsula Family Resource Center
- Key Peninsula Farm Council
- Key Peninsula Health and Professional Center
- Key Peninsula Historical Society and Museum
- Key Peninsula Lions Club
- Key Peninsula Lutheran Church
- Key Peninsula News
- Key Peninsula Tech Solutions
- Key Peninsula Toastmasters
- Key Peninsula Veterans
- Key Peninsula Rotary
- Kiwi Fencing Company, Inc.
- KP Partnership for a Healthy Community
- KP School Bus Connects
- Lakebay Marina Resort
- Larry Sequist
- Linda Grubaugh
- The Longbranch Foundation
- Longbranch Improvement Club
- LPL Financial
- Madrone Cafe
- New Beginnings Real Estate
- Peninsula Light Company
- Peninsula School District
- Phyllis Henry
- Pierce County Fire District 16
- Ravensara Drive-thru Espresso and Bakery
- Red Barn Youth Facility
- Rest Stop Adult Family Care
- RJF Tech
- Peninsula Community Health Services
- Richard Kelly
- Safe Streets Campaign
- Snack Shack
- Sound Credit Union
- Stan Moffett
- The Mustard Seed Project
- Two Waters Arts Alliance
- VIA Unlimited
- Westwind Motel and Apartments
- Wildermer Key Realty
- YMCA Camp Colman

Santa Claus is coming to town...

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

Special Thanks to
AXIA Tree Service and Tim Kezele for decorating the trees in Key Center and at the Civic Center



Santa will leave the North Pole each night at 5:00pm. Please keep in mind that Santa and his Elves have made every effort during these Covid times to continue his visit to the Key Peninsula. Santa will announce his arrival by siren and he will be cruising through the neighborhoods. Due to Covid precautions Santa will not be making any stops. Please come out to the main roadway and wave as we go by.

Sat, December 4

Bel Mar
Wind and Tides
Emerald Shores

Sun, December 5

Letters to Santa Drive-thru
4:30 - 5:30pm
at the Key Center Fire Station
Vaughn Area - 6pmish
Lake Minterwood

Fri, December 10

Jackson Lake
Home
Joemma Beach Farms

Sat, December 11

Horseshoe Lake Estates
Creston Heights Area

Sun, December 12

Palmer Lake
Taylor Bay

Fri, December 17

Bel Ridge
Lake of the Woods
Lake Holiday
Elgin Clifton Properties

Fri, December 18

Lighted Parade - 5pmish
"A" Street, Home

**Due to weather and Reindeer Games, exact times are not possible





Above: The crowd called out for more. Below: Don Swensen's last set. *David Shinnars*

A Farewell to Blending: Key Center Wine Shop Closes

The decade-long Blender bender is over.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

Blend Wine Shop closed its doors — eventually — for the last time Oct. 30.

The beloved Key Center wine shop was preparing to celebrate its 10th anniversary Oct. 8 when the property owner, Sound Credit Union, announced it would be doubling the rent from \$800 to \$1,600 a month, according to owner Don Swensen.

With a fifth wave of COVID-19 infections requiring a return to masks and renewed

capacity restrictions in his shop, he called the situation “unsustainable.”

Swensen had been interested in selling the business and retiring before Covid hit, but vowed to ride out the pandemic.

The “stupid idea” of opening a wine shop in Key Center a decade ago by KP residents Jeff and Dayl Minch quickly took root in the community against all expectations, except their own.

“I had people come by and say it was the dumbest thing they’d ever heard of; it was stupid,” said Jeff Minch about opening his shop. “They’d say, ‘Don’t you realize where you’re at? You’re on the Key Peninsula.’ But that just told me it was the right thing to do.”

The regular Friday night wine tastings became a standing-room-only ritual where

community members who rarely saw each other met and mingled.

“Blend isn’t a place or a business so much as a philosophy and an avenue to experience the energy of a real public house setting,” Minch said. “I was very grateful to have somebody like Don and Molly to pass it on to, to be able to keep that energy going.”

The Minches sold the business to loyal customers Don and Molly Swensen in 2014, who continued to carve out a unique niche and fill it with community meetings, artists of all stripes, lonely musicians and itinerant cribbage players.

“The KP has a bunch of communities out here,” said Blend regular — or Blender — Ron Cameron. “The Blend is one of them. No agendas, no dues, just Blenders sharing thoughts pertinent or impertinent, remembered or not remembered, on every and anything; dandelions, red wine, traffic; the way politics used to be, respectful, and music and more music and art, and you could go or miss and still be a part of it.”

And the Blenders did not go quietly. When the news broke, a resistance group of disaffected oenophiles swiftly formed to complain to SCU, pledge funds to buy the business, and to find a new venue. State and local politicians, some of whom had

been known to visit Blend on occasion, offered high caliber assistance.

A few days later, “I got a call from the CEO of Sound Credit Union,” Swensen said. “Now the rent was down to \$1,000. But he also said they were going to tear down the building in the next 18 months and put in a new credit union branch with four retail spaces. Maybe Blend could be in one of those. Maybe, but it won’t be by me.”

“I can’t go into all the details regarding the negotiations and the contract to that extent,” said Jennifer Reed, vice president of public relations for SCU, “but I can say that our president and CEO, Don Clark, did talk to the owner of Blend Wine Shop and did discuss with him how we could work with him to keep his doors open because it’s important to us that we are supporting community businesses out there in the Key Center area.”

Reed said it was too early to say what will happen with the two parcels SCU owns in Key Center, but “we are looking to rebuild that area, the retail space that we have as well as our branch, in two to three years. Our goal is to develop all of that space.”

After attempts to retain or relocate the business failed, Blend closed Oct. 30. Wine racks were cleared and kegs were drained as The Mind Blenders, an ad hoc mélange

“BLEND ISN’T A PLACE OR A BUSINESS SO MUCH AS A PHILOSOPHY.”

“PEOPLE WILL KEEP IT ALIVE.”



of singers and guitar, brass, woodwind and washboard players, along with too many drummers, backed up Swensen playing a custom-built “Blend Bass” while his son-in-law, Jeff Frederick, ended the night belting out his weekly rendition of Big Al Carlson’s “Take Your Drunken Ass Home” for the last time.

“It has been a fantastic experience and a distinct honor to get to know so many great members of our community and to contribute in whatever way we could to making the KP a friendlier, more enjoyable place to live,” Swensen said.

“People will keep it alive,” said Clark Snyder, one of many lead guitarists in the band. “What’s special about this place is the people in it, and that’s not over.” ■

Seems like it gets better every month. Thanks to folks like these.

No one ever said publishing a community newspaper was easy. But month after month, page by page, the Key Peninsula News continues to surprise, please and enlighten our readers.

Recently, we've shared some of the stories of the people who bring you photos, stories and news about living in this special place.

The editorial, production, advertising and delivery teams work to give you a great paper every month.

As we finish the year, consider supporting your award-winning local newspaper with a donation. When people from other places ask "how do you produce such a great little newspaper?" we answer that it takes a community like ours to make a good thing better.



Tina McKail, KP News

Krisa Bruemmer

To escape the slow pace of rural Vashon Island, Krisa left in 1998 to spend her senior year of high school in Switzerland where she lived with a German-speaking family she couldn't understand for months. She then attended college on the east coast, earning a B.A. in East Asian Studies with a junior year in Japan.

Krisa completed graduate school at the University of Sydney in Australia, then spent a decade in California, where she became a roller derby girl named Neon Nightmare, before returning home to the slow pace of rural Puget Sound.

Since joining the KP News staff in 2019, Krisa has won three Washington Newspaper Publishers Association awards for writing and photography. Her work has also appeared in *Sammiches* and *Psych Meds*, *Mothers Always Write*, *Mother-scope* magazine and other print anthologies and online journals.

When she's not writing, Krisa enjoys knitting, borrowing more books from the Key Center Library than she can possibly read, walking through the forest while listening to podcasts about writing, participating in storytelling competitions, spending time with her childhood friends and watching way too much TV. She lives in Vaughn with her husband Kenny, daughter Violet and pandemic pup Donna.



Tina McKail, KP News

Lisa Bryan

"There are times when a bucket of luck is worth a truckload of talent." That's how Lisa describes joining the Key Peninsula News team. Back when Ted Olinger ran the whole operation, he invited her to write an opinion column three or four times a year and pitched a few ideas. "There are enough opinions out there," she said. "Nobody wants to know what I think."

She was, however, interested in volunteering to report local news. Her first article made the front page in June 2016. The hook was set; she threw herself into the boat and stayed. In January 2018, she was named executive editor — more on the basis of relationships within the community than formal journalistic training. Her work has earned awards for news reporting, feature photography, editorial writing and general excellence.

She loves hearing peoples' stories and making connections. Her eccentric life experiences combine to give her a unique perspective and open ears for news.

A Puget Sound native, Lisa lives with her husband and dogs in Longbranch. She enjoys walks in the woods with dogs and friends, reading, knitting and good coffee. She is passionate for everything outdoors and recently adopted Sound swimming year-round surrounded by the bravest of friends.



Tina McKail, KP News

Bob Wilkins

Bob grew up in Natchez, Mississippi, until age 10 when his family moved to Heidelberg, Germany, where he learned the German language to the point of being mistaken for a native.

After dropping out of Louisiana State University for lack of finances, Bob received a letter from the President of the United States inviting him to visit the exotic Far East. Bob served in Vietnam as a combat medic with the 1st Cavalry Division, finishing his Army career at Fort Lewis. He quickly discovered that Western Washington had no snakes worthy of the name, hurricane season, "stinkin' " humidity or huge mosquitoes. Instead, it had beaches, rivers, mountains, year-round green forests and even sand dunes.

In 1972, a friend helped him land a part-time job at the Tacoma News Tribune, where he stayed for 36 years, eventually supervising a team of 30 graphic artists who produced all the newspaper ads.

After retiring, Bob worked on his 5 acres and 100-year-old KP farmhouse. When he met a like-minded group of folks, he started the Key Peninsula Swap Meet.

Later, Bob volunteered for the Key Peninsula News distribution team and soon joined the publishing board, helping bring our award-winning paper to the community.

DOES YOUR RETIREMENT MATH ADD UP?

When it comes to retirement, it's all about the numbers—how much money you'll need and how much you're saving to get there. Find out your retirement numbers with this five-minute calculation. With the right information, you can move ahead and plan with confidence.

Need your numbers?
Contact us today to learn more.

MKT-06070-0317 Tracking #1819240 (Exp. 02/22)



TODD ROSENBACH
Financial Consultant
7901 Skansie Ave, Suite 210
Gig Harbor WA 98335
(253) 884-4787
todd.rosenbach@lpl.com
www.toddrosenbach.com



Securities and advisory services offered through LPL Financial, a registered investment advisor. Member FINRA/SIPC.



FREE EMERGENCY BABY SUPPLIES

We're here to help.

Visit our Gig Harbor center and you can receive up to:

- 2 dozen diapers (per eligible child)
- 1 bag of wipes per dozen diapers
- 2 complete baby outfits
- 2 blankets
- 2 maternity outfits
- Formula

Text or call us at **253-858-5585** to schedule your pickup today!

Care Net of Puget Sound
2727 Hollycroft, Suite 100
Gig Harbor, WA 98335

Availability is limited. Ongoing material support available through our parenting program.

Ad donated by friends of CareNet

Pregnant? You are not alone.

We provide services at no cost to you.

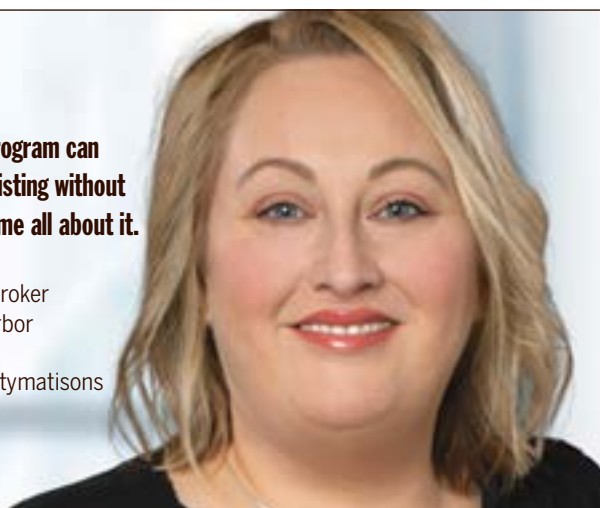


1-800-NOT-ALONE
WWW.CARENETPS.ORG



Our new Market Ready Plus program can increase home value prior to listing without upfront costs for sellers. Ask me all about it.

Misty Matisons, Real Estate Broker
4907 Point Fosdick Dr., Gig Harbor
Mobile **425-449-3038**
mistym@johnlscott.com #mistymatisons



Warm and bright
holiday wishes to all

With scholarships for local kids, stewardship initiatives and more, The Longbranch Foundation helps preserve, improve and grow what's good about here. Our shared home.

Join us with your support, your suggestions and your tax-deductible donation.



www.longbranchfoundation.org



Longbranch Community Church

www.longbranchchurch.net

Come and join us Sunday mornings

Worship Service and
Children's Church 10:30
Adult Bible Study 9:00

16518 46th St KPS, Longbranch

253 884-9339

God's Blessing to You - Pastor John Day

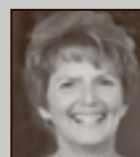
ADVOCATE/ REPRESENTATIVE

SOCIAL SECURITY DISABILITY

98% success rate since 2006
53 of 53 cases approved in 2020

MISSION POSSIBLE

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, INC.



360-798-2920
www.mpes.net

Helping Disabled
Clients Since 1992

JESUS- BEST. GIFT. EVER.



but you have to open it :)

CHRISTMAS EVE AT WAYPOINT
DECEMBER 24TH 5PM & 7PM

12719 134TH AVE NW, GIG HARBOR 98329

WAYPOINT north south
 ONE CHURCH...TWO LOCATIONS

WAYPOINT NORTH-Sundays 9am & 10:45am
 WAYPOINT SOUTH-Sundays church in homes see website for info
 Streaming live @ 9:00am on YouTube.com (search for WayPoint North) or on our WayPoint Church Facebook page.

website - waypoint-church.org Questions? Email the church - office@waypoint-church.org

Oliver Lystad
 General Manager/Lead Estimator
 Vaughn, WA 98394

Patios - Driveways - Stairs
 Retaining Walls - All Finishes

Licensed Bonded Insured LYSTAC*891BQ

Residential
 Commercial
 Building & Remodeling
 Concrete
 Flatwork & Foundation

C 253.255.7012
oliver@lystadconstruction.com
www.lystadconstruction.com

*Strengthening the Key Peninsula
 Connecting the Community*

We're Celebrating!!

This month marks our 6-year anniversary. During that time our organization has:

- Connected the community
- Sponsored community forums
- Brought over \$300,000 in donations, services, and goods to the Key Peninsula
- Created a connection and advocacy point for the KP.

If you would like to be on our twice-weekly community and Covid-19 update list, please write us at:
director@kphealthycommunity.org

For more resources and information, visit:
www.kphealthycommunity.org

We are a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization
 #86-2537545

Key Pen Rockin' the 80's
 New Year's Eve at the Civic Center

WITH MUSIC BY **THE PROFITS**

ENTRY ONLY:	\$40	AGES 21+	DECEMBER 31 DOORS OPEN: 7PM DINNER: 8PM
ENTRY + DINNER:	\$65		
VIP TABLE for 8:	\$500		

BUY TICKETS AT GNOSH, SUNNYCREST, CIVIC CENTER OFFICE OR BROWN PAPER TICKETS

Buy a Brick for the Civic Center

Place your order before the end of December!
 Personalized bricks will be installed near the entrance of the Civic Center in 2022. Order yours today at www.kpciviccenter.org

Yoga classes are back!

8:30 am Mondays and Wednesdays
 Book online www.kpciviccenter.org/yoga.html

Skate Night
 Key Peninsula Civic Center

Friday nights 6-9pm \$5
 for K-8, includes skate rental and games

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



Close to Home Espresso
 Open at 6 on weekdays — Key Center
 Mon-Fri 6am-5pm Sat 7am-5pm Sun 7am-4pm



Happy Holidays to Our Supporting Advertisers

FREE ESTIMATES | 360.265.0914

SITE DEVELOPMENT & BUILD	GARAGES & PATIOS & DECKS
CUSTOM DESIGN & REMODEL	CUSTOM OUTDOOR LIVING SPACES
COMPLETE HOME RENOVATIONS	CONCRETE & AGGREGATE
CUSTOM ADDITIONS	SIDING & ROOFING

RAINIER CONSTRUCTION
 GENERAL CONTRACTOR
 LICENSED/BONDED/INSURED
 WWW.RAINIERCONSTRUCTIONLLC.COM
 RAINI078888



Single Seniors
Fun and friendship after Fifty

PICNICS • FISHING • GOLF
 • SPEED DATING • CARDS
 PARTIES • POTLUCKS
 for Active Seniors
 Social Drinking, Smoking OK

Patti Foster (253) 853-5046

DOWN TO DIRT EXCAVATION LLC

Residential/Commercial
 Grading & Excavation
 Site Prep/Clearing/Hauling



Call for free estimate 253 649.9736
 John Bassler Owner/Operator
 downtodirtexcavation@gmail.com

OVER 20 YEARS EXPERIENCE LICENSED, BONDED & INSURED LICENSE #604203872

Equine, Livestock & Residential Fencing Since 1989

Warwick & Janice Bryant



KIWI FENCING COMPANY, INC.
 Custom Farm & Fence Solutions

13108 125th St NW 800-598-3374
 Gig Harbor WA 98329 253-851-5494
 www.kiwifencing.com fax 253-851-5550
 #KIWIFCI055DA becky@kiwifencing.com



Aspen Land Surveying LLC
 at The Landing in Key Center
 (half a block east of the stop light)
 253-303-0270 www.aspenland.com

PERFECT EXCAVATION
 general contractor



Clearing, Brush-Cutting,
 Excavation, Grading,
 Drainage Systems,
 Retaining Walls & more!

(206)930-9043
 www.perfectexcavation.com

BROOKSIDE VETERINARY HOSPITAL
 Tender Loving Care for All Your Family Pets!



Justine Zingsheim-Nadeau DVM
Lisa Woods-Zabari DVM

13701 118th Ave NW
 Gig Harbor WA 98329

253.857.7302
 253.857.7654 Fax
 www.brookvet.com

If you live on the Key Peninsula, your newspaper is delivered free every month

For those not lucky enough to live here, subscribe for first-class mail delivery at \$30 a year.


Subscribe for 3 years and get 3 extra months free

Sign up at
 keypennews.org

or mail check to KPNews,
 PO Box 3, Vaughn WA 98394

Call (253)851-9170 or Visit Today
 12615 134th Ave. NW Between KP Hwy & Hwy 302

BAYSIDE ANIMAL LODGE, LTD.



*Celebrating over 20 years on the Key Peninsula
 Animal Care and Friendly Customer Service Our Specialties*



Appleby's Plumbing
 24-Hour Emergency Service Repair

PLUMBING & DRAIN CLEANING
 (253) 370-2293

•Hot Water Heaters •Plumbing Services
 •Repairs, Repipes, Remodels •Gas Lines

WA Cont. Lic. #APPLEPD077LD

Call 253-358-6488



Dave the Handyman

David Leger davideleger@gmail.com
 DAVEHH*86409 Text 352-228-1100
 20321 10th St. SW in Lakebay
 LICENSED HOME INSPECTOR #1587



Moran's Portable Restrooms LLC

(360) 994-9544




www.moransportablerestrooms.net
 moransportablerestrooms@gmail.com

PARAMOUNT FIREARMS
 CURATORS OF FINE FIREARMS

We buy firearms and military edged weapons
 I'll come to you

253 993-4101 Barry@paramountfirearms.com
 Barry Bookman - licensed dealer



KEY PENINSULA BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

SUNDAY SCHOOL 9 AM
 FELLOWSHIP TIME 10:15-10:30
 WORSHIP SERVICE 10:30

WE MEET AT KEY PENINSULA CIVIC CENTER IN VAUGHN
 DEACON RICK KRUM 253 353-2745
 WWW.KPBFELLOWSHIP.ORG
 FACEBOOK: KEYPENINSULABAPTISTFELLOWSHIP



TOP LEFT Cormorants fly near Joemma Beach. *Tina McKail, KP News* **TOP RIGHT** Autumn color before the rains began. *Ed Johnson, KP News* **MID LEFT** Holiday crafts at KP Civic Center's Winter Warm-Up. *Lisa Bryan, KP News* **MID CENTER** Piper Glennon, age 5, atop Santa's lap at Winter Warm-Up. *Lisa Bryan, KP News* **MID RIGHT** Steller's jay. *Tina McKail, KP News* **LOWER LEFT** Garden guardian. *Tina McKail, KP News* **LOWER RIGHT** NJROTC students from Peninsula and Gig Harbor high schools honor fallen soldiers at Veterans Home Cemetery for Veterans Day. *Tina McKail, KP News*