

Gap: Wage gap still exists in Clatsop County

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The 78 percent figure nationally is based on median earnings — meaning half make more money; half make less — and not a comparison of women and men working the same type of jobs.

Women generally work fewer hours overall than men, tend to work in lower-wage industries, and are more likely to leave the workforce when they have children, interrupting their career tracks.

These factors are the reasons why many women's rights advocates and labor activists are pushing for an increase in the minimum wage, paid sick leave and child care.

Educators, meanwhile, are encouraging more young women to pursue science, technology, engineering and math education to better compete for higher paying jobs.

Shawna Sykes, of the Oregon Employment Department, found that while the wage gap in Clatsop County is narrower for certain higher-paying industries, such as wholesale trade, it still exists across occupational sectors and age groups.

Assigning roles

Constance Waisanen, a chemical engineer by training, worked for 27 years at Georgia-Pacific's Wauna Mill before



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian
Blanca Diaz, a student at Tongue Point Job Corps, right, talks about her hopes post-graduation. Both Diaz and Chanel Orr, center, spoke as part of a panel discussion on wage inequality at the Judge Guy Boyington building Sunday.



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian
Snacks were used to make a statement on wage inequality during the panel discussion.

switching careers eight years ago and becoming a financial consultant.

Waisanen, a single mother who has raised two sons, described an "invisible prejudice"

against women that is built into the culture. "We just don't sometimes see women in certain roles," she said. "It's still hard for us to see women as leaders. It's still hard for us to see women taking that CEO position."

"That glass ceiling is very real. The top of my head should be flat by now."

Waisanen said it even caused her to doubt herself despite her qualifications and performance. "It's going to take us a long time before we get around to really having women be able to be in a position where we can really be heard," she said.

At the mill, she said, "I don't think they even did it to be evil. I just think they simply couldn't hear me. They just couldn't hear me."

She said she feels she gets more respect, and equitable compensation, as a financial consultant with Thrivent Financial. "The harder I work. The more I get paid," she said. "It's as simple as that. There isn't any barrier."

Younger women may face fewer obstacles as they move through their careers.

Blanca Diaz, of Astoria, who is studying in the electrical program at Tongue Point Jobs Corps Center, wants to eventually start her own business. Regardless of gender, she said, with "hard work and dedication and believing in myself, I can accomplish anything in life."

Get Lit: Authors sign books, answer questions

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once promising characters find themselves consigned to the narrative scrapheap.

But the collateral damage ultimately serves a greater good: the art of effective storytelling.

Fowler was one of five literary all-stars taking questions from an audience, and from each other, at the Coaster Theatre Playhouse on Sunday, the final day of the fourth annual "Get Lit at the Beach" book festival, held April 10 through 12.

Sponsored by Cannon Beach's Tolovana Arts Colony, this year's "Get Lit" event featured Fowler, Jim Lynch, Nancy Pearl, Gail Tsukiyama and Cannon Beach's own Terry Brooks.

Following an authors' reception on Friday, author talks and book signings on Saturday, and Pearl's keynote speech on Saturday night, the Q-and-A panel, which Brooks moderated, exposed the striking similarities and heartfelt differences among the authors — each of whom is successful, none of whom write the same.

Outlines

Wrenching though it can be, the writer must often eliminate dead-end characters from the story altogether before they do any damage in print.

"Sometimes I feel like characters walk into my book and they're auditioning to try to keep space in the book, and I have to boot them off because they either don't come alive on the page, or they don't do what I want them to do," said Lynch, the author of three novels, including "The Highest Tide" (2005).

Whether eighty-sixing characters or introducing new ones, the writer must be prepared to depart from his or her outline, which should be viewed as a guide, not a commitment, according to Brooks.

"You never want to let good ideas get tossed aside simply because you're following a structured form," said Brooks, a fantasist and author of more than 30 books. "That's a bad, bad thing."

Outlines, in fact, were a recurring point of contention during the hour-and-a-half discussion.

"When you get a better idea, all the outline allows you to do is to see, if you enter it into the story, what will it do to the rest of it, and is this a path you want to pursue," Brooks said. "You always allow (writing) to be an organic process."

Tsukiyama, the author of such acclaimed novels as "The Samurai's Garden" (1996), said she doesn't use outlines and finds them constricting. They also pile more busywork onto her plate.



ERICK BENGEL — EO Media Group
The five guest authors of this year's "Get Lit at the Beach" event gather for a photo onstage at the Coaster Theatre Playhouse after Sunday's Q-and-A. From left: Jim Lynch, Gail Tsukiyama, Nancy Pearl, Karen Joy Fowler and Terry Brooks.

Before she can follow an outline, "first I'd have to write the outline — that would be the problem: more things to do," she said.

Writing and research

Of course, all of these decisions assume that the writing even gets done.

"The central mystery of my professional life is that these two things are true: I love to write; it gives me great joy and great pleasure — not every day, but very, very often," said Fowler, the author of several novels, including "The Jane Austen Book Club" (2007). "No. 2: I will do anything on a given morning to avoid writing."

For Fowler, a typical writing day involves waking up, going for a walk, reading her emails, attending to things that require her immediate attention and checking out her favorite political websites to assure

herself that, "yes, the world is worse today than it was when I went to bed."

"It is tragically possible for me to spend an entire working day circling from my email to my political websites, and, at about 3 p.m. I'm exhausted," she said. "And I think, 'Damn, I really wanted to write today.'"

Tsukiyama admitted that her worst habit is procrastination. This, combined with perfectionism, is the death knell for a writer, said Pearl, quoting American author Peter Matthiessen.

Lynch, an accomplished journalist, said that, for him, researching a book is much easier than writing it.

"Writing can be great, in bursts," he said, but, when doing research, he is more likely to "feel like I had a productive day. I get to go out and talk to people and

interact with humanity."

"See, I hate that," Brooks said, later adding, "This is why I write about elves, for crying out loud."

"Very inaccurately, I must say," Fowler quipped.

"These are my elves," Brooks said. "They're exactly the way I say they are."

Go anywhere, do anything

During her keynote speech, Pearl — the author of the nonfiction "Book Lust" series and the only librarian immortalized as an action figure — spoke to the importance of public libraries in her life.

Long ago, when Pearl revealed to a colleague that she often dreams about her childhood library, the Parkman Branch Library in Detroit, Mich., she was told to "get a life."

She wanted to tell him: "In this world, we are given one life to lead, one life to live, but it's through books and reading that we can have any number of lives. We can go anywhere, and we can do anything, and we can be anyone," she said. "I knew when I was 10 years old that that was the case, and I certainly know it now."

Even books that critics widely consider poorly written and edited can have undeniable value as escapist entertainment, allowing readers to live vicariously through the characters' exploits. Otherwise, there would be no room in the culture for tomes like E.L. James' erotic romance "50 Shades of Grey" (2011).

Brooks made this point on Sunday when offering his theory about "this whole '50 Shades of Grey' thing: 'This is a repressed society. It's a Puritan society. A lot of that has carried over through the years. And sex is something that many are denied but all desire.'"

But, "even if what you're saying is very true, it's so poorly written, how could you get through it?" Tsukiyama asked.

To which Lynch responded, after a pause, "How do you know it's so poorly written?"

Roxanne: Auto dealer was willing to help offer some comfort, dignity

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"So it's in the best interest of these children to be seen at a children's hospital in the metro area," said Julie Soderberg, the executive director of The Harbor, which works with victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. "And because we know that this places an added burden on the families, by us having a minivan, we're able to drive these families of the children up to Portland so that they can be seen by a pediatric specialist."

Soderberg also said that the minivan would be used to help transport families to shelter after reports of domestic violence or other abuse.

Astoria Police Chief Brad Johnston said many suspected cases of child sexual assault are not disclosed immediately after the incidents occurred, so forensic medical exams — or rape kits to collect evidence — are not always possible. Children in these cases often get physical exams at The Lighthouse for Kids, which works with victims of child abuse.

He said police would prefer not to have to take young victims of sexual assault to Portland for rape exams. "We still don't think that transporting victims to Portland is the best thing for the victim or the prosecution of the case," he said. "We would like to see them be able to get treatment locally."

Johnston said police could work with The Harbor on transportation depending on the family situation and the nature of the alleged crime.

"The bottom line is we will all work together to take care of the victims," he said.

Williams-Morinville said she was not surprised to hear about a gap in services on the North Coast, or the need to better respond to child sexual abuse.

Warrenton Kia was willing to help offer some comfort, and dignity, for a difficult drive.

"When you're able to do something like that, you do it, because it's important and because it's the right thing to do," she said.

— Derrick DePledge

Givers: Many area residents honored

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• Individual Volunteer of the Year is Shannon Danen for his 19 years of work with the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office Underwater Recovery Team.

• Outstanding Advisory Board Member is Myrna Patrick, a member of the county's Board of Property Tax Appeals, who has served on and chaired the board since 2012.

• Outstanding Volunteer Group is the Clatsop County Animal Shelter volunteers, who perform a wide range of services at the shelter facility in Warrenton, including

walking and grooming dogs, feeding and socializing cats, transporting animals for vet treatments, serving as foster owners and cleaning the facilities. Volunteers who received awards Wednesday were Amanda Burgard, Marcy Dunning, Linda Dygert, Rodney Merrill, Christina Merten, Isabelle Toliver and Jerri Yamasaki.

• Outstanding Individuals within a Group are Mark Tanguay, Clatsop County Jail ministry; Tom Tussing, Clatsop County Sheriff's Office reserve deputy; and Kayla Warner, of the Public Health Department Worksite Wellness Program.

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