



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

143rd YEAR, No. 123

★★ FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2015 • WEEKEND EDITION ★★

ONE DOLLAR

'It's a tough time to recruit police officers right now.'

Astoria Police Chief Brad Johnston

WANTED: POLICE OFFICERS

Background checks, psychological exams winnow applicants

First of Two Parts

By KYLE SPURR The Daily Astorian

Police in Clatsop County and across Oregon are having a hard time hiring new officers. Applicants are failing in large numbers at every step in the recruitment process, from background checks to psychological exams. A negative perception of police nationwide is also keeping potential officers from even applying.

"It's a tough time to recruit police officers right now," Astoria Police Chief Brad Johnston said. "People in law enforcement don't want their children to go into law enforcement. Some of it is cyclical, but some of it we can affect and ride out the cycle."

Johnston said the statewide trend hit his department earlier this year. He started hiring for an open position in March. Out of about 60 applications, he was unable to hire anyone.

The hiring process opened again this fall, and out of a similar applicant pool, only three people are being considered.

Overall, Johnston said, the applicant pool is down about two-thirds from what the department has seen in the past.

The difficulty in finding new officers is coming at a time when many in the field are retiring. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, police departments in Oregon did a lot of hiring, Johnston said, and now



Carl Wycoff/via Creative Commons

Newly minted officers from the Des Moines, Iowa, Police Academy listen at this year's graduation with their new badges in hand.

those officers are reaching the end of their careers.

"We are faced with trying to replace all of those folks," Johnston said.

Actively recruiting

One solution is to do more active recruiting.

Johnston said his department used to pull directly from Clatsop Community College's criminal justice program. The program was

discontinued in 2012 due to low enrollment numbers and decreased funding from the state.

Donna Larson, vice president of academic and student affairs, said the college is planning to reinstate the criminal justice program by next fall. The college will be offering one class this spring.

"We have heard from law enforcement that there is a real need for this program," Larson said. "We really do need to bring it back."

Warrenton Police Chief Matt Workman recently had some success finding new officers.

The department's last three hires have been filled by qualified candidates, including Johnston's son, Tyler Johnston.

Despite the successful hires, Workman said, his department still faces similar difficulties as other small agencies around the state.

See POLICE, Page 8A

Scandi heritage tribute planned

Astoria nonprofit gets grant to plan monument project

By ERICK BENDEL The Daily Astorian

Though Astoria's industrious culture testifies to its Scandinavian heritage, no full-scale monument exists to recognize the Finns, Swedes, Danes, Norwegians and Icelanders who left their homeland in the late 1800s and early 1900s to populate the area.

But the Astoria Scandinavian Heritage Association is working to change that.

Recently, the nonprofit association received a \$2,500 grant from the Oregon Community Foundation to launch the first phase of a multi-year project that will culminate in a monument titled "From Scandinavia to Astoria."

The design and location have yet to be determined, but the goal is set in stone: to celebrate the Scandinavian immigrant experience while educating the public about the Scandinavian tradition.

"The Scandinavians have made a big impact on the fabric of the North Coast area," said Janet Bowler, the project's grant writer and publicist. "The ethics and the values carry over to today."

Sense of identity

Once the committee knows the what and where, they will begin raising money from individuals and businesses. "We can't finish it on our own. We need community support," she said.

Ideally, the proposed monument would be installed in 2017 and unveiled during that year's 50th annual Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival, held every June at the Clatsop County Fairgrounds.

Realistically, however, the heritage association hopes to break ground on the structure, or at least reveal the final design concept, at the event.

"We'd like to have it underway," said Loran Mathews, a project leader and president of the heritage association, which supports the midsummer festival.

See TRIBUTE, Page 10A



Janet Bowler and Loran Mathews

A Sunday homecoming for Poyer

Browns hope to play the spoiler role in Seattle

By GARY HENLEY The Daily Astorian

This season has pretty much been one and the same for Jordan Poyer and the Cleveland Browns: Some ups, some downs, a few injuries and plenty of frustrating losses.

More losses than they were both counting on.

With three games left, the Browns are 3-10 and out of the playoff race.

Still, there's a few things to look forward to for both

MORE INSIDE

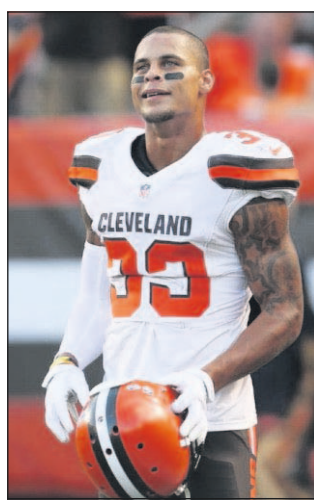
Turn to Page 10 to read our interview with Astoria's Jordan Poyer.

Poyer and the Browns.

While Cleveland will try to play the spoiler role, Poyer — who made a name for himself as a tremendous three-sport athlete at Astoria High School — is preparing to play his first game in the Pacific Northwest as a professional.

The Browns will take on the red-hot Seattle Seahawks Sunday at CenturyLink Field (1:05 p.m. kickoff, FOX).

See POYER, Page 10A



ClevelandBrowns.com

Astoria's Jordan Poyer was looking forward to Sunday's game in Seattle even before the season started.

Budget deal falls short on wildfires

More money, but no fix for agency woes long term

By MEAD GRUVER Associated Press

CHEYENNE, Wyo. — Budget legislation headed to President Barack Obama includes an additional \$610 million for the U.S. Forest Service to fight wildfires next year but no long-term fix to how the agency, year

after year, has had to borrow money from other programs to keep up with the ever-growing cost of fighting fires.

The Forest Service spent a record \$1.7 billion fighting fires this year. Firefighting now accounts for more than half of the agency's budget, up from 16 percent 20 years ago.

The Obama administration wants to address the Forest Service's firefighting budget shuffle by treating wildfires like other types of

See BUDGET, Page 8A

