

YOUR VOICE CONTINUED

River County (Cascade Locks) located "smack dab" in the heart of the Columbia River Gorge should be represented in the *Columbia Gorge News!*

I feel like the "Whos" in Dr. Suess's story "Horton Hears A Who!" shouting out, "We're here, we're here, we're here!"

Kari Goben
Cascade Locks

EDITOR'S NOTE: This year's election coverage did not feature the Port of Cascade Locks board this year because the races were uncontested and our resources were temporarily limited with the loss of our Hood River area editor.

Freedom of religion

A man from The Hood contacted me. He was concerned that I was suggesting that Americans should not have "Freedom of Religion." Of course they should ... absolutely. To exaggerate the point, I would even give my permission and consent for folks to worship their "smart phone."

What I am suggesting to one reasonable intelligent person out there is simple. Once a person decides to worship the specific g-o-d revealed in the writings of Moshe, the Hebrew Prophets, the Psalms and the Apostles letters then "freedom of religious diversity" stops. This is understood by reading the instruction manual. An arrogant man can simply ignore the manual and do what he wants. Cain did this. The historical account of Cain's mistake is in Genesis 4.

Like any book the foundation principles are in the early chapters and these principles are carried into the proceeding chapters for correct guidance and accurate knowledge. The lesson learned from Cain's actions is simple, there is only "one way" to approach the Creator, according to the manual, and it should be obeyed.

Cain and Abel sought reconciliation with the Creator. They were instructed exactly how to do so. Blood. Blood must be offered. A life must be taken and given.

This is what their father and mother learned. Adam and Eve thought fig leaves would "cover up" the situation they had worked themselves into. Their diverse church practice was wrong.

Cain arrogantly offered unacceptable vegetables instead of blood. Cain alienated himself from the Creator permanently for he did not correct his "religious practice" but killed the obedient humble brother. The Cain "church" was doomed but they had their "religious diversity."

Men do not have the right to decide how they will approach the Creator. The church's business method of offering and selling diverse religious practices is not founded on the humility of Abel but on the arrogance of Cain. The church businesses continue to reflect the arrogant nasty murdering attitude of Cain. For this reason millions of people find the church system insincere "religious freedom." Truth is not in church but in the books of the Scripture. Obedient knowledge is "freedom."

Gary Fischer
The Dalles

Want to write a letter?

Columbia Gorge News encourages readers to submit letters to the editor for the weekly opinion page. Letters on all topics are welcome.

Writers must include their name and hometown (for publication) and daytime phone number (for verification, not for publication). Letters from an agency or group must be credited to the author or a contact person.

Anonymous or "name withheld by request" letters are not accepted.

Letters must be 350 words or fewer; generally, the briefer the message, the better. Opinion pieces longer than 350 words may be published as a guest commentary at the discretion of the editor.

Letters are published as space allows, and efforts are made each week to provide as much space as possible.

Deadline for letters is noon on the Friday prior to publication.

We reserve the right to edit all letters:

Letters must be civil.
Vulgar or inappropriate language will not be considered, nor malicious, false or misleading statements.
Letters attacking an

individual, rather than an opinion, are not acceptable.

Letters criticizing a particular business over a particular complaint or grievance will not be considered.

The opinions expressed in letters are "Your Voice," and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Columbia Gorge News, its staff, publisher or advertisers.

Letters may be submitted online at www.ColumbiaGorgeNews.com: Scroll to the bottom of the page and select "Submission Forms," then select "Letter to the Editor."

NEW — Letters also may be sent via email to Letters@gorgenews.com.

Or mail your letter "attention editor" to any of the Post Office boxes listed at bottom of page 4.



MAY 5 HONORED MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS PERSONS

'Bring them home bill' proposed

By Tammy Kaufman
For Washington Gorge Action Programs

On May 5, Programs for Peaceful Living and Washington Gorge Action Programs recognize the National Day of Awareness to Commemorate Missing and Murdered Native Women and Girls to honor the lives of those who have been abducted, assaulted, trafficked or had their lives cut short due to violence. This population endures a murder rate that is 10 times the national average on some reservations, according to the National Indigenous Women's Resource Center.

This issue has been championed locally by Washington State Representative Gina Mosbrucker (R-District 14) who has been working as the lead author on a series of bipartisan legislation to support this cause. Two pieces of legislation passed at the state level to protect Native American women, and a third bill has dropped for consideration in the next session.

The first, HB 2951 (2017-2018), ordered a study to determine how to increase reporting and the investigation of missing Native American women. It directed Washington State Patrol to work with the governor's Office of Indian Affairs to convene meetings with tribal law enforcement partners, tribes and urban Indian organizations to determine the scope of the problem and create partnerships to increase reporting and investigation, as well as to work with the federal department of justice to increase information sharing and coordination of resources.

The second, HB 1713 (2019-2020), established two missing and murdered Native American women liaison positions in the Washington State Patrol, one residing in Western Washington and the other in Eastern Washington. Initially this bill also was intended to set up a legislative task force to monitor and improve law enforcement response to missing persons reports for Native American women, but due to budget constraints that year the task force provision was removed from the final bill.

The third, HB 1571 (2021-2022), is currently under consideration and will be addressed again next January when the legislature reconvenes after Mosbrucker takes time between sessions to talk with the tribes, families and stakeholders to refine the specific needs for this "Bring them home bill," which includes all indigenous persons.



WA State Rep. Gina Mosbrucker, R-District 14 (left) works tirelessly on bipartisan legislation in Olympia to help indigenous families, with leadership from tribal members like Earth-Feather Sovereign (right) a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. Photo courtesy of Aaron Barna, Legislative Support Services, Washington State Legislature.

"I think what still keeps me up at night and still working on this after six years now, is the image of the 12 year old tribal girl holding up a cardboard sign that asks 'Am I next?'" Mosbrucker said during a phone interview immediately following the close of this year's legislative session. "I can't imagine wondering that."

Mosbrucker has eight months now to work with the more than 29 tribes and tribal urban areas to gather information and adjust the bill before it goes to a vote. She noted that this effort is being driven by the tribes. "The family members are telling us what we need to do, and what is broken," she said. This perspective helps her to refine the bill and she hopes to make it even stronger.

Currently there are five main parts to the proposed HB 1571. It would:

1. Upon the death of an indigenous person, direct agencies to immediately contact family members and tribes prior to the removal of remains and allow tribal members to pray over the body before the body is moved from a crime scene. This would honor and respect their cultural ways, but may not interfere with the crime scene or jeopardize a criminal investigation.

2. Require the state jail booking system to be checked during investigations seeking missing indigenous persons.

3. Create a Red Thunder alert to notify the public of a missing tribal person.

4. Create a symbol and help line phone number to be shared at locations where people may be trafficked.

5. Create a pilot program to set up a receiving center to care for up to 50 indigenous persons who are victims of human trafficking and offer wrap around support services to help them recover.

"The shelter is a heavy lift," Mosbrucker said. But she expressed confidence that since this would be a pilot program, it could be successful. "We will look at funding sources, like the capital budget," she said. But as to the specific design of a shelter, she added, "I want to leave that up to the people who have the needs to decide what it looks like."

Mosbrucker anticipates that there is still more work to be done. She is hopeful that others, including her counterpart Rep. Debra Lekanoff (D-District 40) who is vice chair of the State Government & Tribal Relations committee, will be able to successfully launch a legislative task force going forward.

In the end, she said that this all stems from keeping a promise to the Yakama Nation to create real change.

May is 'Mental Health Month'

By Victoria Tarter
For Comprehensive Healthcare

Mental illnesses are common in the United States, affecting tens of millions of people each year. One in five individuals in the United States will be diagnosed with a mental health disorder in their lifetime, and 17 percent of youth (six-17 years old) experience a mental health disorder.

Mental illness is also common in Washington State, where three out of every seven people will likely experience a clinically significant mental illness in 2021, with that number expected to rise in the coming years.

The pandemic has impacted the overall mental health of individuals across the world, making it even clearer that our bodies and minds are intrinsically linked, and mental wellness is essential to living healthy, productive lives.

There are also direct impacts of the COVID-19 virus. A growing body of research indicates that roughly one in three COVID-19 survivors experience psychological and neurological issues.

This year, key priorities for Comprehensive Healthcare during Mental Health Month include advocacy to state legislators, general awareness and community education.

Leaders of four of the largest

community behavioral health providers in the state joined to form Fourfront — a behavioral health collective focused on advocacy and leadership. The group recently advocated during the 2021 Washington legislative session to address chronically underfunded community based behavioral health providers.

They will continue to do so during the proposed supplemental session slated to be held later this year as the outcome of the last session included only modest increases to Medicaid rates which will not sufficiently address concerns with chronic underfunding such as competitive salaries for clinicians.

Locally, throughout the month of May, Comprehensive Healthcare will be providing five different community education classes for local employers, healthcare professionals and community members. On May 18 they will be holding a free, virtual Suicide Awareness for Everyone (SAFE) training. They are also hosting a free and virtual Cumulative Stress, Self-care and Resilience training workshop at noon on May 25.

These trainings offer helpful skills essential to recognizing and responding to individuals in crisis, or knowing how to approach a co-worker, family member or friend about mental health concerns. To sign up for these events,

visit comphc.org/events.

On May 20, there will be a Facebook Live event on the Comprehensive Healthcare Facebook page called "Ask Me Anything."

Clinicians and a peer support counselor with lived experiences will discuss commonly asked questions they receive about mental health and substance use and invite viewers to share their questions. This event is an opportunity to ask anything about mental health including therapy, mental health symptoms, crisis situations and more.

Community education is an important opportunity to teach others the impact of discrimination toward mental illness, the harmful mislabeling of individuals who have a mental illness as violent or "crazy." "There is a large stigma associated with schizophrenia, for example," said Jodi Daly, president and CEO of Comprehensive Healthcare. "This is due to simply misunderstanding the illness and the assumption that all individuals with such a severe mental illness are violent." Daily referenced recent local and national news stories about violence and mass shootings, clarifying that the rate of violence among individuals with a mental health diagnosis is no different than the general population.

A&E HEATING and AIR, Inc.
Your Friends IN THE BRIGHT RED VANS

Expert Service & Reliability

- Maintenance programs
- Licensed and Bonded
- Over 20 years Experience
- Factory trained technicians

Quality Sales & Installation

- Furnaces
- Air Conditioning
- Heat Pumps
- Ductless Mini-Splits and much more!

For a limited time only get up to 72 months no interest or 6 months no payments or interest with approved credit on your purchase of a new Heat Pump, AH, or Furnace.

Serving the Columbia River Gorge Since 1997
NEW LOCATION IN THE DALLES!

541-296-0701 The Dalles
541-387-3311 Hood River

TRASH TALK

Q. Are Pizza boxes recyclable either at curbside or the transfer station? Debra, Mosier

A. Debra, Yes and No. Let me explain. The pizza box bottoms are considered 'contaminated'. But the tops are ok. Simply cut or tear the pizza box in half. Throw away the bottom including paper liner. And recycle the top with your cardboard.

questions to:

Tri-County
Hazardous Waste & Recycling Program
(541)-506-2636 www.tricountyrecycle.com