

Bringing the party to downtown



EDWARD STRATTON — The Daily Astorian

Becky Kraft new owner of Party Jesters has moved it to 1413 Commercial St. in the John Jacob Astor Hotel building.

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Party Jesters has moved into a suite at the John Jacob Astor Hotel building under new owner Becky Kraft. The business was started last summer by Jeannie Alexander in a warehouse in east Astoria.

Kraft said her husband Brandon, a manager at the Best Western Lincoln Inn, tipped her

off about Alexander's intent to sell the business as she moved back to the Seattle area for her husband's job.

"We really felt it would be better downtown," said Kraft, who filled the front display of a small suite in the Astor building with balloons and opened April 1 — no joke.

"I'm basically doing the same thing," Kraft said, helping design and supply gatherings

around the region.

She provides eating utensils, beverage containers, tables, chairs, tents, portable audio systems and other supplies. In addition, she offers services such as event planning, on-site coordination, bartending, setup, teardown and deliveries of equipment.

"I would like to eventually make Party Jesters a one-stop place in this area," Kraft said.

She is looking at a portable dance floor, adding more supplies and eventually a party room.

Party Jesters, located at 1413 Commercial St., is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday. It's available at www.partyjesters.com, on Facebook and will hold a grant opening/ribbon-cutting at 5:15 p.m. Tuesday.

Warrenton Wal-Mart in bidding process

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — Wal-Mart is in the process of bidding for the engineering of the retail chain's new Warrenton location, a spokesperson for Wal-Mart said. The spokesperson commented on the condition of anonymity, because they were not

allowed to provide comments for attribution

The process will take several weeks, the spokesperson said. The contractor will ultimately set the construction schedule, but it's expected that construction will begin by early summer, with a grant opening in late 2016.

The groundwork will include retaining walls, storm-water

ponds and underground utilities. Aboveground work will include the actual building, landscaping and a pedestrian plaza. Frontage improvements along Ensign Lane and U.S. Highway 101, where the store will be located, include bus turnouts, shelter, sidewalks and a new traffic signal.

"Each week we hear from customers along the North Coast

who are looking forward to the convenience a new store will bring," another Wal-Mart spokeswoman, Delia Garcia, said. "We're pleased with the progress toward construction of our new Warrenton store and excited about the opportunity to bring residents the convenience and everyday low prices they desire."

Local hospital charges are in the middle

Report calls for more transparent health care

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

On March 23, Act Now for a Healthy Oregon released a report called "Hospital Charges: Expensive, Confusing, & Inconsistent" detailing the prices of Oregon's hospitals, using Inpatient Discharge Data from the Oregon Health Authority.

Act Now is a campaign created in 2013 by the Service Employees International Union, which represents about 15,000 health care workers across Oregon and southeast Washington.

"Healthcare in general—and hospital care in particular—is expensive in the United States," reads the report. "In fact, hospital spending in the U.S. is more than 60 percent higher than in other developed countries, placing significant burdens on families and communities."

The report analyzed the charges for patients discharged from Oregon hospitals in 2013, looking at the 100 most common diagnoses and the average amount of money charged by each hospital. The most expensive hospital received a score of 1, and subsequent hospitals received scores based on a per-

centage of the price difference from the most expensive hospital.

It ranked Providence Seaside Hospital and Columbia Memorial Hospital 34th and 36th most expensive, respectively, out of 59 hospitals. They were ranked as more expensive than coastal hospitals such as Tillamook County General Hospital (39th), Curry General Hospital (46th) in Gold Beach, Lower Umpqua Hospital (53rd) in Reedsport and Southern Coos Hospital & Health Center (57th) in Bandon.

"It is important to understand that the Act Now for a Healthy Oregon report uses charge information, which is like the 'suggested retail price,'" wrote Paul Mitchell, a spokesman for CMH, in an email response. "It is not reflective of what's actually paid by the patient. In every instance, charges are reduced downward based on rates negotiated between hospitals and insurance providers, and assistance provided to patients by CMH. In most cases, payments are predetermined by Medicaid and Medicare, which are much lower than what it costs to provide the service."

Big differences

The report found that the cost of procedures such as those to treat bronchitis and asthma; appendectomies; and birthing can be two to four times more

expensive at the most expensive hospitals, compared to the least expensive. In 2013, it found, the U.S. spent \$2.9 trillion on health care, a third of it going to hospitals. Ninety-one percent of cost increases since 2000, it added, were attributable to increases in hospital charges, professional services, drugs, devices and administrative costs.

The report focused on several key findings, including that:

- Oregon hospitals charge patients wildly different prices for the same diagnosis and time spent in care. The most expensive hospitals charge two to three times as much as the least expensive.

- Klamath Falls' Sky Lakes Hospital, on average, is the most expensive in the state, while Pioneer Memorial Hospital in Heppner was the least expensive. Southern Oregon had six of the 10 most expensive hospitals, including hospitals in Roseburg, Grants Pass, Medford and Klamath Falls.

- Higher prices didn't always correlate with a higher-quality hospital. Eight of the report's top-10 most expensive hospitals were assessed at least one quality-related penalty in the most recent round of quality scoring by the federal Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services.

- Higher prices don't necessarily mean better jobs. Kaiser Permanente's hospitals

ranked on the less expensive end of the spectrum, although more than 90 percent of their employees earn more than \$16 an hour.

Addressing healthcare prices

Act Now's report comes as Oregon lawmakers are discussing changes to how hospitals set and report prices.

Oregon Senate Bill 891, in the Committee on Health Care, "requires health care facilities to publish, in manner prescribed by Oregon Health Authority, price data regarding health care services offered."

Senate Bill 665, in the same committee, would create a Hospital Rate Commission within the OHA "to review hospital charges billed by certain hospitals and recommend to Oregon Health Authority whether to approve charges as reasonable based on prescribed criteria."

The Act Now for a Healthy Oregon campaign seeks five main objectives, including quality and pricing transparency; minimum levels of charity care by nonprofit hospitals, which the report said includes all but two of the state's 60 or so facilities; reasonable rates for hospital services; and a capping of hospital executives' salaries.

For more information on the campaign, visit <http://actthehealthyoregon.org/>



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Beau Brenden, left, and Kevin Eaton are co-managers and inheritors-in-waiting of J&H Boatworks, started in the 1976 by Al Jaques and Tim Hill.

Making the Dollar

INTERVIEWS WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES
BY EDWARD STRATTON

Beau Brenden and Kevin Eaton, co-managers

J&H Boatworks

300 Railroad Road, Hangar 2

Astoria

503-325-1197 or www.jhboat.com

Between its North Tongue Point shop and Columbia Steel Supply in Miles Crossing, J&H Boatworks performs metal fabrication in a number of areas. The name stems from the surnames of founders Al Jaques and Tim Hill, who still owns the company.

What does J&H Boatworks do?

Kevin: "We're mostly marine-oriented, of course. There's the fabrication and remodeling of mostly vessels, whether they're sport boats or commercial. The only reason that J&H has stayed in business this long is because of its versatility. This isn't all we've ever done. We do anything related to fishing or logging, or anything else that this area has to offer."

Beau: "I'd like to think workmanship, too (is why J&H has survived). It's pretty high up there, too."

Kevin: "We try to pride ourselves on quality. We're not just a bunch of hacks out here on the coast who are just slapping things together. We take a lot of pride in what we do. We're in a small community, and we don't believe in burning any bridges, so we try to please everybody. And that can almost get us in trouble sometimes. We're always dealing with deadlines. On everything we do, there's deadlines, getting these guys out on time, providing a service. We do a lot of stuff for the Coast Guard, as well, and we take a lot of pride in that. Mostly for their motor lifeboat stuff, whether it's (Station) Cape Disappointment, Tillamook or Westport (Wash.), we kind of handle all three of the bases. Plus we work on some of the ships downtown, the (cutter) Alert and what have you, but it's mostly marine these days."

How did you get into this?

Kevin: "I've been welding and this kind of thing now for over 30 years. I've been with Tim now for about 22 years. When I first went to work for Tim, I was actually working on some of that Ag Bag (Solutions) stuff. After that, it turned into boat fabrication."

Beau: "It's almost 18 years now (since I've been hired on). I went to college up here at the hill, and then did a job shadow (at J&H). They hired me on that summer, when I graduated from that class."

Was Kevin (a welding instructor at Clatsop Community College) your teacher?

Kevin: "For one day. That's how I met Beau. I actually teach the night class. Beau ... he was in a degree program, a one-year certificate degree program, and I just happened to sub for one of the instructors that day when I met him. He had a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of drive, and he seemed like a good candidate for work-study."

Who are your main clients, and what do you do for them?

Kevin: "These days, mostly commercial fishermen, at this job site, anyway. Anywhere from simple fabrication to major rehab stuff these days, widening commercial boats, everything from the ground up. We sub out a lot of our woodworking. We've got some really good shipwrights in the area. We don't do any wiring in-house, we sub that out, as well. But when these boats are done, they're turnkey. We just launch them out in the river, and they take off from there."

Beau: "Or converting other boats to other fisheries. There was a boat that just came in that we just got done with. Shrimp is the hot market right now, and we converted that boat into a shrimp. With a lot of the fishermen, it's last-minute. You gotta do this now. They got off crabbing, and then 'OK, I've got this short window, and I'm going to go into shrimping. Can you do it?'"

Is there a plan of succession?

Kevin: "It's kind of a loose plan right now. Tim and (Deborah), they want to retire. They've been at it for a long time. Tim's goal was to build it up to what it's becoming, and within the next few years, he's talking about retiring. We haven't worked out any details or anything, as far as how it's going to work or anything. He'd like to see Beau and I take it over after this."

Clatsop County Property Transactions

Seller: Grace Management, Inc.

Buyer: VTR Seaside LLC

Address: 2500 S. Roos-

evelt Drive, Seaside

Price: \$6,282,000

Seller: Seaside Hospitality LLC

Buyer: ACT Enterprises LP

Address: 2455 S. Roos-

evelt Drive, Seaside

Price: \$3,175,000

Seller: Donna J. Weiss

Buyer: ACT Enterprises LP

Addresses: 741 S. Downing St. and 345 Avenue C, Seaside

Price: \$910,000

Seller: Gearhart Land & Capital LLC

Buyers: Bruce E. Ritchie and Phyllis S. Ritchie

Address: 1405 Hemlock

St., Cannon Beach

Price: \$800,000

Seller: Katherine J. Young

Buyer: Jean Clark McGuire

Address: 1946 N. Ocean

Ave., Gearhart

Price: \$650,000

Seller: Mike Graham

Buyers: Tamra S. Bryant and Jeffrey W. Bryant

Address: 33147 Horizon

Lane, Warrenton

Price: \$640,000