



# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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ONE DOLLAR

## Pathway to citizenship



Kit Hung Lui, of Portland, originally from Hong Kong, waves an American flag onstage after receiving his certificate during a naturalization ceremony near Fort Clatsop at Lewis and Clark National Historical Park Thursday.

Photos by Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

## Long journey ends at Fort Clatsop, a symbol of exploration



By KYLE SPURR  
The Daily Astorian

**H**olding a small American flag and a certificate of citizenship, Patrick Villaflores, who is from the Philippines, soaked in his first moments of becoming a United States citizen.

His family cheered loudly as they watched his final step in the journey Thursday during a naturalization ceremony at Fort Clatsop in Lewis and Clark National Historical Park.

Villaflores, of Portland, moved to the United States in 1994.

"This is a really great opportunity to be part of this ceremony, especially with Congresswoman (Suzanne Bonamici) being here and with my family, who has been part of the journey," he said. "Citizenship has been a long journey for me."

Villaflores was one of 19 immigrants from 12 countries sworn in as new citizens. The others were from Mexico, Ukraine, India, Belarus, Ethiopia, Iraq, Poland, Russia, China, Taiwan and the United Kingdom.

The national park and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services hosted the ceremony Thursday for the immigrants, who live in Oregon and southwest Washington state.

It was the first time the national park hosted the event.

"What better way to celebrate the 19 of you than in a picturesque location that is critical to the story of America today," Scott Tucker, Lewis and Clark National Historical Park superintendent, told the group.

About 20 other national parks hosted similar ceremonies last year, Tucker said.

Immigrants in the region would normally be sworn in as citizens inside the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services' Portland field office.

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Claudia Mendez Barron waves an American flag as she walks off stage after receiving her citizenship certificate.

## Port, Smithart end eviction clash over hotel

New operator 'ready to go'

By EDWARD STRATTON  
The Daily Astorian

A lawyer for the Port of Astoria, which has been trying to evict indebted Astoria Riverwalk Inn operator Brad Smithart and his company Hospitality Masters, announced Thursday the agency is dropping its case.

The Port and Smithart were set to meet Tuesday in Clatsop County Circuit Court after Smithart challenged the eviction last week.

"The parties in this matter have reached an agreement," Tegan Schlatter, the Port's counsel, wrote in a letter to the court Thursday. "We will file a stipulated judgment of eviction as soon as possible within the next week. Therefore, the trial can be taken off the court's calendar."

Port Executive Director Jim Knight said this morning that Smithart voluntarily decided not to contest the eviction. He said the transition to a new operator will hopefully happen in the next week.

"I'm pretty sure we've got the right operator ready to go," said Knight, who would not reveal the Port's choice because he said the parties are still finalizing an agreement.

Smithart said this morning he decided not to contest the eviction because the Port would not accept a payment by Ganesh Sonpatki, the Portland hotelier who had agreed to pay off his debts in order to take over the hotel.

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## CONGRESSIONAL AWARD

## Young woman finds path through science

Interest in elements drives learning

By EDWARD STRATTON  
The Daily Astorian

Over the past six years, Alexiya Lee has challenged herself to overcome autism and become more involved in her community, explore and build her own personal skills.

For her efforts, Lee, 22, received a special visit Thursday from U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, who presented her with the Congressional Award bronze medal at Baked Alaska.

The award is for Americans 14 to 23 years old who demonstrate volunteerism, personal development, physical fitness and regional exploration. The honor has six levels, each with ascending requirements.

Lee is on the fourth of six levels, the bronze medal. She completed 100 hours of community service, 50 hours of personal development, 50 hours of physical fitness and an overnight expedition.

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## A Regatta queen is crowned

Warrenton teenager chosen from princesses

By MCKINLEY SMITH  
The Daily Astorian

On Thursday evening at the Liberty Theater, five young women in evening gowns and tiaras held court.

It was time for last year's Astoria Regatta Queen Claire Helligso to pass on her throne — and the legacy of the Astoria Regatta it represents — to her appointed successor.

That successor was Allison Bentley, an incoming senior at Warrenton High School. She received a glittering golden crown, a scepter, a cape, a bouquet of flowers and a place in history as the queen of the 121st Astoria Regatta.

"Any of us could have made a great queen, so I'm really grateful for the opportunity," Bentley said. "It's such an honor."



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Allison Bentley reacts as she is crowned the 2015 Astoria Regatta Queen at the Liberty Theater Thursday. Assisting in the crowning ceremony are 2014 Queen Claire Helligso, Regatta Co-Presidents Kevin Leahy and Kathy Koppen Dean, and Regatta Admiral Patrick Reiten.

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