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ONE DOLLAR

BEHIND THE CURTAIN



Photos by Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Rachel Maxi does some touch-up painting near the top of the Astoria Column Wednesday.

Abuse shelter tries to suspend services

Nonprofit serving victims goes through restructuring

By DERRICK DePLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

The Harbor, a nonprofit that provides crisis intervention to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, has tried to temporarily suspend all programs during an internal restructuring.

The nonprofit's board has stepped in on an emergency basis to keep essential services functioning while sorting out the agency's leadership.

Julie Soderberg, The Harbor's executive director, informed community partners in an email Thursday afternoon that all programs would be suspended until Sept. 21. She said the services include a 24-hour crisis line, domestic violence and sexual assault response, the Deja Vu thrift store and advocacy operations.

A handmade sign posted on the door of nonprofit's offices on Duane Street said the agency would be closed until further notice.

"We are hoping this break in services will allow time for the board of directors to utilize outside resources to gain a new standard necessary for moving forward in a professional manner," Soderberg said in a statement Friday morning.

"The unfortunate reality of Clatsop County is that there is a long history of nonprofit boards not taking their commitments seriously."

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Astoria Column restoration nears completion

Finished mural will closely resemble the original version

By ERICK BENGEL
The Daily Astorian

The team of painters tasked with restoring the mural that spirals up the Astoria Column and depicts the city's early history are sticking to a general principle: channel the original artist, Attilio Pusterla.

An Italian immigrant, Pusterla frescoed the scenes onto the 125-foot-tall monument in 1926, the year of the Column's dedication. In a series of striking tableaux covering a full century, his frieze captures, among other historical episodes, Capt. Robert Gray's "discovery" of the Columbia River in 1792, the arrival of Lewis and Clark at Fort Clatsop in 1805 and Wilson Price Hunt's overland Astor Expedition in 1812, and the advent of the railroad in the 1880s.

With each restoration, the mural's look has changed slightly, resembling the original version to greater and lesser degrees. And with the current restoration — tentatively set to wrap up later this month and to be unveiled Oct. 24 — the mural will come closer to reflecting Pusterla's vision than it has in decades.

"We're trying to be more true to his style," Project Director



Lucero Garcia, a student at Tongue Point Job Corps, works on some touch-up painting on the Astoria Column.

Marie Laibinis said.

The last restoration, in 1995, was quite successful, Laibinis said. But it yielded a column whose figures largely had a "graphic" look to them: Solid blocks of color filled sharply defined boundaries.

The 2015 restoration promises to be an upgrade — and a throwback.

"We understand the painter much better," Laibinis said. "This will be, by far, the closest to the 1926 original."

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A box of paints sits on the scaffolding.



Seeking counsel

Elementary schools without on-campus mental health resource

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare's placement of counselors in the Astoria School District has been a success, district officials reported at a Wednesday Astoria School Board meeting.

But Superintendent Craig Hoppes also shared his frustration at the district's inability, so far this school year, to get a mental health counselor on campus at John Jacob Astor and Lewis and Clark elementary schools.

Before the program started, Hoppes said, Astoria had 40 kids receiving mental health services. But more than 60 additional students were referred either by school staff or parents by the end of the year, he added.

The district has reported good collaboration between the health-care provider and school counselors. While data is sparse on what effect the counseling has had on students' academic attainment, district officials say it has helped drastically improve attendance in some cases.



Craig Hoppes

Johnson flirted with switch to Independent Party

The state senator will remain a Democrat

By DERRICK DePLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

State Sen. Betsy Johnson, a blunt-spoken pragmatist whose independent streak has at times infuriated Democrats in Salem, seriously considered switching to the Independent Party of Oregon.

"I looked at it. I didn't do it," the Scappoose Democrat said Friday morning.

Johnson toured the state this summer, fueling talk she might run for governor, as an Independent. But Thursday was the deadline to register as a member of the Independent Party to qualify to run as a party candidate in the May primaries.

Johnson chose not discuss a poten-



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian
Sen. Betsy Johnson before members of the Seaside Downtown Development Association July 9.

tial run for governor or any other office, saying only that her choice Thurs-

day was whether to "change my party affiliation."

Johnson's independence has helped make her an influential figure in the closely divided state Senate.

Last session, the senator, a moderate who serves on the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, was among the "Gang of Eight" lawmakers who worked with Gov. Kate Brown to try and forge a transportation funding package.

Johnson, 64, who founded an aviation company, is an advocate for business and economic development, particularly in rural parts of the state. Her late father, Sam Johnson, who had thrived in the timber industry, was a Republican who represented Redmond in the state House.

Johnson's influence is also tied to her willingness to break with majority Democrats when she disagrees on

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