

# Dedicated to the birds

Wildlife Center of the North Coast honors late founder, Sharnelle Fee

The Daily Astorian

Sharnelle Fee, a former paralegal who founded the Wildlife Center of the North Coast and dedicated much of her life to helping animals, especially seabirds, passed away Monday. She was 68.

The wildlife center announced earlier this week that Josh Saranpaa, Fee's understudy for nearly eight years and assistant director

for the last year and a half, would take over as director.

"I spent the last eight years learning from her," Saranpaa, 23, said of Fee, adding he thought of her like family.

For the last five years, Saranpaa said, he's been the only other licensed animal rehabilitator. Fee trained him as if he was taking over, he said, but the expectation was he'd leave and go to college. But life took a different turn, Saranpaa said, and he's happy to be doing what he loves at the wildlife center.

The center will soon announce a celebration of life for Fee, who is survived by a brother in Dayton.

**A change of life**  
After spending a quar-

ter century as a paralegal at Davis Wright Tremaine in Portland, Fee took a sabbatical in 1991. She started volunteering with the owl rehabilitation program at the Oregon Zoo, which Fee said sparked her interest in wildlife.

For the next eight years, Fee balanced her career and volunteer work with the Audubon Society of Portland, a turtle rehabilitation program in Beaverton and even weekends at the Avian Medical Center in Lake Oswego, where she learned surgical skills.

Fee eventually became licensed by the state and federal governments to rehabilitate animals out of her home, and applied for non-profit status to start a wild-

life center. After a divorce, the death of her father and hip replacement, Fee sold her house in Portland, left her job and made her way to Olney, where she had purchased 105 acres.

**Coming to the coast**

In a 2008 interview, Fee said she moved to the North Coast to help seabirds.

"They're challenging because most of them live way out in the ocean," she said. "If they're on land, they're not only out of their element, but they're in bad shape and so it's difficult to get them back into condition, treating their wounds."

Her pet project at the wildlife center has grown to handle between 2,000 and 3,000 animals a year,



Daily Astorian/File Photo

**Sharnelle Fee, longtime director of the Wildlife Center of the North Coast, died this week.**

mostly birds. Saranpaa said the center has more than 100 murres, a penguin-like bird of the cooler northern oceans found all along the West Coast, that have been washing up on beaches. The wildlife center's speculation is that the murres are having a harder time finding food in warm ocean temperatures.

The center has more

room for birds, he said, but they are asking people to bring the birds to the center, which is short on staff and volunteers.

The center receives no direct government funding, other than a small grant it applies for from Cannon Beach. It depends largely on donations and volunteers, with only Saranpaa and another part-time staffer.

## Flat minimum wage invigorates drive for economic security

Pressure for wage floor hike expected to increase in Oregon

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon's minimum wage won't rise in 2016, which is expected to save money for farms and other businesses but also invigorate advocates of a higher rate.

Due to stagnant inflation, as measured by the federal consumer price index for urban areas, the state's Bureau of Labor and Industries will keep the minimum wage at \$9.25 per hour next year.

Both supporters and opponents of a higher wage floor believe the flat rate will be used as an argument in favor of a substantial increase.

"It's a mixed blessing, politically," said Jenny Dresler, state public policy director for the Oregon Farm Bureau.

While it should be good news for low-income workers that prices aren't rising sharply, the unchanged minimum wage will likely spur political action, said Steve Buckstein, senior policy analyst for the Cascade Policy Institute, a free market think tank.

"It probably will increase pressure in the Legislature, or through a ballot initiative, to raise the minimum wage next year," he said. "Both efforts will be bolstered politically by the

fact the minimum wage is staying flat."

**Some want \$15 an hour**

Proponents say the unchanged rate is based on a nationwide measurement of inflation and doesn't reflect unique factors, such as increased housing costs, seen in Portland and elsewhere in Oregon.

"To bring people out of poverty, we need at least \$15 and in places like Portland, more than that," said Jamie Patridge, chief petitioner for a 2016 ballot initiative to raise the minimum wage.

Patridge said he was disappointed by the flat rate but acknowledged that it will likely convince people that the current inflation-based system is inadequate and persuade them to take action at the ballot box.

"It's probably positive for our campaign but negative for low-wage workers," he said. "Workers should not be living in poverty. Every worker should be paid a living wage."

The Oregon Center for Public Policy, a nonprofit that supports increasing the minimum wage, said the rate would be \$19 per hour if it had tracked worker productivity for the past half-century.

"We're seeing growing support for some action," said Tyler Mac Innis, a policy analyst for the center.

**Economic security**

To achieve economic security in Oregon, a single adult with a child needs to earn roughly \$45,000-\$51,000 per year, depending on the region, according to

the group. With the current minimum wage, a worker earns \$19,240 per year.

"It's certainly not good news that it's staying flat. It highlights the fact minimum wage workers need a significant increase in the minimum wage," said Mac Innis.

Dresler, of the Oregon Farm Bureau, counters that farmers in the state compete against others in the U.S. and internationally, so a higher minimum wage puts them at a disadvantage.

Oregon already has the second highest minimum wage in the nation behind Washington state, she said.

"That keeps us less competitive than it does our neighbors" in the Midwest and South, Dresler said.

Farms in Oregon are currently highly diverse, but a major hike in the minimum wage would likely convince growers to transition to crops that are less labor intensive. "That would be one of the reactions to that sort of increase," she said.

Other types of companies will have to raise prices, lay off workers or reduce benefits to cope with a higher minimum wage — or they'll simply go out of business, said Buckstein of the Cascade Policy Institute.

"There are always unintended consequences," he said. "There's no magic pot of money that businesses have to pay more wages."

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

## Oregon students shaky on Common Core, but exceed low expectations

Associated Press

PORTLAND — State education officials warned that Smarter Balanced exams would be more difficult, and they were right.

The new tests, taken by nearly 300,000 Oregon students this spring, were designed to show how well schools helped students meet the rigorous Common Core standards for reading, writing and math.

Based on a trial run at some schools last year, officials projected 30 to 40 percent of students would pass.

Scores released Thursday show students performed a bit better than that, with 54 percent meeting the standards for English and 40 percent meeting the standards for math.

"I am encouraged that our students exceeded initial projections," Oregon schools chief Salam Noor said in a statement.

The new standards are meant to reflect college and career readiness. Fewer stu-

dents met the standards on Smarter Balanced compared to the old test, but that's the point. These are tougher standards and students are being asked to master concepts earlier.

Beyond fill-in-the-bubble questions, Smarter Balanced requires students to provide rationales and do multi-step analyses in addition to getting the answers right. In English, the primary focus is having students read challenging passages and articles, then construct arguments about the material.

The scores revealed a divide in Oregon schools, even if they're allotted similar dollars per student.

Research has shown that family income and parent education levels have a large effect on student achievement. Schools that serve low-income students must deliver more instruction to get similar results as schools in affluent areas.

Schools that draw students from wealthy neighborhoods in Beaverton, Lake Oswego and Portland's west side

performed very well, The Oregonian reported. At other schools, barely 10 percent of students have the writing and math skills that experts say are essential. Examples include the lone school on the Warm Springs reservation and many elementary schools in poor neighborhoods of Salem and east Portland.

But some schools bucked the trend.

Clackamas High, for example, equipped more than 80 percent of its low-income juniors to read and write at a college-ready level. And a pair of Ashland elementary schools got 75 percent of their low-income students proficient in reading and writing, twice the state average for low-income elementary pupils.

More than 90 percent of Oregon students took the exams despite parental concerns that schools overemphasize testing. State officials have warned that schools risk losing \$344 million in federal money if too many parents have their kids opt-out.

## Salamanders may qualify for protection

Associated Press

PORTLAND — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service says two salamanders in Oregon and Washington state may qualify for Endangered Species Act protection.

The findings on Tuesday about the Cascade torrent salamander and Columbia torrent salamander mean the agency will initiate full sta-

tus reviews for the species to see if they warrant protection.

The findings come in response to a petition by the Center for Biological Diversity. The Center first asked for protection for the salamanders in 2012. The petition said they are increasingly rare because of habitat

loss due primarily to logging and road building.

The four-inch brown salamanders live in forest streams and are found only in a small stretch of the Cascades and Coast range.

Biologists say their health is an indicator of the overall health of streams.

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