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ONE DOLLAR



Heritage Square future remains cloudy

Some worry about a lack of public consensus

By DERRICK DePLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

Astoria's community development director said Thursday night that he is unsure about what advice he will give the City Council in December on Heritage Square after a project advisory committee declined to make a recommendation on a new library and housing.

The City Council had directed planning staff earlier this year to investigate a mixed-use project at Heritage Square after abandoning a \$4.6 million renovation of the existing library on 10th Street into the vacant Waldorf Hotel next door.

Over the past few months, a project advisory committee looked at three different library and housing options for Heritage Square, but did not feel comfortable making a recommendation that Kevin Cronin, the community development director, could present to the City Council.

Instead, the advisory committee called for filling the hole at the former Safeway at Heritage Square

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Going gentle into that good night

Volunteers keep patients from dying alone

By ERICK BENGEL
The Daily Astorian

Many people die alone. They near the finish line and, perhaps through no fault of their own, they have no one around to hold their hand, to tell them everything's OK, to bear witness to their final milestone.

But, for almost four years, volunteers with Columbia Memorial Hospital's No One Dies Alone program have worked to prevent this situation.

As patients await their curtain call — as organs fail and consciousness fades — the volunteers sit by the patients' bedside, reading to them, playing music, touching their hand or forearm, monitoring their movements, looking for signs of pain or discomfort, and alerting the hospital staff if anything seems amiss. They commit to being present with the patients and advocating for their needs, a task the volunteers call "holding vigil."

"Our job is to make sure that the patient is as comfortable as possible, so they can relax and do what they need to do," said Laura Lattig, volunteer program coordinator for the hospital and Lower Columbia Hospice. "We really look at dying as a form of labor. It's work — it's hard work. And just as we labor into the world, we're laboring out of the world."

Since Columbia Memorial's NODA program



Photos by Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

ABOVE: A book and certificate designating Dawn Young as a soul midwife practitioner sit on a table in Young's home. TOP: Dawn Young, a volunteer with No One Dies Alone, and Laura Lattig, Columbia Memorial Hospital's volunteer coordinator, stand for a portrait. The No One Dies Alone program has been operating for about four years.

— which now boasts 20 volunteers — took off, 45 of the hospital's patients have been spared a lonesome passing, Lattig said. Patients have ranged from middle age to more than 100 years old. They have died from cancer and other diseases, heart failure, diabetes and natural causes.

"Every death is different," Dawn Young, a volunteer, said. "People just want to be accompanied, I think, a lot of times: 'Go with me, walk me, stay with me until I get there.'"

Compassionate hearts

Lattig launched the No One Dies Alone program at Columbia Memorial Hospital, shortly after joining the staff, when a patient — a dying woman in her 30s without family or friends — was admitted to the hospital.

"That just struck me to the core," Lattig said.

Lattig did some research on end-of-life care programs and discovered NODA through Sacred Heart Medical Center in Eugene (a staff member there founded the program in 2001).

Using Sacred Heart's materials, Lattig gathered some volunteers for an early morning training. They were interrupted by a hospitalist, who informed them that a patient, a man in his 80s, was dying alone. So the new NODA team began their first vigil on their first day. "That's how we got started," Lattig said.

Volunteers — who may pull shifts lasting several hours, often before or after their day jobs — usually meet with patients who are "actively dying," the terminal cases who have stopped eating and drinking, and are otherwise physically expiring.

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Spanish speakers study steps to success

Classes help rural Latino entrepreneurs

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

When she opened MonteAlban Mexican restaurant with partner Juan Jimenez four years ago, Sara Jimenez had plenty of experience cooking but said her English and business skills were both lacking. Over those last four years, Maya has taken advantage of local resources meant to help entrepreneurs limited by their English skills.

Most recently, she joined "Pasos al Exito," or Steps to Success, a set of new personal and business finance classes in Spanish through the Rural Development Initiatives geared toward rural Latinos and experiencing record enrollment.

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Astoria hopes to save popular tree

Crack found in Alderbrook maple

By DERRICK DePLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

A sprawling bigleaf maple that is the dominant feature of Violet LaPlante Park in Alderbrook is in a fight for its life.

A crack near the center of the tree's dual trunk has become infected and weakened by fungus and rot, the city has found, a wound that could cause the tree to topple in high winds and threaten parkgoers and a nearby home.

The bigleaf maple, which stands about 75 feet tall and is an estimated 150 years old, has sentimental value

in Alderbrook. The city's Parks and Recreation Department puts the tree in a similar class as the distinctive Sitka spruce on the Cathedral Tree Trail at Coxcomb Hill and the large sycamore at McClure Park.

"So it's a historic tree and it's got kind of a neighborhood significance," said Jonah Dart-McLean, the parks maintenance supervisor at the Parks and Recreation Department. "There's been multiple generations of people that have benefited by the tree."

A resident discovered the crack and informed the city on Wednesday. Strong winds and heavy rain have swept through Astoria over the past several days, but the city suspects the storms exacerbated, but did not cause, the crack.

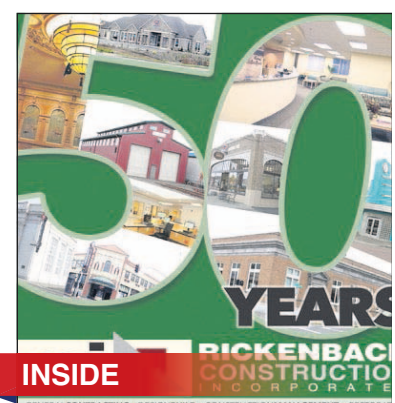
After consulting with arborists, the city is thinking about binding the tree's bifurcated trunk with cable and trimming the upper limbs, which could stabilize the tree and extend its life for another five to 10 years.

Branches were removed on Thursday to reduce weight and stress on the trunk. The city closed the area around the tree as a warning to parkgoers.

Normally, the city would simply cut down a hazardous tree and grind the stump. But the city will try to save the bigleaf maple.

Jessica Schleif, who serves on the Parks and Recreation Board, hopes the city will eventually catalog important and historic trees. "I think

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50 Years of Rickenbach