

Garden to help special needs children grow in county

Project to help preschoolers learn colors, numbers, more

By **KATHERINE LACAZE**
EO Media Group

SEASIDE — A grant to the Early Childhood Special Education Classroom in Seaside will go toward refurbishing and planting an abandoned garden bed to help students learn about nutrition, colors and concepts.

Meredith McGrath, an instructional assistant at the classroom, located on the Seaside Heights Elementary School campus, applied for the \$200 grant from the Northwest Regional Education Service District Foundation for the project. The classroom, operated by the district, serves preschool-aged children with special needs from Seaside, Gearhart, Cannon Beach, Warrenton and Jewell. McGrath said the garden

will be “a really great way to help with academic lessons.”

“Gardens do a lot; they have a lot of potential,” she said.

From planting seeds and starter plants to painting watering cans or other equipment, there are numerous learning opportunities related to tending a garden that can reinforce social, academic and emotional concepts, she said. The students can learn simple science lessons and use garden concepts to explore numbers and colors.

“It’s never too early to learn all that stuff,” she said, adding students of all ages will benefit. “Getting up and moving and touching things is the best way for them to learn.”

In the classroom, instructors try to use a variety of learning styles. The garden “will be a really good way to incorporate space-based education,” McGrath said. Space-based teaching methods absorb a student’s surrounding environment into lesson plans and learning activities.



Katherine Lacaze/EO Media Group

The Early Childhood Special Education Classroom in Seaside, which serves students with special needs from Seaside, Gearhart, Cannon Beach, Warrenton and Jewell, will refurbish and plant this abandoned garden bed and use it for numerous learning opportunities.

The grant money will cover the cost of tools, seeds, soil and starter plants.

The teachers will get the project started by clearing the raised garden bed and getting

it prepped. Once the weather warms, the students will get involved.

McGrath said she plans to plant a variety of flowers and vegetables that grow quickly

and easily. The produce will be used in the classroom, she said.

She hopes to keep the garden going in future school years. She can reapply for

the foundation grant, and she also will consider having the students write requests for donated materials from local businesses in the future.

“There are ways of continuing it,” McGrath said.

In November, the Northwest Regional Education Service District Foundation awarded 22 grants — amounting to more than \$19,000 — to local school district for projects in special education and at-risk programs in Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook and Washington County school districts.

The grants are focused on two funding priorities. The first is services for children from birth through age 5 with varying degrees of disabilities including autism, hearing and visual impairments, speech-language needs and those who are medically fragile. The second focus is school-age special education and behavioral programs for young children and students kindergarten to age 21 with developmental delays, and psychological, emotional and behavioral issues.

’Tis the week to watch for whales

The Daily Astorian

Whale-watching week begins Sunday and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department is assembling trained volunteers at sites up and down the Oregon Coast for the annual event through Dec. 31.

Volunteers with the department’s Whale Watching Spoken Here program will be

stationed at 24 sites along the coast from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. each day of the event to help people spot gray whales heading south to Mexico.

Local watching sites include the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center, 244 Robert Gray Drive near Ilwaco, Washington; Ecola Point in Ecola State Park north of Cannon Beach; and the Neahkahnie

Mountain historic marker turnout along U.S. Highway 101 north of Manzanita.

While watching, visitors will learn about whale migration and feeding habits. The winter migration typically lasts until mid-January. View a map of all 24 watch sites, which extend from Ilwaco to Crescent City, California, at whalespoken.org

Astoria schools to honor excellence

The Daily Astorian

The Astoria School Board, in partnership with the Astoria School Foundation, has created a staff recognition program called “A Tradition of Excellence.”

The program will annually honor one classified staff member, one certified staff member and a team collaborator.

The district will also honor the 10-, 20- and 30-year anniversaries of district employees.

Nominations for awards can be made by staff members, parents, community members and students. Forms for nominations will become available online and at each school in February and be due at the end of

March.

A group of district employees, a school board member and an Astoria School Foundation member will be selected to serve on a nomination committee. Award winners, employment anniversaries and donors to the foundation will be honored at a ceremony in April or May.

The Harbor offers support group for women

The Harbor’s Sexual Assault Peer Center will be offering a multi-week support group for women who are survivors of sexual violence.

This group meets 4 to 5

p.m. Wednesdays through Jan. 27.

Group topics include the importance of self-care, developing coping skills to manage stress and anxiety, identifying the effects of

sexual violence, and inner strength identification.

For more information and to register, call Sharon at The Harbor: 503-325-3426, ext. 106, or visit www.harbornw.org.

Meet with Herzig Saturday

The public is invited to meet with Drew Herzig, Astoria city councilor for Ward 2, from 12:30 to 2 p.m. Saturday in the Flag Room at the Astoria Public Library, 450 10th St. All are welcome to come and share their thoughts, suggestions, questions, and concerns about Astoria.

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Local nonprofits receive \$121,000

PORTLAND — In November, the Oregon Community Foundation Board of Directors approved more than \$548,000 in 13 grants to North Coast nonprofits. Grants awarded include ones to support seniors and people with disabilities, as well as grants supporting arts and culture in the region. In total, more than \$8.4 million grants were awarded by the foundation statewide.

Grants awarded on the North Coast include:

- **Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District Foundation, Seaside:** \$80,000 to provide positive and engaging afterschool activities and mentoring for middle school students in South County.
- **The Harbor, Astoria:** \$30,000 to renovate a newly donated building to create an Americans with Disabilities Act accessible community re-

source center for individuals and families experiencing interpersonal violence in Clatsop County.

• **Liberty Restoration Inc., Astoria:** \$11,000 to renovate and redesign the theater’s box seats with the aim of reselling the naming rights in support of ongoing operations of the historic Liberty Theatre.

• **Bay City Arts Center, Bay City:** \$12,500 to hire a part-time, contracted executive director to expand arts education programs to three school districts and increase services for veterans, elders, and people with disabilities.

• **Community Action Team, St. Helens:** \$250,000 for the Rose Avenue facility that will house a senior center and food bank in Vernonia.

• **Newport Symphony Orchestra, Newport:** \$15,000 to build fundraising capacity

by conducting board trainings, establishing a fundraising committee, strengthening donor outreach tools and processes, and developing new events.

• **Tillamook Bay Community College, Tillamook:** \$30,000 to partner with Oregon State University to create a Partners for Rural Innovation Center, which will be home to an agriculture and natural resources degree program, an open campus, a small business development center, and more.

• **Tillamook County Community Action Resource Enterprises, Tillamook:** \$15,000 to provide short-term rental assistance to 20-30 families in Tillamook County who are at risk of losing their housing.

For full lists of grants and more information about Oregon Community Foundation initiatives, go to www.oregoncf.org

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