

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

143RD YEAR, NO. 174

DailyAstorian.com // TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2016

ONE DOLLAR



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Jason shows off the deck he and Michelle rebuilt in the backyard of their house.

BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS

Little-known loan program helps family rehab their 'forever home'

By ERICK BENGEL
The Daily Astorian

Long before Michelle and Jason, an Astoria couple in their 30s, moved into their new house last month, they knew every inch of it in almost forensic detail — its quirks and cracks, its bones and frailties, its past and potential.

They had no choice, for when they took ownership of the house last June, they didn't simply purchase it, they agreed to really own it — to seize it by the beams and rehab it with their own untrained hands.

And they could afford to make this demanding plunge into homeownership thanks to the Community Action Team's Self-Help Acquisition Rehabilitation Program.

In a region where affordable housing is hard to come by, SHARP helps low-income families in Clatsop, Columbia and Tillamook counties buy houses using U.S. Department of Agriculture loans and restore them with "sweat equity" — the labor invested in improvements and maintenance that boosts a home's value. It is one of three programs in the nation that follows this model.

Working hand-in-hand with a Community Action Team foreman, the couple found a house and brought it up to code while making it distinctly theirs.

"Every day we worked, there was blood, sweat or tears of some kind. Joy. Sadness. It's an emotional investment," Michelle said.

Nine months and countless Band-Aids later, the experience has been well worth it for the couple and their three children — an undertaking as gratifying as it was grueling.

"They're deeply invested in this house," Casey Mitchell, the program manager, said. "They've worked their butts off. They didn't just plunk down some money and buy a house. After they bought the house, they spent months — not living there — working on it and getting to know it."

See SHARP, Page 12A



ABOVE: Jason shows one of the bathrooms in the house. Jason and his wife, Michelle, did nearly all the renovation work to the bathroom. BELOW: Jason walks by the front of the house. Some of the outside walls had to be resided.



Astoria sidesteps fluoride debate

City Council splits 3-2 against fall ballot measure

By DERRICK DePLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

Sidestepping a fractious election-year debate, the Astoria City Council narrowly voted Monday night not to undertake a ballot question on fluoride in the city's drinking water.

Voters in 1952 authorized the city to add fluoride to the water supply and reaffirmed the decision in 1956.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has praised community water fluoridation, which can help reduce tooth decay, as among the 10 great public health achievements of the 20th century.

Yet water fluoridation remains an emotional, polarizing subject. The Oregon Health Authority reports that less than a quarter of state residents have fluoride in their drinking water. Voters in Portland, the state's largest city, overruled city leaders and voted to reject fluoride in 2013, the fourth time since 1956.

See FLUORIDE, Page 7A



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian
Gearhart's Jeff Gage demonstrates a drone to the Seaside Municipal Airport Advisory Committee.

Drone rules up in the air

Seaside Airport not ready to regulate drones

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — Drones are everywhere these days, it seems, as eyes in the sky at weddings and special events, providing assistance for law enforcement and offering a glimpse into otherwise unnavigable geographic territory.

But risks from drone flights — including potential accidents, terrorism and privacy concerns — drew attention at a meeting of the Seaside Municipal Airport Advisory Committee, as members debated whether to enact regulations on the evolving technology.

"This is all a new world," Randall Henderson, the committee's chairman, said. "There are no regulations at all."

Henderson said the city of Seaside had yet to propose a policy, and he was "not in any hurry" to do so.

"But on the other hand it's incumbent upon us to explore what's legal and what's safe and hear from all parties involved," Henderson said.

Gearhart resident Jeff Gage, a drone enthusiast, showed committee members a DJ Innovations Phantom 3 drone, which he said "probably outsells every other kind in the world by a factor of two."

With more than half a million sold a year, these Chinese-made aircraft can be flown as far as 8 miles away from the operator. They are basically "flying cameras" weighing about 2 1/2 pounds, Gage said, although drones can weigh far more.

Gage said Congress passed a law in 2012 redefining drones not as "hobbyist drones" but as aircraft.

See DRONES, Page 4A

Local institution Utzinger's goes up for sale

Hardware store carries the hard to find, obscure

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

After more than 40 years of family ownership, the future of Utzinger's True Value Hardware is up in the air.

Cassy Utzinger said the family is looking to sell the building and store, still owned by the estate of the late Grover Utzinger, after they could not find away for her to buy her siblings out.

Business Brokers of

Oregon has the building and business listed for \$399,000.

On Saturday, Cassy was playing the part her father had perfected over nearly 40 years as the proprietor of the Utzinger's Hardware, the sky-blue storefront on U.S. Highway 101 near Miles Crossing packed from floor to ceiling with every imaginable piece of equipment for home improvement.

"Do you have an ant trap? Or is there such a thing anymore?" asked Marcy Phillips, one of many longtime customers who regularly stop in and first query staff.

See FOR SALE, Page 12A



The Daily Astorian

After taking over her father's store in 2014, Cassy Utzinger said the family is looking to sell.



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