



A NEW TUNE

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With Pokemon Go, a search as good as the catch

Craze overtakes the North Coast

By ELI STILLMAN
The Daily Astorian

A mother and her children rush along the Astoria Riverwalk with their cellphones pointed ahead like compasses. “It’s here!” Kaden Gasser yells as they approach a vir-

tual marker at the end of a pier.

Like millions of players around the world, the 11-year-old and his family were searching for a Poke Stop, a supply station in the free game Pokemon Go.

The popular application uses GPS to create a world where players need to physically move around in order to find cartoon monsters.

While the monsters are fake, the locations are real.

Players have been popping up around the Flavel House Museum, the Merry Time Bar and Grill, First United Methodist Church and other stops in Astoria, and have been shooed away from U.S. Coast Guard Station Cape Disappointment in Ilwaco, Washington. There is even a Pokemon Go Astoria Chapter on Facebook to share local intel.

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Astoria High School seniors Alex Burchfield, left, and Kyle Birge battle their Pokemon at a Pokemon gym located at First United Methodist Church Friday in Astoria.
Danny Miller
The Daily Astorian

BLIND PILOT SPEAKS THE LANGUAGE OF LOSS

Israel Nebeker talks songwriting, influences and his father’s death

By ERICK BENDEL
The Daily Astorian

The songs in Blind Pilot’s latest album, “And Then Like Lions,” are strung together by themes of loss and courage.

But, according to Israel Nebeker — the band’s frontman and songwriter who hails from the North Coast — the tracks don’t merely meditate on sorrow and grief; they examine loss from often overlooked angles — from the way it can bring families and communities closer together, to the sudden sense of perspective it gives to those in mourning.

The album itself — Blind Pilot’s first in five years — sprung from loss.

In September 2014, Nebeker’s father, Royal Nebeker — an internationally celebrated artist, beloved teacher and major figure in the local arts community — died at 69 after battling cancer for nearly two years.

Shortly after his father’s diagnosis, Israel had a falling out with a group of friends and experienced the end of a meaningful relationship — all within a month, he said.

“I just personally went through a chapter of my life where those were the themes coming to me, where I hadn’t really experienced loss in that way before,” he said.

To be sure, Israel had seen it from the outside. Some years ago, a high school friend’s father died of cancer.

“I remember wanting to console my friend, or give him what comfort I could, and really being uncomfortable not knowing what the right thing is to say. And I realized I had no vocabulary for it,” he said. “And then I realized: That’s strange.”

American culture, he said, lacks the language to grapple with loss, and with death in particular.

“It’s not easy for us to share it, as a community or even with close friends. It’s a little bit tricky to know what to say to people,” he said.

“So I think I wanted to make an album that was a conversation about that, and an invitation into a conversation about it, from a perspective that this stuff is not nearly so hard if we experience it together.”

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Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian
Israel Nebeker, lead singer and songwriter of the band Blind Pilot, poses for a portrait Friday on a trail near the house where he grew up in Gearhart.



Herzig exit will create council vacancy

By DERRICK DePLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

Astoria City Councilor Drew Herzig is moving to Massachusetts, creating a second open seat on the City Council for the November election.

Herzig said he intends to serve on the council through mid-September. “If all goes well, I will be leaving town after that, and the mayor will appoint someone to complete the last few weeks of my term,” he said in an email.

Under the city charter, vacancies can be filled by appointment from a majority of the City Council, or the council can adopt a resolution to fill the vacancy at the next available election.

Herzig, who was elected in 2012 to represent the city’s south side, is up for re-election this year.

City Councilor Russ Warr, who is also up for re-election, has announced he will not run for a fourth term. Bruce Jones, a former U.S. Coast Guard commander, is seeking Warr’s east-side seat.

Candidates have until Aug. 30 to file at City Hall.

Progressive voice

Herzig, a dance instructor who moved to Astoria from California in 2009, defeated former Councilor Peter Roscoe 53 percent to 46 percent in the Ward 2 election four years ago.

He has been a progressive voice on the City Council and has pressed for greater transparency in city finances and operations. The councilor has also urged the

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Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare works toward stability

Crisis respite center to open this month

By DERRICK DePLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

The new leader at Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare is working to stabilize the struggling mental health agency and identify the most vulnerable patients to ensure they receive quality care.

Amy Baker, the interim executive director, is trying to reassemble a crisis team weakened by staff resignations



Amy Baker

during leadership turmoil over the past year. The agency is also hoping to open a crisis respite center in Warrenton later this month that could help relieve pressure on hospital emergency

rooms and the county jail.

“We’re never going to have the resources to be all things to all people,” said Baker, who took over in June after top administrators left amid public and internal criticism of the agency’s management. “But our absolute role and necessity is that we know who the most vulnerable are, and that includes both adults and kids.”

Clatsop County contracts with the agency to provide mental health services. The agency is part of Greater Oregon Behavioral Health Inc., which oversees mental health in several counties.

Baker, who was the director of prevention and trauma

informed systems at Greater Oregon Behavioral Health, said her immediate priorities are to ensure client safety, improve community relations, open the crisis respite center and boost employee morale.

Crisis respite center

The crisis respite center was scheduled to open in April but was delayed in a dispute over whether the center would have secure rooms. Police and city leaders in Astoria and Warrenton wanted secure rooms so potentially dangerous patients could not simply walk away.

The partnership behind the respite center — the county, Columbia Memorial Hospi-

tal, Providence Seaside Hospital and Greater Oregon Behavioral Health — agreed that up to four of the 16 rooms would be secure.

Baker said Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, which will operate the respite center for the partnership, hopes the facility can open next week. She said the agency is still awaiting state authorization for the four secure rooms, but licensing could come after the state makes an assessment in late August.

“Everybody that I’ve talked to feels like this is going to be certainly better than what we have right now,” Baker said.

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