

Filling Empty Bellies needs a county license

Buck provides free lunches downtown

By **DERRICK DePLEDGE**
The Daily Astorian

Corri Buck is learning even good deeds require paperwork.

Buck, who has served free lunches to the homeless in Astoria on weekdays since November 2014, has been told by Clatsop County she needs a license or she has to stop.

The county has determined that Buck's Filling Empty Bellies mission is a "benevolent meal site," so she needs a temporary restaurant license from the county to satisfy state food sanitation rules.

"I am going to have a picnic in the park with my friends," Buck said defiantly Thursday afternoon while serving spaghetti, peaches, rolls and snickerdoodles to the homeless from the back of her Ford Edge at Peoples Park.

Michael McNickle, the county's environmental health supervisor, said he wants to work with Buck on obtaining the license quickly. Buck said she already has a food handler card, another government requirement.

The state's food sanitation rules apply to organizations and individuals who distribute home-prepared food to



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian
Corri Buck hugs Chris Crone before handing out food and supplies to people in the parking lot of 12th Street and Exchange Street in 2015.

the needy. The intent is to help make sure the food is safe and wholesome.

"What it does is gives us a record so in case there is a foodborne illness or another illness that comes from that, we have a way to track those back," McNickle said.

McNickle said the county is not trying to stop Buck. "I don't want to shut her down. I just want to make her legal," he said. "And, also, it protects her as well as us."

Location issues

Buck has said she started her mission after God told her to feed the homeless. She used to drive around down-

town before setting up noon outposts outside the American Legion, at the Astoria Armory and, now, at Peoples Park at 16th Street.

Filling Empty Bellies left the Armory in July after complaints from some neighbors and concern from Armory board members. While most of the homeless who would come for lunch behaved, there were instances of public defecation, squatting, drug exchanges and drunkenness.

"Unfortunately, like is often the case, there's a few bad apples that ruin things for everybody," said Bruce Jones, the president of the Armory's board.

Riverfolk, which has the proper licensing, now provides food to the homeless at the Armory on Sundays. Buck, Jones said, seemed resistant to regulation.

"She was frustrated, because what she wants to do is serve lunch, and she does that very well," Jones said. "She doesn't want to deal with the other issues. That's not what she wants to be bothered with."

Jones, a former commander of U.S. Coast Guard Sector Columbia River who is running for City Council, said the food sanitation rules are not overly burdensome. "You have to kind of expect, in 2016, you can't just serve meals out of a car and not expect the health department to eventually show up," he said.

Some social-service experts discourage giving free food to the homeless without also steering people toward housing assistance programs, mental health counseling or drug and alcohol abuse treatment. Free lunches, some worry, enable people to live on the streets instead of seeking help.

But Buck shakes off philosophical questions about the best way to respond to homelessness and zeroes in on the basic fact that hungry people need to eat.

"These people are hungry," she said. "They have the absolute right to eat a meal."



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian
Construction started this week on a new Panda Express at the corner of Ensign and Discovery lanes in Warrenton.

New Panda Express coming to Warrenton

The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — Panda Express is coming to Warrenton.

The American Chinese food chain started construction this week on a new location at the corner of Discovery and Ensign lanes in the North Coast Retail Center, slated to open in December.

"We see tremendous potential in this region so we are very excited for the opportunity to offer additional jobs to residents and become ingrained in the community," Thien Ho, a spokeswoman for Panda Express, said in a statement.

The company is the largest Asian-themed restaurant chain in the U.S., with more than 1,900 locations. Warrenton's is the first coastal location north of the San Francisco metro area. The nearest locations to Warrenton are in Hillsboro, Cornelius and Longview, Washington.

Vince Ibarra, senior real



Submitted Photo
American Chinese food chain Panda Express recently updated its logo and building exteriors.

estate analyst for Panda Express, said Warrenton had been on the company's radar for about three years because of retail activity in the area and the proximity to Astoria and Seaside.

"Warrenton has definitely been a top target for us, but we will continue to look at all markets along the coast," he said. "Each store opening gives us the opportunity to welcome 20 (to) 25 new associates from the local community into the Panda family, and we're very optimistic about our growth prospects in the area."

Multiple agencies help in serious rollover on Highway 26

The Daily Astorian

A log truck that rolled over after a crash on Highway 26 Thursday caused serious injuries and closed the highway for several hours.

Hamlet Fire was called to assist Elsie-Vinemaple fire with the incident in front of Baker's General Store. Units from Banks and Seaside fire departments were called in to assist as well.

The investigation found that a loaded log truck, operated by John Thomas Budge, 55, of Vernonia, was traveling westbound on Highway 26, just passing the Elderberry Inn Restaurant, when it struck the rear of a 2003 Ford F550 tow truck, operated by Fred Baltin Miller, 72, of Seaside.

The log truck traveled off the roadway, struck an embankment, overturned and lost the load of logs across the roadway.



Submitted Photo
Crews respond to a log truck rollover in Elsie.

At the time of the crash, several Oregon State Police Fish and Wildlife Division Troopers had just arrived at the Elderberry Inn Restaurant for a scheduled meeting and quickly took control of the scene, supplying first aid to the injured operator of the log truck. The troopers utilized their patrol vehicles to stabilize the truck and trailer until fire personnel arrived, as well as assisted Hamlet Fire & Res-

cue in extricating Budge, who was trapped.

Budge was transported to Oregon Health & Science University by Life Flight with serious injuries. Miller, sustained minor injuries and went to a local hospital. The investigation continues.

Highway 26 was closed for 4.5 hours for the investigation. "When we arrived, there were logs on the highway, on the shoulder — a little of

everywhere," Seaside Fire Chief Joey Daniels said. "We helped picking stuff up, helped with traffic control after they shut down the highway."

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