



Photos by Lyra Fontaine/The Daily Astorian

Jerry Rounds, Kathy Jean Hrywnak and Kive Dahlberg lead the way down Broadway to the beach in Seaside at the annual Buddy Walk in September. More photos at DailyAstorian.com

# EMPOWERING

## THE SPECIAL NEEDS COMMUNITY

### Buddy Walk raises awareness and funds for Sammy's Place

By LYRA FONTAINE  
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — After high school graduation, people with Down syndrome lose most of the special education resources and other services that previously supported them.

Sammy's Place wants to change that. Eventually, the nonprofit hopes to open a nature-based community for adults with special needs on the North Coast. In September, Sammy's Place sponsored Buddy Walk at the Beach, which promotes awareness of people with special needs and helps the nonprofit get closer to purchasing land to create a living, working and respite community.

Despite the rain, more than 100 participants filled Broadway on the walk from Quatat Park to the beach.

Marty Ertler and his family, from Vancouver, Washington, have attended the event for the past eight years.

"It gives kids with disabilities activities to get them moving and a chance to network," Ertler said. "That's why it's important. They've got feelings like everyone else."

Last year, his son, Calvin, enjoyed holding the Buddy Walk sign and getting "face-painted to look like the Hulk."

Sherie Stockbridge, who has a 2-year-old son with special needs named Mason, also came from Vancouver.

"I want a great place for my son, and we love the



Buddy Walk participants have some fun with music and ribbons before the walk starts.

beach," Stockbridge said.

The 12th annual walk is one of 250 Buddy Walks nationwide. The National Down Syndrome Society event recognizes Down Syndrome Awareness Month in October.

Proceeds of the walk also fund a new animal-assisted learning program. Sammy's Place partnered with Nehalem Bay Horse Excursions & Pony Rides to offer free riding lessons and learning for four families with special needs. The program will expand next year.

"All animals are a natural teacher," Sammy's Place president Julie Chick said. The program can fit various learning levels — some participants help in the stables while others do trail runs, Chick said.

#### Walk helps fund a vision

Kathy Jean Hrywnak founded Sammy's Place in 2006 with friends. The organization, named after Hrywnak's late son, Sammy, began as respite care for people with special needs until it

expanded to include a vision of an inclusive community with rural acreage, animals, gardens and paths, independent and assisted living, a main lodge and working and learning opportunities.

**'I get way more out of working with people with special needs than I give. It's fulfilling.'**

**Kathy Jean Hrywnak**  
founder of Sammy's Place

Hrywnak emphasized the importance of special-needs adults having a space where they can live purposefully and work toward goals. For example, she knows a 23-year-old man with severe autism who hopes to be a head baker someday.

"People need a reason to get out of bed," Hrywnak

said. "People need a life."

Chick would like her son, Blake, to have living and working opportunities after high school. She got involved in Sammy's Place when Blake was nine.

"We are outdoors people and we wanted to make sure he got to thrive in the outdoors," Chick said.

#### Exceeded goal

This year, Sammy's Place exceeded a goal of raising \$15,000. Most proceeds will be saved for acquiring land and \$5,000 will fund more animal-assisted programs.

In the meantime, music played at Quatat Park as individuals with special needs, their families and supporters danced the "Hokey Pokey" and made conga lines.

"There is so much joy and no artifice or social restraints. We just have fun," Hrywnak said. "People always tell me that I must be so patient, but I'm not. I get way more out of working with people with special needs than I give. It's fulfilling."

## COMMUNITY IN BRIEF

### Drop off unused medication at CMH Outpatient Pharmacy

Unused medications have become a public health and environmental health issue in recent years. Prior to a regulation change by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency in late 2014, police departments were the only drop-off locations for unused medications.

Now there is a new option. To responsibly dispose of old medications, the Clatsop Pacific Coordinated Care Organization (CCO) and Columbia Memorial Hospital (CMH) partnered to place a MedSafe bin in the CMH Outpatient Pharmacy at 2120 Exchange St., Suite 101 (Park Medical Building). This free service is available Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. For information, call 503-338-4560.

### Astorian Samuelson joins American Angus Association

Henry Lynn Samuelson of Astoria is a new junior member of the American Angus Association, reports Allen Moczygemba, CEO of the national organization, headquartered in Saint Joseph, Missouri.

Junior members are eligible to register cattle in the American Angus Association, participate in programs conducted by the National Junior Angus Association and take part in association-sponsored shows and other national and regional events.

The American Angus Association is one of the largest beef breed associations in the world, with more than 25,000 active adult and junior members.

### Free family fun Saturday at Marshmallow Festival

HAMMOND — Fort Clatsop Boy Scouts are hosting their first marshmallow festival from 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday at the KOA Campground, 1100 N.W. Ridge Road. This free family event includes crafting marshmallow catapults, racing marshmallows down a hot cocoa river, STEM challenges such as marshmallow towers and a compass marshmallow hunt, a fancy smores bar and a chubby bunny contest. Information about local Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts will be available, as well as free chip IDs, provided by the Astoria Masons.

— The Daily Astorian

## Church honors first responders



Submitted Photo

The First Lutheran Church congregation, as part of a program called "God's Work Our Hands," and in remembrance of the 15th anniversary of Sept. 11, delivered thank you posters and goodie bags to the Astoria Fire Department in recognition of the work they do to protect the public. From left, the committee members who organized the tribute, Sherri Crawford, Tami Jones, Kaye Weimer, Carol Gannaway and Cliff Weimer.

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

#### Clatsop Community Action

**Regional Food Bank** — Volunteers needed to help hand out fruits and vegetables at the weekly produce pantries for two hours on Thursdays, from April to October, in Seaside and Warrenton. Warehouse attendants are needed for food packing or processing, picking orders for agencies, light janitorial and housekeeping, or lawn and grounds maintenance. Three to four-hour shifts are available Monday through Friday. To volunteer, call 503-861-3663.

#### Clatsop Community College

**Outreach Literacy** — Needs volunteer literacy tutors to work with adults, native and non-native speakers. Training available. For information, call 503-338-2557.

#### Clatsop County Public Works

— 1101 Olney Ave. Adopt-A-Road volunteers needed to remove litter two times (minimum) per year for two years. Safety equipment and supplies provided. Volunteers must receive safety orientation. For information, call 503-325-8631.

## RELIGION BRIEFS

#### Crossroads Community

SVENSEN — Crossroads Community Church, a Friends Fellowship, at 40618 Old Highway 30, is holding a Free Family Film Friday at 6:45 p.m. Friday. Come enjoy a film and fellowship. This event is held the second Friday of the month. All are welcome. For information, call Shawn Leonard, pastor, at 503-949-5033.

#### Grace Episcopal

All animals and their companions are invited to the annual Blessing of the Animals at 2 p.m. Sunday at Grace Episcopal Church, 1545 Franklin Ave. Critters of all shapes, sizes and character are welcome, including assorted reptiles and fish in bowls, and even stuffed animals. Blessings

are offered for both pets and their friends, including cases where the owner is present, but has determined it best not to bring their pet due to health or anxiety of the pet.

The monthly Second Sunday Soup-Supper meal is being held at 4 p.m. Sunday in the Parish Hall, free of charge. Those willing to help should come at 3 p.m. to set up or 5 p.m. to help clean up.

A Taizé Prayer & Song service is offered at 7 p.m. Wednesday. The service consists of simple repeated chants, periods of silence, prayers individual and communal, and the lighting of candles. Local musicians Jennifer Goodenberger (piano), Shelly Loring (flute) and Eric Utterback (cello) provide accompaniment

to the Grace Taizé singers. All are welcome.

For information, call the church at 503-325-4691 or 503-325-6580, or go to www.graceastoria.org

#### First Lutheran

Between the 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. services Sunday, a Ministry Fair is being held at First Lutheran Church, 725 33rd St., to ensure members and friends of the congregation are aware of the activities and interests associated with each opportunity to serve. Sunday School is at 9:45 a.m.

The October Artist of the Month is Trisha Dunn, whose art can be enjoyed in the friendship room.

The Scandinavian Workshop meets at 10 a.m. Monday, and Sea

Scouts at 5:30 p.m.

Stewardship Sewing is at 9:30 a.m. Tuesday, TOPS is at 5:30 p.m. and Pure Life Alliance at 5:45 p.m.

Devotional Bible Study meets at 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Wednesday; Senior Choir rehearsal is at 7 p.m.

From 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday, the Transition Pastors from the Oregon Synod meet, and the VASA Astor Lodge monthly meeting is at 7 p.m.

For information, call the church at 503-325-6252.

#### First Baptist

The First Baptist Church of Astoria, 349 Seventh St., is holding its semi-annual basement sale from noon to 6 p.m. today, and from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. Items for sale include

clothes, furniture, books, DVDs, CDs, kitchenware and other items. For information, call the office at 503-325-1761.

#### Pacific Unitarian Universalist

The Pacific Unitarian Universalist Fellowship is holding a service at 11 a.m. Sunday at the Performing Arts Center, 588 16th St. Rev. Kit Ketcham's sermon topic is "Sharing Holy Ground."

Michael Rowe is the service leader, and Bree and Sahalie Heavenrich are the greeters. After the service, the monthly potluck is being held on the second floor of the Astoria Elks Lodge, 453 11th St.

For information, call 503-325-5225 or go to www.pacuuf.org

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