

Veterans: Next stop for group is a reserve on Whidbey Island

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“We want to take veterans who have transitioned from the military, and we want to focus that leadership and that can-do attitude and that take-no-prisoners attitude, and refocus it from a military perspective to a community perspective,” Pfeffer said. “We find that a lot of the skills that veterans bring to the table from their service in the military translates very well to the community impact projects.”

Common ground

The Mission Continues found a partner in the National Parks Conservation Association, a nonprofit focused on improving national parks.

“What better place than a national park,” said Rob Smith, the group’s regional director in Seattle. “Everybody agrees that this is the common ground that we all share.”

The partners found a project site at Otter Point, where 33 acres of parkland were reconnected to tidal influence from the adjacent Lewis and Clark River in 2012.

Contractors dug trenches through 70-year-old dredge spoil deposits to recreate off-channel salmon habitat. They built a new dike around the inland side of the project, and breached an existing dike fronting the Lewis and Clark.

Alicia Todd, a specialist with the U.S. National Guard’s 181st Brigade Support Battalion in Seattle, has been volunteering with The Mission Continues for a year and a half.

“I regain my faith in humanity when I’m out here on projects,” she said, shovel in hand after planting several Sitka spruce. Todd also volunteers with Team Rubicon, another veterans service organization that dispatches disaster responders.

Park in need

Last year, the National Park Service reported nearly \$12 billion in deferred maintenance.

Matt Shaefer, the chief of facility maintenance at Lewis and Clark, said the park relies



Photos by Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

ABOVE: Scott Whisler digs a hole for a plant during The Mission Continues restoration project at Otter Point on Saturday at Lewis and Clark National Historical Park in Astoria. **RIGHT:** Alicia Todd, a specialist in the U.S. Army National Guard, helps move trees to be planted during a restoration project at Otter Point on Saturday.

mostly on contractors for its major projects. The Otter Point project was overseen for the park by Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce, and paid for by the Bonneville Power Administration.

Handling general maintenance are a mixture of park staff and part-time seasonal workers from the pathways program, which provides federal internships for students on break. Last year, 410 volunteers contributed more than 9,200 hours of service at the park. The park values each

donated hour at \$23.56.

“That’s really huge for us,” Shaefer said.

There isn’t as much fanfare for returning post-911 veterans as there was after World War II, Pfeffer said. “Programs like this really enable citizens that don’t have a lot of contact with the military to all of a sudden get out there and do something with our veterans.”

The group next heads to Ebey’s Landing National Historic Reserve on Whidbey Island. Pfeffer said anyone — civilian or veteran — inter-



ested in volunteering with The Mission Continues can contact him at dpfeffer@missioncontinues.org

Monument: ‘We don’t have the resources’

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The city has had difficulty maintaining existing parks and is under pressure to cut costs or shed programs. Without a commitment from the heritage association, the new monument would reduce resources for maintaining other parks.

“It is a great project, but we don’t have the resources to maintain our current park sites and amenities,” said Angela Cosby, the director of the Parks and Recreation Department. “We’re struggling to keep those in operable condition, so adding additional park sites or amenities further increases that burden.”

“If the resources can be made available, it completely fixes the problem.”

The Parks and Recreation Board in June had recommended the new monument with the understanding that the heritage association would adopt the park and help with maintenance, similar to other agreements with advocates for the Astoria Column and the Maritime Memorial Park.

A parks master plan approved this year emphasizes maintaining existing parks.

But the City Council in August was reluctant to impose the adopt-a-park



Submitted Graphic

The city is concerned about maintenance costs at a proposed Scandinavian monument at Peoples Park downtown.

requirement on the heritage association.

Both the parks department and the heritage association are asking for direction from the City Council, which will hear the issue at a meeting tonight.

Loran Mathews, the president of the heritage association, has served on the City Council and the city’s budget committee and is aware of the financial demands on the parks department.

Last year, the city agreed

to place portable toilets at Peoples Park off 16th Street after complaints about public urination and defecation downtown. A deteriorating platform where the homeless would gather was removed this year. Filling Empty Bellies, which provides lunch to the homeless, has used the park as a staging area.

“I think it could be a nice addition to the park, and that’s where we’re at,” Mathews said. “We thought it would be a nice upgrade to the park.”

“I also understand their problem in trying to maintain everything, too.”

Eddy: Veteran’s family has a history of local public service

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With so many areas to cover, Eddy said he has to trust his employees to make informed decisions. “It’s really allowing people to make decisions on their own, and just keeping me informed. I give them guidance.”

Eddy is one of many vet-

erans employed by the school district.

“I think it’s great for the community,” he said. “They’re still able to give back to the community and have that civil service mentality. Big picture, we can’t do enough for our veterans.”

Eddy, a Seaside native, said his family has a history of local public service. His

father, Bill Eddy, is chief of the Gearhart Volunteer Fire Department, and his grandfather — also Bill Eddy — was the city’s chief of police. His wife, Astoria native Melissa Eddy, is an instructional assistant in special education at Astoria Middle School. His son, Will, is a freshman at Astoria High School.

— Edward Stratton

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