

# Washington, other states eye school bus seat belts

## Bill covers public and private buses

By ALEXIS MYERS  
Associated Press

OLYMPIA, Wash. — A bill that would require school buses to have seat belts is being considered by lawmakers

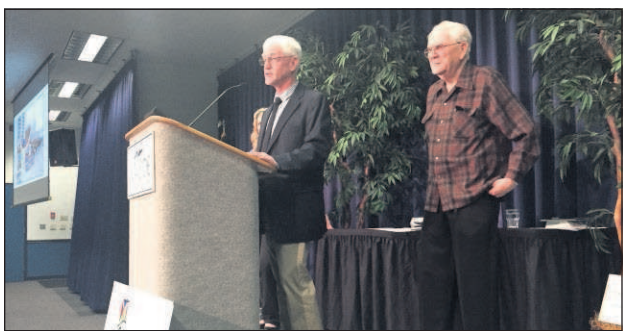
in Washington, one of more than a dozen states where school seat belt measures is on the legislative agenda this year. Senate Bill 5054 would mandate that all public and private school buses purchased after the bill takes effect have a safety belt for each rider. California, Florida, Louisiana, New Jersey, New York and Texas have existing variations of a seat belt law for

school buses, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. At least 17 states, including Washington, have introduced legislation regarding seat belts on school buses in this year's sessions. Jane Terry of the National Safety Council said the organization supports the push for school bus safety restraints, citing a bus crash in Chattanooga, Tennessee, last year

that killed six children. "It's really the safest way for occupants to ride and it comes down to the bottom line of seat belts save lives and we've known this for years," Terry said in an interview. "There's no reason, especially when people are looking at purchasing new buses, why they shouldn't try to get ones with this type of common sense safety equipment on board."

Terry said from the time a child is born they are placed in a car seat and are taught to buckle up in a car, but for some reason a school bus is treated differently. "A school bus should not be a time where you say 'it's OK you don't need to buckle up this time,'" she said. Washington's measure is sponsored by Republican state Sen. Brian Dassel and Demo-

cratic Sens. Jeannie Darnelle and Christine Rolfes. Similar legislation has also been proposed in the House. The other states considering school seat belt legislation include: Arkansas, Connecticut, Hawaii, Indiana, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Virginia and Utah.



R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian  
Ed Rippet accepts the 2016 Byron Award at the Seaside Chamber Banquet. Last year's recipient, Fred Loser, stands behind.

## Seaside chamber celebrates their achievements

### Youth, athletics are benefits of volunteerism

By R.J. MARX  
The Daily Astorian

SEASIDE — Before the speeches began at Tuesday's Seaside Chamber of Commerce awards banquet, Executive Director Brian Owen sent a shout-out to the Seaside Seagulls as the varsity boys sought to extend their undefeated record on the court against rival Valley Catholic.

The link to student athletics was especially appropriate as the chamber presented its vaunted Byron Award — named after longtime volunteer Byron Meek — to Ed Rippet, an organizer of the student athletic program Seaside Kids.

Fred Loser, recipient of the 2015 award, presented the honor.

"Seaside Kids originated from the business people in Seaside," Rippet said in his acceptance speech. "They came up with so much money that they had enough leftover after they flew them to California to form the nonprofit Seaside Kids. Until this day, we are the only program that we know of in the state of Oregon where kids can play free. That's because of your contributions."

The chamber honored Seaside's Bank of the Pacific as business of the year and Sadie Mercer of Maggie's on the Prom as board mem-

ber of the year. Chuck Miner received the chamber ambassador of the year honors and Terry Lowenberg of Beach Development received the Building Block Award for providing construction jobs and opportunities. Cheryle Barker received a life member award; Reita Fackerell was named volunteer of the year.

Incoming chamber president Stacey Brown, operations and dispatch supervisor for the Seaside Police Department, celebrated the chamber's accomplishments.

"The primary goal is to help businesses network and grow, and I think we rock at that," Brown said. "Whether you're an emerging small business experiencing growth pains, or a longtime business with solid roots, we want you to think of us as your proactive business partners."

Engagement is key, Brown said.

Last year, Brian Owen was hired as executive director, a new phone system installed, email and database upgrades put in place and the chamber office remodeled, Brown said. USA Football — a burgeoning international sport — arrived in Seaside for the first time with chamber participation. A multi-year agreement was signed with the Hood to Coast relay and new directors hired to run the chamber's long-running Seaside Beach Volleyball tournament.

"What an improvement," she said. "It's really been a plus."

## Man accused in Seaside standoff to face charges

By JACK HEFFERNAN  
The Daily Astorian

A grand jury Tuesday added seven misdemeanor charges to its indictment of a Seaside man involved in a standoff with police earlier this month.

Brian Wallin, 49, will now face seven charges of recklessly endangering another person after he locked himself inside his home on Whispering

Pines Drive for nearly 64 hours from Jan. 11 to Jan. 14. Wallin is being accused of firing a number of shots during the standoff and killing the family dog. Early in the standoff, he agreed to allow his mother to exit the home unharmed.

Wallin is currently being held at the Clatsop County Jail and is also facing six felony charges of unlawful use of a weapon and one of first-degree animal abuse.

## New child advocacy center helps counsel local victimized children

By NATALIE ST. JOHN  
EO Media Group

RAYMOND, Wash. — It will soon be easier for Pacific County families to seek treatment and justice when a child is abused or assaulted.

Thanks to a generous anonymous grant and a new collaboration between local authorities, Raymond-based nonprofit Crisis Support Network will soon open the county's first child advocacy center. The new program and facility will enable police, social workers, advocates and others to coordinate services for child victims in one welcoming local setting.

Child advocacy centers have a number of benefits, Crisis Support Network Director Kathryn Burr said. They minimize trauma for victims, reduce stress and expense for victims' families, increase cooperation between law enforcement, social services and families, and help investigators build stronger cases.

"It's kind of a one-stop-shop ideology," Burr explained. "All the services are going to the victim, instead of the victim having to do just crazy multiple interviews — going here for this, there for that."

### A better way to help victims

After about seven years of working with victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, advocate Rachel Stanton is still passionate about helping abused kids. But by 2015, Stanton knew there had to be a more compassionate and efficient way to help families cope with the strain of abuse and assault investigations. When abuse comes to light, families quickly find themselves caught in a whirlwind of appointments — and agencies, Stanton and Burr said.

The victim has to undergo both a specialized physical examination and a forensic interview. Investigators, Child Protective Services, therapists, attorneys and other experts may ask the victim and his or her family to take additional steps. Few specialized services are available in Pacific County, so historically, these emotionally — and often financially — devastated families have had to drive to appointments in Aberdeen, Chelalis or Olympia, Washington, on subsequent days, reliving their trauma at each stop.

In cases where the perpetrator was also the breadwin-

### 'Families have bigger concerns. Where are you going to live? Is there enough gas in the car to get to Olympia?'

Kathryn Burr  
Crisis Support Network director

ner, "Families have bigger concerns," Burr said. "Where are you going to live? Is there enough gas in the car to get to Olympia?"

"You are talking about day-long drives," Stanton said. "Their little heads and bellies are thinking, 'I'm gonna have to go and talk about this traumatic, horrible thing that happened to me' for the whole entire drive. It's horrible."

### Building foundation

In early 2015, Burr joined Crisis Support Network, and Pacific County Prosecutor Mark McClain took office. Both recognized that advocates and law enforcement officers often served the same people, but more or less worked in isolation, and they wanted to change that. They knew that child advocacy centers in other parts of the state were working well. The first step, Burr and McClain said, was to foster more understanding and communication between advocates and police. The next step was to create a multidisciplinary team — a coalition of health care and social service providers, police, advocates and prosecutors that is charged with finding ways to serve citizens in a more collaborative way.

### 'I want it to be solid'

Setting up the multidisciplinary team took up most of 2015. For much of that time, Burr was nervous about the project. She knew about the growing body of evidence that child advocacy centers better meet the needs of victims, and reduce the chances that victims or their families will recant their testimony or drop charges to avoid the stress of an investigation. However, the centers must meet exacting state and federal standards. They require specially trained staff, use expensive equipment, and handle complex, emotionally challenging caseloads. She thought it was too important to take lightly.

community volunteers painted a mural on the wall of the center's interview room. Burr will soon begin recruiting a new coordinator, who will be in charge of ensuring that the process runs as smoothly as possible for each client. Over the next few weeks, Burr will also start the process of recruiting and training several forensic interviewers — probably retired police, experienced foster parents and others who have some experience with abused kids. Technicians are working on installing discreet monitors, recording equipment and other technology.

Burr and McClain estimate that the center will serve roughly 60 children per year.

The whole system, Burr said, is focused on "minimizing trauma."



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Entries will be printed in The Daily Astorian on January 31st.  
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