

'To honor his memory'



Lt. Devin Hepner's family, including (front row) father Ron and mother Carolee Hepner, his wife, siblings and others, traveled from Washington, Utah and Idaho for his memorial Tuesday at the U.S. Coast Guard's Air Station Astoria.

Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Coast Guard, family, friends remember fallen comrade

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The family of Lt. Devin Hepner sat in the front row at the U.S. Coast Guard's Air Station Astoria Tuesday, surrounded by servicemen in dress blues packing the cavernous hangars to honor a fallen comrade.

The Coast Guard memorialized Hepner, 34, a marine inspector from Mendon, Utah, who was based in Warrenton. He died of pulmonary embolism Jan. 16 while at an investigating officer course in Training Center Yorktown, Virginia.

The ceremony included commanders from Hepner's Marine Safety Unit Portland, Sector Columbia River and District 13, which oversees the Pacific Northwest. Hepner's fellow guardsmen paid tribute, led prayers, read scripture and fired off a three-volley salute.

Coast Guard family

"It was nothing short of amazing," said Hepner's father, Ron, of the support the Coast Guard has shown his family, helping care for his son's wife, Erin, and four daughters Samantha, Aurora, Audrey and Juniper.

The family flew in from Idaho, Utah and Washington state for the memorial.

Hepner's mother, Carolee, said it meant a lot to the family when his close friend and former comrade in officer candidate school, Lt. j.g. Ross Phillips, traveled from Honolulu to accompany Hepner's body from Newport News, Virginia, to Salt Lake City.

At the airport, an honor guard watched over the transfer to a hearse for the drive to Mendon, where another honor guard acted as pallbearers at his funeral and performed a 21-gun salute.

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A portrait of the late Lt. Devin Hepner in his service dress whites, along with a pair of his operational dress blues, looked over his memorial Tuesday at the U.S. Coast Guard's Air Station Astoria, during which his compatriots donned service dress blues.

Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian



Erin Hepner, wife of the late Lt. Devin Hepner, and her four daughters attended his memorial Tuesday at the U.S. Coast Guard's Air Station Astoria, surrounded by her husband's comrades.

Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Warrenton grad rates on the rise

School goes from last in the pack to top tier

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — Over the past five school years, Warrenton High School has steadily climbed from the worst to nearly the best in Clatsop County at graduating students in four years.

Since 57.9 percent of the class of 2012 graduated in four years, the worst mark in the county, the school has seen continual gains, with more than 63 percent in 2013, 66 percent in 2014 and more than 69 percent in 2015. Last year, more than 74 percent of Warrenton students graduated on time, nearly the highest rate among the county's three larger school districts.

Over the same period of time, Astoria High School has increased from less than 60 percent to a nearly 73 percent four-year graduation rate. Seaside, which has historically had a stronger graduation rate, increased from 69 to 74.4 percent over the past five years.

Knappa, which boasted the second-highest graduation rate five years ago at more than 72 percent, fell off into the mid-60s for three years, but built graduation back above 70 percent last year. The state as a whole has increased graduation from 68.4 percent in 2012 to 74.8 percent last year.

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Charts show Clatsop County graduation rates. Page 9A

New year brings cleanup crusade in Long Beach

Mayor targets eyesores

By AMY NILE
EO Media Group

LONG BEACH, Wash. — The mayor is continuing to set his sights set on ridding the city of eyesores.

Jerry Phillips has been working to clean up ramshackle lots and bedraggled buildings. He took the helm as mayor last year after serving 10 years on the City Council.

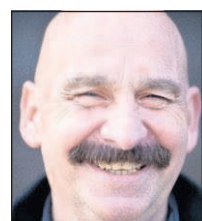
The city plans to demolish a dilapidated house on Fourth Street Northeast within the next month. After that, Phillips wants to find a fix for half a dozen other shabby spots, such as a rundown building that once housed a thrift store and pharmacy on Pacific Avenue and 14th Street South. He also hopes to clean up the abandoned filling station next to Ferrellgas.

"This is what people see coming into Long Beach," Phillips said. "I think it's terrible."

City money

The mayor is tired of using public dollars to make sure private-property owners

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Jerry Phillips

Cannon Beach public works director to leave

Grassick credited with upgrades, parks plan

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

CANNON BEACH — Dan Grassick, the city's public works director since 2013, will be leaving Cannon Beach to spend time with his family.

The public works director supervises the work of 13 employees and manages an average annual operations budget of \$5 million and an average capital budget of \$500,000.

"The expertise you had with that guy was amazing — you almost never find it in a town of this size," City Manager Brant Kucera said.

Because of vacation time accrued, Grassick plans an April 28 departure.

"My life priorities shifted recently and I

realized I need to focus on my wife and grandkids while I am still able and healthy," Grassick said. "I have enjoyed my time here with the entire management team and especially the public works staff. These are very dedicated and passionate staff who take pride in the work they do every day for the citizens, as well as environmental sustainability."

Nationwide search

Grassick was hired in 2013 after a nationally advertised search that drew 35 applicants. With the U.S. Air Force for 29 years, both active duty and reserve, he worked in an engineering capacity as an instructor, liaisons officer and commander before acquiring municipal works experience in Albany and Lebanon.

Kucera credited Grassick with water, wastewater and parks master plan development

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Dan Grassick is leaving his post in April after being Cannon Beach's public works director since 2013.

R.J. Marx
The Daily Astorian

