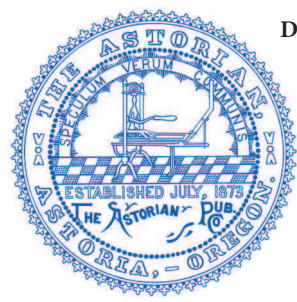


# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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## OUR VIEW

# Arts: More important here than most realize

What comes to mind when thinking of our area's most important economic sectors? Fishing? Wood products? Tourism? Retirement living? Manufacturing? All these contribute to employment, taxes and other social goods, but as a new report makes clear, we too often overlook the arts as a prime source of community vitality and financial well-being.

The National Center for Arts Research — housed at Southern Methodist University in Dallas — just computed scores for all the nation's counties and cities. Its report ranks every county's relative position on five metrics — arts dollars, arts providers, government support, socio-economic and other leisure characteristics.

The three Lower Columbia River counties are in the top 10 percent of all in the U.S. in terms of this "arts vibrancy" — the strength of our arts sector. Altogether, 12 of Washington's 39 counties and 13 of Oregon's 36 are in the top tier of U.S. "arts counties."

### Local details

Clatsop County has more arts providers in comparison to its population than 97 percent of other U.S. counties. It ranks better than 93 percent of other counties in terms of arts dollars — things like revenue produced by art-related programs. It is below average on only one of NCAR's five metrics — government support for the arts. We get much less federal arts money than average, doing better than only 11 percent of U.S. counties. The report judges our overall socio-economic rank as better than 62 percent of counties. When it comes to the catch-all category of "other leisure," we're better off than 98 percent of counties. For example, it will come as little surprise that our restaurant situation is said to be unsurpassed in the nation, while we rate better than 97 percent of other counties in terms of hotels.

It isn't just Clatsop that has a thriving arts community. Pacific County across the river rates better than 88 percent of U.S. counties when it comes to art providers per resident, and generates more art money per capita than 99 percent of counties. It ranks at the 53rd percentile for government arts support, but is only in the 21st percentile for its socio-economic health. It is in the 89th percentile for other leisure activities. Neighboring Wahkiakum County has very similar rankings, with more arts providers per capita than 87 percent of other counties. Elsewhere in southwest Washington, nearby Clark County (home to Vancouver) also is among Washington state's 12 counties in the top 10 percent nationwide for arts vibrancy, as is Thurston County (Olympia).

### Income producer for rural areas

In fact, the Columbia estuary counties are part of an impressive cluster of arts-centric counties grouped around Portland and Seattle, which themselves each rank near the top of America's list of large cities with thriving arts sectors. Counting Clatsop, 10 of Oregon's art counties are in the state's northwest corner and the adjoining Columbia Gorge.

Oregon's three other art counties are Lane (Eugene), Deschutes (Bend) and Jackson (Ashland).

Although National Center for Arts Research's analysis is not without flaws, there's no doubt we are far stronger and more interesting communities thanks to the arts and our residents who create them. We must not take this for granted. Rural counties like ours are particularly fortunate to possess such an intrinsically homegrown creative sector. Elsewhere in the West, only four Idaho counties are in the top tenth; Nevada has four; Arizona two; Utah six. In the U.S. as a whole, arts and the money they produce are skimpy across vast areas.

Aside from acting as a general rallying cry for the arts, the report serves as rebuttal to President Trump and those in Congress who would gut the National Endowment for the Arts. Although Clatsop's arts sector prospers with little federal support, this analysis makes clear that federal art grants produce good returns, and don't benefit privileged communities to the detriment of poorer ones.

"Our analysis shows that the arts benefit Americans at all income levels, and that NEA funding of the arts is remarkably impartial to community wealth characteristics," said Zannie Voss, director of the National Center for Arts Research.

Few forms of economic development are so beneficial and inherently "by and for" local people as the arts. Let's continue spending money and time with local artists of all kinds, while supporting the modest government programs that keep some arts programs viable.

**Clatsop County has more arts providers in comparison to its population than 97 percent of other U.S. counties.**



## GUEST COLUMN

# Clothing children is a big mission

By **SUSAN CODY**  
 For *The Daily Astorian*

What if you are a child in need of new shoes, but your parents can't afford them? Or you have outgrown your pants and sweat-shirts and don't have anything that fits.



When other kids have newer, cooler clothes, the stress and embarrassment of not fitting in even affects kids' ability to learn.

That's why the Assistance League of the Columbia Pacific steps in to help. The all-volunteer nonprofit exists solely to create and support philanthropic programs that promote the well-being and self-esteem of children and teens throughout Clatsop County.

The Assistance League's national Operation School Bell program helps provide children with clothing.

"When you think of Nike Night," said the league's Operation School Bell chairwoman, Liz Knutsen, "perhaps you think of a joyful, slightly chaotic store full of young boys shopping side by side with men and women and coaches and teachers searching for the perfect pair of brand-new Nike shoes, and maybe a cool hoodie to match. Maybe you hear loud music, and laughter. Maybe you smell fresh Fultano's pizza, homemade cookies. Maybe you just feel a sense of warmth and community. That's what our partnership with Nike Factory stores has provided for the past seven years."

The Assistance League partners with merchants, such as Ter Har's, Nike and Ross, to receive discounts so children can choose from popular new items.

Each child is taken on a shopping trip to a local store with a volunteer to advise them how to spend their money — \$80 for elementary school children and about \$120 for middle and high school students.

This school year the league was able to take over the Nike Factory Outlet store for an evening of fun and shopping, and clothed 135



Susan Cody/For The Daily Astorian

**John Kawasoe, head golf professional at the Astoria Golf and Country Club, helps Gracie Brown with her golf stroke at the Assistant League's Golf Drop on Saturday. More photos online at [www.dailyastorian.com](http://www.dailyastorian.com)**

middle and high school boys.

"To date we have teamed up to clothe over 900 boys, and we have spent over \$9,000, Knutsen said. "We are just so grateful to Mike Burk and his team members at the Nike store in Seaside for working with us to provide an unforgettable event for the young men of our community."

Burk, who is the manager of the Seaside Nike Factory Outlet store, was then given a National Operation School Bell award.

Burk said, "You are the people who make it happen, I just oversee everything," as he thanked his co-workers and "the people upstairs," who provide the donations.

### Golf Ball Drop

The Assistance League raises funds through its Golf Ball Drop, Home and Chef Tour, memberships, contributions, sponsorships and grants. The Golf Ball Drop was held at the Astoria Golf and Country Club Saturday. People purchased golf balls for \$5 and a chance to win a prize. The Columbia River Bar Pilots dropped the balls from a helicopter over one green. The balls that land closest to the pin win prizes.

The event also included a free golf clinic and putting contest for children, a barbecue, bake sale

and a raffle.

### Growing commitment

In 2007, when the local Assistance League chapter started, it was able to clothe 70 children, Knutsen reported. This year, it clothed 690 children. "We spent \$66,000 that went back into the community," she said.

There are 128 members who contributed 9,556 volunteer hours this year, secretary Karen Radtitz said. "This group of women is basically the fabric and soul of our community."

Miss Oregon Alexis Mather attended the the Assistance League's luncheon earlier this month and said its mission meshes with her platform of mentoring to develop leaders.

"I feel very lucky and very special for how this community has wrapped its arms around me," said the Astoria High School graduate. "And I also believe that is exactly what this organization does for our youth within Clatsop County, which is extremely inspiring. This organization is providing the tools that these children need in order to be successful."

Susan Cody is the communications lead for the Clatsop County Way to Wellville. She is also a former deputy managing editor for *The Daily Astorian*.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Hot vehicles

With summer time being right around the corner, a lot of people are going to be driving around running their errands with their pets. Remember vehicles can get very hot on a sunny day, and pets should always have easy access to water and fresh air.

In just 70 degree weather, the inside of a car can go to 89 degrees in just 10 minutes. Every summer pets die, and the same goes for little kids. Even if you think your going to be right back, a living being shouldn't be left in a hot car if they are not capable to get help or fresh air on their own.

Just a friendly reminder so everyone in this community can have a warm and safe summer this year.

MERANDA GODWIN  
 Astoria

### Voting in the dark

A dreadful mistake was made this year regarding the May 16 spe-

cial district election: The county did not publish a voter information booklet.

I've been calling and emailing people about this critical election, and am stunned by the number of people who know next to nothing about the candidates or the Port bond issue. Unless people read *The Daily Astorian* daily, they have no other easily known sources of information about the election.

They might not even know who's running, so they can't go to candidate websites. They don't know that the Clatsop County Democrats and Indivisible North Coast Oregon have information about and/or statements from some candidates online. Many voters don't know about KMUN's series of interviews with candidates, or the American Association of University Women candidates forum.

How can we expect people to participate in an election if they don't even know what the election is about? The 2015 Clatsop special districts election had a 23 percent

voter turnout. Shameful. Around the world, people get killed for running for office and for voting, yet most Clatsop voters don't vote. I now have a partial explanation for this appalling turnout.

Voters tell me they want:

- A voter information booklet for special district elections — providing information about, and statements from candidates, and information, plus pro and con statements about bond and other ballot issues

- An online version of the voter information booklet — well-publicized in county newspapers, social media, county website, radio and local cable access TV, etc.

Each of us must tell our county commissioners to make sure there is a voter information booklet for every election. We can't have representative democracy if people are in the dark. Contact the commissioners at [commissioners@co.clatsop.or.us](mailto:commissioners@co.clatsop.or.us)

LAURIE CAPLAN  
 Astoria