

Manager: ‘It’s going to look like the moon when people drive up I-84’

Continued from Page 1A

In her first campaign, Brown spent the first day shadowing another emergency services coordinator. For the next three days, she worked 13-hour shifts — allowing Ayers to take time off.

“It’ll probably be the last day off she has in a while,” Brown said after the trip.

Working with organizations such as the American Red Cross and Oregon Health Authority, Brown planned evacuations by identifying shelter sites, communicating with the public, coordinating livestock movement and preparing for potential hospital evacuations.

Brown returned for a second campaign last weekend as efforts shifted more toward recovery. Individuals and businesses are beginning to figure out how to recoup losses, but poor air quality once again became a factor before rain hit the area early this week.

Brown joined the Clatsop County Emergency Management Division in 2010. She has been a visible face in local preparation for a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and tsunami, and her arrival came after a major storm ravaged the region in 2007. Working in a small county like Hood River, as opposed to other fire operations in Multnomah or Clackamas counties, offered her a valuable test run for future emergency situations on the North Coast, she said.

“There are such unique skill sets and responsibilities that you don’t see very often. We’re really an animal of our own,” Brown said. “I’m trained to handle these situations, but I don’t get a chance to use it that often.”

Hood River also benefits from having outside voices assess situations as they arise.

“There’s also really some value in bringing somebody in that doesn’t have a dog in the fight,” Brown said.

During Brown’s first trip to Hood River, conversations about when to reopen Interstate 84 to traffic occurred regularly. A Level 3 evacuation area with debris, rocks and roughly 3,000 trees sprawled across the road, the popular commercial and travel thoroughfare opened to all westbound traffic last week. The eastbound lanes — just a few feet away from some of the scorched areas — remain closed.

“It’s interesting to see the natural tension with the governor’s office and economic development bumping up with safety operations,” Brown said.

Both emergency and fire personnel are more accustomed to handling wildfires than other types of emergencies. Local organizations are not as reliant upon federal agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which is engaged in hurricane recovery operations throughout the country.

“Wildfire is a hazard that we’re more familiar with,” Brown said. “Local firefighters are able to reach straight up to their mother ships and get all the resources they need.”

Still, though, the Eagle Creek Fire’s destruction in the middle of the Columbia River Gorge — a national scenic area — has impacted many sentimental Oregonians. That, of course, is not something emergency or fire personnel can repair.

“It’s going to look like the moon when people drive up I-84,” Brown said. “We’ll be reminded of it for a long time to come.”

The Eagle Creek Fire caused poor air quality in the Columbia River Gorge.

Submitted Photo



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

While many Oregon beaches are not accessible to individuals using wheelchairs, communities like Seaside and Cannon Beach are making access easier.

Access: ‘It means everyone from kids with a broken foot to grandma and grandpa can go to the beach’

Continued from Page 1A

Serving a need

Manzanita, a town south of Cannon Beach, has had three beach wheelchairs available for use for more than 10 years. The outreach was provided by a local business before the owner retired and donated the wheelchairs to the city, which now operates the service from the Visitors Center.

Dan Haag, the coordinator of the Visitors Center, said the center receives numerous calls and emails asking about beach wheelchairs.

“If we had 100 chairs I don’t think it would be enough,” Haag said.

The city, he said, plans to look into investing in one or two more chairs. He said having a city next door provide similar access will be invaluable.

“I’m excited Cannon Beach is on board. I hope more city entities get at least one or two, because that makes a difference in a lot of lives,” Haag said. “It means everyone from kids with a broken foot to grandma and grandpa can go to the beach.”

Court Carrier, the executive director of the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce, said the chamber frequently receives requests for wheelchairs, as well.



Beach accessible wheelchairs are available in Seaside but only from a private company. The ones planned for Cannon Beach will be free to the public like the ones in Manzanita.

“We’re anxiously moving ahead on this,” he said. “It’s so important.”

Making it happen

Passion for the wheelchair project has been around for years. Last year, the chamber and others in the community came to the City Council for support, Carrier said.

The first wheelchair was purchased with donations from the chamber, Snyder and other local contributors. But with

each wheelchair costing about \$2,500, significant fundraising from donations, grants and corporate sponsors will be needed to pay for three more chairs and the installation of the sheds where they will be stored, Rice said.

The vision is to build code-protected storage sheds where wheelchair users can check out beach wheelchairs while safely storing their own, Rice said. Until money is raised for the sheds, however,

users will be able to check out wheelchairs starting in October from the Cannon Beach Police Department.

“Our aging population affects a lot of us. People haven’t been as vocal as we need to be for those who are mobility impaired,” Rice said. “Cannon Beach is looking toward changing that so everyone can access the beach. Our beaches are already free to the public — let’s make sure it is free for everyone.”

Carrier: Leader plans to depart on Nov. 20

Continued from Page 1A

Carrier started with the chamber in 2014 after a 27-year tenure as the program director and instructor for the Mt. Hood Community College hospitality and tourism program. Before then, he spent 20 years in the hospitality industry.

“It has been a joy to work here,” Carrier said. “I’ve been blessed to live in this heavenly place and make significant progress. I’m disappointed, but it’s what I need to do to take care of myself.”

The decision came after the chamber board was already evaluating Carrier’s three-year contract. Chamber President Greg Swedenborg said Carrier didn’t feel he was in a position to extend the contract past the

chamber’s fiscal year because of “personal and extended family health reasons.”

“Through discussions with Court, (the board) felt the timing was right to make the change rather than postpone the inevitable for a few quarters,” Swedenborg said in a statement. “Court graciously offered to stay on past his contract date, which will help in the execution of our succession plan.”

Carrier will depart on Nov. 20.

Carrier will be moving back to Portland with his wife to pursue his own medical treatment as well as help take care of other family members facing illness.

In his time as executive director, Carrier helped establish a contract with the city

to invest lodging tax revenue for tourism-related marketing support. He also played a large role in organizing celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the Oregon Beach Bill.

Ryan Snyder, the Travel Oregon chairman and CEO of Martin North, met Carrier in 1997 when his wife was in one of Carrier’s hospitality classes at Mt. Hood Community College. Through that personal connection grew a professional one when he heard Carrier was chosen for the director position in 2014.

“I was elated when he found out he was going to be executive director, so the emotional pendulum really swung when he told me he was stepping down,” Snyder said. “He’s a tremendous asset to the industry, and his knowledge in tour-

ism has been invaluable to the small town of Cannon Beach — more than people realize.”

City Councilor George Vetter worked with Carrier when he served as a chamber board member, and said that Carrier’s high energy will be “hard to replace.”

“Court has been a great asset to the chamber and to the community. It’s through his energy and leadership that we are competing with other destinations throughout the country and the state,” Vetter said.

In Snyder’s view, what cemented Carrier’s legacy was his ability to get people to work toward a common mission.

“We shared a spirit of love for people and love for sharing experiences,” Snyder said. “He will truly be missed.”

Center: There is a lack of detox beds for people in crisis

Continued from Page 1A

Part of the high rate of relapse among opioid addicts is the intense pain they feel during withdrawal. Hemsley’s medical addiction specialists are some of the few in the region who can provide medications such as Suboxone and Vivitrol, which can help reduce the pain and prevent relapse.

While providing drug treatment, the center also tries to

identify the personal needs of patients, whether it’s housing, employment or mental health services, Ferguson said, referring patients to other local providers such as Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, the county’s mental health contractor.

One of Hemsley’s frustrations, felt by many private providers, is her inability to accept patients on the Oregon Health Plan, the state’s version of Medicaid, the health insurance program for the poor. A

community health assessment in 2014 estimated a third of Clatsop County residents are on the state plan. Many lack affordable local options for medical and substance abuse treatment.

“I would love to be able to accept OHP,” she said. “We have the infrastructure.”

Another sore spot for Hemsley, chronicled by The Daily Astorian, is the lack of detox beds for people in crisis. The closest option is Bridge to

Pathways more than 60 miles away in St. Helens.

“If we could even have just a few beds, it would be a huge assistance,” she said.

Despite the gaps in service, Hemsley said, Astoria is a very recovery rich community, and providers of drug treatment work together.

“I just respect and appreciate anyone offering drug and alcohol treatment,” she said. “The demand far outweighs the resources we have.”

