

# Astoria students seek support for Walldorf exchange

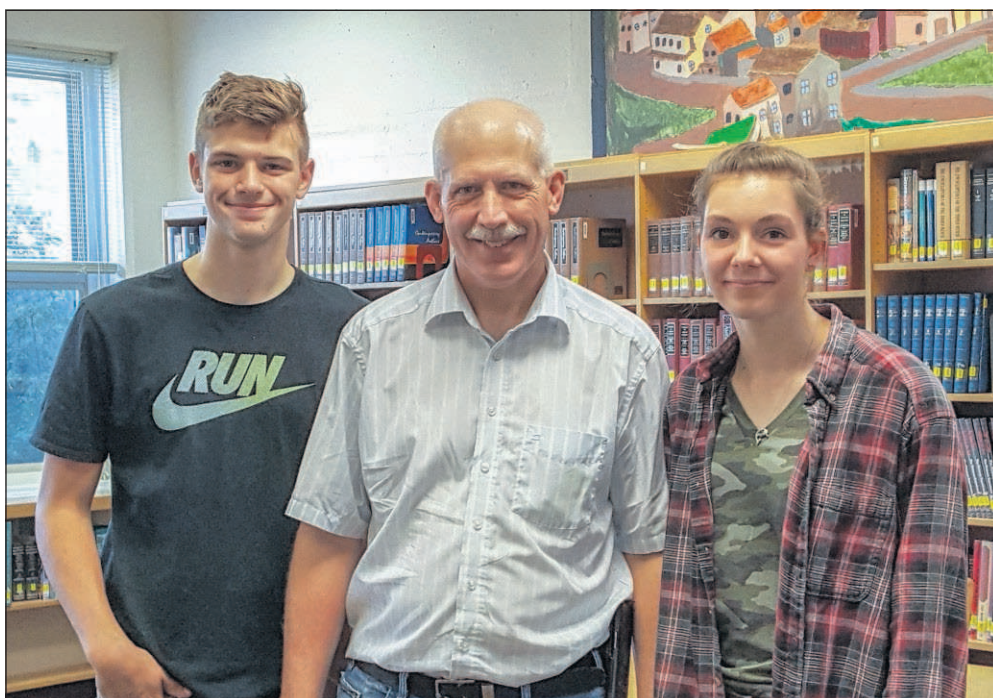
Program on hiatus last year

By EDWARD STRATTON  
The Daily Astorian

Two Astoria High School seniors are raising money to send students to Walldorf, Germany, after the American side of the exchange went on hiatus last year for the first time since 9/11.

Andrew Schauer and Megan Schacher both have German heritage and siblings who have traveled on the yearly exchange. Their families host exchange students each year. The two were taken aback by last year, when only one student could go and the American side of the exchange was canceled. They are trying to raise at least \$20,000 by January to help cover airfare, which can be about half the cost of the exchange.

Walldorf is the hometown of Astoria namesake John Jacob



Submitted Photo  
From left, Andrew Schauer, Jim Pierce and Megan Schacher are raising money and gathering host families to restart the Astoria School District's student exchange with Walldorf, Germany.

Astor, whose American Fur Co. founded Fort Astoria in 1811. Walldorf and Astoria have been sister cities since 1963.

Advising Schacher and Schauer is Jim Pierce, a Warrenton Police Department sergeant who has orga-

nized the trip to Germany for the past 15 years, since his daughter went.

"Last year, I'm not sure

## MORE INFORMATION

Visit the senior project site at <http://tinyurl.com/yco6993g>. Contact Schacher about donations at 503-440-8316 and [mschacher18@astoriak12.org](mailto:mschacher18@astoriak12.org)

what happened," he said. "I think the cost of the trip is probably one of the most ... challenging portions of this trip."

Walldorf students receive corporate sponsorships and support from the city's local chamber of commerce, Schacher said, and only pay about \$1,000 to come to America. Pierce tries to keep the cost of the trip, which includes 10 days in Walldorf and touring sites across Western Europe, at around \$2,500 per student. But whether students can go often depends on fundraising and families forking up the travel costs.

"With Megan and Andrew doing this project, we are hoping to get some fundrais-

ers set up so students can help pay for this trip," he said. "Some of the ideas are maybe an individual money match, or individual sponsorships, where someone from the community might help share in the trip by helping them singularly."

Pierce pays his own way to Germany each year, while sponsoring a lower-income student and part of a female chaperone.

Since summer vacation, Schauer has been collecting cans for deposit. He and Schacher are organizing fundraisers such as a German dinner and silent auction. The two are also trying to find host families for the exchange students arriving in November.

About seven Astoria students are interested in going so far, but the goal is to get at least 11 for discounted airfare, Schacher said. The exchange program prefers Astoria students but is open to families throughout the county, Pierce said.

# State says it's too early to judge unpaid revenue collection efforts

By CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE  
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Five months after Gov. Kate Brown ordered the state to shore up its debt collection practices, the revenue department says it's too early to tell how much money it's brought in as a result.

As of mid-2016, the state was owed about \$3.3 billion in unpaid taxes, fees and fines, according to a December analysis by the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Office. About \$600 million to \$800 million of that sum is owed to the state's general fund, and 95 percent of that is unpaid taxes, the governor's office said in April.

The governor also ordered other state agencies to report the money they're owed to the state's chief operating officer, as well as how much of it is collectible.

As Oregon lawmakers scrambled to balance the state's budget this legislative

session, they too renewed efforts to collect some of that money, pushing for more oversight and hiring at the Department of Revenue.

Although it can't say whether the governor's executive order has made an impact, the revenue department is preparing to implement a system that allows state agencies to determine whether vendors owe the state money, said spokeswoman Joy Krawczyk.

Using that system, the revenue department can garnish payments to vendors to cover the debt.

The revenue department is piloting the system with the state Department of Transportation. At first, the focus will be on tax debt. If it's successful, the department will use it when it helps collect debt on behalf of other state and local agencies.

The revenue department — which is expected to collect more than \$20 billion in revenue in the next two years

— has been plagued with issues in the past decade, many of them identified by multiple audits.

At the urging of the Legislature, the department is expected to undergo additional external and internal reviews in the near future.

Krawczyk says the department has met the reporting requirements laid out in Brown's executive order, and is working on a report about whether it's feasible to publicly post information about the state's debtors online, as the governor has called for.

The agency is also working to recruit for and fill

vacant positions, according to director Nia Ray.

State agencies, under another bill passed this session,

are now required to report debt they write off to the Department of Administrative Services by Dec. 31 every year.

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