



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

The Liberty Theatre has been operating at a deficit, but is hoping to break even this year.

## Theatre: Grant will allow theater to purchase, install its own sound system

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### Challenges

Crockett highlighted several challenges the theater faces, including ongoing maintenance of the 1920s-era building and the need to better understand how to bring people through the doors. In tracking who bought tickets and attended shows last year, Liberty staff found that most attendees lived in Clatsop County and only 28 percent were from outside the area.

Industry standard is closer to a 50-50 split of locals and visitors, Crockett said. "So that gives us some idea of what work we can do."

Councilors commented on the variety of the theater's recent offerings. Crockett said the theater is simply trying out ideas: What do people want to see? What works? What doesn't work?

"I appreciate the diversity of shows there," City Councilor Zetty Nemlow told Crockett, saying she'd been to a show by folk-rock band Blind Pilot and chaperoned a school field trip to a ballet performance.

"The inclusivity is really important," Nemlow added. "There are school children who had never been there before, and that's really cool that they could go out and see a live show in a beautiful venue like that."

### Changes

An \$8,000 grant from the city will be spent on out-of-town marketing, trying to draw in more visitors. Another grant will allow the theater to purchase and install its own

sound system soon. Crockett said they have had to rent sound equipment from Portland for every performance. Getting their own system in place will save them several hours of setup time and about \$1,500 per show.

Despite the theater's tight budget, Crockett thinks it is likely she will begin to add stage crew and an administrative assistant soon. Having these people in place would free up more of her time to devote to fundraising and outreach.

Much further down the road, the theater staff and board hope to renovate the backstage area so the Liberty can accommodate plays, operas and Broadway productions.

Groups interested in coming to the Liberty to put on these types of shows have left disappointed after seeing the theater's limitations, Crockett said. Groups she has approached, hoping they could work with the existing backstage area, have told her "no." To renovate and redesign that back area to accommodate set changes, actors and equipment would "catalyze us up to a completely different level," she said.

City Councilor Cindy Price noted that Crockett and Astoria Library Director Jimmy Pearson were hired around the same time.

"Just as we've seen this transformation, real transformation, begin in earnest at the library with Jimmy Pearson's library directorship ... I've seen the same thing at the Liberty Theatre with your directorship there," she said.

## Bloomfield: 'Emotional generosity was renowned'

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"I have to admit when I first met this diminutive little lady I was a bit taken aback when she was appointed chairman of the construction committee," Folk said. "It didn't take long before I quickly realized she was multitalented and a force to be reckoned with!"

Christine Lolich, president of the Liberty's board, praised Bloomfield's legacy.

"Marge was instrumental in helping to achieve what the Liberty Theatre has become," Lolich said. "With her thoughtfulness, support and vision, we are who we are today."

Bloomfield was also an early benefactor of the Astoria Music Festival.

Many of Bloomfield's

friends describe a life of humility and some adventure. Mary Davies, a neighbor and colleague on the Liberty's board, said, "Marge was one of the most humble and intelligent women that I've known. She never ceased to amaze me when talking about her life. One could make a movie out of it."

Bloomfield's emotional generosity was renowned. Carol Newman, host of KMUN's "Arts Live and Local" recalls that, "Whenever Marge and I met, intentionally or in passing, I felt a joy, a light, a warmth. Marge graciously hosted our Jewish community at home in her natural and generous style. We even sang some of the classics together. Marge enjoyed life, if not the limelight."

## Last call: Last event will be a pub crawl on Oct. 28

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patrons. Sawyer hired a new manager to clean up the bar's reputation.

Port of Call had been administratively dissolved as of late August, according to the Oregon Secretary of State's Corporate Division. A notice to staff was recently posted by Sawyer and Probst.

"It is with a heavy heart that after (three) years and a lot of fun and dedication from an amazing staff, we will be closing our doors," the notice said.

The last event at Port of Call, according to the notice, is an Oct. 28 zombie-themed pub crawl. The Astoria Event Center will host Pacific Northwest Professional Wrestling Oct. 29.

# Trump to call families of slain soldiers, questions Obama

By CALVIN WOODWARD and JONATHAN LEMIRE  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump will call the families of four soldiers killed this month in Niger, the White House says, as Trump again casts doubt on whether his predecessor appropriately consoled the families of military personnel who died in war.

Trump in a radio interview today suggested that President Barack Obama did not call John Kelly, a former Marine general who is now Trump's chief of staff, when his son, Marine 2nd Lt. Robert Kelly, was killed in Afghanistan in 2010.

"I think I've called every family of someone who's died," Trump told Fox News radio host Brian Kilmeade. "As far as other representatives, I don't know. You could ask General Kelly, did he get a call from Obama?"

A White House official later said that Obama did not call Kelly but did not immediately respond to questions about whether the former president reached out in some other fashion.

Trump had said in a news conference Monday he had written letters to the families of four soldiers killed in the Niger ambush and planned to call them, crediting himself with taking extra steps in honoring the dead properly. "Most of them didn't make calls," he said of his predecessors. He said it's possible that Obama "did sometimes," but "other presidents did not call."

Trump's suggestion that his predecessors fell short in that duty brought a visceral reaction from those who witnessed those grieving encounters.

The record is plain that presidents reached out to families of the dead and to the wounded, often with their presence as well as by letter and phone. The path to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and other military hospitals, as well as to the Dover, Delaware, Air Force Base where the remains of fallen soldiers are often brought, was a familiar one to Obama, George W. Bush and others.

Bush, even at the height of two wars, "wrote all the families of the fallen," said Freddy



AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais

President Barack Obama, right, salutes as an Army team carries the transfer case containing the remains of Sgt. Dale R. Griffin of Terre Haute, Ind., during a casualty return in 2009 at Dover Air Force Base, Del.

Ford, spokesman for the former president. Ford said Bush also called or met "hundreds, if not thousands" of family members of the war dead.

Retired Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, confirmed those contacts, tweeting: "POTUS 43 & 44 and first ladies cared deeply, worked tirelessly for the serving, the fallen and their families. Not politics. Sacred Trust."

The White House said letters would go out and calls would be made to the families of the slain soldiers in Niger today. The family of Staff Sgt. Dustin Wright, one of the soldiers, was told by an Army casualty assistance officer to expect a phone call from Trump by this evening, said Will Wright, the soldier's brother.

"He asked if the family would like to be contacted and if we'd be available to speak with the president," Will Wright said from Lyons, Georgia, where funeral services for his brother were held Sunday. "My mother and father said yes."

The soldier's family in rural southeast Georgia has received "immeasurable support from the administration" and the military since he was killed Oct. 4, Will Wright said. He added that it would be "a great honor" to hear from Trump personally.

"If I got to speak to him, I'd tell him he's got the hardest job in the world," Will Wright said. "I know his heart

is heavy because that's his job, and I'd tell him not to let my brother's sacrifice deter him."

Trump addressed the matter when asked why he had not spoken about the four soldiers killed in Niger. They died when militants thought to be affiliated with the Islamic State group ambushed them while they were patrolling in unarmored trucks with Nigerian troops.

"I actually wrote letters individually to the soldiers we're talking about, and they're going to be going out either today or tomorrow," he said, meaning he wrote to the families of the fallen soldiers. He did not explain why letters had not been sent yet, more than a week after the attack.

"If you look at President Obama and other presidents, most of them didn't make calls," Trump said.

Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said later that Trump "wasn't criticizing predecessors, but stating a fact." She argued that presidents didn't always call families of those killed in battle: "Sometimes they call, sometimes they send a letter, other times they have the opportunity to meet family members in person."

She said anyone claiming a former president had called every family was "mistaken."

Kellyanne Conway, a senior White House adviser, further suggested today that there were many ways to console a grieving family and said that Trump doesn't always

make public when he is doing that "because these are very private, very solemn sacrosanct really moments."

Bush's commitment to writing to all military families of the dead and to reaching out by phone or meeting with many others came despite the enormity of the task. In the Iraq war alone, U.S. combat deaths were highest during his presidency, exceeding 800 each year from 2004 through 2007. The number fell to 313 in Bush's last year in office as the insurgency faded. Bush once said he felt the appropriate way to show his respect was to meet family members in private.

Obama declared an end to combat operations in Iraq in August 2010 and the last U.S. troops were withdrawn in December 2011. As Obama wound down that war, he sent tens of thousands more troops into Afghanistan in 2009 and 2010, and the death count mounted. From a total of 155 Americans killed in Afghanistan in 2008, which was Bush's last full year in office, the number jumped to 311 in 2009 and peaked the next year at 498. In all, more than 1,700 died in Afghanistan on Obama's watch.

Trump visited Dover early in his presidency, going in February with his daughter Ivanka for the return of the remains of a U.S. Navy SEAL killed during a raid in Yemen, William "Ryan" Owens. He did not go for those killed in Niger.



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

The Astoria Column is illuminated in pink light for Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

## Column: Goal doubled because of early success

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visitors so far. The original goal was \$1,000 for the entire month, but has now been doubled due to early success, Vigil said.

"It's kind of a lofty goal to get to, but there's no reason we shouldn't be able to surpass it," Vigil said.

The donations will be com-

binated with those from the CMH Auxiliary and recently founded Arm in Arm Fund, which have pitched in \$65,000. The money will help patients pay for expenses beyond medical costs — including transportation to and from treatment, cosmetic items, child care and temporary lodging costs.

Mary Armington — along with Dr. William Armington,

her son — established the Arm in Arm Fund last month in conjunction with the CMH Foundation.

"This fund is to be the safety net underneath the safety net," Dr. Armington said during a celebration last week of the center's opening.

The \$16 million cancer center officially opened earlier this month after seven

years of preparation. It represents the region's first source of radiation therapy for cancer patients and expects to see 3,000 patients a year.

Those patients may find relief from Column visitors on an annual basis.

"I would love it if it could be an annual thing," Vigil said. "Cancer doesn't just stop after the month of October."