

OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Soccer stalwart Boisvert deserves his honor for lifetime achievement

When it comes to identifying key adult volunteers in youth sports on the North Coast, several names come to mind.

In the soccer community it's one — Jerry Boisvert.

There isn't a child who has played soccer in the last three and a half decades whose life hasn't been touched by the man. Every adult volunteer, coach, referee or fan has encountered Boisvert's dedication.

Recently he received the applause of his peers statewide with the 2018 Lifetime Achievement Award from the Oregon Youth Soccer Association. The top honor from Oregon's entire soccer community followed his nomination by Fergus Loughran, past president of the Lower Columbia Youth Soccer Association. Boisvert was one of its founders in 1984.

Boisvert has coached recreational and competitive youth teams, both the Astoria High School boys and girls squads, and served as a U.S. Soccer Federation referee. He has also singlehandedly spearheaded the maintenance of the Warrenton Soccer Complex, mowing, repairing and lining the fields, mending the goal nets and cleaning up.

Each fall when he was coaching Astoria High School teams, it was not unusual to drive along Ridge Road just



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ABOVE: Jerry Boisvert, right, referees a preseason match in 2014.



LEFT: Boisvert coached varsity soccer at Astoria High School.

after lunchtime and observe Boisvert cutting the grass in time for the junior varsity kids to play their early game

— then coaching the varsity squad late into the same evening.

In addition to his commitment to

inspiring his teams and maintaining the fields, what sets Boisvert apart is his sense of fair play. When coaching, his tone was always positive. He encouraged his young players with loving discipline. He could react with passion at a referee's call against his team one moment, shout "good call!" the next, then shake the official's hand after the final whistle. Visiting coaches frequently commented on his positive tone, as well as commending the excellent condition of the fields.

The Clatsop Clash — Astoria vs. Seaside high school games — was always contested with good sportsmanship during his 11-year era as Astoria's varsity coach, despite the intensity of the rivalry. In large part that was because Boisvert had an equal number of Seaside players blended into his classic teams when they were U-14s.

His enthusiasm is irrepressible — he wore a tutu on silly costumes day at Camp Kick-A-Lot, an annual event where North Coast kids learn the game.

When recent serious health troubles caused Boisvert to step back from his commitments, the board of the Youth Soccer Association let out a collective gasp. Loughran — a man not prone to exaggeration — said they needed six or seven people to step up and divide Boisvert's duties.

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Close encounters of the herd kind

In a few short years they've become a symbol of Gearhart.

Newcomers still greet the elk with amazement.

"It just is unbelievable," Gearhart's Ellie Ludy told reporter Brenna Visser. Having an elk herd wander through town is a bonus Ludy didn't expect when she moved to the coast about a year ago. "I knew there would be elk, but I didn't know they would come into your yard!"

But for others, the elk have become more of a nuisance and even a threat. Golf course professionals, homeowners and

landscapers have considered everything: gates, fences, trapping and transport, reintroducing natural predators — even birth control.



R.J. MARX

Now the city is chronicling elk-human encounters in an effort to quantify the extent of the problem, to provide safety for residents and limit damages to property owners. The comments are posted on the city's blog site and offer a stark and seemingly endless series of dangerous incidents.

"As we tried to pack up and leave last Monday afternoon, we found ourselves surrounded by elk who clearly did not mind our looking but did not want us encroaching on their space," a resident posted. "Five were on Ocean Avenue feet from the back of my jeep and 40 or more on our west lawn."

At the city's January City Council meeting, local resident and ham radio operator Dana Gandy told the city elk destroyed approximately \$1,000 worth of emergency communications and antennas and equipment in his backyard. An antenna mast approximately 45 feet tall was snapped in half; cabling and guy wires were destroyed.

Forrest Goodling, groundskeeper at Gearhart Golf Links, reported \$5,000 damage to a newly seeded putting green in a Dec. 22 blog post. Goodling and area golf course crews have been struggling with damage — and potential risk — for years.

In July, golf course officials staged decoy coyotes — models of the predators intended to deter the elk — something of a last-ditch move to find a peaceful resolution to this hoofed invasion.



John Dudley

Elk in a Gearhart backyard.

"We've been working on getting the elk removed, the herd size reduced for years now," golfer Russ Earl said, recounting meetings with four different levels of the Department of Fish and Wildlife.

It's not just professionals who face big landscaping and repair costs.

Residents use picnic tables to protect plantings.

Gearhart's Gay Jacobsen told the city in a December blog post: "We were practically held captive for two days as a herd of 75 elk took over our street, backyard and front yard decimating vegetation, ruining turf and breaking our sprinkler heads. ... They had no fear of us and were huge."

Drivers and pedestrians alike find themselves surrounded by the herd, pets are threatened and their owners intimidated.

"I must leave the house with caution," wrote South Ocean resident Susan Workman.

In a blog post, Ian Goldspink said he was "real close to being in the herd" as he drove down Pacific Way.

"They certainly are majestic and exciting, but they are a bit too fearless of us and too close," wrote Bill Bennetts of South Ocean Avenue. "They are starting to make seagulls seem attractive."

'Danger to both species'

It's easy to see the appeal of the elk,

seeing elk encumbered by a tomato cage and a volleyball net, enough so to contact the Department of Fish and Wildlife to find a remedy.

Photographer John Dudley, whose home on Little Beach overlooks the estuary, said answers will be complicated for no other reason than the fact that emotions run high on both sides of the issue. Anything proposed at the local level would likely face a long period of scrutiny by state and maybe even federal agencies.

"I have watched and photographed the herd for over 10 years and have seen them at least quadruple in numbers," Dudley said. "I like elk and I like humans, but no one should believe that living together is not fraught with danger to both species."

Documentation, awareness

At the city's first meeting of the year, councilors once again sought solutions.

"I remember a number of years ago it was, 'Look at the elk who are visiting our city,'" City Attorney Peter Watts said. "Now the reports we are getting are very different, as well the number of elk and size of the herd."

Mayor Matt Brown, who as a PGA professional at the Highlands Golf Course has first-hand experience with the issue, said the city will forward feedback to Fish and Wildlife as it comes in.

A letter addressed to Fish and Wildlife went out in the mail Jan. 10. "The city of Gearhart would like to request more information on how to best protect the citizens' safety and what can be done so no one is injured or killed by these animals," Brown wrote.

The letter, also sent to Gov. Kate Brown, U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici and state Sen. Betsy Johnson, includes attachments, articles, photos and letters dating from 2014.

Matt Brown hopes it will build awareness of the conflicts public safety issues such as elk-caused traffic accidents, elk-to-human contact and elk-to-pet contact.

"We really haven't had a way to document things," Brown said. "Specific incidents haven't been documented. Now they are."

R.J. Marx is The Daily Astorian's South County reporter and editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette.