



Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian
Left to right: Sarah Mitchell, Sheri Salber and Kerry Strickland hold a needle exchange in Astoria.

County's pilot needle exchange program expands

More than 15,000 needles have been collected in just over three months

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

Kerry Strickland has been giving mothers an ability she wishes she had years ago.

Her son, Jordan, died alone in a Southern California apartment in 2015 when he was 24 years old. Had someone given him Naloxone — a drug that reverses opioid overdoses — he might have had a chance to recover.

Now, she offers weekly training teaching people how to administer the drug, and some of the students have been fellow mothers.

"There's nothing more rewarding than being able to hug a mother and give them the lifesaving drug I couldn't give my son," Strickland said.

A six-month pilot needle exchange program in Clatsop County is gaining momentum and expanding — including the Naloxone training — as the experiment passes its halfway point.

The county Public Health Department and Strickland have been conducting the weekly exchanges since October. After the first event yielded no takers, the



ABOVE: Clean, new needles and containers wait to be distributed at the needle exchange program in Astoria. BELOW: Kerry Strickland holds up a box of naloxone for treating opioid overdoses.



county has collected more than 15,874 needles and handed out 14,419 in trade.

"It's a little shocking that there are that many needles being used for intravenous drug use in this county," Michael McNickle, the public health director, said. "We're still pretty amazed at the numbers we've been getting."

The numbers are staggering for a county of fewer than 40,000 residents, but Multnomah County — with more than 790,000 people — exchanges roughly 30,000 needles a week, McNickle said.

The largest haul came last week, when 4,000 needles were exchanged. Several people — commonly referred to as "messengers" — have been collecting and exchanging the majority of needles each week, McNickle said. Since the beginning, 33 people have participated — 15 of whom returned for at least a second time.

"We built trust in Astoria and the messengers are getting the word out," McNickle said. "Every week is a little different due to the shame that comes with the stigma of intravenous drug use. You're not sure if the messengers are also the users."

Strickland, founder of Jordan's Hope for Recovery, began offering the free Naloxone kits and training four weeks into the program. After completing the training herself, she applied for grants through her nonprofit that allowed her to receive and distribute the drug at no cost.

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'THERE'S NOTHING MORE REWARDING THAN BEING ABLE TO HUG A MOTHER AND GIVE THEM THE LIFESAVING DRUG I COULDN'T GIVE MY SON.'

Kerry Strickland | mother who offers weekly training teaching people how to administer Naloxone

Balensifer to run for Warrenton mayor

Appointed last year to fill vacancy

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — Warrenton Mayor Henry Balensifer will seek election to the top job in November, fulfilling a promise he made after being appointed to serve out former Mayor Mark Kujala's term last year.

Balensifer was first elected to the City Commission in 2012 after serving on the Planning Commission.

After Kujala announced he was resigning last March, Balensifer led the commission as mayor pro tem. He was appointed by the other commissioners to finish out the rest of Kujala's term, which ends in December. At the time, he promised he would not be a "short-term mayor."

"You can't compare running a meeting to being the figurehead of the city," he said, adding, "It was a learning curve to go from a Planning Commission to a City Commission and it was a learning curve to go from city commissioner to mayor."

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Henry Balensifer

Astoria looks to collect on Smithart debt

Fallout continues from Riverwalk Inn suit

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

Astoria is trying to collect back lodging taxes and other debts from the former operator of the Astoria Riverwalk Inn.

City Attorney Blair Henningsgaard has sought garnishment from Param Hotel Corp., a Portland hotelier that was awarded the lease of the Riverwalk Inn through a court judgment against the Port of Astoria last year and hopes to take over operation of the hotel in November.

The hotel's previous operator, Brad Smithart, who also owned the now closed Arc Arcade downtown, owes thousands of dollars to the Port, the city and Clatsop County — debts Param has promised to pay off. As part of past negotiations with the Port, Param will have to pay Smithart as well.

Astoria hopes to garnish what Smithart owes the city from this debt. The city could make back some of the money by then selling the debt, Henningsgaard said.

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Brad Smithart

Tsunami threat canceled after 7.9 magnitude quake in Alaska

Associated Press
and EO Media Group

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — A powerful earthquake struck off an island in the Gulf of Alaska, prompting a tsunami threat that sent the state's residents along the southern coast and western Canada fleeing for higher ground just after midnight.

After a few intense hours, the tsunami warning was canceled, allowing people to return home from shelters. There were no immediate reports of damage, not even on Kodiak Island, the closest land to the epicenter of the magnitude 7.9 quake. The quake

was followed by dozens of aftershocks.

Oregon, Washington state, California and Hawaii were under tsunami watches, which eventually were lifted.

Word of a potential tsunami rattled nerves on the North Coast.

A local alert was not sent out by Clatsop County Emergency Management, said Director Tiffany Brown.

"There is a difference between a watch and a warning. With a watch, it means the potential exists, and a warning is that (the tsunami) is imminent and it requires immediate action. Nothing required immediate action today, so I

didn't issue an alert. I would wake people up in the middle of the night if they needed to take immediate action."

Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District made the decision to open a joint Emergency Operation Center for Cannon Beach, Arch Cape and Falcon Cove as a precaution, but it was closed soon after the tsunami watch was called off.

In Pacific County, Washington, the tsunami watch caused some to seek high ground. As happened on March 11, 2011 when a serious earthquake in Japan was feared to

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Melissa Renwick/The Canadian Press
Brennan Caton, center, Misty Lawson and Courtney Caton, right, listen to the Coast Guard radio inside their home for updates on the tsunami warnings that shook Tofino, British Columbia, after the Alaska earthquake on Tuesday.

