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OUR VIEW

# Warrenton enhances schools while planning longer term

Warrenton-Hammond schools are poised to take advantage of a rare win-win project that will help students while better positioning the district to determine its long-term future.

For years, school leaders have been quietly worrying about what to do when the state of Oregon updates its tsunami inundation maps. Because today’s Warrenton High School is on the banks of the Skipanon River, it likely will be encompassed in any no-new-building zone when those maps are redrawn. Even if leaders secure a brand-new campus site, the district cannot give up that location because it is the fixed home for the student-run fish hatchery, one of the most remarkable and valuable hands-on learning facilities in Oregon.

Warrenton schools recently earned \$436,000 in state grant money to build and equip an automotive, welding and technology center to the north of the high school.

When Robert Roberts, an Idaho businessman, learned about this career center, he donated a steel building worth \$75,000. Roberts has exhibited similar generosity to 50 schools in Idaho and Oregon as a way of “giving back” for his own education.

The news comes as Warrenton-Hammond School Board members and administrators update their master plan. Unlike Astoria, Seaside and Knappa, Warrenton houses its elementary and middle school students in one building. For years, parents and educa-



Warrenton-Hammond School District  
The Warrenton-Hammond School District is planning a 60-by-120-foot career-technical education center at the northern end of Warrenton High School, next to a parking lot.

tors have lobbied for a separate middle school because of concerns about significant differences in maturity levels.

Because of this and tsunami fears, leaders are pondering multiple bonds over the course of 14 years that would transform Warrenton schools, funding a new high school and separate middle school building in a safer location.

It’s good to report some good news. Those who remember Warrenton history teacher Scott Carpenter, now an assistant principal at La Grande, might want to thank him for “brokering” the deal after Roberts had helped his own school with a similar building.

Warrenton leaders are to be commended for their foresight in taking advantage of the donation while they

fine-tune a more detailed big-picture blueprint to determine a future of education in the community, contingent on taxpayers’ support.

And among those applauding the decision are the good folks at the Warrenton Fire Department — because that old wooden shed on the site of the new center offers an excellent burn-to-learn training opportunity!

GUEST COLUMN

## Helping homeless makes us better as a community

In the past few months I have heard many discussions of Astoria’s homeless, both related to their presence downtown, and to what the community could or should do, either on their behalf or to help them go elsewhere. For many reasons, mostly having to do with having been raised in a traditionally Christian home in the 1940s and 1950s by parents who each had seen harder times, these discussions keep bouncing around in my head.

I have heard people who I know to be “good” citizens question why these people should be given “more than broth,” or why showers or clean laundry should be offered. Does this remind you of Dickens characters too? So, I think about who we see as homeless here, and what can be done with the resources we can put together.



JAN MITCHELL

Who are the Astoria homeless? They are a mix of people who are not fitting in our society as we want to think of it. They are veterans still dealing with trauma both physical and emotional. They are the mentally ill who have lost their connection to family. They are people addicted to drugs, alcohol, and often tobacco. Then there are those who simply can’t function in our complex world; requiring education, perseverance, and organizational skills which are beyond them. They all experience damage to self concept and physical bodies.

And there are the “bad apples” — those who taunt, are rude and disruptive. We can find similar folk in all groups — football crowds, bars, and among our neighbors in some cases. They are the visible ones. I had a granddaughter who didn’t want to go into downtown Portland, as the homeless “made her uncomfortable.”

We all share degrees of that discomfort with those who we see as different. Our country’s Puritan roots also cause some to ascribe poverty as God’s judgment — as in if you are living as “the deity” wants you to do, you will be blessed with prosperity. I would suggest that this does not resonate with the major tenants of Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Taoism or the Jewish faith. Most of these encourage us to save our judgmental



Illustrations by Noel Thomas  
ABOVE: A watercolor of homeless in Astoria. BELOW: A mattress and bedding at the Astoria Warming Center, housed in the First United Methodist Church.



‘Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.’ It is a difficult standard, as I acknowledge each day. But it does make for a better community.

thoughts and actions and act on the equivalent of “Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.” It is a difficult standard, as I acknowledge each day. But it does make for a better community.

I had a great uncle John who lived with his sister and her family. He was a sweet and gentle man with self-deprecating humor. He had a role as long as they lived on their Kansas farm, helping with the daily and very necessary work, as the husband had a heart condition and saw himself as mainly an overseer of his wife and John’s labor. Once they left the farm, and John was old, he didn’t have much of a place. But he had a home. I wonder how John would have done on his own? He didn’t have the intelligence, aggressiveness or self-concept to achieve as we try to do in our modern and complex society.

As we as a community struggle with what we can do with our homeless “problem,” other cities are doing the same. The other day, I heard that Beaverton has a larger homeless group and is setting up a day center for families and children. Their council has set aside \$54,000 toward homeless services. Beaverton is a wealthier community than Astoria, but surely we can find ways to help those who are among us, without a place to go.

But mostly, we can try to see those people in front of us as other human beings, flawed as we all are, but deserving of being seen and acknowledged and helped as we are able. It makes us all better as a community.

Jan Mitchell is a 23-year Astoria resident who was educated as a social worker and urban planner. She is a member of the Astoria Planning Commission. The views expressed here are her own.