

Protest: ‘We’re taking the approach to focus on respect’

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“I think it’s sort of a solidarity thing, the fact that even though they’re across the nation, the fact that they had to die so young and out of nowhere,” Harold said.

Seven of the 17 victims in Florida were 14 years old.

“I think for me and the freshmen in this school, that hit them really hard,” Damghani said.

At Seaside High School, students gathered on the track for a protest more akin to a presentation than a march. Unlike many walkouts happening around the country, student organizer Sequoia Shand said the goal was focused on advocating for mutual respect for one another, rather than a stark emphasis on gun control.

For 17 minutes, 17 different students presented calls-to-action every minute about how students can support one another. Every statement was sandwiched between moments of silence.

“What we see in a lot of these shootings is that the person wasn’t treated the best. We’re taking the approach to focus on respect,” Shand said.

She said she supports gun restrictions, which were the driving force behind the demonstrations. “But it’s a very controversial topic. Not everyone supports gun regulations, but we can all come to a mutual agreement to treat people better,” she said.

A teaching moment

After the demonstration in Astoria, Principal Lynn Jackson gathered the student demonstrators in the auditorium to talk about how they had just executed their rights under the First Amendment of the Constitution, including the right to a peaceful public assembly.

While about 150 students attended the demonstration, about 450 other students at the high school chose to remain in class for various reasons, some wearing orange in solidarity with the Florida victims, Jackson said.

“As you think about this process, petitioning the government for a redress of your grievances, I invite each of you to collaboratively communicate, not only with the 150 of you that are seated here today, but for the other 450 that are in those classes right now,” Jackson said.

In order to encourage participation, Seaside High School Principal Jeff Roberts scheduled a formal 20-minute break



Brenna Visser/The Daily Astorian

Sequoia Shand speaks to a crowd of students and faculty during Seaside High School’s walkout on Wednesday for the victims of the Parkland shooting. She is a senior and organized the event.



Brenna Visser/The Daily Astorian

About 150 students walked out for a demonstration at Seaside High School in remembrance of the victims of the Parkland shooting.

at 10 a.m. to accommodate the walkout. Roberts said when students approached him about the idea, they had a conversation about how to make the demonstration more active.

“This has been geared from a political statement to ... what students can do to be the most inclusive as they can be,” Roberts said. “I asked them who they thought their audience was, and what they could do to impact school safety in 17 minutes.”

Improving security

The demonstration comes as the Astoria School District is contemplating whether to ask voters for a bond to fund school improvements. Securing the high school, where more than 70 entrances around campus make controlling access a challenge, has emerged as one of the highest priorities.

The district hopes to add

more enclosed walking corridors between the high school’s four main buildings to make sure students no longer have to go outside between classes.

In the wake of recent shootings, Seaside High School has tightened lockdown protocols and locked every door except the front entrance throughout the day. Preliminary designs for the new Seaside campus feature remotely locking doors and passageways.

While the shooting in Florida has galvanized calls to action over gun violence, research shows schools are safer than they were 20 years ago, according to James Alan Fox, a professor of criminology, law and public policy at Northeastern University in Boston. Four times the number of children were killed in schools in the early 1990s than today, Fox told the university’s newspaper.



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Students at Astoria High School participate in a nationwide walkout to demand action on gun violence.



Brenna Visser/The Daily Astorian

Seaside High School students console each other during a walkout held Wednesday.

a workaround.”

Many of the preventative measures being taken in schools are focused around teacher training and identifying the warning signs of a potential school shooter. The focus is also on ways to support the emotional and mental health needs of students as a way to curb potential gun violence, Roberts said.

Security is a multipronged approach that includes partnerships with law enforcement, counseling and good relationships between students and staff, Jackson said. Astoria is a part of an anonymous statewide tip service for safety issues through Safe Oregon, a service the high school has used for one incident so far this year.

Scare in 2011

When student Peter Ansel Williams, then 16, threatened a shooting at Astoria High School in 2011, he was turned in by a friend, Warrenton High School student Kyle Benton, whom he had tried to recruit. Benton had previously attended Astoria and had formed a relationship with the administration, Jackson said.

“Having strong, inclusive, welcoming relationships between students and staff, those relationships are incredibly powerful as a preventative measure, not only in communication when a potential threat arises, but also in the prevention of such behaviors,” Jackson said.

Pilot: Many of the extras are locals

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police detective who is banished to an “eccentric town of quirky characters in coastal Oregon” after a high-profile mistake.

She is paired with a new partner, Oregon trooper Sam King, played by actor Andy Karl, who exhibits peculiar investigative techniques like “talking to trees for clues and his obsession with flying kites,” according to a press release.

For most of Tuesday and Wednesday, sections of Ocean and Laneda avenues were closed, filled with camera crews and equipment. For North Coast locals, some landmarks like the Pine Grove Community House, which was converted into “Sand Pine Bank” for filming, and Neahkahnie Mountain will be noticeable if the show is chosen for a full season run, visitor center coordinator Dan Haag said.

There may be some familiar faces, too, as many of the extras are Manzanita locals.

“There was a car chase filmed down Ocean Avenue. I think some will recognize Neahkahnie Mountain in the background as they fly by,” Haag said.

While there have been some complaints about how filming has impeded business and traffic, Haag said the community for the most part has had a positive experience being a backdrop for a TV show.

“My main concern was with Laneda Avenue being closed, as it is the heart of our business district. We don’t know what

kind of effect this filming has had on business — I hope not adverse at all,” Haag said. “But so far everyone on the crew has been very polite and helpful and accommodating.”

From the sidewalk, residents Cheryl Walker and Emilee Andrade peered through the scaffolding as the crew filmed a bank robbery scene in the faux “Sand Pine Bank.”

Walker said having a TV crew in sleepy Manzanita has been an exciting experience.

“Sure, there’s been some

negative comments about ‘Hollywood coming to town,’” she said. “But I think it’s been a positive experience. It’s fascinating to watch, and pretty unusual for a town like ours. When you watch a TV show at home, you have no idea how much goes into it.”

Andrade, an aspiring actress herself, said the experience of being so close to a TV shoot is “too unique to miss out on.”

“If this show airs, it will be fun to be like, ‘I was standing right there when this happened!’” she said.



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