

Library: 'I feel like we are really making a difference'

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as director in 2016. An average of three to five children now read to Maisie each week.

"They're not huge numbers, but I think it makes a big impact on the kids who come," Harold said.

Libraries seek to provide several different kinds of programs, she explained, combinations of things that might draw a wide audience but also smaller offerings that have the potential to have deep, long-lasting impacts.

The program at Astoria Library isn't Maisie's only gig. She also travels to Columbia Memorial Hospital, providing companionship to patients and staff alike.

"I feel like we are really making a difference," Holen said.

Maisie came to therapy work by way of other, more traditional border collie activities like sheep herding. Holen noticed the dog had an aptitude for the work, but there were few people in the area with dog-ready sheep who could provide Maisie with the practice she needed to cement and hone her training.

Harold joked that Holen should have bought Maisie a farm. Holen laughed, but con-



Bronte Noguerra reads to Maisie the border collie as part of a children's literacy program at the Astoria Library.

sidered carefully for a moment.

"You get a border collie then you need sheep then you've got sheep and you need two border collies," she replied. "So then you need more sheep and before you know it you've got five border collies."

Holen, until recently, had three border collies.

With sheep-herding out, Holen and Maisie shifted to therapy work. The dog is certified now through Pet Partners and works regularly at the Astoria and Warrenton libraries and at Columbia Memorial.

In each location, Maisie's job is slightly different.

"Here, her only job is just to sit there and listen to the children read," Holen said.

Sometimes she'll roll on one side and nap. At the hospital's cancer center, part of her job is to sit calmly and be pet-



Bronte Noguerra scratches Maisie's head in the children's area of the library.

ted, at other times she might let a toddler chase her. Not explicitly part of her job, but a job she performs nonetheless, is to give staff a break from their daily routines.

"Maisie days" are highly anticipated — treats and love overflow. So much so, in fact, that Holen had to issue a bacon edict at the hospital because at one point her dog was getting upwards of six to eight slices.

And Maisie has her own priorities. She is absolutely not ready to begin work until she has greeted — and likely been treated — by her favorite

people at each location. At the cancer center there are three specific staff members she has to greet first thing every time.

"I could take her off lead and she would go to those three places on two floors and she knows exactly where she's supposed to go and if they're not there she is not a happy camper," Holen said, her words punctuated by a sudden squawk as Maisie pounced on a toy with a squeaker built into it. "She has kind of figured out what is expected from her with whomever she visits. She kind of knows."

Health: Revenue would also fund memory care center program

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memory care center. It currently has one old, lightly used bus at its disposal. Priced about \$80,000 apiece, the new buses would allow the district to take residents to medical appointments and also create opportunities for trips outside the memory care facility.

"I think there's a misconception at memory care facilities that it's not wise to take them places because they might wander off," said Mark Remley, chief executive officer of Aidan Health Services, which manages the district.

"We look at it a little differently. It's a quality-of-life factor."

Revenue would also fund a program at the memory care center that is only being used in one other facility in the state. Using the Montessori Method, an instructor would establish a basic curriculum and allow patients to organize the majority of the tasks to meet those criteria on their own.

"The Montessori approach is based off that philosophy that we're always learning, regardless of our cognition level. The more you do for me, the more you take from me," Remley

said. "It's getting everybody involved to continue being an active member of society."

The health district ended the last fiscal year at a roughly \$600,000 deficit. The board decided last year to hire Aidan Health — a private management firm based in Salem — to a 26-month contract to try to salvage its finances.

This fiscal year, the district has racked up a \$24,143 surplus, Remley said. District officials credit a cheaper contract with a new food vendor, reliance on the management firm's statewide staff — as opposed to out-of-state staffers — and

increased census at facilities, including four more beds at the care center.

"He's done a wonderful job of turning it around," Reynolds said of Remley. "It's been a huge cost saving that they've been able to achieve."

Remley said the health district's financial situation did not factor into its decision to place a tax levy on the May 15 ballot.

"They had talked for a while about doing a levy and what it would look like," Remley said. "The deficit they were running didn't really play a part in that."



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