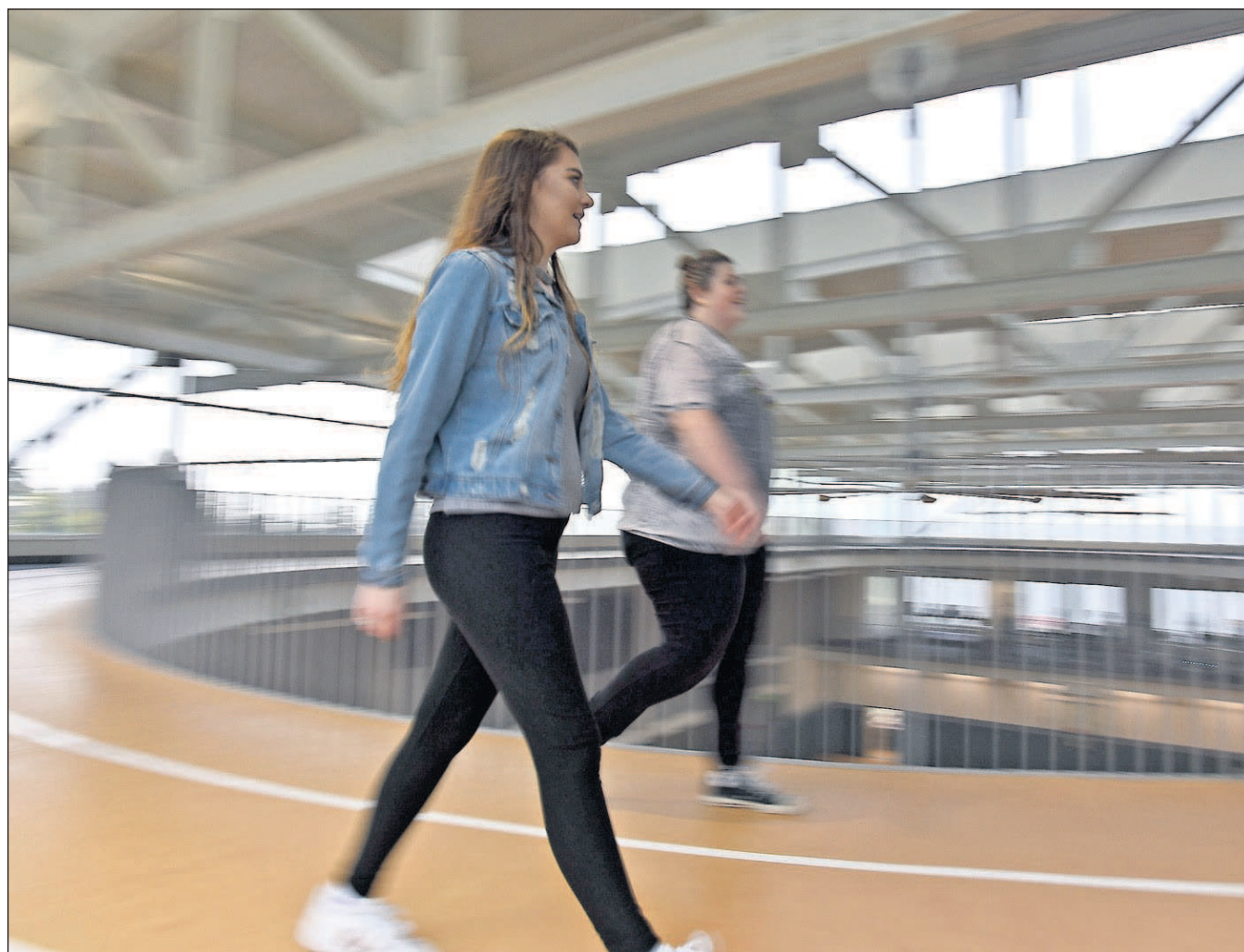


Strolling for strength

Cancer survivors look to new county walking program for exercise



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

People make their way around the track at Patriot Hall on the Clatsop Community College campus as part of the 'Step it Up!' walking program.

By JACK HEFFERNAN
The Daily Astorian

A typical Astoria wind gust caused the hatchback on Teri Keippela's car to jolt upward as she was holding it.

She had recently undergone treatment for a form of cancer that doctors believed would kill her within a year or two, and the strain from the sudden movement caused Keippela — 61 at the time — to hurt her back.

"Who would've thought about such a little thing? But after cancer sometimes, small problems can be more sensitive," Keippela said.

To remedy the pain and prevent future accidents, she forced herself to walk. Seven years later, and in good shape despite the original prognosis, she is helping others with cancer do the same.

See WALKING, Page 7A



Walkers with the program — designed to support cancer survivors — admire the view from the track at Patriot Hall.



Organizers of the 'Step it Up!' program encourage family and friends of cancer survivors to participate.



Cougar sightings have unsettled neighborhoods in Oregon this year.

Cougar? Neighbors report strange noises

Details were sparse

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

A rustling in the bushes, harsh growls, sounds of a struggle and a chorus of dogs losing their minds left some Astorians convinced a cougar passed through their neighborhood Monday night.

Astoria police received a report of a possible cougar sighting on the 500 block of Duane Street the next day, but absent anyone laying eyes on an actual big cat or snapping a photo, the police are not sure if the animal people heard was a cougar or something else.

The report they received was sparse on details, Deputy Chief Eric Halverson said. The people who reported the incident acknowledged they did not see the animal. They told police they heard something in the bushes that they believed was a large predator and also thought they heard another animal being attacked. On Facebook, several residents of the neighborhood described hearing similar noises, and other people chimed in about possible sightings elsewhere in Astoria. So far, police have only received the one call.

"We live in an area where we have forested areas up against the city," Halverson noted.

There are regular wildlife encounters police respond to, from more routine calls about injured deer to much rarer sightings of cougars. The last confirmed cougar sighting in Astoria occurred in 2012, and before that in 2009, according to police records.

Astoria police conferred with the Oregon State Police's fish and game unit as well as the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, but said the agencies have not had any reports of recent cougar activity in Astoria.

"Obviously we'd want to know if somebody believes one of these animals is creating an imminent threat," Halverson said.

The state's Fish and Wildlife Department devotes several webpages to educating people about how to live with wildlife. When it comes to living with cougars, the state recommends keeping pets indoors at dawn and dusk and also feeding those pets indoors. People should not feed wildlife, since this may attract cougars as well. They should be aware of places where deer or elk concentrate.

See COUGAR, Page 7A

Alderbrook residents petition to keep Birch Field

City wants to sell the park

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

Alderbrook wants its park back.

Dozens of residents of the east side neighborhood plan to petition the Astoria City Council at a May 7 meeting to keep Birch Field as a city park. The city has provided time for them to make a presentation about their hopes for the marshy baseball field at the corner of 49th Street and Birch Street.

In February, the City Council asked staff to begin taking steps to delist the park, an action that would ultimately include a hearing and opportunities for public input. The councilors hoped delisting Birch Field might pave the way for housing at the site and relieve the Parks and Recreation Department of the responsibility of caring for a park that is underused. Alderbrook residents, who gathered for a community meeting over the weekend, disagree. They said the park is an important green space in the neighborhood and should be improved as a

park, not as a place to build houses.

Led by Lisa Morley, the residents plan to form the Friends of Birch Field and Park and convince the city to keep the site as a park. They want to take over maintenance and, eventually, turn it from a barren site into a multi-use park. While there is some disagreement about what such a park might include in the future, the group was united in their desire to keep Birch Field a park.

Friends groups exist for other parks around the city,

See PARK, Page 7A



Katie Frankowicz/The Daily Astorian

Astoria City Councilor Bruce Jones and Alderbrook resident Lisa Morley talk to neighbors about options for Birch Field, a park in Alderbrook the City Council plans to put up for sale.

