



Photos from Margo Lalich

Two field officers work on mapping households in a refugee camp in Bangladesh.

## Nurse: Volunteers around the world

Continued from Page 1A

As of April, there are more than 781,000 Rohingya refugees living in camps and settlements, according to the BBC. The Rohingya, an ethnic Muslim minority, have been driven out of their home country of Myanmar since 2015 due to religious persecution.

For the past 20 years, Lalich has interwoven a local career in public health with frequent trips to volunteer at refugee camps around the world. Her life reflects a blended passion for connecting with other cultures and health care, two ideas both deeply rooted in her upbringing.

### Child of ‘adventurers’

Born in Liberia, Lalich was the child of “adventurers,” as she called them, who met in Greece during her mother’s stint working with Hungarian refugees in Europe in the 1950s. Over the course of her childhood, Lalich grew to love learning about different cultures and experiences.

Lalich decided to study sociology at the University of Washington. But as she studied, she couldn’t help but long for travel.

To help finance her adventures, she worked as a fisherman in Alaska, where she met the father of her children — the man she eventually moved to Clatsop County for in 1987. She received a nursing degree from Clatsop Community College and began work as a nurse at Providence Seaside Hospital for 10 years before joining the county in 1998 as a public health nurse.

“I’ve always had a passion for public health,” she said. “Whether it’s in Clatsop County or a refugee camp, standards for public health are the same. It’s water and sanitation, basic hygiene ... it’s taking care of basic needs.”

After receiving her master’s in public health, Lalich



Female community health workers train before going into the field at a refugee camp in Bangladesh.



Rohingya refugees can wait in line for water two times a day at a refugee camp in Bangladesh.

balanced her love for working abroad and keeping a home base for her family. In 2002 she transitioned into working full-time with the county to help manage the public health program, including the county’s immunization strategy, emergency preparedness and other services before becoming the director in 2010.

Lalich stepped down in 2013 to pursue an opportunity to be the director of the Multnomah Education Ser-

vice District.

She found her experience working out in the field as a significant asset while addressing emergency management at home.

“It’s really informed my practice. We have a very cumbersome system of practice in this country. When you work in other places that aren’t burdened by complexities, you get to focus on the issues,” she said. “Emergency response is a perfect example. Here it

is so complex, we make so many assumptions. And yet you can do a lot to take care of a lot of people. Our expectations are just higher here. Keeping that in perspective is a tremendous asset.”

### Daunting scale

Some aspects of working abroad will always be different. The sheer scale of people who need treatment at one time is daunting. Some of the most specific challenges to treating public health in camps are the lack of public infrastructure and dangerously low vaccination rates for preventable diseases.

“People are dying on a daily basis from things we don’t even think about here,” she said.

But to Lalich, her passion to serve is driven by a belief that human suffering doesn’t have borders.

“I’m aware that I’m in a different environment. But we see trauma in our own communities — it just presents differently,” she said. “I guess I feel like a chameleon: I deploy and I adapt. I feel like I’m coming home when I deploy. I’m not thinking about lack of resources, or my discomfort. I just see what is in front of me and what needs to be done.”

### Last trip

After 20 years, Lalich decided to make her trip to Bangladesh her last.

After 30 years of living in Clatsop County, she intends to move away from Cannon Beach to pursue more independent projects related to public health. But one lesson will stay with her wherever she goes next.

“When I come back (to the United States), I recognize it’s purely luck and circumstance I was born where I was, and not a refugee somewhere else. I never take that for granted,” she said. “So I take the best of what I have experienced and try to share that with others.”

## Rape kits: Tracking system in the works

Continued from Page 1A

Oregon State Police estimate they will have largely overcome the backlog by the end of this year.

“It is too soon to tell if these actions will eliminate the current backlog as many of these changes occurred recently,” auditors with the Secretary of State’s Office wrote. “Yet OSP has shown substantial improvement in the number of kits processed in late 2017 and early 2018 while the statewide backlog has been significantly reduced.”

“Melissa’s Law,” contained in Senate Bill 1571, was named for 14-year-old Melissa Bittler, who was assaulted and killed by a serial rapist across the street from her family’s northeast Portland home in December 2001.

At the time of her death, sexual assault kits from at least two other young victims attacked by the same rapist four years earlier sat unprocessed on evidence shelves at Portland Police Bureau. They were tested only after detectives investigating Bittler’s case noticed similarities in the attacks and sent the kits to the forensic lab for testing.

“In the wake of #MeToo and revelations of multiple high-profile cases of sexual assault and harassment, a light is being shown on the injustices many face on a daily basis — especially individuals who do not have the power or ability to call out their abusers,” Secretary of State Dennis Richardson said in a statement. “As a husband and as a father of eight daughters, I have a special concern for the risks women face in their everyday lives, and I will always advocate for a safe environment and justice for all Oregonians.”

The kits typically contain hair and body fluids from the victim and, in some cases, similar samples from the attacker, which can be used to identify a DNA profile.

The law requires police to pick up a kit within seven days after notification from a hospital and submit it to forensic lab for testing within 14 days.

State lawmakers boosted the Oregon State Police’s

budget by \$1.5 million, specifically to add five new positions to help with processing the kits.

Given the public interest in the untested kits, auditors recommend that the state police publish the progress of testing more frequently on their website, as public labs in Texas, Idaho and Florida have done.

State police started a project modeling the Houston, Texas, website within a week of discussing the idea with auditors, wrote Capt. Alex Gardner, director of the OSP Forensic Services Division, in a response to the audit report.

The webpage is up and accessible using the Chrome browser, but additional enhancements may be needed, Gardner noted.

Auditors also recommend that state police launch a tracking system where victims can see results.

A tracking system project modeled after one at the Portland Police Bureau also is in the works, Gardner said. The agency has received a grant to fund the project and plans to deploy it before the end of this year, he said.

The testing of sexual assault kits has led to neglect in processing DNA samples from the scenes of felony property crimes, auditors noted. They asked Oregon State Police to come up with a plan for addressing DNA testing from those crimes.

“OSP decided to suspend analysis of DNA evidence for property crimes to focus on (sexual assault) kits. This creates a risk of a future backlog of property crime evidence at local law enforcement agencies,” auditors wrote.

State police will soon have enough capacity and experience from addressing the sexual assault kit backlog to find a balance in allocating resources for DNA analysis of property crimes, Gardner wrote. He estimated that the lab could begin accepting some DNA work on property crime investigations by early 2019.

*The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.*

## Broadband: NoaNet provides broadband infrastructure

Continued from Page 1A

Early adopters of broadband are usually cities, police agencies, fire departments, hospitals and larger businesses needing a faster connection, he said, followed by medium- and small-businesses.

“Generally we see a growth and expansion in the business community first,” Walker said. “Residential internet lags behind.”

Clatsop County is mainly provided home internet services through CenturyLink and Charter Communications. While NoaNet provides

broadband infrastructure, other companies would provide any additional retail internet.

Anacortes, Washington, is exploring a municipal broadband system to provide more affordable and reliable connection, with NoaNet one of the possible partners. Sandy, in Clackamas County formed a nonprofit broadband utility called SandyNet that is available to businesses and individuals.

“When the growth in access in broadband exists, the communities grow and develop as well,” Walker said.

## Bond Street: Work will occur in segments

Continued from Page 1A

anything that could possibly be done to minimize the risk has been done and will be done throughout this process.”

The work to shore up the slide and reopen the street will occur in segments.

Since last year, the city has changed little about the project except for the type of gravity wall it plans to set against the slide. Originally, the plan was to use concrete blocks, but Harrington said there were concerns about the ability of local manufacturers to supply enough blocks within the city’s time frame.

Now, the city plans to go with a rock wall common to some highway projects led by the Oregon Department of Transportation. Rocks will be bound up in a strong mesh baskets. This type of wall allows for improved drainage, provides for better performance



City of Astoria

An aerial view of the Bond Street slide near Uniontown.

in a seismic event and can be built quickly, Harrington said.

The wall will also provide a less-inviting surface for any would-be graffiti artists. Plants often grow between and around the rocks, causing the wall to eventually form a more natural-looking barrier.

Bond Street, which narrows from a 32-foot wide two-

lane road to a 15-foot one-lane road where the slide hit, will be widened to about 20 feet. The street will be wide enough to allow two cars to pass in opposite directions, but not wide enough to risk unsettling the area even more, Harrington said. The plan still needs to receive several authorizations.

**Graduation 2018**  
To honor and congratulate the Class of 2018

The Daily Astorian is creating a graduation publication for our local high schools that will publish on **Wednesday, May 30th**. This full-color publication will include biographies and pictures of each valedictorian and salutatorian, name and photo of each 2018 graduate and special congratulation ads from local businesses, family and friends.

*The graduation schedule is as follows:*

- JEWELL**  
Saturday, June 2 @ 2pm
- WARRENTON**  
Friday, June 8 @ 7pm
- ASTORIA**  
Saturday, June 9 @ 4pm
- KNAPPA**  
Saturday, June 9 @ 7pm
- SEASIDE**  
Monday, June 11 @ 8pm

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