

## FAIR OUTLOOK

AFTER BUDGET WOES, CLATSOP COUNTY FAIR SEEKS BROADER APPEAL



John Lewis, operations manager for the Clatsop County Fair and Expo, drives a tractor on the fairgrounds.

Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

By JACK HEFFERNAN  
The Daily Astorian

Standing outside the arena at the Clatsop County Fairgrounds, John Lewis had a moment of nostalgia thinking about a county fair he attended near Spokane, Washington.

"I remember spending hours there and never running out of things to look at," Lewis said.

One day, he hopes to have the same feeling here.

"I know people that live in Warrenton that don't come here but drive all the way down to the Tillamook County Fair," said Lewis, shaking his head. "I'm really looking to turn that around."

Lewis officially became the county fair and Expo's operations manager this month after leading on an interim basis for most of the year.

While recovering from budget constraints that have hampered the fair, Lewis is looking to balance conservative spending practices with pushes for more attractions and healthier crowd sizes.

"It's been a tough couple of years here, but everybody feels like we're on the right track and moving ahead," said Mike Autio, the Fair Board's chairman.

The fair — host of two of the largest annual local galas in the Astoria-Warrenton Crab, Seafood & Wine Festival and the Scandinavian Midsummer Festival — used nearly all of its \$438,000 materials and services budget halfway through



A cow gets a cool shower during the Clatsop County Fair last year.

the last fiscal year, forcing county commissioners to approve \$100,000 in contingency funding.

In March, Fair and Expo Manager Kathi Mattinen was placed on administrative leave, and the board held a closed-door executive session to consider the dismissal, discipline or complaints against a public employee.

After the executive session, Mattinen left the fairgrounds holding a box of items from her office. She has since

decided to retire, Autio said.

In the past few months, Lewis — as the maintenance supervisor — has handled most tasks at the fairgrounds. The fair has had a maintenance technician to keep up the fairgrounds before, but Lewis — hired last year after owning a construction company for six years — was brought in to evaluate larger facility needs.

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John Lewis | operations manager for the Clatsop County Fair and Expo

## Preschool advocates prepare for pilot

Hope is to expand early education

By EDWARD STRATTON  
The Daily Astorian

Researchers who want to attract investors to expand preschool for low-income families in Clatsop and Tillamook counties hope to begin a \$2 million pilot study for up to 60 children as early as the fall of 2019.

Clatsop County received a Pay for Success grant in 2016 from the U.S. Department of Education to study the preschool needs, opportunities and challenges of the North Coast and the feasibility of expanding high-quality preschool.

The study was led by Dan Gaffney, a retired educator from Seaside, and researchers with Social Finance, a nonprofit focused on social issues. Way to Wellville, a community wellness challenge, secured a grant to bring in data scientists from the Sorenson Impact Center to look at connections between preschool and future academic success.



Dan Gaffney

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## Boys hurt in fireworks mishaps

Separate incidents in Gearhart, Seaside

By R.J. MARX  
The Daily Astorian

Three boys were hospitalized Wednesday night after fireworks exploded in separate incidents in Gearhart and Seaside.

Young people were playing on Gearhart Beach near Pacific Way with illegal mortar fireworks at about 10 p.m., Gearhart Fire Chief Bill Eddy said. One of the fireworks went off in one of the boy's hands, Eddy said, causing "some pretty massive damage to that hand, plus the hand he pulled the firework on."

The boy was taken to Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria.

A second boy near the explosion told responders he was unable to hear as a result of the blast, Eddy said. He was also taken to the hospital.

The names of the injured boys were not available.

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## Upward Bound bridges summer learning gap

Federal money helps college with academy

By EDWARD STRATTON  
The Daily Astorian

Curtis Kunde said he could be getting more hours at his ice cream parlor job if he wasn't attending Upward Bound Summer Academy, a federally funded summer school run by Clatsop Community College.

But the impact of his schooling isn't lost on Kunde, a Seaside High School student who recently used the sign lan-

guage he learned at the academy to communicate with a group of deaf customers.

"It's happened once this year, once last year," Kunde said. "And there's a big difference for me, being able to communicate to them."

Kunde is one of nearly 30 students from Astoria, Warrenton and Seaside attending the academy, a combination of academic refreshers, a foreign language crash course, outdoor community projects, field trips and college exploration.

The academy is funded by TRIO, a nationwide network of educational opportunity programs for students from

disadvantaged backgrounds funded by the U.S. Department of Education. Upward Bound provides about 70 students in Clatsop County intensive advice and academic support. The less-intensive Talent Search provides information, college visits and application assistance to more than 600 students in the sixth to 12th grades.

Students in the summer academy spend their mornings in class studying math, English and a foreign language. Jon Graves, the academy's director, said that after French,

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Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Sign language instructor Patrick McConahay, center, leads students in a game of Go Fish Tuesday during the Upward Bound Summer Academy at Clatsop Community College.

