

Fair: 'Everybody's really excited'

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Suddenly, he was making business decisions as well.

"I'll literally be in the office part of the day and then be outside on a tractor," Lewis said.

Combined roles

After some turnover, the fair is now fully staffed. Instead of searching for a new fair manager, the board decided to permanently hire Lewis, who will continue filling the combined roles. The decision was partially a cost-saving move, Autio said.

"We sort of discovered, you know, that all the administrative stuff involves the facilities in some way," he said.

The fair's budget for the new fiscal year that began in July is \$1.3 million, a slight decrease from last year. Last year's budget was a 10 percent drop from the previous cycle.

"We were pretty aggressive about trying to make sure our budget was balanced this year," Autio said. "I think, budget-wise, we're pretty good going ahead."

Lewis pointed to a number of decisions made by the fair last year as examples of poor fiscal choices. For last year's Montgomery Gentry concert, for instance, the fair spent \$3,000 on shuttle buses that only 16 people used.

"You have to run it like a business and not like a playground with a big budget because that's not what it is," Lewis said.

Lewis has searched for new entertainment options in an effort to close the gap between expenses and revenue. In lieu of a BMX exhibit, which cost \$8,000 last year without including hotel costs for riders, this year's fair will have a monster truck ride that will cost \$5 per person. As part of the agreement, the fair will collect a percentage of those proceeds and not pay anything for the event.

"We're still going to have entertainment, and it's still going to cost us, but hopefully not as much," Lewis said. "I had success finding things that we didn't even have to pay for."

Lewis made a priority, starting with this year's fair that



John Lewis attaches a vehicle to a tractor.

Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian



Livestock wait to be shown in the 4-H competition at the Clatsop County Fair last year.

begins later this month, of having more attractions to spread across the fair. Those will include fire trucks from different departments each day, jeep races, a pig roast and an additional free concert.

Located in an unincorporated area of the county off state Highway 202 and away from view, the fair has become known primarily for its abundance of livestock, but Lewis wants to alter that perception.

"Here, you walk around for maybe an hour and you've pretty much seen everything," Lewis said. "It's really a 4-H fair, but I'm hoping to add things that will make people in town want to come out here. I really think it's going to be the best fair we've had in years."

Other events

On top of planning for the fair, Lewis also reached out to the organizers of an annual Civil War re-enactment when they announced they were leaving Fort Stevens State Park after 27 years. The event will be held at the fairgrounds in September.

"He just showed a lot of initiative in trying to bring more people to the fairgrounds," Autio said. "He brought a lot of momentum that made us feel like we were headed in the right direction."

Since Lewis was promoted, the Fair Board has taken a more active role in brainstorming possible entertainment options. Board member Paul Mitchell spearheaded the effort to bring Diamond Rio — this year's headline concert

— to the fair, and board member Kallie Linder increased the fair's social media engagement to elicit additional ideas.

"We have a lot more on one now about the different entertainment we can get," Lewis said. "It's just tremendous involvement."

To increase fair attendance — 12,605 people came out last year — while still adhering to budget constraints, the fair will not perform any major capital outlay projects this year. It also has increased its contingency fund by 62 percent.

"This will give them an opportunity to evaluate things, see what their needs are for the (next) fiscal year," said county Budget and Finance Director Monica Steele, who worked closely with the Fair Board to craft this year's budget.

If more funds are freed for future budgets, Lewis' ideas include a revamp of the horse barn and a new parking lot on the north side of the fairgrounds.

Both immediately and in the future, Lewis hopes the county fair will feel similar to the one he experienced in Spokane or the one in Tillamook that some county residents have preferred.

"It's a whole different ballgame," Lewis said. "Everybody's really excited."



Photos by Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian
Students in Brian Vollner's art course are conceptualizing how to turn their photos of plants and wildlife from around the North Coast into a large chalk mural they will draw later this month outside the Barbey Maritime Center.

Academy: Program begins recruiting in the fall at local schools

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German and Spanish, students were asking for American Sign Language. In 2013, sign language displaced German as the third most popular non-English language course taken in college after Spanish and French, according to the Modern Language Association.

"Some students do better with visual languages," said Patrick McConahay, an instructor.

McConahay, who has taught at the college for more than 20 years, took students this summer through numbers, colors, commerce and other conversational basics of signing, finishing his class with a silent game of Go Fish.

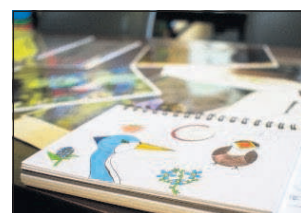
Local teachers pitch the summer academy several afternoon projects for students. This year, students are preparing a stand-up comedy routine, a visitor booklet for the Astoria Riverwalk and a photography exhibit.

Students in Brian Vollner's Creatures of the Columbia program have been visiting parks around the county, compiling photos and samples of local plants and animals as source material for a 30-foot-wide mural inspired by the style of Charley Harper, an American modernist artist known for his wildlife prints. The mural will be drawn in chalk near the Barbey Maritime Center.

Most of the students in Vollner's project were attracted by their interest in nature and art. Students will incorporate their individual sketches into a mural of stacked circles, each a different size and reprinting a different level of life on the North Coast.

"We're taking all the different places we've been to and combining it, so it's not just defining Cullaby Lake or just that one park," Alexis Miller, of Astoria, said. "It's bringing it all together, so it's unique."

The mural, comedy rou-



Warrenton high schooler Marlie Annat's sketchbook reflects the style of Charley Harper, an American modernist famous for his wildlife prints. Harper's style will inspire a large chalk mural Annat and other students in the Upward Bound Summer Academy are designing.

tines, booklets and photos will all be on display during a public finale for the academy from 6 to 7 p.m. July 18 at the maritime center.

Each Friday, students go on field trips to a ropes course, local state parks and the Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum in McMinnville. They will spend the final week of the academy living in dorms at Southwest Oregon Community College, learning about estuaries and nearshore environments at the Oregon Institute of Marine Biology in Charleston.

"The kids have said for many years that they want a residential component, so we'll give them a week living in dorms, eating at the cafeteria," Graves said.

College is a fair bet for many students involved in Upward Bound. Students in the program averaged a 98 percent high school graduation rate between 2013 and last year, compared to 75 percent or less overall at Astoria, Warrenton and Seaside. Nearly 80 percent of high school graduates in Upward Bound last year started college the following fall, compared to 61 percent of county graduates overall.

The Upward Bound program begins recruiting in the fall at local high schools and through the college.

Study: Pilot program could cost about \$2 million

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The study concluded that about 40 percent of 3- and 4-year-olds within 300 percent of the federal poverty level in Clatsop and Tillamook counties are not receiving preschool. The lack of preschool is particularly high among low-income students and English language learners. The quality of preschool in the counties also varies widely.

"There's strong evidence that says when somebody has high-quality preschool, they do well in third grade, which is the No. 1 predictor of high school graduation," Gaffney said. "But that means that they go on and they have higher earning power. They are actually paying taxes, as opposed to needing social services, which are supported by taxes."

In the Pay for Success model, also known as social impact bonds, private investors pay for social programs and get repaid with interest if those programs save the public money. If the public savings are not realized, investors lose some or all of their money. The model has been used in several places around the country, including Illinois, Utah and Colorado.

The ultimate hope locally



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian
A study found a significant number of children on the North Coast miss out on preschool.

is that investors will pay for around 300 preschool slots. The goal had been 600, Gaffney said, but researchers cut out 3-year-olds because of the increased regulations and costs associated with transporting the younger children.

The study recommended a three-year, locally funded pilot study offering high-quality preschool for up to 60 additional 4- and 5-year-olds annually to establish a successful track record before seeking out investors. The pilot program would be overseen by

the Northwest Early Learning Hub. The hub is part of the Northwest Regional Education Service District providing support services to school districts.

The pilot program could cost about \$2 million, including transporting students and increasing the professional development and pay of preschool teachers, Gaffney said. The hope is that much of the cost can be covered by in-kind contributions from entities such as school districts and state groups involved in early childhood education.

Gaffney is pursuing a Meyer Memorial Trust grant to fine-tune a pilot model and develop the partnerships to pay for it.

Astoria, Warrenton and Jewell have all added in-house preschools in recent years. Craig Hoppes, the superintendent in Astoria, said his school district offers 21 preschool slots in-house but is looking at all options to expand the opportunity to all children before they reach kindergarten.

"We know that kids in our preschool program perform very well" in kindergarten, he said.

Despite the high cost of implementing high-quality

preschool, the study concluded, society would save more long term by improved academic performance, higher lifetime earnings, reduced chronic health issues, less need for social services and less potential involvement in the criminal justice system.

"Over a child's lifetime, there would be savings of about \$14,500," Gaffney said.



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Fireworks: 'Don't play with illegal fireworks'

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Eddy said this was the first Gearhart fire response on the Fourth of July in "seven or eight years." The last time, a girl near Del Rey Beach burned her feet after stepping into a buried fire pit.

The message, Eddy said, is "don't play with illegal fireworks."

Gearhart Police Chief Jeff

Bowman said no charges have been issued as a result of Wednesday's incident, but the investigation remains open.

In Seaside, meanwhile, a "boy burned his hand pretty good" using fireworks on the Prom, Seaside Fire Department Division Chief Chris Dugan said.

The boy, whose name has not been released, was taken

to Providence Seaside Hospital with minor injuries, Dugan said.

In another incident, Seaside police arrested a man after he allegedly dropped mortar-style fireworks into the fire pits of other people on the beach.

Ruslan Ivanchenko, 18, of Portland, was charged with reckless endangering, disorderly conduct and possession of alcohol by a minor.