

Firefighters battle to curb arson fire before winds return

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Associated Press



A firefighter battles the Holy Fire burning in the Cleveland National Forest along a hillside at Temescal Valley in Corona, Calif.

AP Photo/Ringo H.W. Chiu

water from garden hoses.

Hundreds more firefighters joined the effort, bringing the total to 1,200. The growing fire has blackened 28 square miles of timber and brush and is only 5 percent contained. More than 20,000 people have been evacuated.

Fifty miles west of the fire, residents in the city of Long Beach awoke today to ash on their cars and in their yards.

Brown's proclamation said thousands of homes were threatened by the fire in the foothills above Lake Elsinore and nearby communities and

ordered state agencies to help local governments.

A resident of Holy Jim Canyon in the forest was scheduled for a court hearing today on charges that he deliberately set the fire.

Forrest Clark, 51, is charged with arson and other crimes

and could face life in prison if convicted. It wasn't immediately known if he had a lawyer.

Michael Milligan, chief of the Holy Jim Volunteer Fire Department, has told the Orange County Register that Clark had a decade-long feud with neighbors and sent threatening emails last week, including one that said, "this place will burn." Ironically, his cabin was the only one in the canyon to survive the flames, the newspaper reported.

As flames raged closer to foothill homes on Thursday, some residents ignoring evacuation orders stood in driveways or on top of roofs and used garden hoses to wet down their property as smoke billowed around them.

Joe Rodriguez, 38, used a power washer on his patio in the McVicker Canyon Park neighborhood.

"Until this thing is barking at my door, I'm going to stick with it," he told the San Bernardino Sun.

Firefighters fought a desperate battle as huge flames came within yards of some homes,

feeding on dense, dry chaparral and propelled by 20-mph gusts. They want to encircle the fire before it can devour neighborhoods and take lives, as gigantic fires still burning in Northern California have done.

"Our main focus this afternoon was getting everyone out safely," said Thanh Nguyen, a spokesman for the crews battling the Holy Fire.

Phil Williams, 57, stayed near his home in Brookstone Ranch, an unincorporated community of about 5,000 people. His family and pets evacuated along with most of his neighbors but as a member of the local water district, he stayed to help out.

Late Thursday night, he described seeing 70-foot-tall flames creeping within 150 yards of his large yard.

"It's all tinder and as soon as the flames hit it, it's gone," he said. "You can hear the fire coming. It truly does roar."

Williams, who had cut back brush around the home, said he planned to "wait for the sun's up, see what's left. Not much more than you can do."



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Morrison Pierce, who rents a studio in Michael Bruhn's Art Garden, is preparing for his September exhibit at the McVarish Gallery.

Art: Space to be more visible to downtown community

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ries of Little Red Riding Hood symbolizing a child's journey into adulthood, to horses escaping a carousel — a nod to his own escape from the rat race of Las Vegas. Along with his art, de'Masi hopes to eventually start selling Astoria-themed souvenirs on shirts, mugs and other items.

Next to de'Masi is Morrison Pierce, a bartender and artist who rents a small interior studio. Surrounded by his pieces, a sink and a toilet, the studio provides a private work space for Pierce, who has been coming in each morning at 7 to prepare for "America is Beautiful," his upcoming exhibit about the side effects of war at the McVarish Gallery.

"I don't really like to do pretty pictures," Pierce said of his paintings, backed by pink to draw the viewer in but centered around recreations of horrific, real-life

war scenes from World War II. "Pretty pictures don't do anything for society."

The newest tenant in Bruhn's building is Astoria Visual Arts, which has been located in the Josephson Fish Station on Pier 11. Annie Eskelin, director of the regional arts nonprofit, said it had been looking for a new, more accessible location for some time before connecting with Bruhn around the time she was brought on.

While the group will keep studios for artists in residency on Pier 11, the new location will be more visible to the community and used for workshops, pop-up galleries and other events, Eskelin said.

She and Pierce see a growing hub of artists in the neighborhood, with the Astoria Makers and Audrey Long Ceramics recently opened next door on Duane Street. Another artists' rental space is being built out in

the former YMCA building several blocks east.

"It's going to be a whole big collective of arts," Eskelin said of the neighborhood.

Along with de'Masi, Astoria Visual Arts will open its new space at the Art Garden during Second Saturday Artwalk, featuring assemblage artists Susan Darms and Carol Scott. The group is taking proposals from the public at astoriavisualarts@gmail.com on future exhibits for the Art Garden.

Although his plans for a market at 11th and Duane haven't materialized, Bruhn said he's pleased with how the space is filling out. Along with the artists' studios are hot dog food cart Boomer's All-American Cuisine and, starting this weekend, new burger and taco cart bAKos.

"I'm really excited about it," Bruhn said of the lot. "We're just going to keep improving the building and the lot."

Cart: Burgers, tacos served up at bAKos food cart in Astoria

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ers will include a traditional beef patty topped with cheese sauce or a Korean twist with coleslaw.

Sides will include Mexican-style street corn, house-cut fries and coleslaw. The two will also serve up nachos with any meat topping, or a dessert version piled with cream cheese, cinnamon and sugar.

Evans and Beek plan to continue working at the bistro, a block away, as they build up the business. They will switch off between dinner and lunch shifts, opening

at 11 a.m. Thursday through Sunday, but plan to eventually expand the menu and add breakfast hours, with items such as donut breakfast burgers.

bAKos is next to Boomer's All-American Cuisine, the first food cart brought in by Bruhn as he develops what he has called the Art Garden at 11th and Duane.

The corner used to play host to the food carts Snackbox, DJ's Vinyl Vegan, Good Bowl and Nourish Juice Bar. But the carts dispersed when the property went into foreclosure proceedings. Snack-

lebox and Good Bowl relocated to the foot of 11th Street, near the new location of The Naked Lemon bakery, while Nourish Juice Bar took up residence in the Astor Hotel Building.

Boomer's and bAKos make up the fourth food cart pod in Astoria, with small groups of carts clustered around Reach Break Brewing, Astoria Eco Wash and Pier 11.

"This feels like a good spot to be, and it's where it was before," Beek said of the 11th Street pod. "It's still got a little bit of the history right here."

Youth: State faces a high rate of foster care placements

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third biggest driver of foster care placements, according to statistics from the Oregon Department of Human Services. The percentage of foster care placements due to inadequate housing has increased from 13 percent in 2015 to 17 percent in 2017.

Gov. Kate Brown's office issued a statement on the report stressing the importance of affordable, stable housing in addressing child welfare.

"Oregon's families need support to stay safely together, and the governor is working to bring more housing under development in the state pipeline as well as focusing on root causes that drive children into foster care, such as addiction treatment and recovery, access to comprehensive health care and domestic violence," said Kate Kondayen, a governor's spokeswoman. "The governor is also supporting the Department of Human Services child

welfare division as they work on right-sizing the foster care system."

Some advocates believe mandatory relocation assistance for evicted tenants and rent control policies amid a boom in statewide population and demand for housing could help curb the trend.

"Without statewide tenant protections in Oregon, people are facing displacement, causing their families to either be ripped apart or live on the streets," said Alison McIntosh, of the Oregon Housing Alliance. "Protecting these children should be the first priority" during the state legislative session in January, she said.

A recent state audit shows the Oregon Child Welfare Office is still plagued with no centralized system for reporting child abuse, high caseworker turnover and a lack of follow-through on recommendations from previous routine audits.

The office has a shortage of

foster parents with no plan to augment the number, according to the audit.

WalletHub, a Washington, D.C.-based personal finance website, produces a variety of city and state rankings, as well as reviews of credit cards. The company has released reports ranging from the best credit cards with travel insurance to the best and worst cities for singles to live.

WalletHub released the report on children in poverty in August to commemorate Child Support Awareness Month.

The United States has the seventh highest child poverty rate among 41 economically-developed countries in the European Union and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, according to the United Nations Children's Fund.

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