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Erick Bengel | Features Editor
ebengel@dailyastorian.com

WEEKEND BREAK



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Seaside Story Slam draws from life



Photos by Katherine Lacaze

David Ambrose, of Astoria, shares a story about Stuart, the hitchhiking dog, during the Seaside Story Slam on Jan. 10. The theme for the evening was Luck, and Ambrose was one of eight storytellers who participated in the performance competition.

Eight minutes. No notes. True stories that make you laugh and cry.

By **KATHERINE LACAZE**
For *The Daily Astorian*

Everyone has a story. That's what Sadie Mercer believes.

"It's all part of the human condition," Mercer, owner of Maggie's on the Prom, in Seaside, said. "It doesn't matter what (the story) is, we can relate to it."

Earlier this month, she and her husband, Andy, launched the Seaside Story Slam series, which takes place at the restaurant from 6 to 8 Thursday nights, January through April, with the Grand Slam scheduled for May 2.

It's a simple concept, drawn from a similar competition held monthly at Rhythm & Rye in Olympia, Washington, that Mercer attended one night in the fall and thought, "Seaside needs something like this."

At the Seaside version, patrons at Maggie's can sign up to tell a story that relates to a theme. One by one, in random order, they have up to eight minutes to share a true personal account, told in first-person from memories, which means no using notes or cue cards.

Three judges score the stories based on the following criteria:

- Does the story address the theme?
- Is it compelling? Do you want to know what happens next?
- Does it have a clear beginning, middle and end?

"The end is very important," Mercer told storytellers at a recent slam. "You don't want to forget the end."

The Seaside series was introduced Jan. 3, with eight storytellers and about 40 people in attendance, a dozen of which had "no idea it was story slam," Mercer said. On Jan. 10, another eight storytellers — hailing from Seaside, Astoria and Vancouver, Washington — shared memories pertaining to the chosen theme: Luck.

The winner, Dee Saidi, of Astoria recounted the time she used her friend Doreen's birth certificate to accompany another friend, Kathleen,



ABOVE: Dee Saidi, of Astoria, was the winner of the Seaside Story Slam at Maggie's on the Prom on Jan. 10. The competition takes place each Thursday, with each weekly winner receiving a giftcard and entry into the May 2 Grand Slam. **BELOW:** Kat Metzler, of Seaside, shares a humorous story about her mother, who claimed the 'My Fair Lady' title at the Columbia County Fair. The Seaside Story Slam performance competition runs for several weeks, culminating in a Grand Slam on May 2.



on a spontaneous overnight cruise to the Bahamas in the 1990s. While she made good memories on the trip, she was constantly fretting about

what could happen — especially when the boat lost an engine and she thought they might go under. They made it back to shore safely, without

IF YOU GO

SEASIDE STORY SLAM SERIES

Where: Maggie's on the Prom, 580 Beach Drive, Seaside

When: 6 to 8 p.m. Thursdays through May 2 (Sign-up starts at 5:30 p.m.)

For more information: Call 503-738-6403 or find Seaside Story Slam on Facebook

"Doreen" dying, and Saidi learned a big lesson: Never go on a cruise with your friend's identity.

David Ambrose, of Astoria, talked about his encounter in the 1970s with Stuart, the hitchhiking dog who half-way through the journey "made up his mind to stay in L.A. and have a good time with the other dogs there."

Mary Kemhus, of Seaside, talked about losing vision in her right eye as an 8-year-old during a Fourth of July accident, and the process of gaining back her sight and sense of gratitude.

The stories run the emotional gamut — some are funny and entertaining, others poignant, even sad — and give a bit of insight into the storyteller's life.

Patrons don't have to be a storyteller or judge to participate. They can also provide an anonymous written answer to a Curious Question, which changes each Thursday. The Curious Questions cover a range of topics, from the item a person would want if stranded on a deserted island, to what they would order as their last meal on Death Row. Mercer reads the answers — whether they are simple and straightforward, or clever and comical — during breaks.

The winner of each slam gets a \$20 gift card, entrance into a drawing for a two-night stay at the Oceanfront Inn, and an invitation to participate in the final Grand Slam. Future themes include Second Chance, For the Love of, Courage, Kids Say the Darndest Things, Instincts, Degrees of Separation, and It Seemed Like a Good Idea.