



THE DAILY ASTORIA

146TH YEAR, NO. 148

DailyAstorian.com // THURSDAY, JANUARY 24, 2019

ONE DOLLAR

Graduation rates show improvement

Schools in the county, state still lag behind nation

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Graduation rates across Clatsop County and throughout the state were on the uptick last school year, according to state figures.

The state defines on-time graduation as taking four years. Overall, schools statewide have increased the graduation rate at least five years in a row, slowly creeping up from 72 percent in the 2013-14 school year to 78.7 percent last year.

Oregon schools still lag behind the 84 percent national graduation rate recorded in the 2015-16 school year by the National Center for Education Statistics.

Astoria High School recorded a 77.7 percent graduation rate, which Principal Lynn Jackson said was the highest in his 12 years as an administrator. He pointed toward a focus statewide on making sure students are on track as they enter high school.

“That transition in that eighth- and ninth-grade year, that transition is vital for students creating a solid academic standing,” he said. “It is very difficult to help students catch up on credit or skill deficiencies when they’re in their 11th year.”

Jackson also pointed to Measure 98, passed by voters in 2016 to improve career-technical, college credit and

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Family sues over Warrenton teen’s death

A \$3.4 million claim

By MOLLY YOUNG
The Oregonian

Attorneys for a Warrenton boy killed in 2017 sued Oregon’s child welfare agency Tuesday, alleging the state failed to prevent the 15-year-old’s death.

The lawsuit seeks \$3.4 million for the surviving relatives of Trevor Secord. The Warrenton High School football player died in January 2017 after a pickup truck stuck and killed him on U.S. Highway 101 while he was drinking with friends.

The lawsuit alleges case workers at the state Department of Human Services ignored red flags in the months before he died.

Secord was hospitalized in August 2016 for alcohol poisoning with a blood alcohol level more than five times the legal limit for adults. But case workers decided not to investigate further, according to the complaint.

“Trevor’s mother wanted help in this case,” said Portland attorney David Paul, who filed the lawsuit with Cannon Beach attorney Brent Corwin on behalf of Secord’s estate. The lawsuit identifies Secord’s by a different last name, Crossgrove.

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CLEANING UP BY COW CREEK



Brenna Visser/The Daily Astorian

Ron Weber, a neighbor, is concerned about the blight from an abandoned property.

Neighbors want county to handle derelict property

By BRENNA VISSER
The Daily Astorian

Out near Elsie, neighbors have been watching a house slowly fall apart.

Diane Jette and others who live in Evergreen Acres can’t stand the eyesore and fear the waste from unknown chemicals in the home and several abandoned cars could be polluting nearby Cow Creek.

“God only knows what’s going into the creek,” she said.

Complaints were logged, but no progress was made, largely because the property owner could never be found, according to Clatsop County records. But in October, the county foreclosed on the house over back taxes.

With the property now under the county’s control, some neighbors want the blight taken care of once and for all.

“We want you to clean this up, now, since we know who the owners are,” Ron Weber, a neighbor, told county commissioners Wednesday night.

The situation highlights the complicated issue of derelict and abandoned homes — a problem that has



Brenna Visser/The Daily Astorian

Diane Jette walks through a blighted property near Elsie that has concerned her for years.

been steadily growing. “It’s tough, because if it’s not tax foreclosed, we can provide notices and fines, but otherwise there is no

legal recourse,” said Monica Steele, the interim county manager.

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‘THERE SHOULD BE NO INDIFFERENCE TO RURAL AREAS. (THEY) SHOULD GET THE SAME RESPECT AS ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE COUNTY.’

Ron Weber, a neighbor

Former Astoria city councilor, trolley champion dies

Morden was a prominent community volunteer

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian



Don Morden

Don Morden, a former Astoria city councilor who was instrumental in keeping the Astoria Riverfront Trolley running, died Tuesday.

Morden, 90, “passed peacefully with his daughter by his side,” according to a Facebook post by the trolley’s “Old 300” group.

“Don loved the Old 300 and was a dedicated volunteer,” they wrote. “He will be missed.”

Morden had the distinction of being the first Astorian to ride the trolley after Robert “Jake” Jacob found it in Gales Creek, former Mayor Willis

Van Dusen recalled.

“Don Morden was a great Astorian and will be missed,” Van Dusen said. “He was at the top of his field in the areas he cared most about. Don was a successful businessman, a dynamic city councilor, civic activist, he was a pillar in his church, a loving father and most important a wonderful husband to the love of his life, Anne.”

“It was a privilege to work with Don,” Van Dusen added. Morden and Van Dusen’s service on the City Council overlapped. “He will be remembered as a man who made his town a better place to live,” he said. “Don was a good friend of Astoria

and a good friend of mine.”

Morden represented the city’s South Slope neighborhoods on the City Council for 12 years until he decided to retire from office in 2004. During his time on the council, Coast Guard housing was developed in his ward and Mill Pond Village, previously a vacant and contaminated lumber mill site, took shape on the east end.

Morden also served on the Astoria School Board, as well as on city steering committees. He was an original board member of the Sunset Empire Transportation District.

Morden was born in Iowa but later lived in Illinois and Southern California. He moved to Astoria with his family in 1974.

He and his wife, Anne, were high

school sweethearts, born only five days apart. They raised four children and founded Columbia Chocolates in Astoria. Don Morden was an active swimmer and runner during his early years in Astoria, participating in races like the Great Columbia Crossing, Van Dusen said.

Don and Anne Morden were known as dedicated community volunteers, and volunteered at the Columbia River Maritime Museum, in particular, for more than 20 years.

In 1992, the couple received the George Award, a prestigious local honor recognizing the people who “consistently stepped forward to meet community needs, instead of ‘letting George do it.’”

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