

AG EDUCATION REVIVED



Marcus Rasmussen's lamb chews on another lamb's ear.

Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

An infusion of state money from ballot measure

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Marcus Rasmussen, a junior at Astoria High School, was decked out in a blue jacket and slacks — official dress of the National FFA Organization — as he strode into the Big O Saloon & General Store on Monday, a lamb tucked under one arm.

After some nuzzling and a \$20 donation from employee Shelly Searls to keep the lamb moving, Rasmussen was off to collect homage from the next business on his fundraising tour.

Signs of the National FFA Organization — the former Future Farmers of America — have begun reappearing around the Astoria School District after a decadelong hiatus, as the high school rebuilds the agriculture education and leadership program that dates to 1969 but was felled by budget cuts in the late 2000s.

Oregon voters in 2016 passed Measure 98, which promised up to \$400 per student to improve the state's dismal graduation rate, expand hands-on learning opportunities and improve college readiness. The measure has translated into an extra \$250,000 to \$300,000 annually to spend on the measure's goals, Lynn Jackson, the high school principal, said.

Among improved counseling, expanded college-level offerings and other efforts, Astoria began creating career pathways for students in business and natural resources, including fisheries and agriculture. The school district added instructor Tess Hamby to teach wood shop and agricultural courses while restarting the high school's FFA program, which now numbers more than 20.

Many students in FFA also belong to 4-H, a similar youth development organization based around agricultural competitions that culminate each year



Shelly Searls, left, pets a lamb brought into the Big O Saloon & General Store by Marcus Rasmussen and Jon Clark.



Students get their hands dirty in a horticulture class at Astoria High School.

in county and state fairs. But FFA takes kids beyond showing at fairs into more leadership and professional development exercises, such as public speaking and job interviews, Hamby said.

"A big part of the reason we're so well-funded by student success funds, Measure 98, is because we fall directly into" career-technical education, she said. "We help with high school drop-

out rates. We help with career readiness and college exploration, all of that."

During the fall term, Hamby taught students about animal science and an introduction to the agriculture industry. This term, she has more than 30 students enrolled in horticulture, which returned with FFA for the first time in a decade. Such classes keep students more engaged than sitting in a lecture hall, Hamby said.

"Students are going to be more likely to take a class where they're doing things," she said. "You can tell when students are sitting there doing mindless work. This is mind-on work."

Junior Allison Keeling had been exposed to horticulture by her mother, a garden center manager at Fred Meyer in Warrenton. A 4-H member the last four years, she heard about Hamby's classes and signed up for as many as

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City Council mulls height limits along waterfront

A two-story limit in Bridge Vista suggested

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

Tall buildings like a contentious four-story hotel approved in December could become a thing of the past along one section of the Astoria riverfront.

At a meeting Tuesday night, the City Council recommended limiting the height of new construction to only two stories — or about 28 feet — along the riverfront from Portway Street to Second Street.

The suggestion, along with other possible code changes to the Bridge Vista portion of the city's Riverfront Vision Plan, will need to pass muster in a public hearing in front of the Planning Commission at the end of March. If endorsed by the commission, the new limit would come back to the City Council for a final decision in May.

City code allows a maximum height of 45 feet in Bridge Vista. The guidelines for development were finalized in 2015.

City Councilor Roger Rocka suggested reducing the height limit and was eagerly supported by Councilor Joan Herman and Councilor Jessamyn West.

The council took a first look at a number of possible tweaks to Bridge Vista to address confusion about what was required of developers and what was desired in the area. Questions about the standards arose in 2018, most notably around the proposal to build the four-story Fairfield Inn and Suites at the base of Second Street.

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Former interns sue over sex harassment

One claims she reached out to Sen. Johnson

By PARIS ACHEN
and CLAIRE WITHYCOMBE
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Two women who interned at the state Capitol are suing a former state senator who they say sexually harassed them.

They are also suing lawmakers and legislative leadership for creating a hostile work environment that they claim allowed sexual harassment to go unchecked.

Adrianna Martin-Wyatt and Anne Montgomery filed suit in Marion County Circuit Court on Monday against Jeff Kruse, a Republican who represented the Roseburg area in the state Senate until he resigned in March in the wake of sexual harassment allegations.

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AFTER A FIRE, A SWEET REUNION

Girl gets replica of beloved stuffed animal

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

When Lauren Johnson's house in Warrenton caught fire in 2017, the family lost everything, including a very special stuffed bunny.

Emma Ryan, Johnson's daughter, who was 6 at the time, called the bunny "Uncle Eric." She had the toy since she was born. It once belonged to a real-life uncle who died before Ryan ever had the

chance to meet him.

The family has since relocated to a home in the Lewis and Clark area, but Ryan would get nervous at the sound of firetrucks, anything that reminded her of the big fire. Of all their lost possessions, Uncle Eric was the one thing she kept asking about.

"I've been telling her that the firefighters have been washing the bunny but they can't get the smell of smoke out," Johnson said.

A small fiction, she admitted, but she really couldn't help it.

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Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Emma Ryan, left, hugs her stuffed bunny after Lt. Wade Mathews, right, and other Astoria firefighters delivered the toy to her in class at John Jacob Astor Elementary School.

