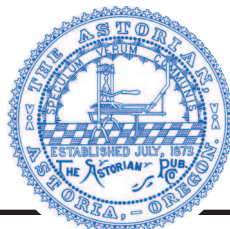


OPINION



THE DAILY ASTORIAN

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SOUTHERN EXPOSURE



Photos by R.J. Marx/The Daily Astorian

Dan Dunn in his office at North Coast Family Fellowship in Seaside.

Honoring Pastor Dunn in Seaside

North Coast Family Fellowship celebrated Pastor Dan Dunn Day on April 7, a special gathering to celebrate the legacy of Dunn, and Patty, his wife of 54 years, and their work with the community.

Dunn, who “just turned 73,” is recognized for his decades of service as a minister to children, families and senior citizens, from ministries in the Southwest, a teaching career at George Fox University, and pastor at Seaside’s Family Fellowship. We met up with him at his church office.



R.J. MARX

Q: We’re with Dan Dunn of the North Coast Family Fellowship. We’re recording.

Dunn: (laughs) Uh-oh! You’ll catch me with my really big whoppers.

Q: How long have you been with North Coast Family Fellowship in Seaside?

Dunn: I’ve been associate pastor for about 22 years now. I did children and family ministries for about 17 years, and for the last five years, I’ve done senior ministries, visitation, counseling in the area of those who are dying, and hospice.

Q: How would you like to tell your story? Is it about Seaside, you, the legacy of the community, relationships?

Dunn: All of that.

Q: Were you born and raised here?

Dunn: No, I’m from the Spokane-Pullman area.

Q: What was growing up like?

Dunn: I wouldn’t call it privileged, but middle class.

My father deserted my mom. He left her when I was about six and my middle brother was maybe four. Mom was pregnant with my youngest brother.

I didn’t grow up with a bad taste in my mouth about my dad because that was Mom — she raised all three of us to remember him and respect him. He was a World War II fighter pilot and decorated. But he wasn’t there, and that was his choice.

Q: Was it forgiveness, or did she say “just move on.”

Dunn: It was more than that. It was her attitude too.

Though my father wasn’t around, my grandfather was, and my two uncles. They were my role models, so I was blessed with that.

Q: Tell me about them.



Dan Dunn at North Coast Family Fellowship.

Dunn: They were wheat farmers. We lived in Spokane and I spent summers, weekends, spring break on the farm. Their interest in me was huge. Garbage didn’t roll out of their mouths, and they stood their ground. They weren’t Sunday school teachers by any means, but they were men. Between John Wayne and my grandfather, golly! They don’t get much better than that.

Q: Describe your time as a youth pastor.

Dunn: I was in youth ministry working with middle school, high school and college for 20-plus years in Phoenix and Glendale (Arizona), starting youth ministries, watching them grow into large youth ministries of 200-plus kids.

I’m not a pied piper — I haven’t gone street witnessing to pull them in. But the word gets out.

Q: How do you make it click for kids to take the right path?

Dunn: It’s not easy. When I was that age I didn’t always make the right choices.

So being with those kids and understanding and letting them know I get the struggles and things they wrestle with.

That came through and they saw that. My wife was very much part of the team. We did it together, and that grew and flourished.

Q: What brought you to Seaside?

Dunn: (While) I was involved with ministry in the Phoenix area, I was helping another close friend get a business going.

I was making a call in San Diego when I had a brand-new Ford Explorer stolen. It was full of samples: jewelry, silver and pottery. By the time the police got to me five hours later, they said: “Your car’s either in Tijuana or it’s in a chop shop up in L.A. somewhere.”

We had friends who had contacted us a week before. “Have you ever thought about coming back? We’ve got a brand new cabin out at Sunset Lake that we just restored. You could rent it if you want.”

Both my boys had come back to the Northwest to go to school. We came back here to become closer to them.

Pastor John (Nagle) was here and he heard about me coming back to the Northwest. He reached out and said, “Let’s talk,” and kind of dangled the carrot.

I called Patty and said: “Let’s go back to the Northwest.”

Q: So all the pieces came together?

Dunn: They did. It was just like boom-boom-boom. We sold the house and everything in about six weeks. It’s just like, OK! We had just worn out living in the desert.

Q: What did you think of Seaside?

Dunn: Even though it was small, peo-

ple knew each other. They were so good to us. People in the community were very helpful, loving, caring, and that continued to grow.

Q: Is North Coast Family Fellowship affiliated with a particular denomination?

Dunn: We’re affiliated with the Conservative Baptist Church. Even though we’re affiliated, we’re not controlled. We call it “Conservative Baptist Northwest,” but it’s very much more like a community church: Bible teaching, Bible preaching. It’s always been that. The whole ministry here has been about people and family and relationships.

It’s amazing how many kids I see who are now adults in the community. “Pastor Dan! Pastor Dan! Come see my new baby!” I’ve done so many different weddings and baby dedications with kids who have grown up in the church.

Q: How does that family fabric impact the community?

Dunn: Wow ... We’ve got educators, principals. I walk into either CMH (Columbia Memorial Hospital) working with seniors and visitation, at Providence, Clatsop Care, up in Astoria. There are so many people at our church working different places. They may come here to worship the Lord and study God’s word, but they’re out there in the community. That’s the beauty of the people.

They love this church and what we’re doing. They’re just so committed. In this day and age, that’s very rare. So many churches are struggling. We hear about it all the time.

Q: What’s the future of the North Coast Family Fellowship?

Dunn: As far as programs, to continue to develop and grow.

Right now, they’re interviewing for a new youth pastor and have talked to a number of different ones. John’s always looking to develop and strengthen the staff. The church is solid financially.

Q: You’re staying in the area?

Dunn: Oh yeah! We live at Smith Lake, right on the lake. We enjoy it, the quiet.

Q: You have a big party ahead.

Dunn: Pastor Dan Dunn Day. They’re bringing me up on the platform, a lot of pics, a lot of memories. They’ve talked about it every Sunday for the past month. This is very humbling.

R.J. Marx is editor of the Seaside Signal and Cannon Beach Gazette, and covers South County for The Daily Astorian.

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