



editor@dailyastorian.com

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KARI BORGEN
Publisher

JIM VAN NOSTRAND
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Education needs to be fully funded

Daily life for Oregon teachers and students shows desperate need to invest in schools

Astoria is my home. I was born and raised here, a K-12 student and graduate from Astoria High School and went to college to pursue a degree in education. I knew it was my calling and I was determined to find a job on the coast



MELISSA GROTHE

because I love it here. I'm a small-town person. Thankfully, I landed a job in the Knappa School District right outside of Astoria. I loved teaching in Knappa, but after seven years, I applied for and was offered a position in my hometown, which I

gratefully accepted.

This is my second year teaching in my home community, but with the joy comes a hard dose of reality about the difference between what our students need and what I can provide for them in a system so chronically underfunded. And it is exactly why KGW News is doing an ongoing investigation about "Crisis in the Classroom." Schools are at the breaking point and it's our students who are suffering.

I love my current group of students, but I know that the incoming group of fourth graders next year is already exhibiting a lot of challenging behaviors, and there are many students with high behavior needs in this incoming class. When you're struggling to meet the needs of at least 25 third- or fourth-graders, adding an additional 6-8 students with extreme behaviors can make it feel like your classroom has grown by a dozen students, at least.

Students come to us from challenging backgrounds, which is by no means their fault. Sometimes their parents simply know no other way of parenting, or the trauma that exists seems impossible to overcome. Students seem to lack many executive functioning skills that allow them to be successful alongside their peers, and don't have coping mechanisms for big emotions. I do think a lot of this can be attributed to technology — which I love and use all the time — but these kids are so trained to the screen. It's hard to get them engaged. I know this problem is only going to get



Photos by Melissa Grothe

Melissa Grothe's students at Lewis and Clark Elementary.



Melissa Grothe's classroom at Lewis & Clark Elementary.

progressively worse as we have more and more students coming in who are technologically attached.

So, how do I engage them with the resources available to me? It would be so amazing to be able to offer these students the chance to take field trips without having to beg for the funds for a bus to get us out into our community, where

my students really come alive. I would love to have access to updated materials and books, but my district doesn't have a certified librarian working in our schools. The people who do run our libraries do incredible work, but we are asking so much of them without a certification.

Most of all, I know my students really need more counselors, a school psychologist, and mental health supports. Our students come from such challenging backgrounds and really need somebody to talk to. One person supporting 400 students in our building is insufficient. If we had mental health services in our schools, I believe it would be a preventative measure for reducing incarceration rates and homelessness in our adult populations. Targeting mental health in kids, before they enter adulthood, would help break that cycle. It's cheaper to educate than it is to incarcerate.

I'm a product of the Oregon school system and a product of Measure 5. I have never been in the Oregon school system as a student or educator in which we have been fully funded. What could

I have accomplished in my life, if my education had been fully funded? Here I am, doing the best I can, to try and scrape together education for the next generation. Now that I'm an adult, I feel far more hopeless about it than I did as a kid. Every day, we must ask ourselves: are we setting ourselves up for failure, or are we setting ourselves up for a better future? Right now, I don't think our state is doing the best that we can for our kids.

That is why I, and teachers across the state, will participate in the Statewide Day of Action on May 8. This activism is unprecedented in Oregon, but things have become so desperate for our students that we are standing up like never before. In February nearly 5,000 teachers marched on the state Capitol. We are not going to stop until lawmakers finally step up and do what's needed and what's right for our students. Please join with your local educators and school staff as we work to obtain the schools our students deserve.

Melissa Grothe is a fourth-grade teacher at Lewis and Clark Elementary School in Astoria.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pass HB 2020

The time is past due for legislation in Oregon to address climate change. Lawmakers in Oregon have been working on a plan to for over 10 years. They now have ready a cap and invest plan, House Bill 2020, the Clean Energy Jobs Bill. Cap and invest means there will be a limit placed on greenhouse gas pollution, which is causing climate change. Industries that emit above a certain level of pollution must buy permits in order to pollute. The limit will be reduced each year, forcing a reduction in pollution. The money paid for the permits will be invested in clean energy sources, energy efficiency jobs and methods to reduce pollution. Proceeds from Clean Energy Jobs will be reinvested into our communities. It will help small businesses and homeowners make clean energy and energy efficiency upgrades, and help farmers and fishermen become more resilient to climate impacts. It will create local jobs that can't be outsourced. Cap and invest has been shown to work both in the U.S. and in Canada. Every state and province that has a clean air policy similar to the Clean Energy Jobs Bill has a growing economy, falling emissions and stable energy prices. It is time for Oregon to join by passing HB 2020.

GENEIA JAMESON
Seaside

Wintermute for school board

Heidi Wintermute is running for Astoria School Board, and she deserves your vote. I have spent my education career teaching students who are considered the most at-risk. It is clear from talking with Heidi that she understands the challenges of the modern day school system, and how best to address those challenges.

Heidi's background makes her an ideal candidate for school board. She understands the issues that face districts because she personally faces them daily. From breaking down budgets to find money for supplies, supporting teachers, providing research-based interventions for struggling

students and understanding the frustration and concerns of parents, she has a proven record of working with all stakeholders in a school system.

Heidi is a school psychologist with a wealth of experience serving the neediest students on a daily basis. Smaller class sizes, giving students access to mental health services, or universal preschool are not just talking points for Heidi. She understands the research that underpins why the Astoria schools need them, and the help they would provide.

Heidi is someone who has put her career into helping students and districts find success. As a special education teacher who will have a child in Astoria schools, I believe she deserves your vote so she can use her experience and expertise to support students, teachers and parents in our town.

JUSTIN JACKSON
Astoria

Stevens for Port

Robert "Steve" Stevens is a candidate for Port of Astoria Commission Position 4. He has served as a Port commissioner since his appointment in August 2017.

Stevens continues to distinguish himself as a model commission member. He clearly understands the elements of good governance, and the difference between the roles of the commissioners and the Port's executive director and staff.

He spends significant time outside Port meetings reviewing meeting agenda and supporting materials, always prepared to intelligently discuss agenda items and make informed decisions. He acknowledges and embraces that the Port Commission acts as a body of the whole, and that no single member represents the commission's decisions or actions.

Stevens acknowledges the Port's financial challenges, and seeks to find viable solutions. He will continue to act in the best interests of the citizens of Clatsop County.

Please join me in voting for Robert "Steve" Stevens, Port of Astoria Commission Position 4.

DAVID W. PHILLIPS
Astoria



Oser for school board

It is important to re-elect David Oser to the Astoria School Board to serve in the capacity of director. David sees "the big picture" of the district, and brings numerous skills to the position. He has served as a director since 2016. He would like to continue serving with the board, as he is interested in the future of our schools.

David moved to Astoria in 2011. He has chosen to volunteer with and support our city, the Astoria School District, Clatsop Community College Foundation, Astoria Public Library Foundation, Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce and many locally sponsored events, such as the Brew Cup and The Nutcracker.

David stays informed about our city by attending City Council meetings. David made an outstanding contribution to our city of Astoria as he successfully co-chaired, with Skip Hauke, the "Yes for Astoria Kids" initiative for passing of the school bond. We thank David and Skip for all the time and effort put into this campaign.

David has the distinction of being married to the Astor School reading volunteer, the amazing and treasured Mrs. Oser. Our grandchildren treasure her and have been fortunate to listen to her stories. Patsy Oser has been at Astor seven years.

David is a solid fellow. He is passionate about helping our city and especially

our schools. Vote for David Oser, director, Astoria School Board.

MAX and JUDY BIGBY
Astoria

Dog etiquette

With spring in full swing, it's wonderful to once again be able to enjoy the outdoors and share the beauty of our many recreation areas with our four-legged best friends.

That said, there are a few basic rules of etiquette all dog handlers should abide by. Doing so will ensure a safer and more enjoyable time outdoors for all.

First, to be off leash, your dog should have an absolutely bulletproof recall. Perfect every time, without exception.

Second, as friendly as your dog may be, many leashed dogs (and occasionally people) do not care for being approached by an off leash one. Please do not assume it is okay for your dog to approach everyone who may cross his or her path.

And lastly, if you need to work on enhancing recall or fine tune manners and obedience with your dog, please consult a licensed and certified trainer.

And enjoy that time outside with your dog.

ANNA GRACE MORGAN
Astoria