



Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Art projects from children hang on the walls at the Shooting Stars Child Development Center.

City march backs nurses

Labor dispute with hospital continues

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

Hundreds of union members and other supporters, including U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley, marched through downtown Astoria on Saturday during a rally for Columbia Memorial Hospital nurses, who are in a protracted labor dispute with hospital administrators.

The Oregon Nurses Association, a union representing more than 120 nurses at the Astoria hospital, and the hospital's administration have been negotiating to replace a three-year contract that expired in May. The two sides brought in a mediator but have not been able to reach an agreement.

Merkley, whose wife is a nurse, arrived Saturday on one of several school buses carrying union supporters from an AFL-CIO convention in Seaside. The Oregon Democrat spoke with supporters and joined the march, which crisscrossed downtown east on Marine Drive and west on Commercial Street.

"Nurses are the angels in our society," Merkley said, encouraging outreach on their behalf.

Nurses claim the hospital is stockpiling profits for a new campus amid dangerously low staffing levels, inconsistent scheduling and low pay. They point to the hospital's nearly 12% operating margin, the third-highest among small, rural hospitals

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Task force formed to address growing need for child care

County still a 'child care desert'

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Parents on the North Coast are becoming increasingly frustrated by the lack of child care options, but despite the apparent demand, child care centers continue to close.

Soar With Us in Gearhart closed earlier this year and Shooting Stars Child Development Center in Astoria is closing at the end of the month.

The closure of Shooting Stars is a significant loss, since the facility's 50 slots account for 11% of all licensed child care slots in Clatsop County, according to Northwest Regional Child Care Resources and Referral.

Like most counties in Oregon, Clatsop County is a "child care desert," a designation given when fewer than 33% of children have access to child care.

The Northwest Early Learning Hub conducted a survey this year to examine child care and preschool needs in the county. The survey was taken from four different perspectives: parents, child care providers, employers and residents.

The lack of child care and preschool is a frustration for parents and employers in particular "and it impacts the overall economy and the health and well-being of the community," said Amy Lovelace, the early childhood program specialist and regional preschool planning lead at the Northwest Early Learning Hub.

As a working mom and employer, Amber Hayward-Hill understands the



Clatsop County is considered a 'child care desert.'

struggle from both sides. She is the comptroller at Ocean Crest Chevrolet Buick GMC in Warrenton, which her family owns. She has experienced the struggle of finding child care, as well as solving schedule conflicts that arise when her employees can't find child care.

It took Hayward-Hill about a year to find child care after her daughter was born. She continued to work and had to piece together child care until she could find full-time day care.

During the week, she would juggle between dropping her child off with two different stay-at-home moms, part-time day care and bringing her baby to work.

Once she was finally able to get her child into the day care full time, the facility closed. Eventually, she found the at-home day care she currently uses.

Since Hayward-Hill understands

the challenges, she tries to support her employees who have young children and even lets parents bring their kids into work on days they can't find day care.

"I know I am not the norm. Bringing a baby to work on a normal basis is not an option for 95% of the people out there," she said. "So I can't imagine how much harder that would be."

To support her employees, Hayward-Hill allowed the school bus to drop children off at the auto dealership. She is also an emergency pickup resource for her employee's children. She has paid late fees for employees who were tardy picking up their kids at day care as a result of work.

She tries to work with her employees and offer solutions, but she still expects them to be actively looking for child care.

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State AG joins rally for recovery

Rosenblum stands with Jordan's Hope in Astoria

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum pledged at a Jordan's Hope for Recovery rally in Astoria on Saturday to continue the state's lawsuit against Purdue Pharma, the maker of OxyContin.

Purdue and its owners, the Sackler family, are being sued by around 2,000 governments across the U.S. that blame the company for fueling a nationwide opioid crisis.

Rosenblum and Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson were among about two dozen state prosecutors who rejected a proposed \$12 billion settlement offer from Purdue earlier this month, calling it inadequate. Purdue recently threatened in bankruptcy court to walk away from a separate \$3 billion settlement if the state lawsuits are not resolved.

"This company and the Sacklers just haven't offered enough money — yet — to address all the harm that they've caused," Rosenblum said. "And they also aren't willing to admit any responsibility."

Kerry Strickland, whose son, Jordan,



Ellen Rosenblum

Intern wants public to access outdoors

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

WARRENTON — Over the next year, Warrenton residents might spot Morgan Murray documenting trails and parks or gathering information about the economy.

The city's new planning intern will help staff update the master parks plan and craft economic development strategies.

Murray comes from Steuben, a small, rainy logging town in upstate New



York, where her parents are construction workers. She attended the State University of New York's College at Brockport, studying therapeutic recreation.

"I really enjoy adaptive sports, so getting people that wouldn't normally engage with the outdoors into the outdoors," she said. "Someone who's quadriplegic, we took them rock climbing, and that was amazing just to see that world open up. So I got into planning because I

wanted to make cities more accessible for all people."

Resource Assistance for Rural Environments, an AmeriCorps program administered by the University of Oregon, places interns in small towns. Murray wanted to do a year of service before deciding what to study in graduate school and liked the program's rural focus. Her adviser, Kevin Cronin, the city's community development director, is also a former RARE intern.

Warrenton, laced with trails and open spaces, hasn't updated its park plan since 2008. It recently



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Morgan Murray is a new planning intern.

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