

Thanksgiving: ‘Astoria is one of the best volunteer towns in the world’

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“Before I started doing this I always did what I call a ‘misfit Thanksgiving,’” Spencer said. “I’m from the Chicago area, traveled all over, and in the restaurant industry if you’re not working chances are you don’t have the money to go see your family.

“So I would just make Thanksgiving dinner and have a bunch of people that didn’t have a place to go over. So I figured I’d do it on a bigger scale and help Mary out.”

Spencer is smoking 10 turkeys at Smoked Bones BBQ and roasting another 10 turkeys in Astoria Brewing Co.’s kitchen.

After the turkeys are done cooking, volunteers pick them up and take them to the Armory.

“Astoria is one of the best volunteer towns in the world, so it’s really not hard to get people inspired in this town to give. But we also get a whole bunch of people who don’t necessarily have the time or the inclination during the year that want to do something on Thanksgiving. It’s the perfect day for it,” Scott Docherty said.

At the event, everyone from children to local elected officials help serve the food, and Jeff Daly, the owner of Astoria Underground, is bringing Santa.

Racks of donated coats and other items will be available for people to take after they eat. Mara Dowaliby, the 2019 Astoria Regatta queen, organized a sock drive at Warrenton High School, so socks will also be provided.

“When all of the craziness and the work is done and you see all of these people sitting together, having a meal, it’s just wonderful,” Mary Docherty said. “It’s beautiful to see these guys come in out of the cold and relax. And they get to sit and talk and visit and everybody talks to them.

“When they’re on the street, they don’t get a lot of eye contact ... I just want them to feel like they’re part of a family.”

And they don’t waste leftovers. Most of the extra food goes to Filling Empty Bellies and the Astoria Rescue Mission.



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Phil Spencer has taken the lead on smoking 10 turkeys at his restaurant and roasting 10 more turkeys at Astoria Brewing Co. next door. He is also providing the gravy and mashed potatoes for the hundreds of expected guests.

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Mary Docherty | Riverfolk founder

“In my own world, I would like to see this every bit as important as the Regatta. I would like to see this as a thing Astoria does every year,” Scott Docherty said. “We don’t have to own it, we can pass it on, just as long as we do our part to make sure it becomes an institution here, because it’s a great thing to have.”

Guilty: ‘I was so afraid of him’

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and confident. And she told on you. It took a while, but eventually, she did what she needed to do to protect herself, to protect her sisters, to protect their cousins and to protect every other little girl within your grasp.”

Brownhill told Leach he is a dangerous pedophile and believes he will continue to seek young girls if he has the opportunity.

“Mr. Leach did make my life miserable, very miserable for four years of my life,” the victim said before Leach was sentenced.

“I felt different than everyone else because he was doing those things to me. I didn’t feel normal and I just wonder some nights, why me? ... I was so afraid of him. Yes, I was scared of what he would do if I told. Yes, my teachers taught us about what to do if someone had been doing that. But when you’re in a real situation, it’s very hard to come out about a very stressful and scary thing.

“I fought because I believed I could do it, I fought for my rights. No one deserved to go through what I had to at all.”

ICE: He worked as a volunteer firefighter for over a decade

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immigration removal proceedings,” Tanya Roman, an ICE spokeswoman, said in an email.

“We make bad choices and I’m very sorry I have (made) my bad choices,” Bermudez-Arciga said in a phone interview from Mexico.

He said he knew there was a chance ICE would come for him after his latest conviction. But he said claims by some ICE leaders that the priority targets for deportation are the “worst of the worst” gave him some peace of mind.

While at the detention center in Tacoma, he said people would talk about how they got picked up. He said there were many construction workers, roofers, landscapers and cannery workers who thought they were just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Bermudez-Arciga said he moved to the United States in his early 20s to create a better life for himself but never became a U.S. citizen.

He said he has a daughter in the United States who finished school and can have a good life.

One of his greatest passions was working as a volunteer Cannon Beach firefighter for over a decade.

Gary Smith, the president of the Cannon Beach

‘I THINK IT’S SAD THAT THEY WOULD TAKE HIM OUT OF HIS COMMUNITY AND DO THAT. HE’S A HARD-WORKING INDIVIDUAL THAT TO MY KNOWLEDGE HAS NEVER CAUSED ANY PROBLEM FOR ANYBODY.’

Gary Smith | president of the Cannon Beach Rural Fire Protection District’s board who was Gilberto Bermudez-Arciga’s training officer

Rural Fire Protection District’s board, was Bermudez-Arciga’s training officer.

“He was a good firefighter,” Smith said. “He has a good work ethic. He participated in all the trainings. He came to all the drills. He came to as many calls as he could get away from his job.”

“I think it’s sad that they would take him out of his community and do that,” Smith said. “He’s a hard-working individual that to my knowledge has never caused any problem for anybody.”

Bermudez-Arciga was also involved in St. Catherine’s Episcopal Church in Nehalem. He said the church and his Alcoholics Anonymous group in Manzanita supported him after he was detained.

Lianne Thompson, a

Oregon should drop private prison investments, Sen. Merkley says

By ANDREW SELSKY
Associated Press

SALEM — The Oregon state employee pension fund should drop its investments in two prison companies whose facilities have been used to detain immigrants, U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley says.

Oregon has \$2 million invested in two prison companies, even though Oregon pioneered statewide sanctuary status. New York state and California recently dropped the same two companies from their own pension funds.

“I think it’s way past time for fundamental values to be reflected in our investment decisions,” Merkley said Monday when asked about the investments. Merkley is a main critic in Congress of the Trump administration’s immigration policies.

The Register-Guard noted in a recent editorial that in 1987, the state Legislature passed the Oregon Anti-Apartheid Act, enabling the pension fund to divest from South Africa because of its brutal repression of majority blacks.

“Progress has been slow since then,” the newspaper said.

As AP reported last week, Oregon’s pension fund also has a \$233 million investment in Novalpina Capital, a private equity firm that with partners bought a majority share of NSO Group, an Israeli spyware company.

Human rights groups say NSO Group’s spyware has been used by repressive regimes against human rights defenders, journalists and political opponents in Mexico, the Middle East and North Africa.

Oregon treasury officials have said they cannot comment on private equity investments, which go into companies that are not publicly traded on a stock exchange.

Oregon State Treasurer Tobias Read’s office has insisted that it can’t drop the prison companies, CoreCivic and Geo Group, because they’re part of an index fund, and only the index provider can determine what’s added or dropped. If Oregon officials intervene, the pension fund would incur costs that violate the “paramount objective” of making money, Read’s office said earlier this year.

California and New York dropped their investments despite the prison

companies being in an index fund.

“The fact that New York and California have already dropped investments in prison companies shows that this is a path that is available to us, and I think it’s the right path,” Merkley said.

CoreCivic spokeswoman Amanda Gilchrist said Tuesday the company has played a role in America’s immigration system for more than 30 years, for both Democrat and Republican administrations. She said CoreCivic does not enforce immigration laws and will never house unaccompanied minors.

Geo Group said it has never advocated for immigration enforcement policies and does not manage any facilities housing unaccompanied minors.

Rukaiyah Adams, the chairwoman of the Oregon Investment Council, which oversees the state’s \$77 billion pension fund, said last month the council is moving toward stronger environmental, social and governance standards, known as ESG. Adams noted the treasury last year hired a staffer to focus on that, but acknowledged the state has catching up to do.

Merkley, a former speaker of the Oregon House of Representatives, said that if the investment council feels it doesn’t have the statutory authority to consider issues like human rights and climate change in making investment decisions, the Oregon Legislature should provide them with that ability.

Senate President Peter Courtney declined to comment. House Speaker Tina Kotek and a spokeswoman for the Oregon State Treasury did not respond to requests for comment.

Rep. Diego Hernandez, a Portland Democrat in the Oregon House, said he believes the Legislature should take up the issue, but noted that the 2020 session is a short one, and the long 2021 session would be more realistic timing.

Investors around the globe are increasingly incorporating social values like climate change and human rights in deciding where to put their money. Asset managers in the United States consider such criteria across \$11.6 trillion in assets, representing roughly \$1 out of every \$4 under professional management, according to a 2018 survey by the U.S. Forum for Sustainable and Responsible Investment.

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