

## IN BRIEF

**Astoria woman injured after being hit by car**

A 34-year-old Astoria woman was injured Saturday night after being hit by a car.

The driver of the vehicle turned onto 11th Street from Commercial Street when he struck the woman, knocking her down.

The woman was taken to Columbia Memorial Hospital in Astoria and later taken to a Portland-area hospital. The driver was cited for failing to yield to a pedestrian.

**Warrenton family injured in crash**

A Warrenton family was injured in a fatal crash near Quincy, Washington, on Dec. 16.

Sarah Scheid, 37, of Warrenton, was driving on State Route 28 when she slid off the road into a ditch.

After the vehicle slid off the road, it was hit by a vehicle that also slid off the road.

Scheid and her five children were injured and taken to a nearby hospital. The passenger in their vehicle, Lynn Coffman, 64, of Tacoma, Washington, died at the scene.

The driver of the other vehicle was uninjured.

**Steelhead closure extended on Columbia River**

Oregon and Washington state fishery managers announced Monday they are extending a steelhead fishing closure on the Columbia River.

Fishing for steelhead will be closed upstream of the McNary Dam to the Oregon and Washington state line through March 31. This closure expands on conservation measures that have been in place since July to protect certain steelhead stocks in the Columbia and Snake river basins.

The return of 2019 summer steelhead to the McNary Dam was the fifth-lowest return on record since 1954. Fishery managers say the closure is necessary to maximize the survival of the fish and ensure there are enough to meet hatchery brood stock production needs.

— *The Astorian*

**Appeals court orders more action to protect salmon, steelhead**

A federal appeals court ruled Friday that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency must do more to protect Columbia basin salmon and steelhead from dangerously warm river temperatures.

The ruling by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals came in response to a lawsuit filed by environmental and fishing groups. It upheld a 2018 ruling by a federal judge in Washington that the EPA had failed to meet its responsibilities under the Clean Water Act. Specifically, the states of Oregon and Washington failed to protect salmon from waters that got too warm.

In her opinion for the appeals court, Judge M. Margaret McKeown wrote that the two states have not taken up the responsibility to craft what are called total maximum daily load standards, which would restrict activities that lead to dangerously high water temperatures.

“Because Washington and Oregon have conclusively refused to develop and issue a temperature TMDL for the Columbia and Snake rivers, the EPA is obligated to act,” she wrote. “The time has come — The EPA must do so now.”

Conservation groups that brought the legal challenge say high river temperatures are the result of climate change and the large, shallow reservoirs behind dams built on the Columbia and Snake rivers.

— *Oregon Public Broadcasting*

## DEATHS

**Dec. 21, 2019**

**BEEEMER,** Genevieve Yvonne, 97, of Clatskanie, died in Clatskanie. Ocean View Funeral & Cremation Service of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

**DAVIS,** Jack, 50, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

**MANIRE,** Ruth Ann, 78, of Warrenton, died in Warrenton. Ocean View Funeral & Cremation Service of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

**Dec. 20, 2019**

**HAWKINS,** Benjamin, 35, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Hughes-Ransom Mortuary is in charge of the arrangements.

## MEMORIAL

**Saturday, Dec. 28**

**GRIFFEY,** Gail — Visitation from 10 to 11 a.m., memorial at 11 a.m., Hughes-Ransom Mortuary Chapel, 576 12th St.

## ON THE RECORD

**DUII**

• **Carrie Ann Godwin,** 44, of Astoria, was arrested Saturday on Brownsmead Hill Road in Astoria for driving under the influence of intoxicants, unlawful use of a motor vehicle, criminal trespass in the second degree and hit-and-run.

**Entrepreneurs profit from parasitic mistletoe**

Harmful to individual trees

By **MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI**  
*Capital Press*

After more than a decade in business, Garrett Huggins doesn't aspire to become a mistletoe magnate.

Huggins is content to earn most of his income as a union carpenter while selling the wild-harvested holiday crop through his family's company, Genuine Oregon Mistletoe, as a sideline.

“We don't expect it to become a million-dollar company, but it does make Christmas happen for us, you know?” he said.

Though they get plenty of help from friends and family, Genuine Oregon Mistletoe is basically a two-person operation: Garrett collects the mistletoe from oak trees in southern Oregon while his wife, Ashley, handles the marketing.

Both help tie strands of the leafy perennial into bundles with ribbon and package them for shipping.

“When people call, they talk to me,” Ashley said. “He didn't want to deal with the customer service side of things.”

**Wholesale parasite**

The Huggins are similar to other mistletoe entrepreneurs in Oregon, where the parasitic plant commonly infects oak trees. They see it as a fun yet frantic way to earn extra money in the weeks leading up to the holidays.

“The season is really short,” Ashley said.

Genuine Oregon Mistletoe is run as a wholesale operation, selling about 10,000 bundles of mistletoe a year to nurseries, Christmas tree lots, Boy Scout troops and other holiday retailers around the U.S.

The company has grown more sophisticated over time. Ashley's uncle built a website that's made Genuine Oregon Mistletoe more prominent than in the early days, when it was dependent mostly on word-of-mouth.

Meanwhile, Garrett's uncle lends him a truck equipped with a boom crane so he no longer has to endanger life and limb climbing ladders to the upper reaches of oak trees on a family member's farm in southern Oregon.

“I don't want to risk it, because if I were to get hurt, that would affect my full-time job,” he said.

**Shotgun harvest**

For smaller-scale mistletoe sellers, blasting the plant out of a tree with a shotgun is often the preferred method



Photos by Mateusz Perkowski/Capital Press

**Garrett Huggins and his wife, Ashley, prepare bundles of mistletoe for sale to retailers around the U.S.**

**MISTLETOE MYTHS**

Though mistletoe is now commonly associated with the Christmas holidays, the plant's role in seasonal rituals predates Christianity.

The ancient druids, for example, would harvest mistletoe with a golden sickle and catch the strands in white cloth before they hit the ground, thereby protecting their supposedly “magical” properties.

In ancient Rome, two white bulls were sacrificed during mistletoe harvest, and the plant was believed to restore fertility when mixed with drink, according to the Roman natural philosopher Pliny the Elder. These rites are one explanation for the plant's association with kissing.

According to Norse mythology, the god Baldr was shielded from harm from any plant that grew in the ground. However, because mistletoe doesn't grow from the soil, the malicious god Loki arranged to have Baldr killed with an arrow or spear made of mistletoe.

When Baldr was eventually resurrected in some versions of this tale, his mother, the goddess Frigg, was so overjoyed that she declared that mistletoe symbolized love and peace.

— *Mateusz Perkowski*



**Ashley Huggins holds a bundle of female mistletoe that contains berries of the parasitic plant. Mistletoe is harmful to individual trees but serves a valuable ecological purpose.**

of harvest.

In their early years of collecting mistletoe, Janey Lee-Sutton and her grandson borrowed a 12-gauge shotgun from the farmer who owned the infected oak trees, but she eventually bought herself a smaller caliber .410-gauge.

“I found the .410 doesn't damage the mistletoe as much as the 12-gauge,” Lee-Sutton said.

The idea of selling mistletoe was sparked by a request from her grandson, Malachi, who was then 4 years old, to buy Christmas presents for their family.

Since he didn't have any money or a job, Lee-Sutton decided that selling mistletoe at a nearby grocery store would be a good learning opportunity.

Malachi borrowed some money for baggies and ribbons, which he later repaid his grandmother while pocketing the profits.

“I wanted to teach him a bit of economics,” she said.

Once the boy grew older and took a gun safety course, Malachi helped with the shooting but discovered that

growing older also has its disadvantages.

“He started noticing that as he was bigger, people wouldn't buy as much, so he started to bring his little sister,” Lee-Sutton said.

With his younger sibling, Miko, serving as the public face of the operation, sales rebounded, and they ended up earning as much as \$400 per year.

Malachi outgrew the mistletoe business once he became a teenager — he's now a high school football player — and the farmer who provided access to the mistletoe died, with his family selling off the property.

“It was a great bonding experience for me and my grandchildren,” Lee-Sutton said.

**Larger operation**

While the mistletoe operation run by Trillium Gardens is considerably larger, annually selling about 700,000 bundles through a distributor, it's also not the main business for the native plant nursery based in Eugene.

Owner Sheila Klest began

selling mistletoe about two decades ago and now collects “thousands of pounds” a year from oak trees up to 100 miles from the nursery, with the permission of the landowners.

“It's at least a semi-truck load but probably a lot more than that,” she said.

When harvesting such massive amounts of the plant, Klest has found it's most efficient to hire people to climb the trees. Though they're strapped into harnesses, it's still a precarious proposition that requires skill.

“Oak trees can be kind of dangerous to climb because you can't tell if a limb is rotted through or not,” Klest said.

**Fragile crop**

The plant can be difficult to handle, as it's fragile and gets moldy easily, and not everything collected is of salable quality, since its leaves can get sun-burned or drought-stressed, she said. Finding the best locations for optimal harvest also requires a certain expertise.

“Not every oak tree is going to have mistletoe, or not very much,” Klest said. “You get a sense of what to do and how to handle it.”

**Ocean Park boy dies in crash**

*Chinook Observer*

**LONG BEACH,** Wash. — An 11-year-old boy from Ocean Park died in a crash on Sandridge Road on Friday and other members of his family were injured after another vehicle crossed into their lane, the Pacific County Sheriff's Office said.

Gavin LeHotta, an enthusiastic motorcycle racer, was in a southbound Jeep Cherokee driven by his father, Steve LeHotta, at about 4:28 p.m. when a northbound Dodge Ram pickup crossed into the Jeep Cherokee's lane. Responding officers found the Jeep Cherokee on its driver's side down a slight embankment. The pickup had extensive and severe driver's side front-end damage, the sheriff's office said.

A witness told officers that they saw the pickup swerve into the southbound



GoFundMe

**Gavin LeHotta proudly displays his many motorcycle racing awards.**

lane several times before the collision, according to the sheriff's office. Deputies interviewed the pickup's driver, who had minor injuries.

The investigation remains ongoing.

The names of LeHotta's family and some other details are from a GoFundMe page started to help cope with crash-related expenses.

Gavin LeHotta was pronounced dead at Ocean Beach Hospital in Ilwaco at about 5:59 p.m. due to inju-

ries sustained in the collision. Steve LeHotta was taken to Oregon Health & Science University Hospital in Portland, along with his partner, Marina Koontz, and Koontz's daughter, Audrey.

Gavin LeHotta attended Ocean Park Elementary School.

The tragedy has generated an outpouring of community concern, with more than \$16,000 raised by noon Monday toward a goal of \$40,000.

“To Gavin, racing was life. He loved being out on

the track more than anything always with his Dad and Grandpa in tow,” an online tribute states. “They never missed a race because Gavin would never allow that. If there was a race, regardless how near or far, Gavin and his family would be there with smiling faces, ready to race, lend a hand to encourage fellow riders. ... He will be more than missed and our community is one less strong without. Ride On, Gavin LeHotta. This world will never forget your smiling face, little one.”

**the Astorian**

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