

## IN BRIEF

## Astoria marijuana store fined for unpermitted remodel

An Astoria marijuana store faces a fine or suspension of its license after doing a remodel without the state's permission.

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission leveled a \$1,485 or nine-day recreational license suspension against Hi Casual Cannabis on Marine Drive because the owner, Wayne Zallen, remodeled the store without prior permission. He instead detailed the remodel in a renewal application for his recreational license.

Zallen was charged with a Category III violation, defined as one that creates a potential threat to public health or safety. It was his first such violation in a two-year period. He must pay the fine by Jan. 15 or start serving the suspension Jan. 20.

## Rec district implements new code of conduct

SEASIDE — No fighting, no alcohol or drugs, no touching or physical contact with other individuals.

The standards were among 10 new rules of conduct presented this month to the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District board.

"We've had a number of challenging incidents at the pool over the years," Skyler Archibald, the rec district's executive director, said afterward.

He said the new policies will enable staff to "know how to handle these situations."

After meeting with outside legal counsel and the Special Districts Association of Oregon, the rec district worked to strengthen the standards of conduct.

"There are some situations where a behavior is repeated or it rises to the level of where we do have to involve the police or consider trespassing that person," Archibald said. "This policy will give us clearer guidelines how to enforce the conduct policy."

— *The Astorian*

## Salem homeless told to leave Oregon Capitol grounds

Salem homeless followed up on a plan to set up tents on the state Capitol grounds in protest after being displaced from downtown under a camping ban passed by the City Council earlier this month.

About 25 people with about a dozen tents occupied the park before Oregon State Police and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department officials arrived Monday morning.

State officials and Salem Housing Authority staff told the homeless they had two hours to leave the Oregon Capitol State Park. At least one homeless man was arrested on an outstanding warrant. By 1:30 p.m., the camp was mostly dismantled.

City officials briefly revisited an idea Friday to allow sanctioned tent camping, but they have backed away from that proposal. Instead, they redoubled efforts to find a space to operate a 90-day warming shelter after Salem First Presbyterian Church decided not to participate.

Officials have yet to announce a location, however.

Urban Development Director Kristin Retherford told the Statesman Journal: "Our consistent message on enforcement of the ordinance is that we will be responding to complaints, but that we do not have the capacity to actively look for campsites."

Retherford is acting city manager while City Manager Steve Powers is on vacation.

"Nobody has been directed to go to parks," Retherford said. "If people are in small groups and not really visible, or doing things that will result in complaints, (the Salem Police Department) does not have the capacity to go searching for campsites."

— *Statesman Journal*

## Oregon's unemployment reached historic low in November

Oregon's unemployment rate in November was the lowest its been in at least 43 years, according to the state employment department.

A November unemployment rate of 3.9% is the lowest recorded since 1976, dipping from a 4% October unemployment rate, which the state revised from an originally-reported 4.1% rate. The statewide rate has hovered near 4% for 37 months, according to state data.

Total nonfarm employment increased in November by 6,300 jobs. In October, the state gained 2,100 jobs, according to state data.

Oregon has gained 2,600 jobs on average each month this year, state data said. Last year, the average was 3,000 new jobs per month.

The state employment department said industries that normally shed jobs during the autumn months, such as construction and manufacturing, instead added jobs in November. The state employment department said dry weather and a tight labor market may have caused those industries to retain jobs they normally would have cut.

— *The Register-Guard*

## ON THE RECORD

## Hit-and-run

• Robert Koontz, 21, of Seaside, was arrested Monday on S. Franklin Street in Seaside for hit-and-run, failure to perform duties of a driver and reckless driving.



Jeffrey Henon/U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed repair work on the North Jetty at Cape Disappointment State Park.



Photos by Ashley Nerbovig/Chinook Observer

Ricky Benavidez Jr., 48, is taking classes at Columbia Education Center in Ilwaco. He graduated from Pacific County Felony Drug Court in November.

## Accountability key to drug court success

By ASHLEY NERBOVIG  
*Chinook Observer*

SOUTH BEND, Wash. — Pacific County Felony Drug Court graduates all believe in doing one thing when they leave the program: helping others who are struggling with addiction.

Ricky Benavidez Jr. is seven months sober and graduated from drug court in November. For the first nine months in the program, the joke was that he was the poster child for drug court, he said. He was in the paper for earning honor roll at Grays Harbor Community College.

"I didn't want that kind of praise, that pressure," Benavidez said. "And then I relapsed."

He tried to hide it at first. He thought it was the right thing to do.

"But I wasn't trusting the process," he said.

After his relapse, the drug court sent him back to treatment. And one of the counselors there gave him advice that seemed to click with him in a way nothing had before. The counselor was a former addict and Benavidez asked him how he'd stayed clean for so long. The counselor said he did it day by day.

Benavidez called it the magic pill. Every person with addiction wants to hear that one thing that will change them, and it isn't always real. There isn't always that one thing. But for Benavidez, the mantra "day by day" has stuck with him.

When Stevie Brown was 10 years old, he was kidnapped, abused and then almost killed when his abductor tried to drown him in a river.

It took almost three decades for Benavidez to come to terms with what happened to him in the two weeks he was held captive. For most of his adult life he was angry and some-



Kari Wiegardt gives Shayne Moseley, right, a gift after Moseley graduated from drug court in December.

times violent. He used drugs to cope with his trauma. Benavidez' mom, Linda Diaz, said she understood her son's drug use.

"Ricky's been through it," Diaz said. "He's had a tough life. We all have."

Diaz said she was proud of him for completing drug court. But she worries about him falling back into addiction. Benavidez does as well. But he's going to the gym, and he's made connections in the community.

And he is focused on getting his degree so he can start working with kids in places like the Naselle Youth Camp. Working with kids is different than working with adults. With kids, there isn't always a change right away, because they are still young, Benavidez said.

"With kids you're just planting seeds, seeds you hope they'll pick up later," he said.

## Stevie Brown

When Stevie Brown joined drug court, she thought she knew better than anyone how to get clean, said Donald Richter, Pacific County Superior Court judge.

"You wanted sobriety, but you wanted it on your terms," Richter said.

But she became a shining star in the program, Rich-

ter said at Brown's graduation ceremony in December. Brown was also recognized for being 17 months sober.

Brown shared her recovery journey at a community panel during the 2019 Pacific County Opioid Summit. Her message to people with addiction then and now is the same: There are people in the community who want to help you.

"You come in and you think that they don't know what they're talking about. They don't know you and they don't know your situation, but they know what works," Brown said.

Brown is studying to become a chemical dependency counselor. She learned through drug court that the best way to stay sober is to give back. And having come into the court pregnant and graduating the program with her second child on the way, Drug Court Coordinator Tessa Clements said Brown was an amazing mentor to the other young moms' in recovery.

Former Pacific County Superior Court Judge Michael Sullivan reminded Brown how worthy she was of success.

"You deserve everything that is good. You deserve good things in your life," Sullivan said.

## Shayne Moseley

But for Pacific County Sheriff's Office Deputy Randy Wiegardt, Shayne Moseley would likely not have made it into drug court. Wiegardt was Moseley's arresting officer. And while she was being arrested, she kicked him. Moseley said she hates to think about that night and her actions.

And yet, Wiegardt and his wife, Kari, both came to her graduation ceremony in December.

Chief Criminal Deputy Patrick Matlock said it was a reminder that law enforcement officers at the sheriff's office care about the people in the community, even the ones who they have to arrest. "He wouldn't be here today if he didn't care," Matlock said.

Richter called the change he'd seen in her nothing short of miraculous.

Moseley beamed throughout the entire graduation, something Clements pointed out was a marked change from when Moseley first entered the program. And Moseley's beautiful smile is something worth sharing, Clements said. Clements also recognized Moseley's countless hours as a volunteer for the Harbor Association of Volunteers for Animals.

Moseley's mother and sister sat beside her during the ceremony and posed for pictures with her and Richter afterward. Missing was Moseley's father, who died in October. But even while she struggled to cope with the immense loss of her dad, she said she never considered backsliding in her recovery.

For Moseley, the thing drug court gave her that helped her the most was the accountability it provided. And while she said she will miss the support, she is excited to move forward.

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