

CORONAVIRUS



Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Astoria School District staff wave as they pass a group of students in Alderbrook during a car parade to say goodbye to the school year.

Under pressure from pandemic, schools plan a placeholder year

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

As they drove through neighborhoods with other Astoria School District staff last week, first grade teachers Lisa Hankwitz and Charlet Robinson were eager for a glimpse of students they had not seen in person in months.

The parade marked the end of one of the strangest school years any of them had ever experienced. But for both women, the cheers they received from students, parents and even just regular residents reaffirmed that the community knew teachers had done their best to continue to help children even as the coronavirus disrupted nearly every aspect of normal life.

They hope to return to classrooms in September, but there is no guarantee they will.

School districts in Clatsop County are finalizing budgets ahead of the usual June deadline and looking at offering some kind of blend of in-person classes and distance education, knowing they may have to pivot.

All of these plans are placeholders.



Lisa Hankwitz, a first grade teacher at Astor Elementary School, waves to students as she rides down Commercial Street.

A document prepared by the Oregon Department of Education outlining state guidance for reopening schools in September quotes Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.

"You don't make the timeline," he

said. "The virus makes the timeline."

The number of coronavirus cases in Oregon continues to rise even as government restrictions are lifted and the economy reopens.

See Schools, Page A6

River cruise canceled in Astoria over coronavirus

Oregon, Canada deliver blows to cruise visits

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

The American Song, a river cruise ship that was set to stop at the 17th Street Dock in Astoria on Saturday, will not arrive after Oregon prohibited all passenger-carrying cruise ships from state ports through late July over the coronavirus.

The state's prohibition comes as all but three of the nearly three dozen oceangoing cruise ships expected this year at the Port of Astoria have been canceled because of Canadian restrictions.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a no-sail order for cruise ships with more than 250 passengers lasting until July 24. The order prohibits cruise ships from taking on passengers and returning to cruising schedules.

Local officials received word from the Oregon Health Authority on Tuesday night that the state would follow the CDC's guidance.

"As is the case in other close-contact environments, cruise ships facilitate the transmission of COVID-19," a release from the health authority said. "The dynamics of passengers and crew intermingling in a semiclose setting are particularly conducive to high coronavirus transmission rates often witnessed on cruise ships."

"The difficulty of decontaminating numerous high-touch surfaces contribute to the high transmission rate. It is, therefore, imperative that the cruise ship can be maintained for the foreseeable future."

In early June, the state approved Clatsop County to enter a second phase of reopening from virus restrictions, allowing larger gatherings and a more diverse array of businesses to reopen with enhanced sanitation and limited capacity. The second phase also allowed for cruise ship visits, albeit with a lack of guidance from the state.

River cruise companies began putting together safety protocols and vetting them with state and local officials. American Cruise Lines announced its new 184-passenger vessel, the American Song, would leave Portland on Saturday and arrive in Astoria later in the day as part of a Columbia River cruise to Clarkston, Washington.

Alexa Paoletta, a spokeswoman for American Cruise Lines, said the company was surprised by the state's decision

See Cruise, Page A6

Knappa woman trains wild mustangs

Inniss chosen for makeover challenge

By GARY HENLEY
The Astorian

Working with wild mustangs requires patience. Sitting with a horse for 12 hours just-to-touch-it kind of patience.

If you're looking to be impressed, try watching a video of Ashley Inniss training a wild animal that outweighs her by some 700 pounds.

Inniss, who is from Jewell and is now living in Knappa, loves what she does. It's the challenge and the affection for horses that draws her to it. She was recently selected to be a trainer in the "Extreme Mustang Makeover Challenge" this fall.

Selected trainers work with mustangs rescued from herd management areas, then after 100 days of training, reveal their results before judges in a competition.

While she grew up in a



Inniss Equine

Knappa's Ashley Inniss, shortly after taking in 'Sedona,' a wild mustang.

horse culture, Inniss is a relative rookie when it comes to training mustangs, and the horses she trains are definitely new to being handled by humans.

"That's the challenge part, when you take a horse that has never been touched or handled and have it trust you completely," she said.

And, like every person, every horse has a personality. Some are more teachable and trainable than others.

"You're at the mercy of the

horse," she said.

Inniss' parents are avid equestrians, so she was exposed to the culture from day one, riding on trails and beaches, before getting into performance riding in her early 20s.

At a competition in 2017, she had the chance to walk around and see other horses, including "Chico," who became her first mustang.

"I had just lost a gelding I had for 17 years, and I ended up falling in love with

this one mustang and adopting him at the end of the competition," Inniss said. "That's what got me into the mustang program."

Chico, from the South Steens Herd Management Area, "has got such a good mind and he's so willing, unlike any horse I've ever owned. The more I got into training him, the more I wanted to get into the program where I found him."

Inniss was assigned her latest mustang this month. Taking a horse that was rescued from the Warm Springs Reservation near Burns, it took her the better part of a day before she could even touch the still-wild mustang.

"She came out of the trailer running and running. I sat out there, just letting her be comfortable with my presence," she said. "Doing a lot of approach and retreat, it took me a little over 12 hours just to touch her."

And finally, "yesterday she was letting me pet her face and she was snuggling on me. It's really humbling to make a connection."

See Mustangs, Page A6



Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

The mural featured in 'Kindergarten Cop' will get a new home.

'Kindergarten Cop' mural finds a home

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

Pieces of an iconic mural painted on the side of Astor Elementary School for the 1990 action-comedy "Kindergarten Cop" have found a home with the Clatsop County Historical Society.

The Astoria School District agreed to donate the pieces following public outcry over renovations at the Uppertown school that would have erased the art.

The remodel began this spring and is tied to a \$70 million bond voters passed in 2018 to improve and modernize the school district's buildings.

"It was certainly an emotional issue for a lot of people and it certainly is a part of our rich film tapestry," said McAndrew Burns, the executive director of the historical society. "I think everyone recognized that."

See Mural, Page A6