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CORONAVIRUS

STDs climb on coast

Four test positive for syphilis

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Cases of sexually transmitted infections have continued to climb in Clatsop County during the coronavirus pandemic.

Four people have tested positive for syphilis since January, according to the county, three of whom were identified in July. The county is conducting contact tracing of 12 potential contacts.

After seeing an increase in cases over the past several years, the Public Health Department announced a two-year initiative in 2019 with the goal of reducing sexually transmitted infections by 10% across the region by 2021.

The initiative was funded by the Oregon Health Authority and was a collaboration with Columbia and Tillamook counties and the Columbia Pacific Coordinated Care Organization, which oversees the Oregon Health Plan in the three counties.

However, the initiative was put on hold because of the virus.

Michael McNickle, the county's public health director, said he hopes the county can resurrect the initiative after the pandemic.

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Ackley won't seek reelection

Appointed to the role in 2015

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

WARRENTON — City Commissioner Pam Ackley will not seek reelection in November.



Pam Ackley

Ackley, a real estate broker with Windermere Realty Trust, has served on the commission since 2015 when she was appointed to fill a vacancy. She was elected by voters in 2016 to serve a four-year term.

Her decision not to run comes during what she said is the busiest time in the North Coast housing market since 2007.

"It's just too busy for me to put forth the amount of work that it takes to be responsible for making decisions that affect our

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Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Andie Sterling covers graffiti painted on her mural in the 13th Street Alley.

NUISANCE CRIMES SURGE AMID PANDEMIC

A spate of vandalism and graffiti

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

The conditions in Astoria's public bathrooms got so bad this year that the previous cleaner wouldn't take the job again, even when offered more than double the money.

Graffiti, meanwhile, has proliferated around the city, all the way up to the base of the Astoria Column.

Astoria and other cities are facing a rise in quality of life crimes during the coronavirus pandemic.

City Councilor Joan Herman questioned at the City Council meeting Monday whether the increase in vandalism had to do with downtown being largely closed for two months starting in March.

"We do have ebbs and flows of this, but really the concerns that we've been seeing in regards to restrooms and also graffiti have actually been more recent, not at the beginning of the COVID pandemic," City Manager Brett Estes said. "The graffiti started early on, but it accelerated later on. And also with the bathroom vandalism, that happened in more recent months rather than at the beginning."

Sarah Lu Heath, the executive director of the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association, said the problems at bathrooms, people camping in alcoves, drug use and harassment have been the most concerning issues popping up in the past month or two after a relative calm.



Edward Stratton/The Astorian

Astoria has seen a resurgence in nuisance crimes like littering, graffiti and vandalism of bathrooms during the coronavirus pandemic.

'THESE NUISANCE ISSUES BECOME REALLY MEANINGFUL AND IMPACTFUL. IF YOU'RE LOSING ONE SALE, THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN YOUR ONLY SALE OF THE DAY.'

Sarah Lu Heath | executive director of the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association

The petty crimes are an "additional stress on business owners that are trying to figure out how in the world to operate right now, when foot traffic is so light," Heath said. "These nuisance issues become really meaningful and impactful. If you're losing one sale, that might have been your only sale of the day."

Sore spots

The city's two main public bathrooms at the Doughboy Monument in Uniontown and near a memorial plaque for Clark Gable on Exchange Street have been particular sore spots. The

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Luke Whittaker/Chinook Observer

State shellfish experts conduct a razor clam stock assessment survey in Long Beach.

Razor clams rebound on peninsula

Harvest potential double from last year

By LUKE WHITTAKER
Chinook Observer

LONG BEACH, Wash. — The Washington coast razor clam population has climbed to a historic high, according to final stock assessment surveys conducted this week by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

"We have a pretty strong population coastwide," said Dan

Ayres, the state coastal shellfish manager, after conducting the survey with fellow technicians on Tuesday in Long Beach, one of their final preludes to the season.

"Long Beach is particularly strong in comparison to previous years. I've been around 40 years and I've never seen anything like it on Long Beach."

The estimated total of harvestable clams coastwide is predicted to be double that of last year, among the highest in decades.

"The preliminary number is 26 million and last year was 13 million," Ayres said.

"Last year, we had a (razor clam) population on Long Beach that was the highest recorded in 25 years. This year, even though we're not quite done, looks like it's going to be significantly higher, perhaps double, which is really good news all the way around. We're seeing that populations are up on all the beaches."

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