

Graduation rates trend up on North Coast

By **KATIE FRANKOWICZ**
The Astorian

Graduation rates at nearly all Clatsop County high schools went up last school year, reflecting a statewide trend.

The statewide graduation rate for the class of 2019-20

hit 82.6%, an increase over the prior year and the highest graduation rate recorded in Oregon, according to data released by the Oregon Department of Education.

Astoria, Seaside and Knappa all saw multiple percentage point increases to their graduation rates. At the

small and rural Jewell School District, where the graduating class was only 13 students, the graduation rate has held steady at 100%.

Only Warrenton High School in the Warrenton-Hammond School District showed a dip in the rate of graduating students, dropping

from a graduation rate of around 80% in the 2018-19 school year to 73% this past year.

Students who graduated last year did so after a strangely curtailed end to the school year. Schools closed across Oregon in March as the coronavirus spread

through communities.

In Astoria, the graduation ceremony was held outside with a drive-in ceremony at CMH Field. Students who still had course work to complete in order to graduate finished online.

The Class of 2020 "ended their high school careers

in a way no one wanted or expected," Colt Gill, the director of the Oregon Department of Education, said in a statement.

But, he added, "the graduation rate shows how much work they put in over the last 13 years with the support of their teachers and families."

Newspaper carrier saves man stuck in bathtub

By **BECCA ROBBINS**
Herald and News

Stephani Bastian couldn't get in touch with her 81-year-old father, Kenneth Plank, who lived alone in Klamath Falls. Although it's not unusual for him to miss occasional calls from his daughter who now lives in Roseburg, Bastian said she had a feeling that something was wrong.

Mike Smith delivers the Herald and News to subscribers, including to Plank, his downstairs neighbor in the apartments. He, too, felt like something was wrong on Dec. 23 when he delivered Plank's paper. Smith noticed the U.S. Navy veteran had several papers stacked up, so he went to get help.

After alerting the building maintenance manager, the two men discovered Plank had fallen in the bathtub and had been stuck there for several days. Plank couldn't reach his phone or his emergency alert necklace, and he had become confused and weakened.

After his rescuers got him out of the tub and into a chair, Smith and the building manager called 911. After a short stint at Sky Lakes Medical Center, Plank is now recovering from the fall and the rehab at Marquis Plum Ridge.

Bastian received a text the day after Christmas from her father's best friend, notifying her that her father was in the hospital and that his doctor was trying to reach her. Bastian learned her father, still



Kymerly Bastian, left, and her grandfather, Kenneth Plank.

confused, had given the hospital her old phone number.

She rushed to Klamath Falls the next day. When she learned her dad's newspaper carrier was the one to alert someone for help for her father, which may have saved his life, Bastian gave Smith a big hug to express her gratitude. They both burst into tears, Smith said.

"Be thankful for your newspaper man because he might be the only one who knows something's wrong," she said.

Although Bastian was quick to call Smith a hero, Smith said he feels he doesn't deserve the accolade. Still, he knows that if that was his loved one, he'd feel the same way Bastian does.

"I'm ecstatic that I chose to break the mold and say we

need to check on this guy," Smith said.

Smith knew something was wrong when he noticed the two untouched newspapers outside Plank's door. Smith said Plank was "regular as clockwork" with his routine, which Smith recognized as a habit from the military. As a veteran with medical conditions himself, Smith said he's been cognizant of his health, and the health of others, during the coronavirus pandemic.

Smith also lives above Plank and could hear the TV on below him for more than a day, which Smith said was unusual.

Plank doesn't know how long he had been in the bathtub before help arrived. He told the Herald and News he remembers reaching a paper cup from the sink and filling it up from the tub to drink from. He said he wasn't of sound mind for the entire stretch he was stuck. Plank said he believes he was hallucinating because he recalls getting up out of the tub and walking around the apartment.

Plank is doing rehab three times a day at Marquis Plum Ridge to recover from injuries, which include a bruised hip and shoulder as well as a laceration across his back.

Plank has lived in Klamath Falls since 1979, when Bastian began attending Klamath Union High School and Plank took classes at Oregon Institute of Technology for a welding certificate. Plank later

worked at Oregon Tech for over 18 years, Bastian said.

Bastian's daughter, Kymberly, now attends Oregon Tech, but hasn't been in the area because she's been completing an externship in Tigard.

Plank is getting mobility back, and Bastian said the nurses assure her that he's doing fine. For now, she said that he's working hard but is exhausted after his rehab sessions.

Bastian reminds people to check on the senior citizens in your life, especially those who live alone.

"You never know," she said.

Smith likes to interact with his newspaper clients when he can. He recalled a subscriber on his route who is going through chemotherapy treatments for cancer. Although with COVID-19 he leaves most of the newspapers outside buildings on his routes, for her, he takes the paper inside to her door so that she doesn't have to climb the stairs.

"If you don't care about what you're doing, then why do it?" he said.

Plank has three more weeks of rehab at Plum Ridge ahead of him. In the meantime, Smith hopes his act of kindness will encourage people to take better care of those around them.

"We need to push through all of this and realize we are our brother's keeper," Smith said.

Hotel: City has 120 days from the appeals board decision to conduct a new review

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Hollander, of Bellingham, Washington, based Hollander Hospitality, had applied in April for a one-year extension of the permits. He argued that poor economic conditions amid the pandemic made financing impossible. City staff denied his request, and the City Council upheld the decision on appeal. Hollander then appealed to the state.

The city contended that Hollander had 18 months before the pandemic to begin his project. Hollander's attorney, Steven Hultberg, argued that only economic conditions when Hollander applied in April should matter when deciding whether to grant him an extension.

City staff cited other hotel projects still moving forward, including the Bowline Hotel near Buoy Beer Co. and a Hilton Home2 Suites in the planning stages near the New Youngs Bay Bridge, as examples that economic conditions were still viable. Hollander argued that the other hotels were not comparable to his project.

The Land Use Board of Appeals sided with Hol-

lander. But rather than order the city to extend the permits, the appeals board directed the city to review the issue.

"At a minimum, the City Council was required to explain why it chose not to rely on petitioner's evidence of poor market conditions and instead chose to rely on evidence of other hotels that petitioner explained are not similarly situated and may or may not have received financing," the appeals board said.

The appeals board also agreed with Hultberg's argument that the city exercised too much discretion in denying Hollander's permit extensions because of new, more restrictive building rules along the riverfront enacted after his hotel's approval. Hollander would have to significantly shrink the hotel to preserve views if he cannot get the building permits extended.

Astoria has 120 days from the appeals board's decision to conduct a new review of Hollander's application. City Manager Brett Estes said city staff and City Attorney Blair Henningsgaard are reviewing the ruling to determine the next steps.

SKANSKA

SUB-BIDS REQUESTED

Warrenton School District Improvements

Skanska is requesting Subcontractor bids for the Warrenton Grade School Siding, Flashing and Weather Barrier replacement located at:

Warrenton Grade School
820 SW Cedar Ave.
Warrenton, OR 97146

Scopes of Work currently bidding include:

Work Category #01 Siding, Weather Barrier, Sheet Metal Flashing and Trim Replacement

Work Category #02 Painting

All bids are due no later than

January 29th at 2PM

There will be a non-mandatory pre-bid meeting held at the Warrenton Grade School on Monday January 18th at 10am. Contact Derek Bourque for additional details.

All bids are to be submitted to Skanska via Building Connected.

For bid documents and details contact Derek Bourque, derek.bourque@skanska.com
Oregon CCB: 153980

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