



Wild Grocery & Cafe in Manzanita tries to reduce plastic waste by opting for glass containers instead of plastic when possible. Photos by Emily Lindblom/The Astorian

Plastic: ‘People vote with their dollar’

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Unfurl also offers clothing made of natural fibers, such as organic cotton and linen, from big brands like Patagonia and prAna as well as local brands like Portland-based designer Erin MacLeod.

Unfurl is a longtime contributor of 1% for the Planet, certifying that 1% of their gross sales goes to local environmental non-profits, including the Lower Nehalem Community Trust, North Coast Land Conservancy, Cape Falcon Marine Reserve and the Wildlife Center of the North Coast.

“Those people are doing



Plastic pollution litters the beach at Fort Stevens State Park.

the front-line work on environmental issues and restoration, protecting the land, animals and ocean right here,” Moore said. He added

that Unfurl tries to source clothing made with sustainable materials, but that is difficult to do. “Even if we can’t find that many prod-

ucts that are truly sustainable, at least everything we do sell contributes to these local environmental groups,” he said.

Moore said as awareness of plastic pollution grows, so too does the demand for and the availability of sustainable materials.

“Making those types of choices at a consumer level is really important to do and it drives these industries to change,” he said. “If companies are seeing people buying more natural fibers or yogurt out of glass jars, they’re going to make more of that. People vote with their dollar for what they want to see in the world.”

Restaurateurs: Up to 20 new employees could be hired

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Pathumratanathan handles much of the menu and employee training at the couple’s restaurants, while Lorwatcharasophon handles operations.

Kelley Shannon, a singer and employee at The SEA, is handling entertainment booking and said there will be live music daily.

Neither “of us were passionate about opening a restaurant,” Lorwatcharasophon said. “But we are foodies. We eat. We like to go eat different Thai food. We love to go out to like famous restaurants. Even in Thailand, pad thai is my favorite thing.”



Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

ABOVE: The SEA Crab House will expand into the former Baked Alaska location. **RIGHT:** Paxton Hoag takes a box of free eggs on Wednesday that he planned to use in a meal for the homeless.



Lorwatcharasophon emigrated from northern Thailand to Pennsylvania at 19 to be with her brother. She studied engineering for two years before going to work in restaurants, first in New York City and then in Los Angeles.

Pathumratanathan emigrated from Bangkok to Los Angeles, where his parents ran a Thai dessert shop in Los Angeles. He worked as a technician for oil companies, while waiting tables and delivering food on the side.

Lorwatcharasophon had a friend in Portland with a food cart named “Thai Me Up” looking to get out. The couple took over on a shoestring budget and started their careers as restaurateurs.

“I didn’t even have enough money to change the name,” Lorwatcharasophon said. “So I used whatever she had. I just understood that Thai Me Up would be a catchy name.”

Thai Me Up moved to Lincoln City in 2018 and in 2019 expanded to Seaside. Then the

couple took over the former West Lake Restaurant in Seaside, turning it into Cajun-style seafood restaurant The SEA, and went from five to around 30 employees. They estimate that the new Astoria location could add more than 20.

Astoria has gone from zero to two Thai restaurants, starting with the Mai Tong Thai Food cart near Reach Break Brewing and later Curry & Coco Thai Eatery.

But Nalinrat Sahunalu, who runs Yellow Curry Cozy Thai, closed Curry & Coco just before Christmas and is undecided whether to reopen in March. Lorwatcharasophon considered putting a Thai Me Up on Pier 12 but said the

buildout would have been too expensive. The couple is considering another location for a Thai restaurant.

Christopher and Jennifer Holen left Pier 12 after deciding they could not make the space work financially amid a pandemic that has severely limited indoor dining. They downsized to Nekst, a to-go space across the street from Pier 12.

Lorwatcharasophon and Pathumratanathan, having ridden the roller coasters of opening new restaurants on shoestring budgets, staying safe amid the coronavirus and surviving multiple dining shut-

downs in Seaside, feel optimistic about the future in Astoria.

“I’m positive that we’re going to start indoor dining by (next) Friday,” Lorwatcharasophon said. “I’m very positive after tracking all the numbers ... we’re almost done with winter. We’re almost over (the virus). The more people get vaccinated, the more they’re going to be living.”

“It’s not only for us,” Pathumratanathan said. “We have too many people we need to carry on, like employees. They need to have money to take care of their families too.”

Delivery: Will deliver within 15 miles of participating restaurants

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customer. North Coast Grub charges nothing to restaurants, instead marking up the menu prices to customers on its website for the convenience of delivery. The service delivers within 15 miles of participating restaurants, with a delivery fee of up to \$5.75 depending on the distance.

“That’s our way to be able to help restaurants during this

time, when they are dealing with their overhead being high, but the number of orders coming in being low,” Millo said.

The website on Thursday listed about 12 restaurants in Astoria, some of which had not yet agreed to participate. Millo said the company is in the process of reaching out to the listed restaurants, which receive a tablet to accept or decline orders from North

Coast Grub.

Tony Kischner, the co-owner of Bridgewater Bistro, said he was somewhat disturbed at being listed without his permission as a local favorite. But he later met with a representative from North Coast Grub and decided to take a tablet as another way to sell food and reach a broader audience online.

“It’s no skin off my nose to get it going and see if it

works,” he said.

Robin Frazier, the owner of The Oasis Bar in Castle Rock, said she was one of the first to sign up for The Rock Eats, which has brought in anywhere between 10 to 25 extra orders a day.

“It keeps my doors open,” Frazier said. “It keeps my employees employed. It’s huge. Plus it gets my food out to people who usually wouldn’t come in.”

County reports 14 new virus cases

The Astorian

Clatsop County reported 14 new coronavirus cases over the past few days.

On Thursday, the county reported seven virus cases.

The cases include a woman in her 20s living in the southern part of the county. The others live in the northern part of the county and include a male and a female between 10 and 19, a man and a woman in their 20s, a man in his 40s and a man in his 70s.

All were reportedly recovering at home.

On Wednesday, the county reported seven virus cases.

Three of the cases were recorded in January. They include a

female in her 40s living in the northern part of the county and a female under 10 and a woman in her 40s living in the southern part of the county.

A male between 10 and 19, a woman in her 20s, a man in his 40s and a woman in her 70s living in the northern part of the county also tested positive for the virus.

One was hospitalized and the rest were recovering at home.

The county has recorded 758 cases since March. According to the county, 18 were hospitalized and five have died.

The Oregon Health Authority reported 146,138 cases and 2,002 deaths from the virus statewide as of Friday morning.

Fire calls: Call volume has doubled in the past 10 years

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“After Labor Day, typically our calls just fall off and they didn’t. November, we had the third-busiest month we’ve ever had in the district. September was the busiest month we’ve ever had.”

“I think he’ll take us so far — just brings a ton of experience with him,” Reckmann said. “But that is just the tip of the iceberg. “This is a huge stride, but this isn’t the end. This isn’t the fix. This is the first step. There’s just a ton of needs.”

Call volume has doubled in the past 10 years and volunteer firefighters have become harder to recruit, making it necessary to hire personnel. The stress on fire chiefs in Cannon Beach has resulted in turnover.

About 5% of the fire district’s calls for service are for fires. Most are for rescues and emergency medical calls. Seventy-seven percent of the calls involved people who do not live or pay taxes into the fire district.

Reckmann said despite the progress in the past year, operations are still unsustainable at the current rate of funding.

Voters approved a five-year levy last May for 35 cents per \$1,000 in assessed property value to help sustain operations by hiring a second commanding officer and replacing equipment.

The levy allowed the fire district to hire a division chief in January. Reckmann said Jason Smith, of Monterey, California, has already hit the ground running.

The fire district still has the lowest tax rate on the North Coast. Reckmann said one of the district’s needs is a fire marshal. He said inspections need to be done, but have been put on hold because no one has time to do them.

He asked the city in December to levy a 5% prepared food tax to help fund the fire district — an idea he has pitched several times in the past.

“This is no longer a, ‘Hey, what do you think about this,’” Reckmann said. “This is, ‘We need to do it. I need your help. And here’s why.’”

Mayor Sam Steidel said the conversation is important, but response to the pandemic has dominated the city’s time.

The mayor said the biggest issue is that the restaurant industry would likely push back because it would be on them primarily to manage, handle and transfer the funds.

“They’re so strapped right now that I wouldn’t dare broach the subject,” Steidel said. “That’s kind of where we’re at.”

Police: Big-box stores use a disproportionate amount of resources

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Workman said it is unclear if call volume to big-box stores was also impacted by the pandemic or if it is beginning to plateau.

“If we didn’t have the pandemic, would that have still gone up?” he asked. “It’s going to take pretty much a year of normalcy, if you will — whatever that is — to see what’s going to happen.”

“I’m hoping that they plateaued and that this is kind of what to expect or where we’re at, but I don’t know.”

Prior to the pandemic, Workman shared ideas with the City Commission about ways big-box stores can contribute to funding services, since they use a disproportionate amount of resources.

The police chief suggested raising fees on peo-

ple convicted of traffic violations and other crimes, along with other administrative fees related to Municipal Court. He also suggested charging a public safety fee to businesses based on calls for service.

He said Municipal Court has been at capacity because of shoplifting cases referred from Walmart and Fred Meyer, along with increased caseloads related to the region’s homeless population.

Workman said the conversation was put on hold due to the pandemic, but he expects to revisit the ideas in the future.

“I’ve always thought that the businesses that utilize the majority of our resources should be contributing towards funding those resources or giving us the tools to try to address the problems that we see around those areas,” he said.