

CORONAVIRUS

Park district candidates take center stage

Middle school purchase a campaign issue

By R.J. MARX
The Astorian

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Candidate residency in doubt • A2

SEASIDE — Ten candidates take center stage in the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District's May 18 board election.

Candidates have split into two groups, with the five incumbents facing challenges from a slate aligning under the campaign slogan, "It's time for a change."

"I'm joined by four like-minded people who are also

very disappointed with the way the current board has discharged their responsibility to care for SEPRD," John Huisman, one of the challengers, wrote in a letter to the Seaside Signal.

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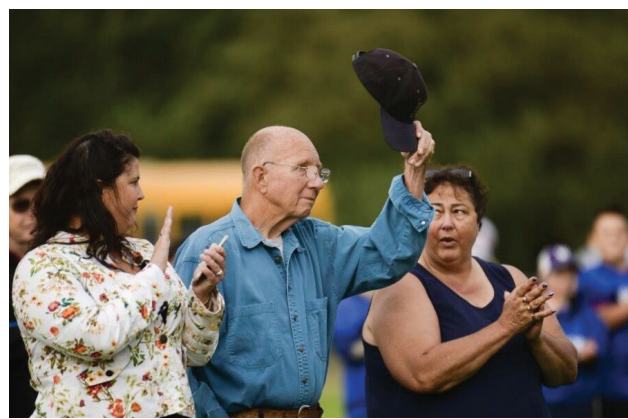


Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Mike Leamy discusses repairing a tombstone that has fallen over at Greenwood Cemetery.

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County reports new virus cases • A6



Danny Miller/The Astorian

John Mattila, with his daughter, Allison, left, and his wife, Mary Ann, was recognized before a game in which Warrenton's home field was named in his honor.

Legendary Warrenton coach valued hard work

Mattila dies at 74

By GARY HENLEY
The Astorian

WARRENTON — The announcement from his family came about 8 p.m. on Saturday night. A Warrenton legend had passed.

Former Warriors' football coach, girls basketball coach and teacher John Mattila died of congestive heart failure Saturday at home among family, including Mary Ann, his wife of 34 years, and his daughter, Allison

Mattila-Gascoigne.

Born in Longview, Washington, on April 8, 1947, Mattila was 74.

At one time a coach in football, wrestling and baseball at Tillamook High School, Mattila came to Warrenton and coached football from 1974 to 2011, compiling 252 wins. He had 290 victories coaching girls basketball from 1997 to 2011. He took the Lady Warriors to four consecutive state tournaments, the last two finishing with records of 27-3 and 27-2.

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Couple works to preserve stories at historic cemetery

A restoration project at Greenwood

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian



ABOVE: Benjamin Young is buried at Greenwood Cemetery. BELOW: A device holds up a gravestone as Mike Leamy repairs it.



Mike Leamy pauses on the slopes of Greenwood Cemetery near Olney, places a deliberate hand on the pinnacle of a grave monument from the late 1800s and comments, with an eye out to the horizon but a quick glance back at his audience: "I knew it would be a massive undertaking, but I didn't think it would be such a monumental task."

He chuckles to himself and pats the monument lightly, just in case you missed the pun.

But there's truth folded in with the joke.

When Leamy and his wife, Lynda, purchased the historic but still active cemetery from the Caldwell family in the early 1980s, they didn't know anything about cemetery management. All they wanted was a place in the country where they could raise their boys and tend to their animals. Greenwood Cemetery, on a hill overlooking Youngs River, was a beautiful and affordable option.

They moved into the house on the property just in time for Memorial Day and the dizzying crush of people and bouquets that descend on cemeteries at that time of year to honor the dead.

Now, decades later, they can tell you the stories of many of the deceased occupants. They are finishing up a restoration project that will ensure some of the oldest parts of the historic cemetery will remain intact for generations to come.

A grant

Last year, the couple received a grant through the Oregon Commission on Historic Cemeteries for work to straighten, clean and repair leaning, loose and toppled tombstones in the oldest section.

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At Gearhart fire, a family affair

A father-daughter volunteer team

By R.J. MARX
The Astorian

GEARHART — On a Saturday morning in April, Josh Lair and his daughter, Amy, share a common destination: the Gearhart firehouse. Both are fire department volunteers.

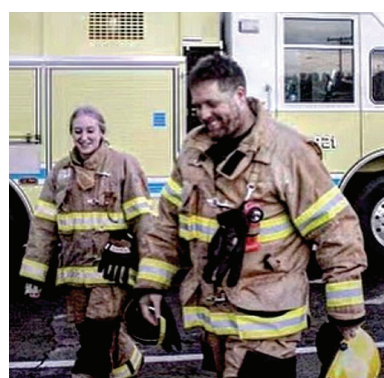
The job isn't what most people expect.

"You think of firefighters just putting fires out," said Amy Lair, who recently earned her emergency medical technician license. "But there are some intense scenes

that we come onto, and a lot of sad things happen. It's kind of amazing to watch a whole group of people come together for one common cause, and just as volunteers."

Josh Lair and his wife, Liz, moved with their five daughters from the Park City, Utah, area about four years ago. He joined the fire department in 2018.

Amy Lair spent summers and holidays with the family while pursuing her associate's degree in health science at Dixie State University in St. George, Utah. After Amy received her degree, she moved to



Gearhart Fire Department

Amy Lair and her father, Josh.

Oregon to join her family in early 2020.

"Amy's plan previous to her move was to continue her health science degree at the University of Maine, after receiving an academic

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A large donation pushes Nordic park closer to reality

Scandinavian festival plans several events

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

The Astoria Nordic Heritage Park is closer to the finish line after a Sweet Home couple with local ties bought the naming rights for the entrance.

Tony Larson and Shelly Tack donated \$250,000 for the right to a personalized inscription on the park's grand entrance ramp and stairs.

"This is a one-in-a-lifetime shot to not only say 'thank you' to my great-grandparents, but also 'thank you' to the Astoria community," Larson said.

Larson's great-grandparents emigrated from Denmark to the

Dakotas and moved to Astoria in the early 1900s. Larson said some of his favorite childhood memories were of coming to the Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival from Portland. He has been on the festival's board for several years.

"My dad and great-grandaunt would bring me out," he said. "I've got a 50-year love affair with the place, and I'm only 51."

Tack, from Sweet Home, said her great-grandparents emigrated from Sweden to the Upper Midwest before coming to Astoria.

"It's something we're both really proud of, that our families came here ... that they made that sacrifice for future generations," she said.

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