

## Fitness: ‘There’s a lot more hope now’

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Since reopening, the aquatic center has followed state guidelines, which required people to social distance from one another and to wear masks anytime they aren’t in a pool or a shower. The center will continue requiring patrons to wear masks and social distance, Patterson said.

“Something that’s been nice is because we have smaller groups in the center, we have an opportunity to interact more with our patrons ... I missed that interaction. When we were closed, we got to see what we take for granted. I missed seeing the community in the facility,” Patterson said.

Before social distancing guidelines, the aquatic center’s lap pool could fit about 20 people. The recreation pool could fit about 50. Now, the lap pool allows eight people at a time, while the recreation pool allows between 12 and 15 people at a time. One household can use the hot tub at a time.

“It’s a big difference, but we’re just really happy to be open again. Our baseline restriction is to be 6 feet apart in the water ... For the most part, people are very happy to be back and follow the rules. The pool can’t be replicated elsewhere,” Patterson said.

Having patrons schedule their pool use ahead of time is a major change, Patterson said. The center has also stopped hosting birthday parties and large gatherings.

“Before, people just walked in. Now, unfortunately, we have to be a little more restrictive,” Patterson said.

Another big change, which is in the works, is the reintroduction of fitness classes. The Astoria Parks and Recreation Center’s fitness classes will continue at the aquatic center, starting this week. The recreation center is being used as a day care.

“Our goal isn’t to compete, it’s to offer things that aren’t accessible in other places. We’re figuring out what we can give to the community that will be well received and used,” Patterson said. “The question we’ve been asking is what can we do to offset things that used to be offered pre-pandemic?”

The aquatic center’s fitness classes include cycling, circuit training, pilates, kickboxing and yoga. Classes are limited to six students each. More fitness classes, including swimming classes, will be brought back but a start date hasn’t been set.

“The classes are a big difference and welcome addition. Our hope is that eventually a parent can take a class



Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

**TOP:** Peter von Payens will teach many of the fitness classes at the Astoria Aquatic Center. **ABOVE:** David Johnsen finishes a lap in his own lane.

*‘OUR GOAL ISN’T TO COMPETE, IT’S TO OFFER THINGS THAT AREN’T ACCESSIBLE IN OTHER PLACES.’*

Terra Patterson | Astoria Aquatic Center’s supervisor

while an older kid swims, as restrictions open up,” Patterson said.

The aquatic center’s staff moved large fitness equipment machines to the lobby outside of the gym, making more room for people taking fitness classes or who come to use the gym.

“We put a lot of time and effort into reorganizing that area,” Patterson said.

**‘A tremendous healing’**  
In recent months, the movement center has brought back more of its classes, many of which hadn’t been offered during the past year.

“It feels like a tremendous healing ... People take classes for everything from social interaction to physical health to emotional well-being. When you’re not able to offer that, it is tragic,” West said. “It broke my heart to close, especially during such a difficult time when people needed dance and each other more than ever.”

The movement center’s staff has worked to adapt to

varying guidelines during the pandemic. Recently, the state’s guidelines on full-contact sports changed, allowing the center to reintroduce partner dancing courses.

“It’s been exciting,” West said. “Our county has still been fluctuating between moderate and high risk, so the AAMC has been operating in compliance with the high risk state guidelines because it’s been difficult to try and flip-flop back and forth every time that status changes.”

As vaccination rates increase, more people are coming to the movement center to take classes, West said. She hopes most of the center’s usual classes will resume by summer — though some classes, like contra and tap dancing, will likely come back in the fall because those classes usually aren’t taught during summer.

“Some classes are requiring registration. Some are not open to the public. Some instructors are capping attendance at 10 students,” West said.

### Looking forward

The aquatic center’s staff is looking forward to adding more fitness classes, especially swimming, to its roster.

“We’re excited for newer things we’re bringing back. We haven’t had exercise classes at the aquatic center for 10 years. It’s really exciting to give the community something it wants,” Patterson said. “... There are things we’re looking at bringing back this summer. With the fitness classes we’re restarting, there’s a lot of possibility.”

The aquatic center’s staff is also looking forward to continuing to host local organizations and sports teams for events, Patterson said.

The movement center’s staff is looking forward to performing at events and partnering with local venues. The center will be involved with Astoria Pride in June, which West described as “an honor.”

“We have really missed collaborating with other venues and entities ... It is something that is further out but before, being under so much duress, we weren’t even having those conversations, so it feels like this incredible awakening,” West said. “There’s a lot more hope now that wasn’t able to be there before.”

## Guns: Measure is divisive locally

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to enforce certain state laws, and it will tell us how to abide by the will of the voters to the extent that we can,” said Sarah Hanson, who serves as counsel in the conservative-leaning county.

Supporters of the ordinance include the Oregon Firearms Federation, which said in a November statement that “extremists” and “big city radicals” were trying to curtail gun rights.

The group referenced Portland protests opposing police brutality that occasionally turned violent last summer and called the ordinance a “common-sense” step that would “ensure your right and ability to defend your life and the lives of your loved ones.”

The ordinance would ban the enforcement of laws like background check requirements and restrictions on carrying a gun, though it would have exceptions for others, including keeping firearms from convicted felons.

The Oregon Firearms Federation didn’t respond to a request for comment on the court case.

Sheriff Brian Pixley has expressed support, saying in a March statement that one of his responsibilities is to uphold people’s Second Amendment rights and that he’s eager to “move forward with the will of the voters.”

The measure is divisive locally, though, and four residents filed court documents opposing it. One, Brandee Dudzic, referenced the strict gun safety drills she learned in military medic training, saying she values the right to own a gun but believes it should come with safety measures like background checks and secure storage.

A gun shop owner in Columbia County said he supports background checks and believes that “state law trumps the county law.” But he voted in favor of the Second Amendment measure on principle.

“We need to make sure that people are safe. We need to make sure that people are responsible,” he said. “But as more rules are in place, we just need to make sure that we’re not overregulated.”

He spoke on the condition he not be identified because some of his customers take a hard line against gun restrictions and he didn’t want to lose their business.

Everytown Law, an affiliate of the group Everytown for Gun Safety, is pushing for the measure to be overturned. Eric Tirschwell, the group’s managing director, said it would be the nation’s first court test amid the current wave of Second Amendment sanctuary laws.

Everytown argues that the ordinance violates the U.S. Constitution, which says federal law supersedes state law, as well as the state constitution and an Oregon law that gives the state power to regulate firearms.

The decision won’t have a direct effect outside Oregon, but could send a message.

“This case is important and should send the message that where state or local jurisdictions attempt

to unconstitutionally or unlawfully nullify gun safety laws, we are prepared to and will go to court,” Tirschwell said.

Other laws trying to blunt the effect of federal gun restrictions haven’t

faired well in court, including a 2009 Montana measure that made guns and ammunition manufactured in the state exempt from federal law and a similar 2013 measure in Kansas.

Many of the latest wave of measures, though, take a different tack by focusing on the actions of local police, including punishments like fines.

In terms of federal law, gun rights advocates may have a successful legal argument under the so-called anti-commandeering doctrine, which says the U.S. government can’t make state and local officials enforce federal law, said Darrell Miller, a professor of law at Duke Law School and co-faculty director of the Duke Center for Firearms Law. He agreed that the Oregon case is the first of its kind.

Local enforcement of state law, meanwhile, is another matter. Most states don’t have similar provisions in their own legal codes, and Oregon’s attorney general said in court documents that the Columbia County ordinance is incompatible with criminal law and the duties of county officials.

“To the extent the local government is trying to say, ‘We’re also not going to enforce state law either’ ... that’s a much more difficult and complicated position,” Miller said. “The authority of the state over localities is much, much stronger.”

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## Steinweg: ‘I just love doing things with the kids’

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the Nehalem Valley 4H club and volunteered in support of other youth projects.

“It keeps me out of trouble,” she joked.

Steinweg was recently the recipient of the state’s first award for education support professionals in Oregon, recognition for her work that came with a plaque and a \$5,000 check.

The award is connected to state legislation passed in 2019 that directed the Oregon Lottery and the Oregon Department of Education to design and implement a program to honor the state’s education support professionals.

To qualify for the award, the employee nominated needed to demonstrate that they excelled in their field, showed leadership and innovation and collaborated with

colleagues, students and families “to create a school culture of respect and success” among other accomplishments.

Steinweg represents all of these things, Barry Pack, the director of the Oregon Lottery, said in a statement.

“Dedicated professionals like Paula are the heart and soul of school districts across the state,” he said.

“Paula is not afraid to try, fail and try again, especially when the success of a student is on the line,” Jon Wood, the Jewell School principal, said in a statement.

The award — announced during a staff meeting at Jewell School this month — was a surprise to Steinweg. State Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, and Colt Gill, the director of the Department of Education, joined virtually via Zoom to make the announcement.

It was a shock and an honor, Steinweg said. But, she added, she has never expected or needed this type of validation or acknowledgement.

“It’s just what I do,” she said. “I just love doing things with the kids. ... All the stuff that I do for the kids is not because I want to be recognized for it.”

Steinweg is a former waitress. She initially applied for a job as an educational assistant at Jewell School to be able to spend more time with her children and, in general, to build up something “a little more” for herself.

She has spent much of her life in Jewell and feels it’s important for students in the tiny, rural community to be able to access a variety of experiences, to be exposed to different places and different types of activities — and she wants to be a part of making

that happen for them.

Still, Steinweg said, she does think it’s important to honor school district staff who aren’t teachers. Education assistants go into classrooms and help keep kids on track and fill a variety of other important roles.

“To recognize us, that’s great,” she said.

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