



Ethan Myers/The Astorian

Cannery Pier Hotel & Spa donated \$100,000 toward the Astoria Nordic Heritage Park. Pictured, from left, Petra Cereghino, Junior Miss Sweden; Miss Scandinavia Kaisa Lijjenwall; Linh DePledge, the general manager at Cannery Pier; Loran Mathews, the president of the Astoria Scandinavian Heritage Association; and Judi Lampi, who leads the park committee.

Nordic park: ‘Visitors will have access to Nordic heritage year-round’

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The park, designed by The West Studio, of Seattle, will be located at the spot of the former Peoples Park downtown. Rickenbach Construction, of Astoria, will be in charge of construction and the heritage association will maintain the park upon completion.

The park will honor the rich history of Nordic immigration into Astoria, which in turn shaped much of the cultural heritage and tradition of the city.

With a view of the Columbia River and an entrance from the Astoria Riverwalk, features inside the park will include a mid-

summer pole in the plaza, granite slabs representing Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, as well as a gateway arch leading to 10 interpretive panels describing the heritage of Scandinavians on the North Coast.

Janet Bowler, the vice chairwoman of the park committee, said they hope to hold events on the plaza, as well as educational tours for schools and cruise ships.

Bowler and Lampi emphasized the park will not just be for the Nordic community, but for the whole city.

“Visitors will have access to Nordic heritage year-round,” Bowler said.



A surfer died in June at Short Sand Beach at Oswald West State Park.

Ocean: ‘Always have children in life jackets. It’s the law’

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Tiffany Brown said. “I think about all the people that went swimming this weekend that aren’t really swimmers. That’s what hot weather does, it pushes people to do things that they wouldn’t normally do because they’re uncomfortable.”

Over the past month, several ocean-related deaths and injuries showed the dangers.

On Memorial Day in May, a 14-year-old boy was presumed to have drowned off the Long Beach Peninsula in Washington state.

In June, an 11-year-old Portland girl died after being swept out to sea off Cannon Beach.

A 34-year-old college professor drowned in June while surfing at Short Sand Beach at Oswald West State Park north of Manzanita.

Last weekend, a 44-year-old man from Tacoma, Washington, was pulled unconscious from the water off Beards Hollow at Cape Disappointment State Park in Washington state. His family said he was later determined not to have meningitis.

Beaches on the North Coast can be particularly treacherous for swimmers due to colder-than-average water temperatures, strong currents and rocky shore-

lines, notes Cannon Beach Fire & Rescue Chief Marc Reckmann.

“We’ve had the most water rescues this year that I’ve ever seen,” Reckmann said. “The point is, if you see someone in trouble, call 911 immediately, do not hesitate.”

Stefan Holubar, a vacationing doctor from the Cleveland Clinic, was on the scene at Short Sand in June when people tried to help the surfer. “We had an experienced team and we gave him everything we could,” the doctor said. “A couple hundred people were watching. It was very traumatic for the whole beach.”

U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officer Diolanda Caballero said she hopes people diligently prepare themselves ahead of time before getting in the water. “No matter what, even the best swimmers can be caught off guard. The ocean is extremely unforgiving,” she said.

Life jackets can also be an asset to people of all ages, particularly minors, when on the water. Of the 27 reported boating fatalities in Oregon in 2020, the Oregon State Marine Board said that 17 could have been prevented if the victim had worn a life jacket.

“Always have children in life jackets. It’s the law,” Caballero said.



Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

TOP: A rescued river otter pup eats fish at the Wildlife Center of the North Coast. BELOW: The river otter in a quiet moment after eating.

Otter pup: Will be released when she is older

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Sea otters were once hunted to near-extinction in waters off Oregon and Washington state as part of the fur trade in the 18th and 19th centuries. While the mammals were successfully reintroduced in Washington, parts of Alaska and in Canada in the past 50 years, similar efforts failed in Oregon.

In January, the push to bring sea otters back on the Oregon Coast received a small boost when former President Donald Trump signed the federal budget. Included in the budget was a directive to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to study sea otter reintroduction in the Pacific Northwest.

Rare visitors

If sea otters remain relatively uncommon, common river otters are rare visitors to the Wildlife Center of the North Coast.

The river otter pup there now was one of a pair found in the Deer Island area in neighboring Columbia County. There had been a vehicle accident where the two pups were found. The Portland Audubon Society played baby otter calls at the site hoping to lure the mother out of hiding, but she didn’t respond. It is likely she was hit and either too injured to



respond at the time or already dead.

One of the pups, a male, didn’t survive. The other pup did. The wildlife center was better equipped to care for an otter than Portland Audubon, so she came to the North Coast. She will be released back near Deer Island when she is older — and bigger — and after she has hit several key milestones, such as the ability to hunt her own food and recognize predators.

Otter pups are difficult to raise in captivity for release back into the wild. They are highly social animals that rely on their mothers to teach them how to survive.

So, wildlife center employees — much like local school districts after a year of the coronavirus pandemic — have planned enrichment activities designed to keep the otter entertained and socialized, as well as to

educate her on key points of being an otter. Eventually, they will have to teach her how to swim.

At the same time, it is important that the pup maintains a healthy fear of humans. As tempting as it might be to give her a name or speak to her in baby talk, Hogan and the others who care for the pup must be careful to give her no positive interaction whatsoever.

When she’s released, “she should be able to hide, not slowly walk up to us like, ‘Where’s the food?’” Hogan said.

It’s a tricky balance. While the pup is at the wildlife center, they need her to trust them enough so they can feed her and handle her, but she also needs to be scared of them, Hogan said.

“Mom! Here they come!” Her vocalizations have

changed in the weeks she’s been receiving care, going from the low grunts registering a deep fear to a higher-pitched squeaking when wildlife center employees approach, noises that, in the wild, would signal something like, “Mom! Here they come!” Hogan said.

On a chart on her cage door, which is shrouded with blankets and towels, there is a note reminding caretakers, “Do not open or peek” — a measure intended to ensure the otter doesn’t become accustomed to the sight of humans being around, but also to guard against escapes as the center allows the pup more room to roam around her enclosure. Staff try to handle her as little as possible and keep their voices down when they are near her cage.

While the otter pup might be tucked out of sight and sea otter recovery in Oregon still uncertain, people on the North Coast can try to spot local river otters at Lewis and Clark instead.

The park does not track river otter numbers, but the mammals are certainly present.

Cole suggests visiting the Netul Landing Visitor Center at the south end of the park along the Lewis and Clark River at dawn or in the early morning or at sunset.

Hospital: Relationship has expanded through the years

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Nancee Long, the director of communications at Columbia Memorial, said the move also brings a higher level of care to the community now that the providers have access to resources at OHSU.

The relationship between the two health care organizations has expanded through the years. About 10 years ago, the Columbia Memorial Hospital Board of Trustees decided it wanted to partner with a larger institution and chose OHSU.

Thorsen described it as a unique partnership.

“It’s unique in the way we have been able to partner without merging, but yet growing our specialty care locally with a major academic university that has now improved access to care for our community,” Thorsen said. “It started with the (CMH-OHSU Knight Cancer Collaborative) and has grown through that 10-year period to this.”

Thorsen said the transition of the 28 providers was the final of three primary goals the collaboration set in 2019. The first was completed when OHSU physician James Heilman joined the CMH board in 2019, and the second happened on June 1 when the Astoria hospital hired Chris Strear as chief medical officer.

“That position is really set up to help be the liaison between the work we do here locally and the work at



Sarah Bello

Erik Thorsen, the CEO of Columbia Memorial Hospital, stands with Heather Pilkington, Oregon Health & Science University clinical project manager; Dr. Mark Rawson, a podiatrist; Dr. Peter Bales, an orthopedic surgeon; and Ryan Larsen, an orthopedic physician assistant, on the first day of a new provider collaboration.

OHSU and trying to help us drive strategy,” Thorsen said.

Long said it’s important for patients to know that it’s a collaboration, not a transfer of ownership, so there won’t be any changes to billing or who their doctors are.

“A patient can now know that their provider has the full strength of OHSU behind them, insofar as education and collaboration, and it’s a great thing,” Long said.

While OHSU is the employer, Columbia Memorial remains independent and reimburses OHSU for the cost of the employment and is responsible for providing the space for clinic and sup-

port services.

The collaboration also brings the opportunity for specialists from OHSU, like vascular surgeon Robert McLafferty, to come to Columbia Memorial on a part-time basis, whereas without it the hospital would not be able to recruit a provider to the area for a part-time job.

Long said the provid-

ers continue to be part of the local community and the prestige of the new brand will help recruit staff.

“Economic development depends on bringing people here, building houses, having great health care, so I think we’re providing a way to really bring a much higher level of medicine to the area and keep them here,” Long said.

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