



A sign made for Ted Stallsworth at a memorial service near Coffenburg Lake.

Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

In Warrenton, family and friends grieve a virus death

Stallsworth is believed to be the 12th county resident who died from the coronavirus

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

A memorial service for a Warrenton man who died from the coronavirus drew nearly 200 people to a picnic area near Coffenburg Lake on Thursday evening.

It was overwhelming to a family who never expected so many people would attend, but, for Ted Stallsworth's wife, Julie, ultimately heartwarming.

The faces in the crowd — longtime friends, law enforcement, people Stallsworth knew from recovery, clients from his carpet-cleaning business — were a testament to the kind of man he had been, she said. An anchor for her and their four children, a man ready to befriend anyone.

Stallsworth, 52, died on Aug. 19 after being hospitalized since late July. His family believes he is Clatsop County's 12th virus death based on information reported by the state.

His family doesn't know how he caught the virus. Around the time he got sick, other family members were also sick. His youngest daughter was exposed through her work. His oldest son was exposed while on vacation. He ended up hospitalized with severe symptoms around the same time as his father. At Stallsworth's memorial service near the lake at Fort Stevens State Park, he stood up to talk with an oxygen tank in tow.

The virus that killed Stallsworth has killed more than 600,000 people in the United States to date — 13 in Clatsop County as of early Monday. The virus is surging again in Oregon because of the delta variant, placing a strain on the health care system as hospital and intensive care unit beds are becoming scarce.

The Oregon Health Authority reported 58 new virus cases for the



Ted Stallsworth died from complications of COVID-19 on Aug. 19.



Flowers sit at a memorial service for Ted Stallsworth.

county over the weekend. Since the pandemic began, the county has recorded 1,851 virus cases.

Hospitalization rates are expected to continue to rise over the next week, according to researchers with Oregon Health & Science University. Most of the recent hospitalizations and deaths from the virus are occurring among people who are unvaccinated.

Stallsworth was unvaccinated.

'He said he'd never thought it would get him'

He was not against vaccinations, in general, Julie Stallsworth said, but he told her he felt the vaccines for COVID-19 had been developed more quickly than he was comfortable with. When she got vaccinated in April, he didn't join her.

Julie Stallsworth isn't sure the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's approval of the Pfizer vaccine — the first such approval for a coronavirus

See Virus death, Page A6

Cruise ship season slips away

Oceangoing cruises disrupted by pandemic

By ETHAN MYERS
The Astorian

The remaining oceangoing cruise ship visits on Astoria's calendar this year have been canceled.

Bruce Conner, who is in charge of the Port of Astoria's cruise ship marketing, told Port commissioners earlier this month that the final eight cruise ships planning to stop in Astoria will not do so because of the coronavirus pandemic. Twenty-nine passenger cruise ships were set to visit the port this year.

"We were 50-50 probably through mid-July and then each day it went (down)," Conner said. "So no, it was no surprise, but there was an outside chance and I did not want to say anything."

While two Norwegian Cruise Line ships docked at the Port this year — the Regatta and the Pride of America — both were crew-only vessels waiting out virus disruptions. All 38 oceangoing cruise ships on the Port's calendar for 2020 were also canceled.

Foreign-flagged cruise ships visiting multiple U.S. ports are required under federal maritime law to stop in foreign ports, such as Canada, which banned cruise ship visits in March 2020. The vessels were unable to visit ports on the Pacific coast until the Alaska Tourism Restoration Act was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Joe Biden in May, allowing ships transporting passengers to travel between Washington state and Alaska.

Conner and the cruise lines were attempting to get an exemption for Oregon.

"They were holding on ... we just ran out of time," Conner said.

Will Isom, the Port's executive director, said he was also not surprised the cruise ship visits were canceled given the surge in virus cases. But he acknowledged the financial blow of the cancellations.

Oceangoing cruise ships typically bring in over \$1 million each year for the Port. Much of that money goes toward dredging, a significant operational cost, Isom said.

"When you have that type of fixed cost, it definitely hurts," he said.

Isom noted the Port has been able to recoup some of the financial losses with the two crew-only vessels that came this year.

While the oceangoing cruise ships will not venture into Astoria until at least 2022, a number of riverboats are visiting the city at the 17th Street Dock.

"There has never been a busier year than this year, at this point anyway, in the history of the riverboats coming," Conner said.

Looking ahead, Conner said he is encouraged by the growth in the cruise ship industry. The Port has 37 ships scheduled for 2022 and 22 ships scheduled for 2023.

"I think the demand is there, the bookings are there and people have booked," he said. "They have made these reservations to accommodate the demand."

Bigfoot believer steps up to skeptics

Retired postman wrote a sasquatch book

By PATRICK WEBB
Chinook Observer

RAYMOND, Wash. — Russell Wiitala has two words for folk who want to measure him for a tin-foil hat.

"Metaphysical denial."

The longtime Raymond resident

coined the phrase to describe doubters who question the existence of sasquatch, sacred numbers or anything paranormal.

But can the retired postman deliver the evidence?

He hopes to take strides with the publication of his book, "Sasquatch: Shaman of the Woods."

Wiitala is a familiar figure in north Pacific County as a rural carrier for 27 years and for his many roles with the Willapa Players. He's president of the community troupe, spearheading its conversion of a newly purchased South Bend church into a theater. He's written plays, directed and acted and even

appeared in a couple of films.

But while that hobby is all make-believe, Wiitala is eager to prove the reality of sasquatch. And his book spells out his belief that if humans were more open-minded they would acknowledge that there is plenty of evidence that otherworldly beings exist.

Around the world, the names of these creatures vary: sasquatch, Bigfoot, yeti, abominable snowman or swamp creature. Everywhere their existence is questioned because few people can demonstrate evidence they have seen any



Patrick Webb/Chinook Observer
'They are metaphysical and telepathic,' Russell Wiitala said of sasquatch.



Russell Wiitala wrote 'Sasquatch: Shaman of the Woods.'

See Wiitala, Page A6

