

IN BRIEF

Crash damages walkway in Seaside

SEASIDE — A Warrenton man was charged after a single-vehicle crash Thursday night caused property damage to the city boardwalk area on the south side of First Avenue near the Seaside Civic and Convention Center.

Joshua Bell, 33, was arrested for driving under the influence of intoxicants, reckless driving and criminal mischief.

The city does not have an estimate yet of the damages.

“We will be looking at hiring a subcontractor to rebuild the sidewalk and walkway,” Dale McDowell, the city’s public works director, said.

Transit district seeking volunteers for budget committee

The Sunset Empire Transportation District is looking for volunteers who would like to serve on the budget committee.

The committee, which is made up of seven district board members and seven residents who serve three-year terms, has five vacant community positions, with one being a two-year fulfillment of a term.

The committee typically meets once a year in the spring, but can hold additional meetings if needed.

Interested volunteers should send a letter of interest, which can be emailed to jeff@ridethebus.org, dropped off at the Astoria Transit Center or mailed to Sunset Empire Transportation District, 900 Marine Drive, Astoria, OR., 97103.

— *The Astorian*

Oregon begins tracking homeless deaths with new law

For the last decade, only one Oregon county has tracked the deaths of people experiencing homelessness. That’s about to change with a new law that took effect Jan. 1.

The law requires death reports to indicate if someone was homeless at their time of death, similar to the way Multnomah County has tracked deaths through its “Domicile Unknown” report since 2011.

When compiling a report, state medical examiners would check a box called “domicile unknown” if they determined a person was homeless when they died. The examiner could also report the decedent’s last known address.

— *Oregon Public Broadcasting*

DEATHS

Jan. 1, 2022

HAMILTON, Amy Elizabeth, 46, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Ocean View Funeral & Cremation Service of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

HOYER, Lois Blanche, 95, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

KAINO, Ronald Edward, 89, of Hammond, died in Hammond. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

PURO, Darlene Ellen, 82, of Astoria, died in Warrenton. Caldwell’s

Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Dec. 30, 2021

CAPPS, John Lester, 71, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Dec. 29, 2021

CRAM, Benedine Mary, 77, of Seaside, died in Seaside. Ocean View Funeral & Cremation Service of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

Dec. 24, 2021

KELLY, Roberta Cheryl, 64, of Seaside, died in Portland. Caldwell’s Luce-Layton Mortuary in Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

ON THE RECORD

Criminal trespass

• Keith Alan Byman, 33, of Warrenton, was arrested Friday at Fred Meyer in Warrenton for criminal trespass in the first degree.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

TUESDAY

Clatsop County Fair Board, 5:30 p.m., 92937 Walluski Loop, Astoria.

Cannon Beach City Council, 6 p.m., City Hall, 163 E. Gower St.

WEDNESDAY

Clatsop County Board of Commissioners, 10 a.m., work session, (electronic meeting).

Clatsop Community College Board, 2 p.m., work session, (electronic meeting).

Knappa School District Board, 5:30 p.m., work session, Knappa High School Library, 41535 Old U.S. Highway 30.

Gearhart City Council, 7 p.m., (electronic meeting).

the Astorian

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Lydia Ely/The Astorian

People spend the last few moments of light on New Year’s Day at Cannon Beach.

No charges against driver in fatal crash near Warrenton in 2020

By ERICK BENDEL
The Astorian

A woman who police say caused a double-fatal traffic crash south of Warrenton in 2020 will not be charged with a crime, the Clatsop County District Attorney’s Office said.

On Nov. 4, 2020, then-26-year-old Rachael Elizabeth Forrest, heading north on U.S. Highway 101 in a Lincoln Navigator, missed a curve and struck a southbound Toyota RAV4, which

careened into the northbound lane and collided with an Oregon Department of Transportation vehicle.

The Toyota’s occupants — Ilwaco, Washington, residents Randall Jack Shine, 63, and Patricia Ann Shine, 71 — died. A dog in the car was also killed.

The transportation department employees went to the hospital. Forrest was uninjured.

Forrest was initially arrested for driving under the influence of intoxicants and

reckless driving. But a series of tests — field sobriety tests, a drug recognition evaluation, a Breathalyzer test, blood and urine tests — failed to establish that she was impaired.

Oregon State Police determined that Forrest caused the crash. However, “none of the tests that were done captured any kind of controlled substance,” District Attorney Ron Brown said.

In a letter to one of the victim’s families, Scott McCracken, the senior deputy district attorney who

reviewed the case, wrote:

“I agree with the assessment that Ms. Forrest caused this horrible tragedy, that she is responsible, but I do not believe we would be able to establish, beyond a reasonable doubt, that a crime occurred.”

McCracken wrote that the decision not to prosecute Forrest was a difficult one, “reached through consultation and conversation with others.”

“It was certainly an awful case,” Brown said.

Hope: ‘He was just trying to figure out what to do’

Continued from Page A1

tour, he finished out his last months in California before returning to Seaside.

“He was just trying to figure out what to do, and struggling,” Fairless said. “He felt civilian life was just not for him. He gave up trying. He would say all the time, ‘The only thing I know how to do is kill.’ So he ended up going back into the military.”

He enlisted in the Oregon National Guard and served as a sergeant with American forces in Afghanistan.

“He was trying to reassure me that I didn’t need to worry, that somehow occupation with the Army National Guard is a lot safer than invasion with the Marine Corps,” she said. “He was telling me, ‘There’s a Starbucks and I’m going shopping.’”

He was in Afghanistan for about a year, but recurring injuries prevented him from joining his platoon on their next assignment in Africa. He returned home.

“That was a hard blow,” Fairless said. “He was just trying to figure out what to do and struggling.”

Her brother felt “weird” about his medals — a Purple Heart for valor, a National Defense Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, NATO Medal and more.

“He felt like he didn’t deserve them,” she said. “We spent most of our lives feeling so extremely hopeless because of the economy and our efforts to be productive citizens. We did not have a good start. We were intelligent enough to be aware of why we struggled but not seemingly, at least in his regard, capable of overcoming it. Being aware that you have a mental health problem, does not fix it.”



Curtis Fairless on military duty.

In December 2018 Fairless was working at a restaurant in Astoria when she learned her brother had killed himself at a home owned by his aunt in Warrenton.

“He didn’t leave a note, but he did leave a message,” she said. “And that message was a stack of books next to his head splattered with his blood. The top book is ‘On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society.’ Oh, my God.”

‘Productive processing’

When Curtis Fairless returned home from Afghanistan, he brought rubies, jade and other gems bought at a market where he was stationed, intended as an investment for his family and loved ones.

The gemstones were made into dog-tags for family and loved ones in his memory at the funeral. His sister kept one remaining

ruby in her possession.

She decided to tie the drawing to Veterans Day in her brother’s honor because she sees an impact not only for Afghan people, but for America’s military veterans trying to reenter society.

The final ruby is a “productive processing” of her pain and reflects the kind of service member her brother wanted to be, she said.

“His memory to me is one of self-sacrifice,” she said. “He was also sending a message that we’re doing it wrong — in regard to mental health, homelessness, foreign policy, literally almost everything. We’ve been doing it wrong, and we need help. And we are the only ones that can help ourselves. That’s what his life said. But that’s especially what his death said.”

“We look at the American soldier, and Marines in particular, as the strongest human being there is,” she continued. “But he was just a sad, broken, abused little boy that was pimped out by our government and then not helped enough by his community.”

Fairless, a writer, organizer and youth advocate who ran unsuccessfully

for Seaside mayor in 2014, lives in Rainier with her son, Ruben Saucedo. She is back in Portland finishing her bachelor’s degree in science and social work with a minor in conflict resolution.

The winner of the ruby drawing held in December was Lee James, of Coupeville, Washington, an Army veteran himself.

“My wife and I will treasure the ruby,” James wrote to Fairless. “Receiving it is like a sign that ‘paying it forward’ is truly the way. We are so blessed. The blessing wants to grow for others.”

With her support of the Afghan refugee effort, Fairless said she hopes people confront their internalized fear about immigrants — not just refugees.

“I would suggest, I would hope, that the people of my hometown start to really ask themselves hard questions about themselves,” she said. “‘Do I have any unconscious biases?’ ‘Where are my blind spot biases?’ ‘Am I unintentionally racist and sexist and just don’t know it?’”

“‘Is war a bigger problem that I should care about?’ The answers are ‘yes.’”

WANTED

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