



Photos by Lydia Ely/The Astorian

The lack of transportation can be a barrier for rural veterans who need health care and other services.

Rural veterans are at higher risk of suicide

Outreach to improve access to mental health treatment

By **ABBEY McDONALD**
The Astorian

SEASIDE — Each seat at American Legion Post 99 had several take-home items: a resource packet, a blue stress ball and a firearm safety lock with suicide prevention hotlines printed on either side.

Together With Veterans held its first regional community event on Wednesday, bringing together service groups, veterans and family members from Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook, Lincoln and Washington counties to discuss suicide prevention with a public health perspective.

“We want to promote connectedness, because that is one of the most important things when it comes to preventing things like suicide,” said Donna-Marie Drucker, the president of the Oregon Firearm Safety Coalition.

“Having that sense of community, that sense of belonging, that sense that we have something bigger than ourselves and to serve. All the things that veterans really talk about and often miss when they leave the service,” she said.

Together With Veterans, a community created program run through U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, is the first of its kind in the state, Drucker said. They selected this region of Oregon for the proximity to Portland and the high rates of veterans in rural

See Veterans, Page A6

Josh Davis is Clatsop County's veterans services officer.



ARCH CAPE

Residents concerned about forest purchase

Logging, recreation among the worries

By **NICOLE BALES**
The Astorian

The Arch Cape Water District Board took a big step in April when it signed off on a \$4.7 million purchase of 1,441 acres of commercial timberland, but a segment of the community is not confident in the district's plan.

The purchase, which has been years in the making, will turn the timberlands around the source of Arch Cape's drinking water into a community forest, making the unincorporated area one of the few coastal communities to have full control of its watershed.

But some residents and landowners are concerned about the water district's plan, including the impact logging and public recreational use could have on the area.

Financed by state and federal grants, the plan will protect drinking water and wildlife habitat. The property will tie into an additional 3,500 acres the North Coast Land Conservancy acquired for its Rainforest Reserve project above Arch Cape and adjacent to Oswald West State Park.

The water district, which oversees 295 water connections, also plans to significantly scale back logging and provide recreational opportunities.

Astoria oversees a similar system at its 3,700-acre Bear Creek watershed, which provides the city's drinking water. However, there is no public access or recreation.

Leading up to the board's decision to purchase the land, Bill Campbell, a homeowner, sent a petition with more than 100 names calling for the board to defer the logging scheduled to start in 2023 and work with a ratepayer advisory work group to come up with an operations management plan that could eliminate the need for logging. He has also set up a blog with critiques about different aspects of the board's plan.

Campbell said the overarching concern is lack of community involvement in the process. He said there are also concerns about logging and plans to open the forest — which sits behind many neighbors' backyards — to the public for recreational use. He also questions the board's ability to manage the forest and the financial plan.

See Arch Cape, Page A6

INSIDE

GOVERNOR'S RACE

Kotek, Read differ on track records in Democratic primary • A2

Republicans compete in crowded primary field for governor • A3

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High school senior jumps life's hurdles

Sisley battles through asthma condition

By **GARY HENLEY**
The Astorian

Astoria High School senior Maddie Sisley can tell you a thing or two about clearing hurdles.

First, as the No. 2-ranked 100-meter hurdler in the state, she jumps hurdles pretty much every day in practice or meets.

Two, she's part of a senior class that had to deal with nearly two years of limited seasons — or no season at all — in sports because of

EVERYDAY
people

COVID-19.

And third, Sisley has been jumping obstacles for the better part of her four-year athletic career at Astoria, just to compete in the sports she loves.

Anyone who has watched Sisley play soccer for the past four years can appreciate her competitiveness.

She was a standout defender for the Lady Fishermen her first two years, before coach Tim Fastabend moved her to forward midway through her junior season, and

Sisley responded by becoming a scoring machine.

She spent her last year-and-a-half as Astoria's leading scorer and most dangerous soccer player in the open field, finishing the 2021 season with all-league honors.

And she did it all while battling an asthma condition that limited her playing time.

Sisley would play until she would drop, sometimes literally.

“It was a big thing,” she said of the asthma, which would force her to the sidelines at least once a game. “It was a big bump in the road for soccer, especially it being my last year.”

It also made basketball difficult to play, and prevented her from running the 300-meter hurdles.



Gary Henley/The Astorian

See Sisley, Page A6

Maddie Sisley, jumping her last hurdle in her last home meet.



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