

## IN BRIEF

## Seaside band teacher killed in crash on Highway 26

A Seaside band teacher was one of two men killed on Saturday after a crash on U.S. Highway 26 near the Saddle Mountain State Park Road intersection.

Police said Fredrick Scheffler II, a 49-year-old Portland resident, was driving westbound in a black 2020 Tesla Model Y just before noon, veered into the oncoming lane and struck a gray Hyundai Tucson driven by Kyle Rieger, 26, who lived in Warrenton.

Scheffler sustained fatal injuries and was pronounced dead at the scene.

Rieger, who taught at Seaside High School and Seaside Middle School, was taken to Providence Seaside Hospital after the crash and later flown to Oregon Health & Science University Hospital, according to Seaside High School principal Jeff Roberts.

"Despite heroic efforts from the medical team at OHSU, the injuries sustained by Mr. Rieger were too much to overcome and I am sorry to have to share that he passed away," Roberts said in a letter to students and families.

Rieger held a bachelor's degree in music composition and a master's degree in instrumental conducting from Truman State University in Kirksville, Missouri. He joined the Seaside School District in September.

"Although Kyle was here for a short time, he had already had a great impact on students and colleagues alike and had a bright future ahead of him," Roberts said.

The crash partially closed the highway for more than three hours.

## F-15 flyover marked Memorial Day in Astoria

F-15 Eagle fighter jets conducted a flyover over Astoria on Monday to help mark Memorial Day.

The jets passed by just after 11 a.m.

"F-15 flyovers from the 142nd Wing and your hometown Air Force are a way for us to pay tribute to American patriots who paid the ultimate sacrifice and their families," Col. Todd Hofford, commander of the 142nd Wing of the Portland Air National Guard, said in a statement. "The flights are also a public salute to our local communities whom we appreciate and respect, for their support of our airmen and all those serving throughout our nation."

"It is an honor to protect and defend the Pacific Northwest and the freedoms which allow us to spend time with our loved ones on this national holiday."

## CEDR recognizes businesses with awards

Clatsop Economic Development Resources recognized standout North Coast businesses — large and small — for their community contributions in the past year during an awards ceremony on Thursday at Clatsop Community College's Patriot Hall.

Kevin Leahy, the executive director of CEDR and the Clatsop Community College Small Business Development Center, said he was happy to see this year's event bring together a variety of businesses.

"I would say that's kind of our secret sauce.

We're not just relying on one thing, like tourism," he said. "We have so much going on here with natural resources, and hospitality, and retail and health care, that's what really makes things special here."

— The Astorian

## BUSINESS LEADER OF THE YEAR

- **New Business/** Gaetano's Market & Deli
- **North County/** Holly McHone Jewelers
- **South County/** Brian Olson, Beachcomber Vacation Homes
- **Business Achievement/** Montealban Mexican Restaurant

## SMALL BUSINESSES

- **Economic Impact/** Kiosco Mexicano
- **Customer Service/** Lucy's Books
- **Innovation/** Encore Dance Studio

## LARGE BUSINESSES

- **Community Impact/** Mo's Restaurant
- **Economic Impact/** Columbia Bank
- **Innovation/** J.M. Browning Logging Inc.
- **Customer Service/** The Ocean Lodge

This year, CEDR added the Skip Hauke Spirit of Business Community Supporter award, to honor the late CEDR co-founder. Margo Lalich received the award for her work as Clatsop County's interim public health director during the pandemic.

## Mental health services to get over \$500M spending boost this year

By APRIL EHRLICH  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

Oregon health officials announced Friday how they will spend more than half-a-billion dollars set aside for behavioral health services in the state.

The \$517 million spending package is divided into three main areas. About \$132 million will pay for grants to help behavioral health providers with staffing shortages. Another \$155 million will pay for rate increases for service providers. The remaining \$230 million will go toward supportive housing and residential treatment programs.

The ambitious spending package is the result of legislative initiatives to help the state improve its behavioral health services. Oregon has the fifth-highest unmet need for mental health services, according to federal data, with more than 10% of adults saying they can't get the help



Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, Clatsop County's mental health and substance abuse treatment provider, has sought to help with housing.

they need.

One of the biggest challenges Oregon faces is a shortage of mental health workers, according to a February report by the Oregon Health Authority — a problem that was exacerbated by the pandemic.

That's why lawmakers this year allocated \$132 million toward grants for pro-

viders to bolster staffing. The program, slated to begin this week, will provide grants to 159 organizations to hire and retain employees. Most of the money will go toward wages, benefits and bonuses.

Meanwhile, the \$155 million for provider rate increases will put an extra \$109 per Medicaid member into the behavioral health sys-

tem. That program is slated to begin July 1, although it awaits final legislative and federal approval.

The money for supportive housing services includes \$100 million in direct awards to counties, then \$112 million toward a competitive grant program for residential mental health and substance use services.

The grant program will support long-term projects, including new construction and renovation for supportive housing programs. The remaining funds will go to federally recognized tribes to fund housing and residential treatment projects.

"This will ensure that people are supported in settings that best meet their needs and will create more equitable and effective housing alternatives for people with serious and persistent mental illness, requiring a higher standard of care," the Oregon Health Authority said in a statement.

## Many Oregon hospitals owe federal government for early pandemic loans

By AMELIA TEMPLETON  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

This spring, hospitals and health systems in the Northwest are reporting some of their biggest financial losses since the COVID-19 pandemic started. In some cases, the need to pay back loans granted by the federal government early in the pandemic is contributing to their fiscal woes.

Providence Health & Services, based in Renton, Washington, lost \$510 million in the first quarter of 2022. Oregon Health & Science University Hospital, based in Portland, has lost \$64 million in the current fiscal year, including a \$20 million loss in the month of February alone.

And the St. Charles Health System, in Bend, lost \$21.8 million and announced layoffs.

All three health systems have cited the impact of the omicron wave, inflation and the health care labor crisis as reasons for losing money on their operations.

Most hospitals have drawn on pandemic aid dollars, from the CARES Act and other sources, to partially offset those losses.

But a lesser known aid program, the Medicare Accelerated and Advance Payments program, offered short-term interest-free loans, not grants. And now, the bills are coming due at a time when hospitals' costs are rising quickly and revenue from patient stays and surgeries is growing more slowly.



Bruce Forster

Oregon Health & Science University Hospital is one of several Oregon hospitals facing financial losses as COVID-19 care has strained resources the past two years.

At the outset of the pandemic two years ago, Oregon hospitals and primary care providers received more than \$1.1 billion in advance payments from Medicare, according to records shared by the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems. The idea was to keep the cash flowing in the early crisis months of the pandemic, when elective surgeries were canceled, by paying hospitals in advance for services they would provide to Medicare patients in the future.

The program has been used in the past to support hospitals impacted by wildfires and hurricanes. The idea is that hospitals are able to pay back the advances once the crisis has passed and operations have returned to normal. But the pandemic has dragged on — and hospitals and health systems are still dealing with the effects. At the same time, the federal government wants to get its money back so it can keep

Medicare funded.

Based on the number of Medicare patients they treat, PeaceHealth, headquartered in Vancouver, Washington, OHSU and the St. Charles Health System got the biggest advances of the systems in Oregon that took loans: \$214 million, \$137 million, and \$94 million.

Congress set the repayment timeline and has extended it once already. Hospitals have lobbied, unsuccessfully, for the loans to be forgiven.

In March 2021, a year after the first payments went out, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees Medicare, began recovering those cash advances by paying health systems 25% less for Medicare reimbursement claims. Earlier this year, following the schedule set by Congress, they began paying just 50% of the bill for any service the hospital provided to a patient covered by Medicare.

Hospitals can also opt to repay Medicare for the loans directly to avoid having their reimbursements reduced.

The Lake Health District, in remote Lake County, received about \$5.2 million in grants from the Provider Relief Fund, and a \$7 million loan from the Accelerated and Advance Payments program, which it is now paying back.

CEO Charlie Tveit said Lake Health District is repaying Medicare even as he is considering layoffs or cuts to services, including a long-term care facility and small hospice program.

"We're looking at that. We can't continue to lose money like we have been," he said.

Tveit said the high cost of hiring temporary employees through an agency for critical positions Lake Health has been unable to fill is the primary driver of the losses. Most hospital systems are short on nurses and have been paying high wages for certified nurses to travel to their hospitals for short stints. But, as Lake Health and others have found, that can get expensive quickly.

Lake Health District didn't spend the advanced payments it received from Medicare, since it seemed likely the loan would need to be repaid. Still, Tveit said it's frustrating to be returning federal aid — particularly when he can't predict how COVID-19 might impact his future operations.

"We have no idea what's going to happen this fall," Tveit said. "It might come back with a vengeance."

## DEATH

May 28, 2022

WALKER, James Leigh, 83, of Astoria, died in Astoria. Caldwell's Luce-Layton Mortuary of Astoria is in charge of the arrangements.

## MEMORIALS

Saturday, June 4

ABRAHAMSON, Craig Fager — Celebration of life at 1 p.m., Astoria Elks Lodge, 453 11th St.

BERRY, Diane A. — Celebration of life at 1 p.m., Warrenton Community Center, 170 S.W. Third St. in Warrenton.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

TUESDAY

Cannon Beach City Council, 6 p.m., special meeting, City Hall, 163 E. Gower Ave.

WEDNESDAY

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

Seaside Improvement Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Gearhart City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 698 Pacific Way.

## the Astorian

Established July 1, 1873  
(USPS 035-000)

Published Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday by EO Media Group, 949 Exchange St., PO Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103 Telephone 503-325-3211, 800-781-3211 or Fax 503-325-6573. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Astorian, PO Box 210, Astoria, OR 97103-0210

DailyAstorian.com

MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS  
MEMBER CERTIFIED AUDIT OF CIRCULATIONS, INC.

Circulation phone number:  
800-781-3214

Periodicals postage paid at Astoria, OR

ADVERTISING OWNERSHIP

All advertising copy and illustrations prepared by The Astorian become the property of The Astorian and may not be reproduced for any use without explicit prior approval.

COPYRIGHT ©

Entire contents © Copyright, 2022 by The Astorian.



Printed on recycled paper

Subscription rates  
Effective January 12, 2021

MAIL

EZpay (per month).....\$10.75  
13 weeks in advance.....\$37.00  
26 weeks in advance.....\$71.00  
52 weeks in advance.....\$135.00

DIGITAL

EZpay (per month).....\$8.25

## Entomologists mull official name for 'murder hornets'

By DON JENKINS

Capital Press

Asian giant hornets, popularly called "murder hornets," should be commonly known as "northern giant hornets," according to the Entomological Society of America's committee on naming insects.

Washington State Department of Agriculture entomologist Chris Looney proposed the name. The recommendation by the names committee must still be approved by the society's governing board.

The society's "Better Common Names Project" has been targeting what the society calls "problematic names (that) perpet-



Asian giant hornets have been found in Washington state and British Columbia.

uate harm against people of various ethnicities and races."

Last year, the society renamed the "gypsy moth" to "spongy moth," the first name change approved by the governing board.

Looney said last week that he wanted to keep

the public from confusing Asian giant hornets with a different species commonly known in Europe as "Asian hornets," another large and destructive pest.

"That was my main motivation," he said.

Asian giant hornets, scientifically known as Vespa mandarinia, have been found in Washington state and British Columbia.

Asian hornets, Vespa velutina, are spreading in Europe, but have never been documented in North America. The simi-

lar names, however, have already apparently caused a mix-up.

A Washington state resident in 2020 reported an Asian giant hornet sighting to a United Kingdom agency's website. The misdirected report delayed finding an Asian giant nest in Whatcom County, the agriculture department said.

The confusion spans the Atlantic. Residents of Switzerland, Spain and the UK have contacted Looney to report sightings of Asian hornets.

OPEN HOUSE: 32227 SEASCAPE LANE, CANNON BEACH  
JUNE 4TH AND 5TH • 1-3 PM



Distant Ocean View but minutes from the center of town. 3 Bedroom, 3 bath custom home on 2.04 acres. Solar panels, generator, elevator, radiant floor heat throughout. Custom Design by Coaster Construction LLC.



Cindy Hawkins  
503-440-0130

HERON REALTY

WANTED

Alder and Maple Saw Logs & Standing Timber

Northwest Hardwoods • Longview, WA

Contact: John Anderson • 360-269-2500