

the Astorian

149TH YEAR, NO. 148

WEEKEND EDITION // SATURDAY, JUNE 11, 2022

\$1.50



Fred Pynes is the park host at the Astoria Column.

Photos by Lydia Ely/The Astorian

Astoria Column host looking to collect stories as anniversary nears

The landmark will turn 100 in 2026

By ETHAN MYERS
The Astorian

Fred Pynes wakes up to the Astoria Column towering outside of his window from his small house on Coxcomb Hill.

Every day, as park host, he visits with people who come to check out the 125-foot-high landmark and the views it has to offer. For some, it's their first time up. Others have lost count.

Many have shared memorable experiences at the monument since it was dedicated to the city in July 1926. Proposals, international visits, graduation ceremonies, weddings, unforgettable sunsets and much more — the Column has provided the background for it all.

With the 100-year anniversary drawing closer, Pynes figures there are plenty of stories to be told. In the coming months, he plans to collect as many as he can in the hopes of compiling them for the centennial celebration.

"That's what we thought, maybe somebody would tell us about their first date, maybe their prom date, maybe their first kiss, or just different things about the Column," Pynes said.

Pynes is unsure how many stories he will receive. Depending on the amount, he hopes to assemble them into a book.

Lending a hand in the project is Sarah Brown, Pynes' granddaughter. Brown's father, Kevin LaCoste, is part of the Friends of the Astoria Column, a nonprofit that helps oversee the park for the city.

"The idea is to give the community a takeaway from this anniversary, so a commemorative book of sorts," Brown said. "Anything ranging from major life events, a proposal, the spreading of ashes — or things that were momentous to somebody up at



The Astoria Column on Coxcomb Hill.

the Column because I know there are lots and lots of those stories out there — to funny stories.

"... Any memory or just a nice serene evening when the sunset was perfect. Just stories like that that people want to share."

Brown envisions the book being sold at the Column's gift shop and at retailers across town.

In addition to, as she puts it, being the energy for the project, Brown is handling the digital collection of stories, an element Pynes was tentative to take on by himself.

Brown opened an email — astoriacolumnmemories@gmail.com — to receive submissions of stories and photos.

Pynes credits Jordan Schnitzer, the Portland developer and philanthropist who serves as president of the nonprofit, for coming up with the idea. Schnitzer said the board hasn't discussed plans for the anniversary yet, but will look at several potential options to honor the centennial.

In the three days of festivities following the dedication in 1926, 8,000 people participated, the Column's

website estimates.

Today, hundreds of thousands of visitors stop by each year to take in the 360-degree view.

Despite many interruptions, such as the Great Depression, World War II and the coronavirus pandemic, the Column benefited from several renovation projects to preserve the structure and artwork over the years, including a \$1 million restoration in 2015.

The history and investment of the community has resulted in a monument that people in Astoria are really proud of, Pynes said. He hopes that is reflected in the stories people share.

Originally from Eugene, Pynes recalls seeing the Column for the first time on a family trip to Long Beach, Washington. Back then, it didn't hold much meaning to him.

"It was just a monument. I didn't know a thing about it," he said with a laugh.

Since then, the Column has taken on a special significance in Pynes' life. He has served as park host for the past

See Astoria Column, Page A8

Commissioners advance vacation rental ordinance

County would recognize rentals in more zones

By ERICK BENGEL
The Astorian

The Clatsop County Board of Commissioners on Wednesday voted to advance an ordinance that would allow vacation rentals in unincorporated areas where many rentals already operate.

The ordinance would add rental units of 30 or fewer days to the county's development code, making them a permitted use in 16 zones — from Knappa and Svensen to Clatsop Plains to Cove Beach. More than 170 vacation rentals operate in the unincorporated portions of the county, but only in Arch Cape — a zone that has allowed them for almost 20 years — does the development code mention them.

Approving the change would codify an existing practice — to the dismay of residents, particularly in the Cove Beach neighborhood, where vacation rentals compose roughly a third of homes. Several residents there had hoped county commissioners would ban

vacation rentals from residential zones.

The first reading comes weeks after commissioners updated vacation rental operating standards meant to help prevent troublesome behavior, such as loud noise and littering, among visitors.

Commissioner John Toyooka said on Wednesday that enforcement of those standards is the overriding concern in his exchanges with residents. "There are compliance issues we must attend to, and I think as a board we have to look at that very closely," he said.

As the Oregon Coast has marketed itself as an attractive destination, coastal economies have come to count on tourist dollars. Some neighborhoods have felt the pressures of visitors more than others. As vacation rentals have multiplied on the North Coast, some residents fear that too many rentals will strain the natural environment and make quiet beach living impossible.

The county has held about two dozen meetings, from town halls to work sessions, on the issue since

See Ordinance, Page A8

County discloses virus outbreaks at care homes

Public health recommends masks at indoor gatherings

By ERICK BENGEL
The Astorian

The Clatsop County Public Health Department has disclosed three coronavirus outbreaks at care homes on the North Coast.

At Clatsop Care Retirement Village in Astoria, 14 residents and three staff tested positive. All infected residents have been vaccinated and double boosted. Two of the staff have been vaccinated and received a booster; one has not received a dose of the vaccine.

Lauren Beard, the facility's administrator, said no one has been hospitalized

because of the outbreak.

At Clatsop Care Memory Community in Warrenton, six residents and two staff tested positive. All eight individuals had been vaccinated. The residents had been boosted.

One resident was hospitalized, but she has returned and is recovering, Hannah Olson, the facility's administrator, said.

At both facilities, infected individuals quarantine in their room for 10 days, and staff wear personal protective equipment when in their presence. The facilities are under the umbrella of the Clatsop Care Health District.

"We're giving them the best care and taking care of these people, and we will continue to do so," Olson said.

See Outbreaks, Page A8

Bird flu concerns force restrictions at wildlife center

Disease found in Oregon and Washington state

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
KMUN

Normally, the Wildlife Center of the North Coast would be drowning in ducklings.

The Olney-based rescue and rehabilitation center sees several hundred a year and late spring is always an especially busy time.

But avian influenza is on the move across the nation. Millions of birds have died from the disease or been culled to curb its spread. The disease was detected in Oregon in



Wildlife Center of the North Coast
Ducklings are regular patients at the Wildlife Center of the North Coast at this time of year, but cases of avian influenza in the region mean the center has new restrictions on what kinds of birds it can accept.

May for the first time since 2015. With cases now reported in Oregon and Washington state, wildlife centers across the region are taking precautions.

To protect patients as well as ambassador birds used in educa-

tional outreach, the Wildlife Center of the North Coast has had to make some temporary changes to what kinds of animals — specifically, what kind of birds — it accepts.

Under new state restrictions meant to stem the spread of the bird flu in Oregon, the wildlife center's clinic cannot accept any sick or injured waterfowl.

That means no ducklings, for now.

"If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, we can't take it in," said Josh Saranpaa, the executive director of the wildlife center.

The center can still take songbirds, but following further guidance from the state, the center opted to restrict raptors and scavengers that consume waterfowl, as well as species of shorebirds and seabirds

See Bird flu, Page A8

Astoria names new police chief

Kelly served in Newport News

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Stacy Kelly, who served as the assistant police chief for the Newport News Police Department in Virginia, will become Astoria's next police chief.

Kelly, who has more than 20 years of experience in law enforcement, is expected to begin on July 1.

"We are looking forward to having Stacy join the team and be part of the Astoria community," City Manager Brett Estes said in a statement. Former Police Chief Geoff



Stacy Kelly

Spalding retired from the post in April after leading the department since 2017. He moved into a part-time role focusing on issues such as homelessness and community livability.

Deputy Chief Eric Halverson has served as the police department's interim chief.

The city completed a recruitment process earlier this year for a new police chief but did not select a candidate. Estes said none of the candidates were the right fit for Astoria.

The city reopened the job posting and Kelly applied and was selected in the second round.

Over the course of his career

See Chief, Page A7



7 29467 20121 7