



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

The Step Ahead Academy will serve children 3 1/2 to 5 years old.

## Preschool: Step Ahead aims to open to a full class in early September

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On the North Coast, several preschools have closed their doors or reduced class sizes in recent years. Since 2017, Clatsop County has lost over half of its licensed child care capacity slots.

Taylor said it was a priority of hers to start a preschool rather than a day care. In addition to providing somewhere for children to spend the day, preschools have structured education and a curriculum that builds over time.

Monika Oldham, a former teacher in the Warrenton-Hammond School District, is now the director and teacher at Step Ahead. She started her career at a preschool over 20 years ago, and is looking forward to teaching younger children.

The licensed preschool is

open to children ages 3 1/2 to 5. As of late August, all 18 slots remained open for registration.

They have applied to the Oregon Department of Human Services' Employment Related Day Care program, which offers co-pay options to families depending on size and income. They have also applied to the U.S. Coast Guard's Child Care Subsidy program.

"We're hoping that that will open new avenues where families will know about us and we'll have a chance to share what we offer and listen to what they need, and the hope is that we meet in the middle and that we're able to fill up," Oldham said.

The staff includes Oldham, a teaching assistant and an office manager who will run the front desk and

registration.

"I wanted something that was quality, but still play-based," Oldham said. "I wanted the kids to have their hands in everything and learning through play, but yet have a distinct scope and sequence of which direction we're going so we can make sure we reach the end goal: to have many of the students ready for kindergarten when it comes time in the fall."

The assistant teacher on staff is bilingual, and will be teaching Spanish daily. The preschool also plans to have regular art and music lessons.

One area is lined with play mats and climbable obstacles, ready for daily gymnastics lessons.

"My background is gymnastics, so I really wanted them to be able to have that introduction on a daily

basis. It's good exercise for them, learning that it's fun at a very early age is very important to me," Taylor said.

Also part of the curriculum, Taylor has brought over her character development exercises from Infinity Gymnastics, including the powerful words program where each month the kids will learn a word or phrase to focus on.

"I am a survivor of domestic (child) abuse. So, it's always been important to me to be able to provide the opposite of that. Just a safe place for kids to grow physically and mentally," she said.

September's powerful words are "positive attitude."

Step Ahead hopes to open to a full class in early September.

## Election: Moratoriums on psilocybin will be on ballots

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In 2017, voters approved a jump in the tax rate from 9 cents to 33 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value following the library's move to a larger location on S. Main Avenue.

The city is also asking voters to approve the transfer of a preschool building on S.W. Third Street that has become a financial burden.

Community Action Team, an agency that combats poverty in Clatsop, Columbia and Tillamook counties, would take over the building. The space is used for Head Start, a federally funded preschool program.

Because the property's real market value exceeds \$100,000, the city has to receive voter approval for the transfer.

### Gearhart

In Gearhart, the after-shocks are still being felt from the failed bond measure for a new firehouse in May and the resignation of Paulina Cockrum as mayor in June.

City Councilor Kerry Smith was chosen to replace Cockrum as mayor.

Dana Gould, a former sheriff's deputy and emergency responder, was appointed to Smith's Position 1 slot. Gould will face Anne Mesch, a former teacher, for a four-year term on the City Council.

City Councilor Brent Warren, who was appointed to Position 3 in 2020, is up against Preston Devereaux, a former fire chief, for a four-year term. Warren was one of the leading advocates for the firehouse bond, while Devereaux was among the critics of the project.

**MEASURE 109, PASSED BY OREGON VOTERS IN 2020, LEGALIZED THE PSYCHEDELIC — FOUND IN SO-CALLED 'MAGIC MUSHROOMS' — FOR THERAPEUTIC USE BY PEOPLE 21 AND OLDER AT STATE-LICENSED SERVICE CENTERS.**

### Seaside

In Seaside, Mayor Jay Barber and City Councilor Dana Phillips opted not to run for reelection. City Councilor Steve Wright chose to run for mayor instead of reelection in Ward 1, leaving three open seats on the seven-member City Council.

Wright, the board president of the Seaside Museum & Historical Society, is uncontested for mayor. He was appointed to the City Council in 2016 and elected in 2018.

Steve Dillard, the owner of the Sandy Cove Inn, and Duane Solem, a postman, will compete to replace Wright in Ward 1. Dillard ran unsuccessfully for the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners in May.

City Councilor Tita Montero, who was appointed and first elected to the City Council in 2010, will run for reelection to a fourth term in Ward 2. She will face Dan Schorr, a former project manager.

The contenders to replace Phillips in Ward 3 and Ward 4 are Seth Morrissey, a former city councilor; Seamus McVey, who works with the homeless on addiction and mental health issues; and Marcus Runkle, the owner of a consulting firm.

A five-year local option levy would fund fire equipment and personnel. The levy — an estimated 33

cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value — would generate \$2.3 million. It would replace a levy set to expire at the end of the fiscal year.

The city is also asking voters to approve a temporary, two-year ban on psilocybin manufacturing and service centers.

Measure 109, passed by Oregon voters in 2020, legalized the psychedelic — found in so-called "magic mushrooms" — for therapeutic use by people 21 and older at state-licensed service centers.

Clatsop County also placed a temporary ban on the ballot for unincorporated areas.

The moratoriums would give Seaside and the county time to work out regulations on psilocybin that could go beyond the standards adopted by the state.

### Cannon Beach

In Cannon Beach, Mayor Sam Steidel and City Councilor Mike Benefield are completing their second, four-year terms and are unable to run again because of term limits.

Barb Knop, a retired teacher who serves on the Planning Commission, and Erik Ostrander, a hotelier, will vie for mayor.

Along with the mayor's race, there are two at-large slots open on the five-member City Council, which go

to the top two vote-getters.

City Councilor Robin Risley, who was elected in 2018, will run for reelection.

The other contenders are Lisa Kerr, an attorney and former planning commission; Gary Hayes, the owner of a media and marketing firm; Deanna Pauli-Hammond, the owner of Cannon Beach Bakery; Laurie Simpkins, the owner of Healthy Hub Massage & Wellness in Seaside; and Jenae Pearce-Mushen, who works for a Gearhart security company and is a member of the city's public works committee.

### State House and Senate

Betsy Johnson's decision to launch an independent campaign for governor had a ripple effect in the state Senate and House districts that cover the North Coast.

State Rep. Suzanne Weber, a Tillamook Republican elected in 2020, chose not to run for reelection in House District 32 so she could campaign in Johnson's former Senate District 16.

Weber, who was unopposed in the Republican primary for Senate in May, will face Melissa Busch, a home health nurse from Warren, who was unopposed in the Democratic primary.

Cyrus Javadi, a Tillamook dentist, won the Republican primary in May to replace Weber in the House. Logan Laity, a small-business owner and community organizer in Tillamook, was unopposed in the Democratic primary.

House District 32 was redrawn after the 2020 census and now covers Clatskanie to the east and all of Tillamook County to the south.

Ethan Myers, Erick Bengel and R.J. Marx contributed to this report.

## Port: 'I am optimistic about the things we are doing operationally'

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results from a feasibility study to expand the facility.

"I think there is some evidence that we have demand and we're starting to meet more of that demand," he said. "As we move forward with this expansion, I think there's hopefully going to be even more significant growth than what we're seeing at the boatyard."

With the challenges the Port faces with deferred maintenance and deteriorating infrastructure, the agency spent nearly \$3.5 million in capital outlays during the last fiscal year.

In addition to expanding the boatyard, the Port has plans to redevelop the waterfront and add businesses to the Airport Industrial Park in Warrenton.

"Starting back in 2020, with not only the loss of log exports at the Port, but then

also with the pandemic, what that's done is really force the Port, initially on the expense side, to really try to lean out the organization to do things with less resource and, quite honestly, I think we've done a good job at that," Isom said.

Isom hopes the Port can continue to bring in more revenue and instill confidence in outside stakeholders and the public in order to get in a "better position to garner financial support for some of the infrastructure."

"I am optimistic about the things we are doing operationally, but I also understand the gravity of some of the infrastructure issues we have and we're going to continue to push really hard to find ways to get those problems addressed, whether that be through grants or legislative efforts — those are things we continue to push hard on," he said.

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**Heather Jenson**  
Advertising  
Representative

**the Astorian**  
971-704-1716

[www.dailyastorian.com](http://www.dailyastorian.com)  
949 Exchange St.  
Astoria, OR  
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