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## Town Hall

*In a classroom setting,  
local officials talk  
education and more*

**M**onday's pre-town hall meeting with Sen. Jeff Merkley (story, A1) was well-attended, and as effective a half-hour gathering of a group of public officials as you could ever expect to see.

Port infrastructure, school funding, federal budget issues, county payments, and even electronic smoking devices — the source of one of Merkley's biggest frustrations as a legislator — received a quick but pointed piece of the senator's attention. He considers the porous restriction on sales of e-devices and associated products to be a significant health hazard for youth, and decried the Food and Drug Administration's "foot-dragging" in enacting rule changes pertaining to use, possession, and sale of such items to adolescents.

The group of 30 or so officials, and a few citizens, met at Hood River Middle School, down the hall from the cafeteria where 75 or so residents would gather a short time later to hear from Merkley.

The pre-session convened, fittingly, in a science classroom. It was on the same day the State Senate approved the \$7.235 billion K-12 biennial budget regarded as too small by most educators, including Superintendent Dan Goldman, who was present. When Merkley remarked that the K-12 allotment was an increase from the current level, Goldman noted, "But the investment does not keep pace with costs," adding that per-student funding actually goes down.

Also in the room were officials from the County Commission, Hood River and Cascade Locks city and port, and Columbia Gorge Community College.

The conversation returned to education with Merkley's hedged prediction that change is coming via legislation aimed at replacing the federal structure known as No Child Left Behind, famous for leaving a lot of students and districts pulling up the rear by what Merkley calls "high stakes testing."

Testing requirements were termed by Goldman as "traditionally states' issues increasingly becoming federal ones" and Merkley said that "a significantly diminished federal role comes out of this legislation."

When he restated that 90 minutes later near the end of the town hall, it drew applause, indicating how welcome is the idea, to many people, of returning more local control to ways we assess our kids' education, and the rewards or consequences owed to schools that excel or fall behind.

## Support Wilhelm

We continue to see hard times for our schools, and that is why I am asking you to join me in supporting Kris Wilhelm, as a candidate, running for the Hood River County School Board, Position 1, Westside Hood River AND Cascade Locks.

Kris's platform is simple, she will represent kids, teachers and parents. I have known Kris since we were young and grew up in the valley together. She is a HRV graduate and currently lives on the Westside of Hood River. Kris has always been one to ask the hard questions and do the research. If she is on the board you can be sure that she won't vote on something before trying to understand the subject fully. With a background in Public Relations, she will strive to communicate with her con-

stituents regarding any decisions that are made, as she would like to represent YOU, the people of Hood River and Cascade Locks. She is passionate about issues happening in our schools and I know she could make a difference. It is important, now more than ever, that we have representatives that can help us weather these times with clear explanations on what is being passed through our School Board.

Please help me support Kris Wilhelm and vote for HRC School Board, Position 1, May 19, 2015.

**Julie Clark**  
Hood River

## Mountain Elegy

These trees aren't worth much  
We would say, climbing up through  
The dark tree tunnel  
They won't cut them.  
Second growth Fir and Ponderosa,  
some Oak Some diversity here, some  
habitat, some peace.  
Sometimes, glimpsed through the

weave of branches An Old One,  
gnarled and strong, around which  
The undergrowth keeps a respectful  
distance.

Emerging from the dark trees, a  
bright ridge At the top, a grassy rest-  
ing spot With lichen covered stones.

Either way you look from here,  
there is a volcano.

The ridge runs south to the foot of  
Wy'East, the Lonely Mountain Across  
the river to the north, the bulging  
Pahto.

And low down in the valley be-  
tween them

The town where we live.  
Our habitat is safe  
But just up there, the sacred stones  
are gone.

In their place, a leveled dirt plat-  
form for the machines.

And the trees lie as they were cut  
No longer holding their dark  
spaces.

The complexity of light filtering  
through branches Gives way to the  
harsh sun.

**Venka Payne**  
Hood River

## April 8, 1975: Leaving Saigon, Vietnam

By MAUREE DONAHUE REVIER

40 years ago our family went to the beach for spring break, where I celebrated my 11th birthday. That beach was warm and sunny; we snorkeled and swam and rode bicycles, and climbed through abandoned helicopters.

That beach was Pattaya in southern Thailand ... after the R&R base for the US soldiers was closed but before it became the "hot" travel destination. After break, we returned home to Saigon, Vietnam, to finish the last few months of school and our tour with the American Embassy.

That Sunday when we arrived home — Easter Sunday, March 30, 1975 — family from Indiana called: they were concerned about the stories they were hearing and wanted us to leave right away. As usual, my parents soothed their parents' concerns saying the stories are always worse than the reality.

But Monday we found out that the North Vietnamese soldiers had crossed the border and were marching toward Saigon. We went to school and to work, as usual, for the next week, waiting to see what would happen.

But the soldiers kept marching and we made plans to leave.

My mom sorted our belongings into three piles: the most important in the pile of what we take with us, the next most important in the air freight pile. The rest would be sent by sea; we had no idea if we would ever see our things again. The air freight pile was limited by weight and included my sister's Legos: if only the airfreight made it out of Saigon, the Legos would be shared between all three children: me, my sister who was 9 and my brother who was 3. If the sea freight made it out as well, then the Legos would go back to my sister.

At school, my class of 15 5th graders hung out and talked while our teacher, Mrs. Thorsen, filled out our education records, so we would have something to take with us if we had to leave. Recess was cancelled. And eventually, the school was closed on Thursday

and we took home whatever texts and books we wanted.

On the morning we were scheduled to leave — Tuesday, April 8 — a South Vietnamese fighter jet flew right over our house and rattled the windows. We hid under the dining room table until it was quiet. Then ducked back under when he made a second pass and dropped two more bombs.

We had no idea what it was about when it happened, and wondered if the North Vietnamese were already in Saigon. But it turned out it was a South Vietnamese Air Force defector on his way to bomb their president, who lived a short distance from us. That's when I knew this was real.

Saigon always had a night curfew from either 10pm or midnight to morning. But now they enforced a 24 hour curfew. How were we going to get to Ton Son Nhut Airport if we couldn't leave the house? Finally, we heard the curfew was going to be lifted for 2 hours in the middle of the day. We loaded up our luggage, carry-ons, and a small family heirloom grandfather clock, which I carried, and headed to the airport. I remember the streets being empty.

At the airport, I saw many friends from school. Some of us

had tickets for the Air France flight and others, like us, had tickets for the Pan American flight. But the pilots of these planes were reluctant to fly to Saigon: too dangerous. Finally, the Air France 747 arrived in the early afternoon and was quickly boarded and pushed back for take off.

Then it sat on the tarmac in the tropical sun for another 3 hours.

Finally, we heard that the Pan Am flight was coming in at dusk, when the

747 would be more difficult to see in the sky, thereby more difficult to shoot down. It arrived, we said good bye to my dad who was staying in Saigon, and boarded quickly.

As the plane took off at dusk, dark below us and purplish pink sky above, I looked out the port side windows to see bombs consistently bursting on the dark horizon. The lights of their bursts faded as we safely rose into the growing night, on our way home to America.

Maureen Donahue Revier has lived in Hood River for eight years. Revier teaches ESL at Mid-Valley and has three children who attend Westside Elementary.



Photo by Maureen Donahue Revier

MAUREEN DONAHUE Revier, age 11, in the helicopter that is about to take her from Vietnam.

## ROUND TABLE

# Top 10 programs for learning and playing in the Gorge

By PATRICK MULVIHILL  
News staff writer

**S**ince I moved to the Gorge in early March, I've been blown away (no wind pun intended) by the vitality of Hood River's community. The people here are full of energy and enthusiasm, especially when it comes to educational and recreational opportunities.

This spring and summer will be no exception. Coming soon is a tide of Community Education programs for all ages and interests, ranging from the toughest of sports and outdoor adventures to the finest of arts. Kudos to Hood River County School District and its local community education partners for building such a strong, diverse lineup.

Heads up, here are the Top 10 exciting community education and recreation programs coming your way.

**10. Rural Rampage Adventure Bike Challenge**

Teams of two will compete in an adventure race that combines physical fitness and problem solving skills. The challenge will take racers on an exhilarating ten-mile bike ride with five cheeky challenges to be completed along the way. Rampagers of all ages are welcome, however, each team must have at least one

member over 16. Prizes will be awarded to the top three teams. The event is a fundraiser for Hood River Wrestling Club and Columbia Gorge Ecology Institute.

**9. Cascade Mountain School – MacGyver Camp** (Grades 1-3, 4-6)

Unlock your inner genius. Like secret agent MacGyver, students will learn how to build things out of scraps, found objects and broken tools. Students will spend the day outside in the Trout Lake Valley, building forts, fires and rockets, as well as other cool, hands-on projects.

**8. Aaron Meyer – Classroom Music Project** (Ages 8-14)

In this one of a kind program, children will learn how to make music from the ground up. Students will learn to write lyrics and produce/record their own music, which they will receive in MP3 form. Then, they will perform their own song alongside professional violinist and composer Aaron Meyer in the Families in the Park concert August 6 at Jackson Park.

Meyer will work with up to 25 students on the basics of music composition, artistic interpretation and recording technology. No previous musical experience necessary.

**7. Smith Rock Climbing Camp** (Ages 11-18)

Climb the towers of volcanic ash, aspire to reach their spires. Beginning to advanced climbers are allowed to progress at their own comfort level in a safe, encouraging and "no pressure" environment. The camp's philosophy is to emphasize personal safety through rope skills. Basics include: tying a figure eight knot, belaying and safety checks. Advanced skills include: rappelling, building anchors, lead climbing, multi-pitch climbing and charting a vertical course over boulders and rough earth.

**6. Columbia Center for the Arts – Skateboard Art** (Ages 9-15)

Inviting shredders, skateboard lovers and art lovers who want to paint their own skateboard! Michelle Yamamoto will guide students through the composition and graphic design process, the transfer of their images onto the skateboard deck and bringing those designs to life in acrylic paint. A quality, California-made skateboard deck is included in tuition.

**5. Rock Band! Summer Camp**

Future rockers, punks and metal heads, unite! Band members will come together to play two cover songs and write a song of their own. Each group will perform their songs in the newly finished Underground Music Station in the Union Building, downtown Hood River.

**4. Lego Physics** (2nd, 3rd grades

and older)

Westside Elementary will become Lego Central throughout spring and summer. With instructor Diana Chenoweth, budding engineers and architects can experience hands-on science with Legos. There are four courses to choose from which range from basic structural integrity and wheel balance to sophisticated gears and pulleys.

The courses are a chance for students to enrich their STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) skills at an early age, and of course have fun while they do it.

**3. Cascade Mountain School: Mt Hood Mountain to Mouth** (High School Camp)

The ultimate science immersion course. On this intense 12-day adventure, students will conduct meaningful ecological research on Mt. Hood and through the Hood River Valley. The party will embark on a 3-day, 2-night backpacking trip on Mt. Hood, explore the Eliot Glacier and then take a white water rafting trip down the White Salmon River. Students can earn four high school credits if they complete the course.

**2. Summer Musical Theater Workshop – "Mulan"** (Ages 2-5 and grades 5-11)

Hood River Middle School's summer musical is Mulan, a thrilling work of Disney lore. The theater team is top-notch — and they'll have

your back. Choreographer Teddy Meyer will challenge you in the dance and you'll love every second. The theatre's full sound system will ensure your lines and songs are heard. Eric Meyer paints a fun backdrop and builds amazing sets.

Later in the summer, the theater will also present "New Kids," with the same great team, open to kids in grades 4-10.

**1. Columbia Gorge Racing Association: Learn to Sail** (Ages 10+)

A true gem of The Gorge is its waterfront, an internationally renowned spot for water sports. The Columbia Gorge Racing Association has been hosting word class sailing events since 1996, and has been training sailors, from beginners to Olympians, since 2004.

The program earns first place on this list because it allows people of all ages and skill levels to take part in a legendary piece of the Gorge's cultural identity.

The program includes beginner through advanced lessons and professionally coached sailing clinics. Learn at your own pace: sign up for one session or the whole summer. All classes are taught by U.S. Sailing certified instructors in the CRGA's fleet. Participants under 10 must have a parent's permission. Lessons will be held at both the Cascade Locks Marine Park and the Hood River Marina Basin.