



Steven and Ann Farley pose for photos at the Liberty Theatre during a past year's Downtown Astoria Lighting event.

Couple has spread Christmas cheer for many a year

BY CINDY YINGST
The Columbia Press

Santa Claus carries much responsibility along with his clutch of candy canes.

Steven and Ann Farley of Warrenton take their roles as Santa and Mrs. Claus quite seriously, knowing children come from a variety of homes and backgrounds.

"Sometimes these kids will tell you the deep dark secrets they don't even tell their parents," said Steven, 71, who has been Clatsop County's main Santa Claus for 35 years. "It's a tear-jerker at times."

He got started while serving as an officer for Astoria's American Legion. Whoever volunteered to play Santa for the Christmas party usually got the job.

"Most guys were not Santa material," he recalled. "One of the kids said, 'Santa you smell like beer.' So I made a mental note of that. When the next year rolled around and they were looking for a Santa, I said 'I'll do it.' I don't drink."

Steven Farley, who retired from the Port of Astoria and the Army Corps of Engineers, got his wife involved a few years later. Ann Farley, 70, works as

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Officer Al Fontana retires after 26 years

The Columbia Press

Warrenton Senior Police Officer Alfonso Fontana has retired, but you can still find him working around town.

On Tuesday night, Police Chief Matt Workman, City Manager Linda Engbretson and the City Commission recognized his 26 years with the city.

While Dec. 1 was his official retirement date, Fontana agreed to continue working for the small department until his departure won't cause staffing problems.

His first day of retirement "I worked a 12-hour shift," he told those gathered at City Hall, including many of his fellow officers. "I worked 12-hour shifts two days in a row."

He was hired in 1992 and is the department's firearms instructor. He's an avid fisherman and snorkeler and has posted dozens of videos of his hobbies on YouTube. Good or bad, nearly everyone who has been in town for any length of time has met him.

His wife, Nadia, said he never takes sick leave, even when he's sick. Fontana said that's just how he was raised.

The department currently is recruiting for two officers to fill vacancies, Workman said.



Warrenton Mayor Pro Tem Rick Newton reads the city's proclamation on a plaque before he gives it to Officer Alfonso Fontana.

Cindy Yingst/The Columbia Press



Bond money for new school construction expected soon

The Columbia Press

The school board authorized the sale of \$38.5 million in bonds Wednesday night, the first step in construction of what will become a new middle school campus.

The sale became possible after last month's 60 percent voter approval of the bond measure.

"This is what's going to fund everything else we're doing," Superintendent Mark Jeffery told members of the Warrenton-Hammond School Board.

The new campus on high ground is necessary as the state will not allow additional construction at school sites that are near or within a tsunami inundation zone. And the number of stu-

dents in the district is growing.

Business Manager Mike Moha is preparing all the supporting documents that allows the bond issuing company to evaluate the district's credit and set the bond rate by Jan. 22 or 23. Bonds are estimated to sell by the end of January.

"We expect a mid-February closing and that money will be ours," Jeffery said.

The district's property owners will pay the money back over the next three decades.

With the school board's Wednesday authorization, the district's bond underwriter, Piper Jaffray & Co., was to file paperwork Thursday with the state

Municipal Debt Advisory Commission.

Once the money is received, a project manager will be hired. That person will oversee the process of getting proposals from and selecting architects and designers, construction superintendents and general contractors.

Board members also reviewed a list of projects for which the money could be used. Items further down the list are unlikely to be funded by the bond money. In order of priority:

- Purchase land for the school site, estimated completion by Jan. 30.
- Site preparation and construction for the grades 6 to 8 middle school, November 2019 through January 2021

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