

Miniboats: Students launch GPS-equipped boats

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It fits into the state's mandate to provide more STEAM education. Students in the miniboat program hit all of those fields: science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics in addition to international exchange.

Having STEAM skills can lead to lucrative careers, said Alisa Dunlap, Clatsop County regional business manager at Pacific Power, which sent engineers to Warrenton Grade School to help students in the design process.

"We are excited to support

a program dedicated to enriching the education of young learners and empowering them to try new things and explore their creativity," Dunlap said.

Following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan, debris from the country washed up on Oregon and Washington shores. One of those items, a fishing vessel, is now on display at the maritime museum. The boat and its journey across the ocean was the inspiration for the miniboat program.

Since it began in 2017, 1,213 students on both sides of the Pacific have been involved in the launch of 24 miniboats, traveling a total of 55,236 nautical miles (and climbing daily).

Last spring, a tiny island in the Republic of Kiribati recovered a sailboat designed and built by Portland fourth-graders, who had it launched off the coast of Mexico. It took 472 days to cross the 11,000 nautical miles.

Other schools that have launched boats include Hilda Lahti in Knappa, Gearhart Elementary, Otto Petersen



Above: Students consider solar-powered running lights for their boat. **Below:** Stan Co and Jon Connelly of Pacific Power supervise boat builders.



Tuesday's event is a "miniboat summit" with students from three schools presenting their boats, conducting a sparkling cider christening, then handing them off to be launched in the ocean.

"Miniboats ... have the power to create substantial and lasting impact — in the community and well beyond," said Nate Sandel, the museum's education director. "We've seen these boats capture the imagination of our students, but also many people from around the world, who encounter the boats, help with a rescue, or simply follow the boats' progress online."

In late November, Sandel traveled to Japan to deliver boats to students there and take part in launches from Japan. All of those boats can be tracked on the museum's website.

Elementary in Scappoose, Richmond Elementary in Portland and Wy'east Middle School in Vancouver, Wash.

County committees have vacancies

Clatsop County seeks applicants to serve on two advisory committees, the Ambulance Service Area Advisory Committee and the Human Services Advisory Council.

The ambulance committee gathers information from service users, providers and

the medical community, monitors coordination of service resources and dispatch procedures and reviews service area boundaries. The group meets four times a year. The vacancy is for a two-year term.

The human services panel advises county commissioners on developmental disabilities, mental health and alcohol and drug abuse services. The council meets at 3 p.m. on the first Thursday of every month to identify needs, establish priorities for publicly funded services and assist in selection of service providers. The vacancies are for two-year terms.

Members of both committees will be appointed by the county commissioners. Applications are available on the county's website or from the County Manager's Office, 800 Exchange St., Astoria.

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