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Frogtown will premiere a new production at the Tillamook Head Gathering at the Seaside Convention Center on Saturday, Jan. 30. The gathering is a fundraiser to benefit the arts at Seaside High School.

Frogtown to benefit arts at high school

Second annual event supports arts education, experiences for Seaside High School students

By Katherine Lacaze
EO Media Group

The commonality of art, music and poetry is one of the messages students will receive when they participate in the Tillamook Head Gathering in Seaside this month.

The gathering “is really an effort to keep art endeavors alive,” English teacher Mark Mizell said. “I really think we’re shorting the kids if we don’t expose them to the arts.”

The fundraiser returns Jan. 30 at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center for a second year with a special multimedia production by Frogtown, a socially conscious entertainment troupe that features Astoria native and 1993 Seaside High graduate Heather Christie, and other performers from the Pacific Northwest.

Last year, about 250 people attended to hear prominent local author and Seaside High School alumnus Karl Marlantes. The event raised more than \$6,000, used to bring award-winning Oregon author Clem Starck to speak to English classes on the subject of beat poetry, send students on field trips and offer opportunities to learn more about visual and performing arts.

When Mizell started teaching at the high school, funds were available for field trips and activities to support extracurriculars, but “those funds have really gotten scarce,” he said.

That is unfortunate, since “there is a very thin line — if there is a line at all,” between the arts, creativity and spiritual matters, he added.

“When you’re talking about the arts, you’re talking about things that

really keep people going on a day-by-day basis: visual arts, music, poetry,” Mizell said. “They might not be necessarily bread-and-butter sorts of things as far as money goes, but the arts give us spiritual nourishment that sometimes the students don’t necessarily get in other places.”

Teaching diversity with frogs, music

The Tillamook Head Gathering is put on by a committee of current and former students and teachers.

The highlight of the event will be a multimedia stage show, Frogtown, based on Emmy-award-winning author and composer Philip Pelletier’s musical storybook “One Night in Frogtown,” published in 2008. “It’s for kids 9 to 90,” Mizell said. “It’s really a cool story, and the performance they do is really neat.”

Using projected animations, a live-story reading and live music performances, the theatrical rock show tells the story of cultural diversity using music as a metaphor. The cast includes Seaside’s Christie, Pelletier, Oregon Music Hall of Famer Andy Stokes and saxophonist Andy Warr.

Music as an outlet

Christie, who helps produce the show, also does individual work as a performer. She comes from a musical family; her grandparents, father, aunt and uncles all did performing arts of some sort. Her aunt, Retta Christie, spearheaded the western swing group Retta and the Smart Fellas.

Heather Christie’s early memories include watching her dad’s rock shows under her mother’s poncho. At a young age, she started singing bluegrass, country and western and gospel songs. Using her mother’s 1940s Martin guitar, she taught herself how to play the instrument.

An affinity and talent for music was a natural part of her life, not something she had to consciously strive for.



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Seaside High School alum Heather Christie sings Frogtown’s “River Meets the Ocean,” from the group’s upcoming release “Bedtime For Tadpoles.”

“I think it was just something I was born with,” she said. “It was just happening and it was what was driving me.”

Her style is influenced by the sounds of the ’60s and ’70s — Joni Mitchell, the Eagles, Grateful Dead, Rickie Lee Jones and Bonnie Raitt. She has written and produced three albums and toured with her own material.

About eight years ago, she got connected with Pelletier and Frogtown and started producing, collaborating and singing with the group.

“It actually helped me grow a lot as an independent artist to have all these new experiences and take it to another level,” she said.

The group is focused on a new release, called “Bedtime for Tadpoles,” a multimedia experience with a lullaby ambiance that follows the water cycle, as well as a CD featuring dance music, called “Let’s Move!” Some of the new material will be premiered at the group’s Tillamook Head Gathering performance.

Christie said she is excited and honored to partake in the fundraiser for her alma mater. Giving students access to arts education is “essential for survival and san-

ity,” she said. High school is a time when “you’re growing and learning and having strange feelings and emotions, and you take things really intensely,” she said. Art “helps us transform those emotions into something beautiful and positive,” she added. Seeing the way children — and people of all ages — react and respond to Frogtown. Christie knows the importance of musical exposure.

“It’s a really magical experience and with such positive messages,” she said of Frogtown. “It’s very intergenerational, and brings everyone together, from the grandkids to the grandparents.”

The fundraiser will include a silent auction, featuring art donated by local artists. From 6:30 to 7 p.m., people can browse the silent auction items. High school senior Claire Ogilvie will coordinate the auction, among other tasks, as part of her Pacifica Project.

The high school’s jazz choir and jazz band will perform, followed by the Frogtown production.

Tickets cost \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door. They are available at Beach Books, Seaside Coffee House and the business office at Seaside High School.

Conference empowers women on education, career planning

One-day program features inspirational speakers, workshops

By Katherine Lacaze
EO Media Group

Since 2001, the Seaside and Astoria chapters of the American Association of University Women and Clatsop Community College have collaborated to help Clatsop County women of all ages access equal education opportunities and more promising, productive futures through a free one-day conference.

The 2016 WINGS Conference — the acronym stands for Women Interested in Going to School — is Feb. 6, from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Clatsop Community College’s Columbia Hall. Lunch and professional child care are provided to participants during the conference.

The conference provides sessions and workshops led by college staff and other people that help women explore education options, such as certificates, the General Education Development test, degrees, job skills, career direction and financial information.

“We were lucky enough to get a college degree and we want everyone who wants one to have the same opportunity,” said Ane McIntyre, WINGS publicity chairwoman.

Inspirational stories

During the program, women hear inspirational stories from past participants or other guest speakers, such as State Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, who is a major supporter of the conference. They receive incentives to enroll at Clatsop Community College and the opportunity to apply for WINGS scholarships.

This year, the conference workshops include: degrees, certificate programs and pathways; GED certificate; federal financial aid; lives in transition; scholarships; conquering math anxiety; career planning; support services for students; and living-wage career opportunities.

The conference also features a concurrent half-day program called WINGS Latina, conducted in Spanish, which was a new addition last year.

History of program

WINGS started in 2002 and originally was intended as a one-time community service project for the American Association of University Women chapters.

“AAUW’s mission is heavily into equity for women and men and education, so it seemed like a natural thing for us to do,” said Pat Lehman, an association member and WINGS conference co-chairwoman.

In 2011, WINGS was one of the four winners of AAUW’s national Breaking Through Barriers award.

“We feel we are performing an important service,” said Lehman, who is also the chairwoman of the Clatsop Community College Foundation Board.

Over the years, WINGS has served more than 600 local women. After past conferences, many WINGS participants enrolled in one or more classes at Clatsop Community College, such as the free Lives in Transition class, or other institutions throughout the state.

“We have some amazing success stories,” Lehman said.

Community support is an important aspect of the conference. Last year, more than 100 local businesses supported WINGS through direct financial contributions, giving their employees a paid-day-off to attend and donating items for a raffle and gift bags.

“One of the things the participants talk about appreciating most is not just the gifts — which are terrific — but the fact that somebody is out there with a business saying, ‘We think that you can do it and here’s our testimony to that fact,’” Lehman said.

For more information, call Lehman at 503-717-1852 or visit www.wings-clatsop.com or the conference’s Facebook page. In order to guarantee a place at the conference, women need to pre-register, especially if they plan to bring children.



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Amy Magnussen, a Clatsop Community College adviser, gives a presentation to a room full of participants during the WINGS Conference in 2015.

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