

'A GIFT TO EACH OTHER'

Cannon Beach celebrates holiday season with annual lamplighting, holiday tea

By Brenna Visser
Cannon Beach Gazette

During a notoriously busy time of year, Lori and Kathy Strombeck come to Cannon Beach as a way to start the holiday season in a more "peaceful and gentle" way.

"Coming here is a gift to each other — rather than buying fancy sweaters or something," Lori said.

The two sisters traveled from Corvallis and Eugene to attend the Cannon Beach Library Holiday Tea and lamplighting ceremony Saturday. Sitting by the library's fireplace with tea in one hand and homemade cookies in the other, Lori said they have been attending the town's holiday rituals for the past four years as way to start off a chaotic month of shopping and event planning.

"We like starting the season in a peaceful way. When the holidays start getting crazy and expensive, we go back to thinking about this day — the tea, the lamplighting, the music — and remember what Christmas is all about," Lori said.

The Strombecks were among hundreds who came

Saturday to celebrate the 44th annual lamplighting ceremony in Sandpiper Square.

"It makes me teary just from the beginning to see Sandpiper Square fill up with so many people like this," said Margo Dueber, the organizer and emcee of the event. "We come together as family, friends and a community. It feels just kind of yummy, doesn't it?"

The lamplighting tradition began in 1973 amid an oil crisis that drove down the number of vacationers who were coming to visit Cannon Beach. To get back visitors, the town banded together to create a holiday celebration with a Charles Dickens theme. The Coaster Theatre put on productions of "A Christmas Carol" and shop owners dressed in Victorian style, Dueber said.

Since then, many of the traditions remain and others have evolved. Bill Steidel and Paul Dueber again performed the town's official song "Christmas in Our Hometown," which Steidel composed for the Dueber family when Paul Dueber Sr. died on Christmas Day 1967. For the first time, students from the Cannon Beach Academy sang highlights from Christmas carols. The lamp is still lit the same way Jay Schwehr, a Cannon Beach local, did for 40 years before falling ill.

The lamplighting duty since has been passed on to selected Cannon Beach grade school-



PHOTOS BRENNNA VISSER/CANNON BEACH GAZETTE

Santa walks through the crowd at the lamplighting ceremony.



Hundreds stand waiting for the lamplighting ceremony Saturday in Cannon Beach.

ers. But this year, the task was given to Ethan Burnett, the oldest grandson of Tom Drumheller, a local hospitality leader who died in September.

"He was also caring, always helping, always reaching out to the community during the holidays and every other time of year," Dueber



Bill Steidel and Paul Dueber sing the town's traditional Christmas song at the lamplighting ceremony.

said at the lamplighting. "It was extremely important to him for people to feel loved and appreciated."

The evening ended with

kids lining up to see Santa, who made a surprise visit in a blaring fire truck to Sandpiper Square to hand out bags of treats.

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a rate increase. The 20-year plan is required by the state, and projects would focus on rehabbing or replacing a variety of systems, including brittle water lines and water storage tanks.

The proposal would keep the city's current rate structure and raise the average homeowner's water bill from about \$50 a month to about \$70. The increase would be phased in over five years and generate \$2.1 million and \$1.6 million for water and wastewater projects.

Whether this would be enough to fully fund projects remains a key concern.

Others raised questions about whether commercial outfits were paying enough under the current rate structure. Council members were divided whether to set aside the full amount of funding for the projects or to seek out public or grant funds that could help lessen the burden for Cannon Beach homeowners and businesses.

The city plans to hold a series of public hearings before implementing any changes. For now, the city is considering approving just the first year of rate increases proposed in the five-year plan, which would increase the cumulative water, wastewater and stormwater base rate by 16 percent from this year to next — about an \$8 difference for the average residential ratepayer.

The plan would impact rates annually by accelerating or slowing increases depending on what projects are planned for each fiscal year, according to City Manager Bruce St. Denis.

Which plans and what rate structure the city proposes will be sure to bring out stakeholders on all sides. Two public meetings are scheduled in January to discuss utility rates, on Jan. 16 and Jan. 22.

Parking

To many in Cannon Beach, parking is well-nigh a God-given right. There are no time limits in heaven.

Contrast that with a summer weekend in Cannon Beach, with vehicles gridlocked along Highway 101 for miles. Trailers and cars circle the streets looking for a spot compound the problem. Finding a parking space on Hemlock Street is like winning the lottery.

In an attempt to create more downtown parking, Cannon Beach planned to im-



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TOP, Mayor Sam Steidel speaks to the crowd at the grand opening of the Cannon Beach Academy.

LEFT, Cars are parked where the city planned to implement timed parking on Hemlock Street between Second and Third streets.

RIGHT, Cannon Beach Information Aide Patrick Leary writes a parking violation citation during a recent bike patrol.

pose time limits along a section of Hemlock Street.

The proposal would have installed three-hour parking limit signs on Hemlock Street between First and Third avenues, as well as on First, Second and Third streets between Hemlock and Spruce.

A pilot program, with the goal of creating 50 new spots by the end of 2018, never got



COLIN MURPHEY/EO MEDIA GROUP

off the ground. Opponents to timed parking rallied, rejecting the idea as bad for business and adding that they felt "shut out" of the process. Residents presented a petition arguing that timed parking would "negatively impact the relaxing atmosphere" of the town, "increase traffic congestion when cars need to be moved," and "not

allow visitors enough time to enjoy the restaurants and browse through the local shops" generated 120 signatures.

After impassioned arguments from the community, the Cannon Beach City Council voted in July to table any discussion of timed parking or any other parking solutions until after the summer.

As of December, the topic remains to be considered.

Cannon Beach Academy

Students, their families and residents gathered for a grand opening celebration this to celebrate the Cannon Beach Academy's first school year. The ribbon-cutting highlighted four years of volunteering and fundraising it took to open the charter school at the former Preschool and Children's Center after Cannon Beach Elementary School was closed in 2013.

The path in 2017 was never fully certain until the first day of classes. They reached their enrollment goals on the last week of the Seaside School District deadline.

Because of budget issues, the Cannon Beach Academy board had to change locations for the charter school in May. The Planning Commission voted unanimously to grant a conditional use permit to the grades K-2 charter school. That left only a few months to secure the lease for the current location at 3781 S Hemlock St. from the city and finish necessary renovations before a fall opening.

By the end of the year, it was all smiles as community members came out to celebrate the academy's official grand opening with a ribbon-cutting and tour of the building.

The school will look to 2018 for greater enrollment, new classes and a positive role in the community.



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Personnel with the Seaside rope and rescue team prepare to bring up a dog that fell off a cliff Monday afternoon at Ecola State Park.

Dog rescued from cliff

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requires more climbing than usual.

For Seaside Fire Lieutenant Genesee Dennis, the man who scaled the rock face to retrieve Felix, this was his first rescue since gaining his certification a year ago.

"The most difficult part about this rescue was the fact it was a dog," Dennis said. "You can't reason with a dog,

and they can't really help. At one point he slipped out of his harness, and I was basically bear hugging him, with no available hand holds."

About three hours later, Felix was greeted by a warm blanket, a visibly emotional owner and group of friends anxiously awaiting his arrival.

"He's everything," Stremming said, clutching Felix in her arms.

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