From haircuts to housing, Homeless Connect offers help

One-day, one-stop event links the homeless with services

By Kyle Spurr
EO Media Group

For the sixth consecutive year, the Clatsop County's homeless and near-homeless population is invited to an event at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center to receive services ranging from free haircuts to housing assistance.

The sixth annual Project Homeless Connect Jessica Maclay Memorial will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Jan. 29 at the convention center.

Project Homeless Connect, organized by Clatsop Community Action, will feature services from at least 42 nonprofit, governmental and faith-based agencies.

The one-day, one-stop event will offer medical screenings, hearing testing, eye exams, immunizations, haircuts, personal care items, clothing vouchers and a hot meal. In addition, many assistance services will be available, including housing, mail service, food stamps, identification, Social Security, employment, education and legal aid.

"The whole focus is to link people up to services, and we only have five hours to do it. All the key agencies will be there,"

said Tony DeGoede, Clatsop Community Action staff member.

DeGoede said the annual event helps an average of about 200 homeless individuals, which is still a fraction of the overall population. In 2014, Clatsop County recorded 638 homeless families and 1,038 individuals. Records show 321 individuals were under the age of 18.

Homelessness includes people living with others due to losing their own housing and are "doubled up," which has become more common among the county's youth, according to the CCA.

See Homeless, Page 6A

EO MEDIA GROUP FILE PHOTO
Yellow-shirted volunteers help guide participants at 2014's Project Homeless Connect to different services covering health, education, housing, employment, food and more.

JEFF TER HAR PHOTO
Part of what may be a ship's keel was discovered last November by Seaside residents Ben Hidy and Travis Trapani.

Discovery turns out to be a shipwreck

Buried boards are from the keel of an unknown ship

By Andrew R. Tonry
For the Seaside Signal

What three friends discovered while metal-detecting in the dunes last November is indeed a shipwreck.

Now the question is: which one?

"We have over 2,000 wrecks at the mouth of the Columbia (River)," said Oregon's State Archeologist, Dennis Griffin. "So it's interesting if we can figure out what wreck this is because we don't have it on record."

In hopes of recovering the ship's identity, Griffin traveled to the site near Avenue L Jan. 13 and took two wood samples from the boat's 21-foot keel, then sent them to Eugene for testing. The results, expected in a few weeks, will determine the type of lumber used in construction and, in turn, narrow the ship's potential points of origin.

"Let's say it's Douglas Fir," Griffin said hypothetically. "If that's what it is, that's usually used in more west coast shipping."

Should that be the case, lost ships from abroad — and even the East Coast — would be crossed off the list of candidates.
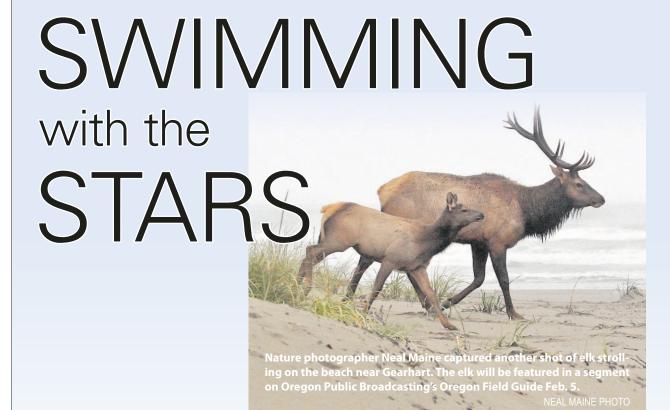
The tests being performed will not account for age, though Christopher Dewey, a volunteer at the Columbia River Maritime Museum, examined the site and estimated that the ship was built in the 20th century.

"It's really a process of elimination," Griffin said. "You look at reported wrecks in the area and try to determine would this size of an artifact be from one ship rather than another? Trying to nail that down to one particular wreck, that can be very difficult."

That is, in part, because where a ship was known to sink and where it may wash up can be vastly different.

"We've known boats to hit a sandbar off the Columbia but found the wrecks had floated down 20-some miles or so to Arch Cape," Griffin said. Historically, lost ships are more likely not to be found, he said.

See Shipwreck, Page 8A

SWIMMING with the STARS

Nature photographer Neal Maine captured another shot of elk strolling on the beach near Gearhart. The elk will be featured in a segment on Oregon Public Broadcasting's Oregon Field Guide Feb. 5.
NEAL MAINE PHOTO

Gearhart's elk herd will be featured on Oregon Public Broadcasting program

By Andrew R. Tonry
For the Seaside Signal

The elk that roam through Gearhart are about to become the stars of their very own television program.

Well, at least a segment of a program. They will be featured on Oregon Public Broadcasting's show, "Oregon Field Guide" at 8:30 p.m. Feb. 5.

"One of the things that attracted me to the story was that I know these animals to be very majestic and beautiful to look at," said the program's producer, Jule Gilfillan.

In Gilfillian's initial research,

she was inspired by a video on YouTube showing the elk bathing and frolicking in the Necanicum estuary and ocean surf.

"It's beautiful footage," said Gilfillian. "I was like like, wow, this is really something."

"So I just kept researching it and realized also that there was somewhat of a controversy in that area," she added. "Some people think the elk are just fantastic, and other people think they're a nuisance. Some people are worried about safety. There were just various issues that came up, so I grabbed a photographer, and we went down last August and interviewed folks."

The elk herd that visits Gearhart sparked enough discussion last spring to warrant a town hall meeting where residents discussed possible methods of dissuading the elk from coming to town. So far, they haven't been dissuaded.

"We were kind of rolling the dice," Gilfillian said. "I was like, gosh, I wonder if we're going to see the herd. But we need not have worried, because they were right there."

Gilfillian was taken aback, however, by the Gearhart herd's comfort in proximity to humans.

See Elk, Page 5A

© Neal Maine | PacificLight Images

Astoria's new port director pays a visit to Seaside

Port is in 'dire straits'

By Nancy McCarthy
Seaside Signal

It wasn't like Jim Knight, the new director of the Port of Astoria, didn't know what he was getting into when he was hired.

"I knew the port was in financial shambles," he told the crowd attending a Seaside Downtown Development Association breakfast Jan. 8.

"I knew the infrastructure needed improvements. I knew there was controversy, that the port's customers felt neglected, that someone was proposing an LNG (liquefied natural gas) project.

JIM KNIGHT

"I knew it would cost between $200,000 and $300,000 to upgrade Tongue Point.

"And I knew the South County community was also feeling neglected and needed attention."

But, he added, "Those are the exact reasons I wanted to take the job."

Knight, who joined the port last October, is the fifth director in 2.5 years. He was formerly with the Port of Olympia, where he was director for 8.5 years.

The visit to the SDDA weekly meeting was at least the second time Knight has been in South County since he started the job. He visited the Seaside Chamber of Commerce's weekly breakfast meeting in December.

The port is the target of Seaside Mayor Don Larson and Gearhart Mayor Dianne Widdop who are participating in a ballot initiative for the May 19 election. Proposed by the Committee to Restore, Revitalize and

Reorganize the Port of Astoria, the initiative would, among other things, have the governor appoint port commissioners from recommended candidates proposed by the five mayors in Clatsop County and the chairperson of the Clatsop County commission.

The campaign committee, which includes the three primary petitioners Widdop, Seaside businessman Steve Phillips and Astoria businessman Dan Van Dusen, must collect 1,000 to 1,500 signatures to put the initiative on the ballot.

Of the five appointed commissioners, four would be county residents and one would be from outside the county.

A letter written sever-

al months ago by former Mayor Mike Morgan, of Cannon Beach, as well as Larson and Widdop urged that the port commission be appointed by the governor.

A Senate bill containing the same elements as the proposed initiative was drafted by state Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose.

Knight said he thrived on a challenge.

"The port is in dire straits and needs to improve its customer relations," he added. "I hit a gold mine!"

His first task, he said, is to gain control over the port's finances. The financial control problems are the "worst I've ever seen," Knight said.

See Port, Page 3A