

Good customer service is at the heart what we do

A colleague emailed me recently and asked if I would consider being part of an advisory group for a project she was working on. As I looked at the deadlines and schedules of our organization for the next 30-40 days, I realized it was going to be pretty tough to squeeze anything else out of March or April. Have you felt that way this winter, and now into the first couple weeks of spring? It's been an amazing and busy winter at the beach, and all indications are that the future outlook for the remainder of 2015 is looking strong, too. But is there ever a cost to being too busy? Does service ever get sacrificed during busy times?

Providing good customer service is at the heart of what we do in the tourism and hospitality industry – or, at least, it always should be. It seems pretty straightforward and easy too, right? A customer enters your business or establishment and wants to buy something, or has a question. Hopefully we have the answer, or are able to provide the goods they are after, and we help foster a great experience. They leave, we both feel great! But what happens when the last interaction we had didn't go so well, or perhaps something else put us in a bad mood? Often times that carries over to the next customer being helped, and, in turn,



JON RAHL

that next individual might have a really bad experience. Now what? The customer service cycle can be incredible or it can be

brutal. We never know who is going to walk through the door or who is going to tell all of their friends on Facebook or Twitter how awesome (or horrible) something was. It requires a level of commitment to always do our best and put as much focus as possible on the person that is standing, or sitting, in front of you. Last year, we unveiled a new program designed to analyze the front lines of Seaside and, specifically, how good we are as a community when it comes to providing great service. Our first goal was to evaluate, while not embarrassing anyone. From day one – and now as we enter year two – this has been

a volunteer program. If you want your business to participate, and have a secret shopper walk through the doors, that's entirely up to you. We took what we did last year (we analyzed 10 businesses across all sectors in 2014), and learned that we are doing a pretty decent job but that the way we run this particular customer service program could be improved. So that's what we've done. Are you a business owner or manager who would like to dig a bit deeper into the way you service your customers and see if you stack up the way you think you should? Just like last year, the program will coincide with

National Travel and Tourism Week from May 2-10. We'll utilize secret shoppers and are hoping to expand the number of participants. If you are interested in participating, please send an email to info@seasideor.com, subject line "Customer Service" and we'll take it from there. I'll write about the results in a future column. Have a thought or question about tourism in Seaside, or maybe an idea for a future column? Drop me an email at jon@seasideor.com. Jon Rahl is the director of tourism for the Seaside Visitors Bureau and assistant general manager of the Seaside Civic & Convention Center:

Scene and Heard CLAIRE LOVELL

Man over machine better

One day in March, two workers came to fix the pot-holes on Ninth Ave. In about three days, instead of seven or eight mud puddles, we had a large hole spilling over onto Lincoln St. Why the street is used so much is a mystery to me. I think the traffic is just looking for a shortcut to Holladay. Using the backhoe is futile. The real solution, I believe, is to get those guys out of their machinery, give each of them a shovel to fill the holes with new gravel; use a rake to spread and a roller to press it down or consult with Dennis Wiese to find the right M.O. and not continue to rearrange the chuck holes for a temporary two or three days. It should be man over machine, which is probably cheaper anyway. March 8, when the sun turned actually warm after a freezing night, the town was full of dogs and people like summer. The beach was dotted with scores of visitors and the bumper cars were running — truly a beautiful Sunday. It was also the day of the beer show at the convention center.



CLAIRE LOVELL

38 singers were really fun to watch — so young and fresh and capable – we've always had exceptional music departments in our schools and this was a great example. I do apologize for not identifying everyone. They were all stars. The Cannon Beach Chorale, John Buehler directing, sang numbers by Haydn, Mozart, Stephen Foster and others, plus a contemporary rollicking tune, which avowed, "There's A Meeting Here Tonight!" It was a good note to end on and we were all the better for it, and the music was the kind you hum on the way home. After returning from the concert, we saw at the factory outlet near Rue Guy, what looked like smoke on one of those turrets. It turned out to be streams of water on the roof. What a job to be doing at night!

ing, although that's a selfish point of view. She certainly deserves it. Nancy has been my boss for several months now. I met her when she first came to the Signal but never got to know her except through her columns. I wish her well in all the pursuits she was unable to enjoy while being a working girl.

Seaside businesses

One day last week, a group of gals went to lunch at Daisy May's, a new eating spot in the factory outlet, formerly the Winehaus. Daisy May's is mostly a sandwich shop, though soups and salads are available. I chose the potato soup but it was nothing like my mother's, tho' tasty. Ours was depression fare with just potatoes, onions, bacon, milk and a little bit of parsley. Guess I'll have to make it myself. It's good to have an eating place for shoppers. I also went to the Antique Mall on Broadway. My friend, Emmy, introduced me to Sherrie who works there. There are lots of interesting things in the old Selnes and Wheatley location, which brings back many memories. Sherrie has a house dog named Charlie Brown. He's a cute little guy, very friendly and gives everyone who gets close a wet doggie kiss.

Laugh Line:

Late St. Patrick's Day joke: "If the wind is at your back, pray that it isn't from the corned beef and cabbage."

Concert notes

On March 16, a dual concert was performed at the Seaside Methodist Church. Initially, the Seaside High School choir, directed by Vanessa Unger, sang several numbers in a practice run for a contest on the following day. Their first offering was an African tune with drums, blocks and maracas, it sounded like, in the accompaniment. They were so professional and made such beautiful music, including an Italian number and finally, a lovely sacred song. The

Good luck, Nancy

I was sorry to hear that Nancy McCarthy was retir-

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Call your local elementary school or Head Start center for an appointment by April 7 for the Astoria clinic or April 15 for the Seaside clinic.

Limited transportation help is available upon request. se habla espanol.

Sponsors are NW Early Learning Council, NW Educational Service District and Clatsop Kinder Ready. Major health & education groups of Clatsop County are partnering to make this clinic possible.

Seaside Providence Hospital begins breast milk donor program

Breastfeeding moms on the north coast can now make a special donation of breast milk to help premature or medically fragile babies. Donor breast milk is an essential part of the medical care for at-risk infants whose own mothers cannot supply sufficient milk for their special health needs. Providence Seaside Hospital now offers breastfeeding moms, who have excess milk, an easy way to make a donation with the opening of a milk drop – a convenient place for moms to learn about milk donation and to donate frozen milk, which is then shipped and processed at Northwest Mothers Milk Bank in Portland. “Breast milk donation is one of the most beautiful, pure and selfless acts a mother could do for another and for a medically fragile baby,” said Julie Hedford, RN, lactation consultant and maternity nurse at Providence Seaside Hospital. “Breast milk can be a medical priority and we look forward to working with our community in saving babies, drop by drop.” Human milk provides optimal nutrition, promotes normal growth and development, and reduces the risk of illness and disease for infants. Providence Seaside Hospital is located at 725 S. Wahanna Road in Seaside. The milk drop is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., every day. To learn more, please call Providence Seaside’s Birth Center at 503-717-7530.

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Shelby Gosser, Seaside mom, is the first breast milk donor to the Providence Seaside Hospital milk drop.

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