

Providence Play Smart program

Free heart screenings for youth offered

By Katherine Lacaze
Seaside Signal

Providence Health and Services is asking parents to play it safe by getting their children's hearts checked, and they have the opportunity to do so through the health-care organization's free Play Smart Youth Heart Screenings program that recently has been offered on the North Coast.

Providence plans to hold its third heart screening event at the coast from 4 to 7 p.m., May 20, at Astoria's Providence Heart Clinic, 1355 Exchange St. At least 50 youth need to register before it can be offered. Registration for the event currently is very low, said Lydia Hibsich, the Business and Community Development Manager at Providence Health & Services.

The Play Smart program is for people 12 to 18. Cardiologists will give painless, non-invasive screenings to teenagers to check their heart health. The free screening includes an electrocardiogram (EKG), blood pressure reading and height and weight check. If the results show a potential problem, students can get a free echocardiogram.

"We are trying to prevent heart disease by identifying risk factors in kids," but the screenings are used to help detect and diagnose a number of potential cardiac issues, Hibsich said.

The program received about \$10,800 as a donation from the Oregon Logging Conference's annual Ladies' Desserts for Dreams fundraiser held as part of the conference in Eugene in February. Judy Nygaard, the wife of then OLC President David Nygaard, chose Play Smart as the beneficiary because her family has a personal connection to issue.

On June 12, 1998, 15-year-old Andrew Nygaard, a swimming and track standout who had recently graduated from Astoria Middle School, died suddenly of heart problems during a swim practice for the North Coast Swim Club in Seaside. Multiple tests conducted after his death could not detect a specific cause, but it was related to a cardiac problem, Judy Nygaard said.

Andrew's death was unexpected — he was physically fit and had no apparent medical issues. He was doing light dry land drills when his death

occurred. Judy Nygaard said she was on her way to pick up her son when she received the call. She is now an advocate for youth heart screenings.

"I think people just don't

know how important this is," she said. "When it comes to the heart, it doesn't matter if your child is active or healthy or physically fit — they need to be screened, because for us, there weren't any warning signs."

Even when children have physical examinations prior to participation in sports, they don't include heart screenings. Unfortunately, when it comes to cardiac issues, if medical attention is reactive rather than preventative, it's too late, Judy Nygaard said.

As the wife of the conference president, she was responsible for planning the Desserts for Dreams fundraiser. She selected a sports theme, given that the screenings are particularly targeted toward

student athletes. Her daughter, Melissa Svensen, helped with decorations. About 40 community businesses donated desserts for the event. In donating the money to Prov-

idence for Play Smart, Judy Nygaard's only request was that they would offer screenings at the North Coast. The hospital held two prior Play Smart events in the area on Jan. 21 at Providence Seaside Hospital and Feb. 4 in Astoria. Between the two clinics, 123 students were served. Of the 123 students screened, 95 were in the normal range for their age; two were recommended to get the additional echocardiogram screening for more information; and 26 were identified as having elevated blood pressures.

All the youth received the results of their screenings, Hibsich said. Those who had elevated blood pressure were given recommendations for further care and treatment with

their healthcare practitioners. Dr. Robert Morse, a cardiologist, followed up with parents and did phone consultations to give recommendations.

Providence Health & Services started its Play Smart program in June 2012. The screenings have been "highly beneficial," Hibsich said.

"It's one of those things where everybody benefits," she added. "There is no downside to screening kids."

To date, more than 6,000 youth have been screened at more than 60 school and community based events, and the screenings have identified about 300 students that needed further assessment and treatment of various cardiac issues. Sometimes personnel from other healthcare organizations will volunteer for the Play Smart clinics.

Hibsich works with school nurses to get them engaged and to disseminate information to students about the screenings. For the North Coast screenings, she has worked with the Astoria, Knappa, Seaside and Warrenton school districts.

"We're going to have another push to try to drive awareness in the schools" before the

May 20 event, she said. One of the biggest challenges for the hospital is to get information to parents about the screenings so they will bring their children or sign consent forms for their children to be screened. Anyone younger than 18 must get a parent's or guardian's signature since it's a medical procedure, she said. The hospital encourages all people who work with youth to send out reminders about the screenings through emails, newsletters and other means.

In other areas served by Providence, such as the Portland-metro area, the screenings are sometimes offered directly in schools.

"We do have plans in the future to have the screenings at one of the high schools" on the North Coast, Hibsich said, adding it's just a matter of selecting which school and promoting the event.

Each screening takes about 10 minutes. Youth and their families will receive the results in about two weeks. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 503-216-6800 or visit www.playsmartgetsscreened.org. Consent forms can be found online.

Gearhart man 'a great fit' to take reins as rec district's new director

Archibald from Page 1A

Archibald and his family moved back to Gearhart in August, when he started working at Pacific University. He commutes to Forest Grove each day, which he is willing to do because they enjoy living in the area.

"When the position opened up that I'm currently working, my family and I decided to make our home in the Seaside area," he said.

He now will transition into being executive director, which he described as "a great fit professionally," as it will give him the opportunity to serve the communities and residents he cares about. Although he does not feel comfortable giving specifics at this time, he is looking forward to helping the district's programs, services and visibility expand.

"Coming in as an outsider, my first focus is accessing where the district is at," he said.

He feels former General Manager Justin Cutler, who resigned in March, did a good job maintaining the district's stability and helping it grow. He plans to continue that growth and also be a resource and community partner to help the district be "an organization that is really receptive to receiving feedback from the community" and doing things the board and patrons are interested in.

He has a varied background, he said, working in different progressive and high-functioning organizations that have helped him broaden his professional experience, which he now brings to the Sunset Empire Park & Recreation District. He is looking forward to building relationships with community partners and working with the district's existing staff.

"It's really exciting to be able to work in an industry, and particularly with the Sunset Empire Park & Recreation District, to enhance the quality of life and provide these great services for people. I just can't think of anything that would be better," he said.

Science teacher leads fish release project

Steelhead from Page 1A

sag in that area and, since it's part of the tsunami trail for students, it was posing a public safety risk.

The project received funding from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Restoration and Enhancement Program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife and a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's community-based Restoration Program and American Rivers.

Since replacing the culvert, fish having been returning, which is a good thing, Meyer said. For several years, Coho in the area were unable to spawn.

This past winter, he and students saw a couple pairs of Coho salmon moving through the stream, as well as a few carcasses.

At the culvert, Meyer told the students about the work done and money spent to help give the fish better access throughout the creek, while encouraging them to show the same respect for the natural world by not littering, fishing for endangered species or disturbing sensitive streams.

"We want to respect the fish and wildlife around us," he said to his fifth-graders. "We want to keep it nice and keep it friendly and keep it real."

The impetus for Meyer's bi-annual fish activity with his students was the replacement of the culvert, with the common goal of each outing being to get fish back "in a stream that used to have lots of fish in it," Meyer said. "From a science perspective, this is meant to gain connection with kids to wildlife and to give them some hands-on experience with habitat and ecosystems and watershed and the lifecycle of salmon."

Throughout the years, they have put in Chinook salmon and steelhead trout. The Chinook are not expected to return to the little creeks. They instead will travel to larger tributaries in the Necanicum system because they grow into bigger fish and require more water flow, Meyer said.

Ideally, for a "true scientific endeavor," Meyer would like to put in Coho salmon, which are the native run. Since Coho



KATHERINE LACAZE PHOTO

After releasing about 500 steelhead trout into China Creek, a group of fifth-graders continued down the path to the culvert, which was replaced about three years ago to help with fish passage, that runs beneath Spruce Loop Road near Seaside Heights Elementary School.

are an endangered and protected species, however, releasing fish propagated in a hatchery is prohibited by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. There are several reasons for that, said Chris Knutsen, a fish biologist with the department.

Primarily, there is evidence, he said, that "releasing too many hatchery Coho can have a negative impact on the productivity of native fish." The department has substantially decreased how many hatchery Coho it releases into rivers on Oregon's north coast. There are only two rivers, Knutsen said, where they release Coho: the North Fork Nehalem River and the Trask River.

The risk posed by other species of fish propagated in hatcheries is much lower, which is why they use fish, such as steelhead trout and Chinook salmon, for the classroom project, he said.

Transferring wild fish from a different system, while done historically, also is discouraged and not currently done often because there are genetic consequences. Different watersheds provide different population structures for Coho, and the species tends to vary genetically and sometimes behaviorally

among the distinct structures. The department doesn't want to harm the native Coho salmon by introducing fish from a hatchery or transferring Coho from a different location.

"That's the key... you think about the things you can change that would produce more Coho," Knutsen said.

The department also regulates harvesting and works to improve habitats as ways to improve native fish populations. Those are the issues that can be and are addressed, while a factor like ocean conditions, which has a big impact on Coho production, can't be helped by the department, Knutsen added.

A success story

Other programs in the area have illustrated success in supporting fish repopulation in their native habitats. At Thompson Creek and Stanley Marsh, the North Coast Land Conservancy has helped improve the habitat so it is conducive to salmon spawning.

The resurgence of the native Coho salmon at the location was initiated in the 1990s when tidegates used on Stanley Lake were removed. The tidegates impeded fish passage, so

after their removal, "the adult salmon returned and then the numbers have steadily grown," North Coast Land Conservancy Executive Director Katie Voelke said.

The conservancy became the owner of the 80-acre estuarine property in 2006 and has guided the process further forward through restoration work. Now the Coho population is "very robust," Voelke said.

"A lot of the restoration we've done is to make the juvenile habitat healthier and that's how you get to raise your adult members," she said, adding they joke that they're "building the biggest fish hatchery."

"Really what we're doing is allowing the land to grow fish on its own," she said.

Last year, there were more than 300 spawning salmon in a very small section of the system, which has become one of the most productive Coho spawning beds in the Necanicum Estuary, Voelke said.

Meyer would like his program to emulate the conservancy's.

"That Thompson Creek system is what I would like to see happen here," Meyer said, referring to his school project.

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