

Rec district hires new aquatics head

By Katherine Lacaze
Seaside Signal

The Sunset Empire Park & Recreation District hired Justin Smith to be the agency's new aquatics manager. He started June 29. Former aquatics manager Russell Cleveland resigned in March, and Mike Kadi, head coach of the Seaside Swim Team, has been serving as interim aquatics manager. Smith, who is from Kansas, was offered the job May 28, and he accepted shortly after.

The recreation district originally advertised through the National Recreation and Parks Association and received 13 applicants, which were screened down to five for phone interviews. Two were invited for in-person interviews with a seven-member panel, which included a practical, hands-on component, and to meet the district staff. The decision between the two finalists was very close, interim executive di-

rector Mary Blake said. Incoming executive director Skyler Archibald played a big role in making the final selection, since the two will work together in the future.

Smith currently serves as aquatics manager at the Paul Henson Family YMCA in Prairie Village, Kan. The facility is part of the YMCA of Greater Kansas City, based out of Kansas City, Mo. Smith began working there in August 2012. Prior to that, he worked with the YMCA Trout Lodge in Potosi, Mo., for about three years. His experience there included lifeguard, waterfront director and program operations manager.

Smith originally is from Sydney, Australia, and attended went to trade school there before moving to the United States and discovering his real passion was for water recreation.

When the Sunset Empire Park & Recreation District's aquatics manager position

became vacant after the departure of Genessee Dennis in late summer, Smith applied for the job. He was one of the two final candidates, along with Cleveland, who ultimately was hired.

Smith was very interested in moving to the Seaside area and becoming involved in the community, which he believed "would really just be a great fit" for him, so he applied for the position again.

The recreation district's aquatics facility size is similar to the one he oversees now, Smith said, and he's very familiar with managing employees and programs in this capacity.

"I think the transition will be kind of smooth since I do a lot of this stuff already," he said.

Smith's greatest passion, when it comes to aquatics, is teaching water safety to children and young adults. He looks forward to continuing to provide the district's key

aquatics programs, such as the Seaside Swim Team and swim lessons.

During his time at the YMCA Trout Lodge, Smith got his first professional experience managing others, as well as giving instruction and leading programs. At the Paul Henson Family YMCA, he helped build a robust swim team.

"Now I'm hopefully going to take (both experiences) and bring them there (to Seaside)," Smith said.

He said he looks forward to working with others at the Sunset Empire Park & Recreation District, which he believes to have a strong backing from the community.

Smith's personality, enthusiasm and proclivity to team-building and public relations made him a good candidate, Blake said. The YMCA is very focused on youth development and risk management, so Smith's background in that area will benefit the district, she added.

Seaside high schoolers help adorn cast of local music festival production

Sewing Club members participate in costume apprenticeship

By Katherine Lacaze
Seaside Signal

Three students from Seaside High School's Sewing Club took part in the Astoria Music Festival's first costume apprenticeship program in late June.

The festival, which held its 13th season this year, traditionally incorporates a Vocal and Instrumental Apprenticeship Program. The program's production for 2015 was the comedic opera "The Magic Flute," or "Die Zauberflöte," by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The production used Astoria as its setting. In general, the two-week apprenticeship program provides advanced training to pre-professional singers and instrumentalists. It also incorporates local young dancers.

A new addition to this year's program was a costume apprenticeship, overseen by Costume Manager Cynthia Harber, a local teacher at Astoria Middle School.

When Managing Director Carol Shepherd heard about Seaside High School's Sewing Club, she saw an opportunity to provide another venue to instruct and develop young people through the apprentice program. Three students from the sewing club — Brooke Laws, Max McNeill and Chastity Cozzitorto — participated in the costume apprenticeship, and the program benefited from their participation, Harber said.

The program also benefited from a \$500 budget for costumes, which gave the team the ability to create more elaborate attire. They had to craft outfits and other

costume pieces for the nearly 20-member cast, as well as about 18 dancers from Maddox Dance Studio and the Astoria School of Ballet.

Because "The Magic Flute" was set in Astoria — with references to the U.S. Coast Guard, a pirate and Columbia River Bar Pilots — the costumes followed a nautical theme. Characters included spirits, a queen of the night, priests and a bird-catcher.

"Thank God we had a budget this time," Harber said.

She devoted about 14 hours per day to the production through the duration of the program, and the sewing club students each devoted about four to six hours per day. Besides the students, Harber also received help from Astoria's Englund Marine and Industrial Supplies, who willingly let the group borrow costume parts.

Harber taught her apprentices techniques and skills they could take with them and teach to others in the sewing club when it reconvenes for the 2015-16 school year. "It's going to help them the next time they have to do this for a performance at their school," she said.

Shepherd agreed it went well.

"The students have had a great time, and it's been a very good experience for them, and a great way for us to involve more students in the festival," she said.

Harber's goal is to build the apprentice program to include apprentices in all areas, such as direction, stage management, costuming, props, lighting sound, video and more.

In return for the Seaside students' help making costumes for "The Magic Flute," the Astoria Music Festival donated \$300 to the high school's sewing club.

Duane Larson is Vice Principal of the Year 2014-15

Mayor's son honored at school administrators conference in Seaside

By Katherine Lacaze
Seaside Signal

Duane Larson, the son of Seaside Mayor Don Larson, was selected as Oregon's Vice Principal of the Year for 2014-15 and honored during the 2015 Confederation of Oregon School Administrators Conference in Seaside.

The Oregon Association of Secondary School Administrators selected Larson for the honor, which was open to all high school and middle school vice principals in the state. Larson was announced as the winner in fall 2014.

Larson serves as vice principal of Alice Ott Middle School in Portland, a position he has held since 2002. He attended the COSA Conference, and June 19, he was recognized, along with those who were given other honors. Larson's wife, Elizabeth; daughter, Rachel; and parents, Don and Lois, were in attendance.

"Having the award presented to me in Seaside, with my parents there, was very special to me," he said.

Under Larson and Principal James Johnston, Alice Ott Middle School achieved Model School

status, designated by the Oregon Department of Education, for the past three years. In his nomination letter, Johnston described Larson as "a cornerstone to what we have been able to accomplish with student achievement."

Larson attended Cherry Park Elementary School, Floyd Light Middle School and David Douglas High School. After obtaining degrees from George Fox College and Portland State University, he did his student teaching at Alice Ott. In 1991, he joined the David Douglas School District as a sixth-grade teacher at West Powellhurst Elementary School. He also taught math at Floyd Light for three years, served as an administrative intern and was the Community Sports Coordinator before being appointed as vice principal of Alice Ott.

While being recognized individually is nice, Larson said, "success really is a team effort."

"Alice Ott Middle School has been recognized several times recently in the state, and nationally, and that's due to strong effort from all staff and students," he added.

Last year, Johnston was named Oregon's Middle School Principal of the Year.

Larson is passionate about middle school students and helping them be successful, he said.

"I think this award confirms that my efforts have been successful and encourages me to continue working hard," he said.

Students come to the school as 11-year-olds and "leave as high-school-ready teenagers," so they do a lot of growing up, physically and emotionally, during middle school, Larson said.

"It's rewarding and enjoyable to help them during this transition in their lives. It can also be frustrating, as we deal with a tough population," Larson said, adding the school has more than 70 percent of students who are on free or reduced-cost lunch and there are more than 30 languages spoken in the students' homes.

"That being said, we are regularly complimented for how well behaved Alice Ott student are," he said.



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Duane Larson, the son of Seaside Mayor Don Larson and the vice principal of Alice Ott Middle School in Portland, was honored as Oregon's Assistant Principal of the Year for 2014-15 during the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators conference in Seaside June 19.

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