

Finding inspiration, insights on the Seaside Prom

I'm a creature of habit when it comes to my work schedule and job duties. On many levels, I think we have to be habitual in process. That being said, we must leave room for an element of spontaneity and disruption to the order we try and follow.

As I considered my upcoming deadline (i.e., what was I going to write about) for this month's column, I decided to spend my lunch hour on the Prom, from a bench at Avenue E. Parked there, with food in hand, I simply sat by myself and observed what was happening around me. Visitors were fluttering by in various forms — walking, running, and biking — while birds were buzzing and chirping overhead, and in the distance. To my left was Tillamook Head

and to my right was our world-famous Turnaround. This was "just" lunch for me (pretty nice picnic, really), but for hundreds in my vicinity (including the beach), this was vacation. How cool is that?

Charged with directing the advertising and marketing efforts of the City of Seaside Visitors Bureau, it's my job to make sure our messaging is not only consistent, but also inspiring to the multitude of prospective visitors that consider vacationing or day tripping to our area. So, what is inspiring? What is it that people want to do? Do they always know? Should we always be repeating the same messages, or do we focus solely on the unknown — or at least relatively unknown? The answers aren't



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always simple.

People have been visiting the Seaside beach for well over 100 years. History documents that exceptionally well — especially if you look at the old photos scattered throughout town, or on our Facebook page. But

why do they visit? It's fairly safe to say that, in most cases, they come for the beach. They seek the beauty and serenity of the ocean, and during the summer — cooler temps — natural air conditioning, if you will. There must be more though, right?

When I moved here, I believe I offered a fresh perspective on what to highlight in our marketing efforts. I was still learning the town the same way a visitor might. Quite honestly, I'm still learning, but it's not always the same way I did five years ago. That's how diverse our little spot on Oregon's North Coast is. The story I believe we could be doing a better job telling is one of recreation — beyond Seaside's beach. Kayaking, canoeing, biking, bird watching, or

even stand up paddle boarding are the type of active adventures that people are seeking.

These stories — and many other off-the-beaten-path stories — come to life from the people I talk to. And it's not just hoteliers or businesses on Broadway. I love talking to them, too; it's just that I believe we have to exhaust our resources when we seek inspiration and insight. Last year's Seaside 2034 visioning campaign, conversations with retired Public Works Director, Neal Wallace and regular conversations with Necanicum Watershed Council director Melyssa Graeper have all given me insights towards considering a different way to promote and communicate Seaside's story.

And that's what we are considering right now. As we gear up for the final weeks of an amazing summer and incredible 2015 to date, the Visitors Bureau will be looking at different ways to drive awareness. It will be a fun project and one I'll keep you updated on. In the meantime, I encourage you to get out and talk to someone you've never talked to. Walk a path you've never crossed. That inspiration and insight might lead to a great new idea.

Have a thought or a 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.

Young people from FosterClub voice their concerns during Wyden visit

Wyden from Page 1A

hard to provide direct financial support, but the idea is that we provide young people ways to finance college, ways to secure housing and health care."

The goal, he said, is to make sure young people leaving the foster care system don't fall between the cracks in terms of housing, health care and basic necessities.

Wyden, whose wife Nancy joined him, chose Seaside to debut his foster care finance reform package because the city is home to FosterClub, the Seaside-headquartered national network for young people in foster care.

Nancy Wyden's father and aunt had both been in foster care, her father from age 5 to 12 and her aunt from 13 to 15, she said.

"I want you guys to pretend you're in my shoes," Ron Wyden said. "I'd be interested in hearing what you would be working with you if you were in my shoes."

Royce Markley, 22, who spent nine years in Oregon and Washington foster care systems, said he had received little or no information on financial aid before entering Linn-Benton Community College. "That put a lot of strain on my life and my education," he said.

Ashlee Foster-French, who spent four years in Oregon's foster system, said foster children faced obstacles setting up bank accounts, budget and finance. "Identifying the problems we have is an important place to start," she said.

"We get labeled," Foster-French said. "We have to fall into a category to receive medication. I'm a mother of three, and every time I've gone in to give birth, they bring up my past medical history. It's very upsetting."

Elbert Belcher spent 21 years in Kentucky's foster care system. He urged preventive services, including counseling, transportation



R.J. MARX PHOTO/SEASIDE SIGNAL

FosterClub grads and volunteers with Sen. Ron Wyden, and wife Nancy, center left.

and assistance for families and parents on board to take before children are placed into the foster care system.

"I'd like to focus on the sibling connection," Belcher said. "I haven't seen my two younger brothers for six or seven years because they've been readopted after our unfortunate abusive adoption. I think it's inhumane not to have communication with your siblings if they've been adopted in a closed adoption."

"With anyone in this room, regardless if it's a five-star hotel, a garbage bag for luggage, a bed on the floor, if we feel a part of something, or valued in some way, we'll see better outcomes," he added.

Others told Wyden about frequent placements, bullying, abuse from some foster families and lack of contact with overburdened case workers, many of whom are untrained in youth engagement.

"I think there's a powerful moral case for every youngster to be able to have a safe option in these kind of situations," Wyden said. "Even if you don't share my idea for the morality, you should be for what we're talking about because it is so much more attractive financially than what we're going to pay for picking up the pieces, in the welfare system, the law enforcement system, post-traumatic

during community events and special projects. Some volunteers work in the Harbor's client service office, Déjà Vu's donation center, and as ongoing advocates for individuals accessing services.

All volunteers will need to attend the first training. Training requirements vary depending on the type of volunteer position. Contact Chris, volunteer coordinator, at 503-325-3426, or visit 1361 Duane St, Astoria to pick up a volunteer packet.

Volunteer opportunities are available at the shelter,

stress and drug addiction.

"I think there are now Democrats and Republicans who are prepared to say that," Wyden said. "There's an excellent possibility of getting something done here. And getting it done in the fall. I think we've got an opportunity that doesn't come along very often. We've got some new momentum to fix these concerns that these young people are talking about."

FosterClub, Wyden working together

FosterClub Executive Director Celeste Bodner was selected as Sen. Ron Wyden's 2015 Congressional Coalition Adoption Institute "Angels in Adoption" honoree.

Q: What is the purpose of today's visit?

BODNER: We work with Sen. Wyden a lot in Washington, D.C., so his office called last week and asked if they could visit our office. The senator nominated me for an award. Part of this is recognizing that. The other is, he has just introduced a potentially landmark bill that will improve how services are offered for kids in foster care, and he's going to talk to some of our young people about that.

Q: Have you worked with Sen. Wyden before?

A: We bring young leaders to Washington, D.C., to help inform public policy. He's been meeting with young leaders for 10 years. We have a great relationship with his office.

Q: How does the Family Stability and Kinship Care act work?

A: The federal financing structure has been broken for a long time, and the way federal funding has come down has caused a hardship to young people, in that federal funding didn't kick in until kids entered foster care. And stopped the minute they left foster care. This new bill would make funding more flexible and allow states to use federal funding to prevent kids from needing to go into foster care in the first place, and also provide services after they leave foster care to adoption or a legal guardianship. This would provide support to these kids too.

Q: What kind of preventive services are you proposing, and why is that important?

A: We believe reducing the number of kids entering foster care, if we can provide services for the fam-

ily, if the family is struggling with homelessness, or addiction, or mental health, to provide upfront services to the family so the child doesn't have to experience the trauma of going into a foster home. If we reduce the number of kids who come into foster care the system, we will have more capacity to manage those kids and put them in good, healthy places.

Q: How often do you go to Washington, D.C.?

A: I live in Seaside, and I go to Washington, D.C. about 12-15 times a year.

Q: Do you think the Family Stability and Care Act will pass?

A: As advocates we've been pressing for something like this for five or six years, there's been a big drumbeat for it a lot of national advocates are really pressing for it. We're very pleased to have Sen. Wyden in such a strong position.

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Bereavement support group to meet at Providence Seaside

A six-week bereavement support group, "Journey through Grief," for family and friends of those who have lost a loved one takes place at Providence Seaside Hospital Mondays, Sept. 21-Oct. 26 from 3:30 to 5 p.m. The group will meet at

Providence Seaside Hospital Family Consult Room. There is no charge for the sessions but pre-registration is recommended.

The hospital is located at 725 S. Wahanna Road. Call Cynthia Livar at 503-717-7233 to register.

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