



KATHERINE LACAZE/SEASIDE SIGNAL

Gearhart Elementary School teacher Jennifer Glasson (back) works with Principal Juli Wozniak (middle) and fellow instructors Mary Foust (right) and Angela Dilley to run the new Learning Center Support Station for elementary students with challenging behaviors. The facility is designed to remove obstacles interfering with the students' learning experience.

Gearhart looks at 'a better answer'

Gearhart from Page 1A

lot of in-home tutoring as responses to disruptions. There were not many options, Gearhart Elementary School Principal Juli Wozniak said. "We just felt like there had to be a better answer."

Hoping for a more long-term, mutually beneficial solution, the district created a classroom with an environment where students could receive more attention, specialized education, the opportunity to focus on behavior and the chance to try again multiple times.

Preparing the classroom

The Astoria and Warrenton-Hammond school districts both have specialized classroom settings, which Seaside staff visited to get ideas for their Learning Center Support Station. The group then researched different aspects of the problem, including how trauma can create behavioral and emotional challenges for students and what sensory stimuli exacerbate negative behaviors. They also looked into different curriculum, classroom structures, reinforcement systems and more.

With the start of the 2015-16 school year only a week away, the district's Board of Directors approved Wozniak's recommendation to hire Glasson, a long-time Gearhart Elementary School teacher, to lead the classroom. Glasson, Foust and Dilley receive support from a county behavior specialist, school psychologist and community volunteers.

Once the school year started, students were placed in the classroom as part of their individualized education programs. Now there are about seven students, including a few from Seaside Heights Elementary School, who come for at least part of their school day.

The small class size is one of the most important factors in the center's success, Glasson said. In a general education classroom, with a teacher trying to instruct dozens of students, disruptive behavior can derail the learning experience for all students. Staff members have little time and few resources to give a challenging student the attention and care needed. Instead, the student has to be removed from the classroom and sometimes sent home.

From the student's perspective, in a regular academic class, there are 31 "unpredictable kids besides you, and it's hard to navigate that all day long socially," Glasson said. Students with these disabilities experience triggers emotionally first, and then their ability to communicate verbally is compromised.

The support station, with its smaller class size and higher instructor-to-student ratio, creates an ideal environment for teachers to stop a behavior, wait for the student to regain control, reteach a skill and then move on with the day as if nothing happened — or the "Groundhog Day" approach, where negative reactions and outbursts are quickly forgotten.

"Every day, and even within the same day, we're moving forward," Glasson said.

Wozniak agreed. "We've been able to create an environment that de-escalates those behaviors and makes it safe for students to learn," she said.

Customized instruction

The teachers focus on a variety of positive reinforcements, from compliments to small rewards. "We don't want to give them little carrots all the time, because that's not realistic in society," Glasson said, but "a little prize goes a long way." Additionally, in the specialized classroom setting, time is dedicated to equipping students with tools for social competency, such as patience, gratitude, emotion management, social skills, cooperation, losing graciously and understanding expected behaviors.

"Kids will do well if they can, and if they have the skills," Wozniak said. "We're trying to teach them the skills."

Each student's schedule is customized to his or her needs, and the learning methods vary. The teachers use visual cues and clear, concise language. Sometimes the kids get to have yoga and puppet therapy sessions. Students might be given their own workstations if they need space from other students. One room has walls that students can draw on and beanbag chairs to tackle when they are frustrated and need to exert energy.

The classroom is in a constant state of flux. Some students attend for certain periods of the day, but go to their general classroom for academic or extracurricular segments where they can succeed; some students spend their entire day at the support station. The goal is for the classroom to be "a station, not a destination," Glasson said.

"For some kids, this is a destination, but they've been at school and participated more than they've been able to before," Glasson said. "That's what public education is about: being able to educate every person regardless."

Achieving the best

Her students are kind, supportive, funny, helpful, smart and creative, "just like any other kids," Glasson said. "But their behaviors will sometimes get in the way of other people perceiving that."

Once students have mastered certain skills in the small, controlled environment of the support station, they start moving into general education settings where they can succeed, Wozniak said. Then "Their peers see them in a place where they can shine," Glasson said.

Students still are included in school activities, like fundraising competitions. The entire staff is involved and working toward their success, "s So they're connected to the rest of the school," Wozniak said.

"Which I think has a huge impact," Glasson added.

They showed 'selfless dedication'

Heroes from Page 1A

2,400 Americans, wounded nearly 1,200 more and launched the United States into World War II.

The second quote, often attributed to Japanese Marshal Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, claims the attack served "to awaken a sleeping giant and fill him with a terrible resolve." The attack, Gibson said, did in fact stun the United States, not least because of the enormous loss of life and military equipment.

"When they attacked us, we were that sleeping giant, and we did awaken," he said.

On Dec. 8, 1941, America declared war on Japan; three days after that, Germany declared war on America. The country became embroiled in a two-front war. What followed were several years of gruesome combat, the detonation of atomic weapons on two Japanese cities and the death of many more Americans, not to mention millions of people across the world. Through it all, U.S. military men and women showed resolve. To Gibson, Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day is "a shout out to all those heroes."

"For those lost, we can't replace them," Gibson said. "But for those survivors, you epitomize the strength and resolve of this great country."

Also during the ceremony, Clatsop County Veterans Services Officer Luke Thomas, the master of ceremonies, read a proclamation on behalf of the city of Seaside, declaring Dec. 7 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day.



JOSHUA BESSEX/EO MEDIA GROUP

Spurgeon Keeth Sr., a Pearl Harbor survivor, listens to guest speaker retired U.S. Navy Capt. Steve Gibson, during the Pearl Harbor Day of Remembrance ceremony.

"Those heroes hold a cherished place in our history through their courage, sacrifice and selfless dedication," the proclamation stated. "They saved our country and preserved freedom."

Ali Vander Zanden read a letter from U.S. Rep. Suzanne Bonamici, who could not be present. In the letter, Bonamici said the country owes "profound gratitude" to service members, like Thomas and Keeth, "who survived the Pearl Harbor attack and served with bravery and distinction to demonstrate the United States' commitment to freedom here and abroad."

"The veterans I've met tell me how their service altered their perspectives on life and marked their character," Bonamici wrote. "I am humbled and inspired by their stories."

Event 'brings us all together'

Undeterred by the drizzling rain, the crowd then moved outside the conven-

tion center to watch as local Boy Scout Troop No. 642 lowered the flag to half-staff. A color guard from the Camp Rilea Armed Forces Training Center posted colors to the bridge that spans the Necanicum River, where Thomas lay a ceremonial wreath as the U.S. Coast Guard flew overhead. Nearby, Gibson played "Taps."

Seaside resident Trish Vowels, who attended the ceremony, said patriotism runs deep in her family. Several of her relatives are veterans, including her father, who served in World War II. Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, she said, is an event that "brings us all together for a really great cause and helps us remember who we are."

Her great niece, Kayla, sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" and "God Bless America" at the ceremony. The 14-year-old also performed at last year's ceremony, and she said she loves it.

Fire: Nearby homes also damaged

Fire from Page 1A

A few passersby paused beside the barricade tape to view and photograph the damage.

Fast-spreading blaze

The house fire was reported to Seaside dispatch early Sunday morning at approximately 2:33 a.m. Fire emergency personnel were dispatched to the 100 and 200 blocks of 11th Avenue and on scene within a few minutes. By 2:44 a.m. the fire had reached two-alarm status, and at 3:08 a.m. the fire expanded to a three-alarm fire.

By 7:35 a.m., the fire was contained.

The addresses of the houses that were destroyed were located at 121, 125, and 131 Eleventh Avenue. The house with extensive damage was located at 221 11th Avenue.

Fire departments and emergency personnel from Seaside, Cannon Beach, Gearhart, Astoria and Hamlet responded to the alarm Sunday morning at 2:33 a.m. Ultimately more than 50 firefighters responded to the fast-moving fire.



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A fire last Sunday destroyed three homes and burned another.

Three other homes nearby had minor damage, including broken windows, bubbled paint and smoke damage, Dugan said.

Aftermath

A Winnebago home and a passenger car were deemed a total loss, Dugan said.

Two vehicles on 11th Avenue suffered minor

damage, including melted tires and bumper.

Those vehicles are considered "very drivable after repairs," Dugan added.

The fire cause remains undetermined at this time, but it was most likely electrical in nature, fire officials said. The blaze started at the occupied house at 125 11th Avenue and quickly spread to neighboring houses.

One firefighter was treated for a knee injury suffered during the response.

"I talked to him last night, and he seems to be doing well," Dugan said Monday. "They stabilized him, he went home from the hospital, and he's going

to see a specialist today. No other injuries — except other than a few sore bones."

The American Red Cross Cascades Region provided immediate emergency assistance for temporary lodging, assistance to meet immediate basic needs for 14 adults and two children affected by the fire. All homeowners and property owners have been notified, Dugan said. "I don't think we missed anybody. Insurance companies have been notified and they'll go through the process of documentation. We get the first look, and then we hand it over to them."

Family recalls good memories in house

Families from Page 1A

neighbors," Shirley Yates said. "It was an old house, but it was so homey, it was so inviting."

The LaDeRoutes arrived in Seaside after word of the fire from their home in Hillsboro. "I just spent \$25,000 upgrading the property," Chuck LaDeRoute said as he surveyed the still-smoldering fire.

The LaDeRoutes purchased the house in 1982. "We just put \$25K into it last year," Chuck LaDeRoute said. "New air-conditioning, new fireplace, new carpet. Well, looks like the fireplace is still working. "We almost came down this weekend," he added. "I'm glad we didn't."

"God gave us a house and we've enjoyed it for many, many years," Carole LaDeRoute said. "We have lots of happy memories. We had Thanksgiving in that house a year ago."

Homeowner Sandi and Mike Sheets and her husband own the home on Eleventh Avenue that sustained major damage. "I'm the house that's still standing," she said Tuesday.

Sheets said she and her husband have been on a "fifth wheel" adventure traveling the country. "We're on a four-month, 'Let's see what the United States looks like."

"Obviously, when I look at our neighbors, I feel very blessed," Sheets said, her voice choked with tears. "They're such wonderful people I can hardly talk about it. We'd like to extend our sympathies."

THANK YOU

We want to thank all of the **VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS** who worked so hard — and at their own personal risk — to save our home on 11th Avenue in Seaside. Knowing that each of you from Seaside, Gearhart, Cannon Beach, Astoria and Hamlet volunteer your time to help your neighbors shows how special each one of you are. Our gratitude is immeasurable.

- Mike and Sandi Sheets