

Wendy was the bright star in many hearts

It seems so right that the first time I met Wendy Richardson it was to talk to her about a community event that she was organizing.

I was a freelance writer in 2008, assigned to write a story for the Coast Business Journal about "Where the Stars Play," a concert series held in the summer at Quat Park in Seaside. Wendy had organized it for several years on behalf of the Sunset Park and Recreation District. It was designed to draw people downtown and into local businesses.

Wendy generously gave her time to share with me her enthusiasm for the event, which, she felt, benefited the community and gave mostly unknown bands some recognition and a little pocket money. We met in her small office next to Seaside Health Foods on Roosevelt Drive. She worked there as the sales representative for The Daily Astorian.

Little did we know that about three months later, I would start working in that same office as the South County reporter for The Daily Astorian and we would become fast and close friends.

Wendy's generosity, love for her community and desire to help others — even when it meant impinging on her own time or resources — are the qualities all of her friends are writing about this week on her Facebook page in her memory. Wendy died of a massive stroke Monday.

"Your friendship, generosity, kindness and wicked sense of humor have kept me afloat through sad times. You always knew the right thing to say, or when a hug



IMPRESSIONS
NANCY McCARTHY

was just what I needed," wrote Gretchen Fulop Darnell. "I fear Seaside will never be the same."

"The many lives you have touched, the many people who have been healed by your words! Thank you for your gift of love throughout the community," wrote Linda Smith.

"Thank you for all that you taught me, helped me through and shared with me! I am forever grateful for your love and wisdom," added Angela Fairless.

Every weekday morning for nearly seven years, until I retired last March, Wendy would come into my office for a quick chat. It would be our way of starting the day. We shared our personal trials and triumphs in those conversations and usually ended up laughing. She had many tribulations that dogged her throughout the time we worked together, problems that I'm pretty sure few people knew about because her smile and vivacity masked her stress.

In some ways, Wendy seemed naïve about people, but her faith in them usually worked out. Like the time a stranger came into our office with some hard luck story. Wendy loaned the woman \$25 — money she couldn't spare at the time. The woman promised to pay her back, even though she was on her way out of town. A few months went by. But to my great surprise, the woman repaid the loan.

Wendy was always sheltering people under her wing, especially young people. Whenever we went to lunch together, there inevitably would be a person at the restaurant — a waitress or someone we would run into — who had either lived temporarily with Wendy's family or who had gone to school with one of Wendy's three children and who Wendy had somewhat "adopted."

Family was the dominant theme that ran through Wendy's life. She dearly loved her husband, Al, and her three children, Alix, Andie and Nick. But what impressed me so much was how she raised the kids to be thoughtful, creative, caring, educated adults. Two years ago, Wendy celebrated three graduations in the same month: Alix and Andie graduated from college and Nick graduated from Seaside High School. Nick is now attending Lane Community College in Eugene.

In this day, when there's so much talk about high school dropouts and the high cost of a college education, to have all three children graduating in the same month is quite a feat!

But her motherly instincts didn't end with her children. Wendy was the office "mother," too. When Seaside reporter Katherine Lacaze needed furniture for her baby, Wendy dug out her leftover furniture from her garage.

"You showed me how to sew a button onto my jacket," wrote Erick Bengal, former Cannon Beach reporter, on Wendy's Facebook page. "You shared your home-cooked meals with me... You counseled and consoled me during some of my darker days at the Ga-



Wendy Richardson with son Nick.

JEFF TER HAR PHOTO/ SEASIDE SIGNAL

zette. And I always looked forward to our talks. I can't believe I don't have those to look forward to anymore."

"I just realized I still have the jumper cables she loaned me in my back seat," former Seaside reporter Louie Opatz wrote on Facebook. "Wendy was always so generous, gregarious and loving — and all those things so selflessly. She never did—and never would have—asked for those jumper cables back."

Wendy was the true spirit of the Seaside community, a tireless volunteer for the high school, the Seaside Chamber of Commerce and other local organizations. She would work full days at the office, then spend evenings and weekends (and, during beach volleyball tournaments, early mornings) helping out in the community.

She taught me the true meaning of the phrase, "It takes a village..." She introduced me to this village of South County, to her friends and her family, and she made me feel

comfortable here. There wasn't a Thanksgiving or Christmas that went by that she didn't invite me to share it with her and her family.

Maybe it is right, too, that we honor Wendy at Christmas. She and her mother ran the Christmas shop, "'Tis the Season" in Cannon Beach for more than 20 years. Christmas was Wendy's favorite holiday.

She often talked about her mother, who died several years ago; Wendy missed her very much.

In a final Facebook post last weekend, Wendy showed a picture she had taken of a rainbow over the house that she and Al had moved into a few months ago. She adored the house and its location near West Lake.

The rainbow seemed to symbolize that all was well, finally, in Wendy's life, and, as always, she wanted to share the happy moment.

"Beautiful rainbow over the house this morning," Wendy wrote. "Thanks, mom."

Fort Clatsop holiday happenings

How the Lewis and Clark Expedition endured the winter of 1805-06

ASTORIA — Lewis and Clark National Historical Park will offer special programs about the Corps of Discovery's winter at Fort Clatsop on the days following Christmas.

Starting Saturday, Dec. 26, Fort Clatsop will feature living history programs by park rangers each day through Jan. 2.

Costumed rangers will present daily flintlock muzzle-loading programs at 1:30 and 3:30 p.m. Hands-on programs about various aspects of the explorers' winter at Fort Clatsop will be available at the fort at 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and from 2 to 3 p.m. Ranger-guided walks on the Netul River Trail will

be offered at 2 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 26 and Monday through Saturday, Dec. 28 to Jan. 2.

Movies will also be playing for visitors to enjoy in the Fort Clatsop visitor center: "A Clatsop Winter Story," a 22-minute movie about the 1805-06 winter from a Clatsop Indian perspective, and "Lewis and

Clark: Confluence of Time and Courage," a 34-minute movie about the entire voyage, will be offered each hour.

The park is closed on Christmas Day, Dec. 25.

Fort Clatsop is located southwest of Astoria, three miles southeast of U.S. Highway 101. The park, including the Fort to Sea

Trail, the visitor center, fort, Netul River Trail, and the parking lots, is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The park also includes the Salt Works site near the Promenade in Seaside and the Middle Village/Station Camp site just east of Fort Columbia in Washington.

Admission to the Fort Clatsop unit of the park is

\$3 per adult and includes Netul Landing and the Fort to Sea Trail. There is no admission fee for the Salt Works or Middle Village/Station Camp. Passes to National Park Service sites are accepted for free admission.

For further information, call the park at 503-861-2471 or visit www.nps.gov/lewi.

LETTERS

Man's illness and his cure

Many of us might remember growing up in a time when drugs and drinking, foul language and all manner of loose living was rare and even discouraged.

Wow, have things changed! I wonder if we have any clue what happened and how. Remember when you didn't have to lock your door, when a handshake would seal the deal? A man's word could be trusted.

How about a marriage that lasted a lifetime. That sure would be nice if kids could count on the folks being together for their kids to see them growing up.

Is it just me, or has a dark cloud covered the earth? Has the human race totally lost its mind?

This did not happen over night, but slowly — hardly getting our attention. Generation after generation, until we see what a terrible mess we've made of things. There seems to be a universal condition that has us bent on our destruction, a powerful illness taking its toll. I have the cure for sin. Ask me how?

The truth will set you free.

Robert Register
Seaside

Officers failed to respond to emergency

Why would a law enforcement dispatcher fail to send HELP to two women stranded in a pool of water on the roadway, especially after being told that a 71-year-old woman, with a knee injury, was in the vehicle and need assistance getting out of the car? The person at the dispatch center was also told that the vehicle had

stalled and that water was coming into the passenger compartment. At this point it appears the dispatcher, with great calm, told the caller to call a tow truck, which the lady did but apparently none responded.

Finally after some time a police officer did stop and offer them a ride. He took them to the Safeway parking lot in Seaside, told them that he had other things to do, dropped them off cold, wet and alone, to take care of themselves from there on.

I am dumbfounded. I thought the number one job for law enforcement was to protect life and property. If this is so, how could a peace officer, on a rainy cold December night, drop both women off at a Safeway parking lot — one, an injured elderly woman — and tell them to call a cab. I'm stunned.

It appears to me the appropriate thing to have done on a rainy and cold night would have been to take them to the Seaside Police Station and let them make a phone call to a friend for help. Shouldn't this be part of an officer's training?

Samuel Patrick
Astoria

The gift of cancer research funding

I am a 20-year cancer survivor who owes her life to the tremendous cancer research done prior to

my diagnosis, and I know most cancer survivors feel the same way. Without research, the successful chemotherapy and radiation protocols used today would still be on the drawing board. Right now we are in danger of losing the progress we've made and derailing future treatment advancements unless Congress increases federal cancer research funding.

What better gift can Congress deliver this holiday season than a renewed commitment to fighting a disease that kills more than 8,000 Oregonians yearly?

Over the past decade, flat funding and inflation have jeopardized progress against cancer. Federal funding for medical research has dropped more than 24 percent in

inflation-adjusted dollars since 2003, forcing cancer centers to halt promising clinical trials and drying up the grant pool for researchers.

Budget proposals being voted on in Congress over the next few weeks include the largest single increase for cancer research in a decade. Cancer strikes one in two men and one in three women, including roughly 22,400 Oregonians each year. As the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network lead advocate in Oregon, I urge Oregon's members of Congress to vote to increase research funding in the 2016 budget. Let's ensure more Oregonians with cancer can join me and say, "I'm cancer free."

Lois Fitzpatrick
Seaside

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