

# Students' challenge to communities: Become prepared

## Student body leaders seeking new school facilities

By Katherine Lacaze  
Seaside Signal

What they don't know can hurt them, was the message Seaside High School's student leaders conveyed to the Seaside City Council Monday night.

Leaders of the Associated Student Body are concerned about how unprepared students and the community are for a catastrophic Cascadia subduction zone event. They organized Don't Catch This Wave to spread awareness about the issue and raise funds to help move the school district's at-risk campuses out of the inundation zone.

"We decided we wanted to stand up and work to make a change for ourselves, our peers and the students that sit below us in class and are too young to realize that their lives are in jeopardy every single day when they're at school," treasurer Jesse Trott told City Council members.

She and co-presidents Taylor Barnes and Whitney Westerholm shared a version of a presentation the officers prepared for Seaside High School and other schools across the state.

"Our project is all about tsunami preparedness, specifically focusing on the earthquake and tsunami that are supposed to hit our coastline from the very southern tip of Canada to the very northern tip of California," Trott said.

The hope is to raise funds to relocate Gearhart Elementary School, Seaside High School and Broadway

Middle School, which all sit in the inundation zone. Seaside Heights Elementary School also could be remodeled and expanded in the process to house all the elementary students, but nothing is decided.

"Relocating our schools is definitely our top priority," Westerholm said.

Although it may be lofty, she added, "it's our goal this year, and even if we don't reach it, we want to keep this program going."

### A safe place to be

High school students must walk about 1.6 miles to get to an evacuation site and cross bridges in the process. Broadway Middle School students have about 1 mile to walk. Gearhart Elementary students only have a quarter mile, but their route goes west to a site with an elevation of 46 feet at its highest point — likely not high enough.

"What these kids don't know, and a lot of our high schoolers don't know, is that they are evacuating to somewhere that isn't going to keep them safe," said Westerholm, who has a younger brother at Gearhart Elementary. "That just breaks my heart, to be honest — that we could have had a safe place for these kids to be, and there isn't."

When the tsunami will hit is uncertain, but there will be hundreds of students at risk when it does, and that is Westerholm's main motivation for helping to spearhead the project, she said. Whether it is the current students or possibly their future children, "the



Seaside High School Associated Student Body officers Whitney Westerholm, Taylor Barnes and Jesse Trott gave a presentation on their tsunami awareness and fundraising campaign, Don't Catch This Wave, at the Seaside City Council meeting Dec. 14.

fact of the matter is, it will be a group of 400 kids" that are impacted, she added.

The three at-risk schools are not built to withstand an earthquake, which will be the death of many students. For instance, Barnes said, the high school, built in the 1950s, will likely collapse on those who are unable to get out.

"They will essentially be trapped in the school," he added.

Superintendent Doug Dougherty said they do not qualify for "any seismic retrofitting money no can they access those funds to help move the schools," because they are in the inundation zone.

The 24-minute presentation is accompanied by a silent video of approximately the same length that shows the high school students walking quickly to their evacuation site "in the best circumstances," Barnes said.

**'Relocating our schools is definitely our top priority.'**

— Whitney Westerholm, Associated Student Body co-president

That means no earthquake damage, no debilitated or injured students, no devastated bridges. However, according to the students, research shows the community would have only about 15 minutes from the start of an earthquake before a tsunami — likely of a 8.7 to 9.2 magnitude — hits.

"That's not very much time," Barnes said.

In the presentation, the students discussed the tsunami that hit Japan in 2011. It is predicted the event on the Pacific Northwest will

be similar, Barnes said. The water will move swiftly, faster than a human can outrun, and rise to about 80 to 100 feet in elevation.

### Fundraising for relocation

Besides footage and photos from the Japan event, the presentation also included a clip from Oregon Public Broadcasting's recent documentary, "Unprepared." In the documentary, Dougherty talked about the 2013 bond measure the school district sponsored to acquire funds to relocate the schools. The price tag was \$128 million, and the measure failed. Dougherty has said the district will sponsor a similar bond measure in 2016.

The students' fundraising campaign is primarily for contributing to that effort, but they also hope

to put some money toward radio communication equipment, natural disaster preparedness kits, pre-assembled food and supply kits, advertising about tsunami evacuation routes and immediate disaster relief.

The student body officers are in the process of sending letters to Fortune 500 companies, politicians and celebrities, asking for funds. The main goal, though, is to reach out to other students and schools.

In the past couple weeks, they gave their Don't Catch This Wave presentation at Gresham and Scappoose high schools. Gresham High School will dedicate its annual Unity Week to raise funds for the Seaside project. Westerholm said they will go back to Gresham in a couple weeks to present during the kick-off assembly for Unity Week.

The Seaside students also are handing out blue ribbons and asking people to tie them in a visible place to show support and bring awareness to the cause. Additionally, they plan to hold a walk-a-thon, similar to Relay For Life, in the spring. Students will find people to sponsor them to run or walk 1.6 miles, the same distance of their evacuation route.

City Councilor Dana Phillips said she was impressed by what the Associated Student Body officers are doing "on behalf of the safety of the students."

Councilor Jay Barber agreed.

"What we're seeing here is that our young people really are leading the way for us to wake up to the reality that we live in," he said.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

**Monday, Dec. 14**  
Seaside City Council Meeting, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

**Tuesday, Dec. 15**  
Union Health District, 8 a.m., Providence Hospital, Education Room B.

**Seaside School District**, 6 p.m., 1801 S. Franklin St.

**Seaside Planning Commission**, work session, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

**Wednesday, Dec. 16**  
Seaside Tourism Advisory Commission, 3 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

**Thursday, Dec. 17**  
Seaside Transportation Advisory Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

**Monday, Jan. 19**  
Seaside School District, 6 p.m., 1801 S. Franklin St.

**Tuesday, Jan. 5**  
Seaside Community and

**Senior Commission**, 10 a.m., the Bob Chisholm Center, 1225 Avenue A.

**Seaside Library Board**, 4:30 p.m., 1131 Broadway.

**Seaside Planning Commission**, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

**Wednesday, Jan. 6**  
Seaside Improvement Commission, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

**Thursday, Jan. 7**  
Seaside Parks Advisory Committee, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

**Thursday, Jan. 14**  
Seaside Convention Center, 5 p.m., at the Convention Center.

**Wednesday, Jan. 21**  
Seaside Tree Board, 4 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

**Tuesday, Jan. 26**  
Seaside Airport Advisory Committee, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

# Council unanimously approves audit

Audit from Page 1A

The firm rendered an unmodified opinion. Everything was accurate and complete, Proulx said, adding, "It was a very well-run audit this year."

The Seaside City Council voted unanimously to accept the audit, which state law requires to be performed annually. The report is online at the Secretary of State website.

### Revenue boost

Also at the meeting, the city unanimously adopted three resolutions adopting and appropriating supplemental budget increases. The city's revenue for fiscal year 2014-15, particularly from tourism, was higher



**'These are just housekeeping resolutions we're going through.'**

Mark Winstanley  
city manager

than anticipated, City Manager Mark Winstanley said.

The first resolution made changes totaling about \$400,000 to the budget for sewer plant replacement, capital improvement and maintenance, systems development for parks, the Seaside Municipal Airport and economic development. Because the combined

increase was more than 10 percent, the council held a public hearing on the resolution. No one commented.

The second resolution adopted approved a decrease of \$100,000 to sewer resources and increases totaling about \$41,500 to funds for community development, the state tax street fund and parks construction.

The third resolution affected the Seaside Road District Budget. The beginning fund balance was increased from about \$797,000 to nearly \$896,000.

"We're making adjustments to our beginning fund balances so they coincide with what the audit has for ending fund balances for last year," Winstanley said. "These are just housekeeping resolutions we're going through."

## Enjoy trivia night at the Seaside Public Library

On Wednesday, Jan. 13, at 6 p.m. the Seaside Public Library will host its monthly Team Trivia Tournament. Teams can consist of one person or have as many as six people.

Trivia nights are informal, fun, competitions where teams battle to see who has the greatest knowledge of all matters trivial. General questions will be asked by our trivia host and the winners are the team which, at the

rectly answered the most questions. Prizes will be awarded, but the main prize is knowing you have the smartest trivia team in Clatsop County.

Seaside Public Library is located at 1131 Broadway, across from the Youth Center and Swimming Pool. For more information on this event or other library activities call 503-738-6742 or visit [www.seasidelibrary.org](http://www.seasidelibrary.org) and [facebook.com/seasidepubliclibrary](http://facebook.com/seasidepubliclibrary).

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