

Change in 2015 creates new opportunities in Seaside

Happy New Year, Seaside! Many of us will, or have already, set resolutions for the upcoming year. I'm not much into it personally, but what has become commonplace for me is this first column of the year. For the fifth straight January, I'll take a "look back and look ahead." It's a perfect time of year to reflect on the past and look forward to the future, so without further ado, let's do just that with Seaside tourism. Let's take a look back at 2015.

Visitors Bureau changes

Change can be difficult, but it can also be exciting and help create new opportunities. Throughout 2015, we experienced a bit of both. In May, we hired Portland-based MEDIAmerica as the publisher of our annual visitor guide (set for release in early February). One feature of the new guide will be an all new look shaped by the rebranding project we kicked off in September.



SIDE RAIL
JOHN RAHL

We spent the fall working on that project and capped it off by hiring a new web developer in early December. When it comes to creative marketing development, this year was a blast.

Video explosion

The use of video continues to get more engagement than most anything posted on social media these days. We experienced great success with a kayaking video (announcing the new ADA launch at Broadway Park) in March and subsequent videos — including a storm video posted in December that reached more than 113,000 people organically were staples for a good chunk of promotion we did in 2015.

Weather and events

Who could have predicted the crazy things that happened with weather and events in 2015? From very little rain, to sun-drenched skies, many people will tell you it felt like we didn't have a winter on the coast this past year. They might be right. It probably wasn't a surprise that we closed out the year with record rainfall in December.

Sandwiched in between the dry and wet weather was a freak power outage on the Fourth of July and a bizarre August windstorm during Hood to Coast that halted the annual race festivities on the Seaside Beach. Through it all, residents, employees and visitors weathered it in a way that can only be described as another great year in Seaside tourism.

Incorporating visitors bureau changes

The changes mentioned above were just the beginning for what

lies ahead. The great part about the development of all this new creative is the unveiling that will come with it. We'll launch the first part of our new website by late January and our 2016 Visitor Guide will hit the street the first week of February. Throughout early 2016 we'll be incorporating new advertising creative and making sure all of our communication assets align with our new brand.

Preparedness becomes more commonplace

The city of Seaside and the Visitors Bureau helped launch a hotel keycard program, raising awareness about earthquakes and tsunamis in late 2014/early 2015, that started to catch on a bit this past year.

The state of Oregon has since launched a hospitality program for preparedness and I see it becoming a topic that is easier for people to talk about and subse-

quently prepare themselves accordingly.

Convention Center expansion

This was a hot topic in 2015, but due to its magnitude, it bears repeating for 2016. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Seaside city leaders made a controversial decision to build a convention center in town. It wasn't always the most popular idea, but can we imagine our community without it today, 45 years later? Sometime later this year, city leaders will decide whether or not an expansion of the current 22,000-foot facility makes sense for future generations.

Have a thought or a question about tourism in Seaside, or maybe an idea for a future column? Drop me an email at jrahl@cityofseaside.us. Jon Rahl is the director of tourism for the Seaside Visitors Bureau and assistant general manager of the Seaside Civic & Convention Center.

Writer believes Pacific Northwest has stories to tell

Entrepreneur makes a home in Gearhart

By Katherine Lacaze
Seaside Signal



HIGHLIGHTING PEOPLE WHO ARE NEW TO THE COMMUNITY

GEARHART — Entrepreneur and writer Gideon For-mukwai was a bit uncertain when he moved from Singapore to Gearhart in late August, but over the months, he became intrigued by the stories to be told of sailors, shipwrecks, indigenous people and other local interests.

"I'm very fascinated by the Pacific Northwest," he said. "Cape Disappointment, the Graveyard of the Pacific — all these things are new to me, and they're very, very intriguing to me."

He moved to Clatsop County because of his wife, Dr. Pamela Soh, who works as a pharmacist at Providence Seaside Hospital.

For-mukwai, founder of Business Storytelling Academy, is a native of Cameroon,

Africa. From humble beginnings, he used the power of storytelling to plot a journey that took him to undergraduate school in South Africa, to Singapore for specialized studies, to Reno, Nevada, for a master's degree in new media journalism and then back to Singapore. For-mukwai has visited at least 20 states and 18 countries as "a storytelling warrior," or "someone that helps businesses to fight business wars using the power of stories," he said.

He started a different version of his company while in Singapore the first time. When he moved to Nevada for graduate school, he kept the same concept but changed the name to Business Storytelling Academy and the

company evolved. Struggling with job prospects in Nevada, he moved back to Singapore, where he became a resident. Even now, about 40 percent of his company's operations remain in the Asian country.

He uses coaching, writing and training to help businesses craft engaging and audience-friendly stories for different forms of communication. His goal is to help employers engage employees; help employers engage business prospects, customers and stakeholders; and help employers engage the community for public relations campaigns.

Sometimes he will be a keynote speaker or lead workshops at conferences and business training seminars.

He speaks several languages, including his mother tongue, a Bantu language; French; English; and some Mandarin, Malay and German. He's also learning Spanish.

Writing craft

While he is willing to help write stories for others as part of his job, he also enjoys writing for himself. For-mukwai's interest in writing was sparked as a young teenager after reading Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer."

"That book inspired me so much," he said. "I felt like Tom was my brother from a different mother."

In addition to enjoying others' tales, he decided to write his own. His first published work was an autobiographical book titled "Facing Adversity with Audacity." It was published in 2008. In May this year, he published a second book, titled "The Science of Storytelling: How Win the Hearts and Minds of Your Prospects for Profit."



KATHERINE LACAZE PHOTO/SEASIDE SIGNAL

Author Gideon For-mukwai

Since moving to Gearhart to be with his wife, who has lived in Oregon several years, For-mukwai has felt mixed emotions.

"My first impression was positive, especially the fact that it wasn't too crowded," he said. "But I was very uncertain and worried the long rains. The fact that most of the day is cloudy, would take a toll on me."

He still feels that way at times, but he tries to not let it bother him and to continue with his meetings and activities as usual.

"I'm liking it now, so I think I will like it even more over time, especially as summer comes," he said.

He looks forward to kayaking and continuing his hobby of running outdoors along trails. He said there are times he misses Singapore — "especially when it gets too cold" — and he will travel back there every couple of months for work.

He especially is excited to learn the history of the Pacific Northwest. He loves visiting places like Cape Disappointment and reading about the area's indigenous people and the early sailors and explorers who visited. He plans to interview area residents, including native people and fishermen, to capture and share stories of the Pacific Northwest.

"This is a new chapter that allows me to interview people that live in this area, find out what they do, and I think that will end up in a book," he said.

Meanwhile, he will use the stories he gathers here to keep his clients and blog followers aware of what he is doing.

They found happiness in the city of their dreams

A new move and a career transition

By R.J. Marx
Seaside Signal



R.J. MARX PHOTO/SEASIDE SIGNAL

Alexa and Chris Anderson relocated to Seaside from Logan, Utah.

For Chris and Alexa Anderson, the chance to relocate to Seaside seemed like a dream come true. Chris was offered a chance to continue his 15-year career as an insurance adjuster in a city they both had fallen in love with.

They purchased a condo in Seaside, loaded up the truck and moved from Logan, Utah, in February 2014.

All ready to start his new job here, corporate headquarters threw him a curveball. "They said, 'Chris, we've just moved our field jobs in-house. You can either move to Des Moines or Columbus.'"

Today, he sees it as a blessing in disguise. "I wasn't shocked, but I was hurt," Chris said. "They could have handled it a whole lot better."

In love with the Oregon coast, Chris decided to stay.

It was the right decision. He soon forged a new career as a property manager and real estate broker.

Alexa, who ran a salon in their former home of Logan, Utah, found a new role at Shear Pleasures in the Gilbert Building, where she is now cutting hair (full disclosure: including this reporter's.)

Paige Anderson, 16, attends Seaside High School, and Michael, 18, attends Astoria High School. A violist, pianist and composer, Michael plans to attend music school after graduation. Paige sings in the choir and recently performed in the school's '80s musical.

Alexa was a stylist and salon owner in Utah, but after 20 years, was ready to retire the scissors.

In Seaside, she went for a manicure at Shear Pleasures, happened to mention her prior experience and promptly received an invite to cut hair in Seaside.

"If you ever want to know anything about where you're living, cut hair," Alexa said. "Sometimes women can get catty, but not in this shop."

She now cuts hair four

hours a day, four or five days a week. Alexa loves the "whole feel" of Seaside. "It's magical," she said.

The Andersons first visited the coast in 2012, when they drove from Seattle to San Francisco. "One of the places we stopped was Seaside," he said. "We pitched a tent at Fort Stevens. The first day, we drove down the Promenade. We said, 'We love this place!' I still have the map, I circled it."

"Everyone was happy here," Alexa added.

They took a second trip in September 2013, drawn by fishing, the ocean, restaurants, golf and shops. That tipped their decision to make the move.

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, they found a small but welcoming community in Seaside.

"There are a lot of good friends you have with the church," Chris said. "I can't think of anyone I don't like."

They share the church's commitment to volunteerism and community, Alexa added, volunteering with the homeless shelter, beach cleanup, Seaside Kids, and always ready to help a neighbor in need.

"We're very happy to be here," Chris said. "We're amazed at the sense of community. You go into the convenience store next door, and they say, 'Oh, you're here for your Grape Crush.' They know what you want."

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