

## Warrenton's Bruce Bobek announces run for Oregon House

### Noted physician seeks seat in Legislature

By R.J. Marx  
Seaside Signal

Dr. Bruce Bobek, an Astoria physician and president of Columbia Memorial Medical Staff, will seek the Republican nomination for Oregon House District 32. The district includes Clatsop County and parts of Tillamook and Washington counties. The term of office, held by incumbent Deborah Boone, is two years.



Dr. Bruce Bobek

Bobek has lived in Clatsop County for 26 years and previously served as a commissioner for the City of Warrenton. During his time in office, Bobek helped fund and build the Warrenton Library, establish the Warrenton Wetlands Plan, and develop the Warrenton Business Association.

"I always had an interest in politics," Bobek, 65, said Wednesday, Feb. 3.

Bobek moved with his family to Astoria in 1990. When his youngest daughter said the city's hills were "too high and scary," the family, including Beverly and five children, moved to Warrenton.

"I was a city commissioner in the '90s and then my practice got so busy that

between my kids and my practice, I didn't have time for politics," Bobek said. "I helped start the Warrenton scholarship program in 1996. I was president of that for several years and now I'm on the board."

With his children grown and career solidly established, in January Bobek decided to make a bid for the Legislature.

He described his political philosophy as "fiscally conservative, but pretty open."

He said regulations are "onerous for businesses in general, and for small businesses throughout."

From a policy perspective, he said he was focused on improving health care and education throughout the state. Bobek said he recognizes a need for emergency preparedness, but "would try to stay within budget."

"I'm all for first responders, whatever we can do to help them, make it easier," he said. "But I would be a big fan of making sure we have the money to do all these things. I would be fiscally responsible."

He said Salem was in need of change. "I appreciate the work and time Debbie Boone has put in. I'm not a negative person. I'm not going to say her performance is bad, but I think people would vote for an overall change of policy."

Bobek is unchallenged within his party. Primary day is May 17.

## Food 4 Kids keeps students fed

### Backpack program supplies supplemental meals for local elementary, middle school children

By Katherine Lacaze  
Seaside Signal

During the school week, students have access to free and reduced-price meals, but those options are not available during the weekend. That leaves some students to endure a few days with possibly less to eat. The Food 4 Kids backpack program aims to fill that gap.

The goal of the organization is to supply elementary and middle school students in the Seaside School District with supplemental weekend meals during the school year. Using food primarily purchased with donated money, several dozen volunteers work weekly to reach that goal.

Seaside residents Coral Cook and her daughter, Brandi Perry, are two of the program's longtime volunteers. Cook was involved with a summer lunch program for about eight years until the school district took it over. Then Cook — along with Rosemary Kemper-Riddock, Annette Brodigan, Mary Blake, Maureen and Jim Casterline, Jan Jackson, Al Peinhardt and others — started thinking of "how the kids aren't fed over the weekends," she said. The group established the Food 4 Kids program in 2011, starting with



KATHERINE LACAZE/SEASIDE SIGNAL

**Teagan Duffy, 5, is one of Food 4 Kids' youngest volunteers. He helps prepare and package food to fill the backpacks that get sent home with students on the weekend.**

Seaside Heights Elementary School students and growing from there.

Since Kemper-Riddock passed away in October 2015, Sally LaCoste stepped in from Our Lady of Victory Catholic church. Other volunteers also took on some of Kemper-Riddock's various responsibilities. However, "there is no replacement for her," Cook said of Kemper-Riddock.

Generally, the volunteers pre-package cold food items on Wednesday afternoons and set out products to be separated into the backpacks Thursday. One of six participating groups — including Our Saviour's Lutheran

Church, Our Lady of Victory Catholic church, Seaside Elks Lodge, Home Depot, the Seaside American Legion and the Seaside Methodist Church — are responsible for rotating weeks, but some volunteers come more often than with their affiliated organization.

The backpacks are sent home with students Fridays, and they return them Mondays so the process can start over.

### Volunteering together

A few months ago, the program got new volunteers, and some of its youngest. Around Thanksgiving 2015, Cook got

a call from Natalie Duffy, who moved with her family to the area from Portland in 2014. Duffy's then 5-year-old son, Teagan, wanted to speak with Cook about volunteering.

"He said, 'Hello, I would like to help with the backpacks,'" Cook recalled.

Since then, Teagan, his mother and her other three sons have come almost every Wednesday to lend a hand.

"The boys really like it," Duffy said.

The spirit of volunteerism is "passed down in the family" and fostered by their Christian convictions, Duffy said, adding, "We do feel it's a calling." One of the first volunteer projects the Duffys did as a family was to prepare car care packages — bags filled with pop-top soup cans, utensils, water bottles and other items — to be easily distributed to panhandlers or others in need.

"They had fun handing them out knowing they were helping people," Duffy said about her sons.

At the Duffy's former church in Portland, they participated in a program similar to Food 4 Kids. Families would take a backpack apiece and be responsible for filling it continually throughout the year. After they moved, Duffy said, Teagan expressed interest in finding a similar opportunity in Seaside. Duffy said she thinks the Food 4 Kids program is important, because if students are "not getting a free lunch at school (over the weekends), they might not be getting much at home, if anything."

## Local man helps international organization combat sex trafficking

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Barber, a Seaside City Council member, is a senior fellow for the Vancouver, Washington trust, which annually trains about 15 non-profit organizations in resource development through the program.

Barber became a consultant to help Shared Hope manage its finances. He described his role as an "executive coach," who advises Smith and helps with staff and finance development. He helps with fundraising, pursuing grants and expanding the board of director's reach and efficiency. While Barber's job responsibilities remain constant, his motivation for serving the organization has changed since he first got connected to Smith.

"I started out as a consultant, but now I'm passionate about the initiative," he said. What triggered his passion to combat the problem, he added, was "actually meeting face to face with some of the young women who were survivors."

Barber, who has two daughters, considered that the survivors, and those still being abused, are other people's daughters, granddaughters, sisters and friends. There was only one course of action in his mind: "This can't continue to happen in our country," he said.

### Driven by demand

Smith founded Shared Hope International after a trip to the brothel district in Mumbai, India, where many of the people prostituted were girls trafficked from Nepal; boys also are victimized, but it is less common. The organization established a safe house in Nepal to help restore and rehabilitate rescued survivors.

Smith and her staff then became aware of the minor sex trafficking industry taking place in the United States,



SUBMITTED PHOTO/SEASIDE SIGNAL

**Jay Barber at Shared Hope International's annual JuST Conference in Washington, D.C.**

which is the focus of Smith's book "Renting Lacy: A Story of America's Prostituted Children," co-authored by Cindy Coloma. The group started spreading awareness about the issue and that it is happening at home. In the Pacific Northwest region, United States Interstate 5 is a major artery for the minor sex trafficking industry.

"The biggest disservice someone can do to the issue is to believe it's not impacting them or their community, because it hasn't happened to them," Director of Communications Taryn Offenbacher said. "We know it happens in small communities all across the states."

Shared Hope works to correct misidentification and misrepresentation of victims, who sometimes are wrongly portrayed as promiscuous or somehow to blame for their situation. Rather than discrediting or blaming the children, people must be willing to look deeper, Offenbacher said. The

men and women who traffic and pimp out children are often master manipulators, preying on those who are physically and emotionally vulnerable. The industry only thrives because a demand perpetually exists — people are willing to pay a lot of money to sexually exploit a child who was forced or coerced into prostitution.

### Decriminalizing the victims

At the time of the organization's foundation, many laws were set up to criminalize prostitutes but not so much the people buying, selling and using them, Barber said. Shared Hope began to focus its energy and resources to change state laws across the country, he said.

Shared Hope started the Protected Innocence Challenge, a comprehensive strategy to promote zero tolerance for child sex trafficking.

The organization each year releases 51 individual report

cards — one for each state and Washington D.C. — that analyze 41 key legislative components in a state's laws that are necessary to effectively respond to domestic minor sex trafficking crimes. The report cards, according to the organization, provide a blueprint for policymakers to establish policies and laws creating a safe environment for children.

"We believe advocates and legislators are willing to strengthen laws to protect children, but they're busy or they don't know everything about the issue," Offenbacher said. The report cards provide "a very quick summary of the areas their states are doing well," in addition to ways to improve and language to incorporate into legislation, she added.

In 2011, the first year the cards were released, 26 states had failing grades. More than 40 states began changing their laws based on the initiative. In the 2015 report, no state received a failing grade and six received A grades. Oregon went from a D in 2011 to a B in 2015.

The next challenge is to make sure the laws are enforced, Barber said.

### Spreading the hope

In addition to conducting research to inform policy and practices, Shared Hope focuses on training service providers, law enforcement personnel, community advocates and others; offering mental health services and counseling to survivors; funding and providing technical assistance to shelters and service providers. The organization also has a shelter in the Pacific Northwest for survivors, ages

**'This can't continue to happen in our country.'**

Jay Barber

18 to 26, who are interested in pursuing General Education Development, vocational training or college. The organization allows them to live at the shelter, free from financial barriers and fear of being found, Offenbacher said.

As for international work, in places such as Jamaica, India and Nepal, the organization has shifted toward partnering with and supporting indigenous groups and agencies that provide services.

Shared Hope sponsors the annual Juvenile Sex Trafficking (JuST) Conference in Washington, D.C. The conference is attended by several hundred people from various organizations and agencies, all dealing with minor sex trafficking from different perspectives. The goal of the

conference, said Barber, who has attended each year on behalf of Shared Hope, is to "bring all that energy to a focal point." During last year's three-day conference about 70 survivors attended to share their testimonies.

This April, Shared Hope is sponsoring the first JuST Faith Summit, which is similar to the conference but designated for churches and other faith-based organizations. The church has "a might role in addressing and stopping the tragedy" of sex trafficking, according to the organization's website. Some churches across varying denominations have neglected the issue, and Barber said he suspects it might be because it prompts the question, "Are we practicing what we preach about the value and validity of every person?"

"As we consider that men in the churches are abusers, what does that say about how we practice our faith?" he said.

For more information about the conference or Shared Hope, or to report trafficking, visit [sharedhope.org/](http://sharedhope.org/) or call 360-693-8100.

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