

A 'LEGACY OF CIVILITY'

Hundreds turn out to honor former mayor

By R.J. Marx
Seaside Signal

A man of faith and a playful spirit is the way friends and family members described former Seaside Mayor Don Larson at his memorial service at North Coast Family Fellowship. The Friday, Dec. 16, service saw an outpouring of remembrance for the man who has guided Seaside's civic affairs as mayor since 2002.

"If there was one person I know I wish everyone I know could meet, it would have been him," Larson's granddaughter Kirsten Riedel described her grandfather. "He cared about people so much. His playful spirit came from a place of love for life and curiosity and desire to get to know other people, and to learn about the good things in life and the gifts of grace from our Lord."

Jay Barber, who replaced Larson as mayor this month, pointed to Larson's "legacy of civility," his love for the city of Seaside and his openness to all citizens. Seaside's city workers, police and firefighters and law enforcement throughout the county rose in memory of the former mayor.

Speaker after speaker described a man of faith who stressed the model of volunteerism, in city government, in the church and with neighbors. As the city's flags hung at half-staff, Larson's son Duane Larson recalled how the family came to the Oregon Coast on camping trips every year before settling here permanently upon his retirement as a civilian employee for the Oregon National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve.

Pastor Larry Rydman shared Larson's reaction to his cancer diagnosis and the special role faith played in his final year. "I don't want to think



Duane Larson becomes emotional speaking on behalf of his family during the funeral of his father, Don Larson, the former Seaside mayor on Friday, Dec. 6, at North Coast Family Fellowship in Seaside.



A photograph of Don Larson and his wife, Lois, sits on display during the funeral.

about heaven," Larson told Rydman. "I've got too many things on my to-do list."

Larson loved his role as mayor, Rydman said Friday. "Five years before his retirement, he said 'I'm going to retire in four years and seven months. Then I'm going to

move to Seaside and become mayor."

Larson's special relationship with children and family was stressed by speakers.

"His grandchildren were his greatest sense of joy for his last 25 years," Rydman said. "Don was recently hon-

ored by the city when they renamed the Seaside Library the Donald E. Larson building. He was really touched by the recognition and the family was touched that he was given the honor while still alive."

At North Coast Family Fellowship, Larson was remembered for his work with AWANA — an acronym for the scriptural phrase "approved workers are not ashamed" — a weekly church program. Larson worked with kids every Wednesday night, a role he continued even while serving in city office.

"Those kids became so important to him," Pastor Dan Dunn said. "He became our commander. I would stand by and watch by the doorway where all the kids were, he'd be surrounded by these kids and he would have them pray, and he would pray with them. I was watching this and thought, 'How many mayors are in tune with the kids of their community as this? And loved and care about them as fiercely as he did?'"

One of those AWANA alumna, Kayla Vowels, sang "God Bless America."

Before his death, Larson asked that all remembrances be given to YUGO Ministries toward providing a house for a deserving family in the Ensenada, Mexico area.

Larson was born in Portland to Elmer and Dena Larson on March 14, 1936, and has a younger brother Jim. He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Lois; David Larson, Kristin Larson and Nicholas Clayton; Lorraine and Bill TenHaken and Kirsten and Josh Riedel, Rebecca and Brandon Winebrenner, and Erika and Alex Sneath; Duane and Elizabeth Larson and Rachel, Cameron and Paige.

Larson retired as sergeant major, the highest rank for an enlisted person.

Annual Tillamook Head Gathering coming Jan. 7

The third annual Tillamook Head Gathering will take place on Saturday, Jan. 7, at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center. Doors open at 6:30 and the program begins at 7 p.m.



Kelsey Mousley

Soul singer Kelsey Mousley, who graduated from Seaside High School about 10 years ago, will provide music with her Portland band. Artists donate items for a silent auction; light fare from The Stand.

All proceeds support enrichment in the arts for local students. Last year's gathering helped fund an arts day at the high school, in which local artists gave

workshops for the entire student body.

The event also helped support a choir trip to Los Angeles, bring in professional musicians to perform in various classes and provide a stipend for a professional dance instructor to share his expertise through a dance club. A yearbook staff photography workshop also received funds from concert proceeds.

Tickets are \$10 at Seaside Coffee House, Beach Books, Seaside High School's business office, or \$15 at the convention center the day of the event.

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Santa visits children at holiday celebration

Christmas from Page 1A

"The spirit behind the event is to provide a fun holiday environment for children to come celebrate together with their community and take pictures with Santa," said Grace Smith, the district's fitness and special events manager.

The celebration is an annual tradition for the district, but it was moved this year from the Seaside Civic and Convention Center to the community center. The main offerings remained the same, however, Smith said.

Throughout the hall, children and their families decorated sugar cookies; crafted Christmas trees from twigs and ribbons in various shades of green; and created paper wreaths. They snacked on small Grinch heads made of green grapes, strawberries and marshmallows and lined up to meet with Santa and get photographs.

According to Smith, it is primarily community volunteers, along with a couple staff members, that oversee the event — from portraying the elves to managing the snack tables and assisting with crafts.

"We definitely wouldn't



Children and adults enjoy working on holiday-themed arts and crafts during the Children's Holiday Celebration at the Bob Chisholm Community Center on Dec. 10. About 300 people attended the free community event, hosted by the Sunset Empire Park & Recreation District.

be able to run an event like this without all of our amazing community support," she added.

Another factor in being able to offer the event to everyone in the community for

free was sponsorship from local businesses. The local Jeremy Mills State Farm Insurance agency was the title sponsor, along with Provide Seaside Hospital. Other local businesses supported the

event through in-kind donations, Smith said.

Holidays are important times for families in the community to be able to fellowship and celebrate with one another, Mills said, adding he loves the Christmas season. During the past two years, his office has been intent on finding events that are geared toward children or reading-related.

"Our office is built on the desire to help our community," he said. "Partnering with Sunset Parks has enabled us to do that."

He believes it is important for businesses like his to support local organizations and their community events. Doing so helps the organizations expand on the event dynamics — making them bigger and better — and allows them to continue being free for all, Mills said.

The agency chose to sponsor the Children's Holiday Celebration, along with the district's Easter and Fourth of July events, "because I felt it would have the most impact and the deepest reach," Mills said.

Of all the district's events, he said, those are the three best he could think to be a part of "to give the most to our community kids."

School district intends to hire a project manager

Campus from Page 1A

The second resolution approved the retention of Dull Olson Weekes-IBI Group Architects, of Portland, for design and architecture services. As the district engaged the firm for pre-bond services in 2013, and they have continued to be involved in the project, there is no need to go through the entire request for qualifications process again, Roley said.

"They were well-vetted at that time, and have been

great to work with," she added. "We have never ceased to have a formal arrangement with them."

District staff intended to meet with representatives from the firm this week.

In other news:

The board appointed Kelley Brandon, of Gearhart, and Brian Dewey, of Cannon Beach, to represent Zone 4 and Zone 1, respectively, on the district's Budget Committee. The nominations were made by board members

Mark Truax and Patrick Nofield.

The members discussed whether Seaside School District should remain part of the current breach-of-contract class action being taken against the state of Oregon, started by Linn County. The district, like other affected entities who receive timber revenue, is automatically part of the class action. If any entity desires to withdraw, they must submit it in writing by Jan. 25, 2017. Business Manager Justine Hill asked the

Clatsop County Department of Assessment and Taxation for information on the financial significance of the class action to the school district in terms of additional revenue. The county agency, which administers revenue predictions, did not have numbers as of the December board meeting, Roley said. Board members agreed there was no reason to withdraw. Board President Steve Phillips said the class action is "not a political issue; it's a contractual issue."