

Why everyone needs access to our county's libraries

Failure to publish legitimate news" was the headline of an editorial in a January 1943 edition of the Signal. The headline came after reports from Portland that "that's where they shoot people on the beach." The report came after a report from the FBI that had been founded mortally wounded on the beach by a sentry "after an exchange of shots."

A clarification didn't come for a week. The editor lamented the attempt to get a news story "is like playing a game of ring around the rosie by long distance."

That year Gearhart and Seaside considered a merger of the two cities, with the goal of merging police, fire and water supplies.

That year was also the last year that Clatsop County directed funds to local libraries for more than 70 years, until the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners delivered \$5,000 for Libraries Reading Outreach Clatsop County in 2015.

"When the county gave money, that was the first time since 1943 that they supported library services," Seaside Library Director Esther Moberg said.

Collaborative effort

Such musings may seem aimless, but the possibilities of historical comparison and analysis are directly dependent on our access to information.

To think that huge swaths of our population are not just underserved, but unserved by our local libraries, stretches the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

In the city of Seaside, 30 percent of residents have no access to broadband internet.

"There is a lot of poverty and a lot of politics in Clatsop County," Jane Tucker, former director of the Astoria Public Library said at an October visit by Rep. Suzanne Bonamici to the Seaside Public Library.

Bonomici responded to an invite by Moberg and other Clatsop County librarians seeking federal support for the library reading outreach program, focused on low-income youth in rural areas not served by Seaside, Astoria or Warrenton libraries. The program is a collaborative effort between the three public libraries, the Northwest Regional Educational Service District and the county.

A card for all kids

The program began eight years ago when Seaside librarian Reita Fackerell, Tucker and others approached the state to see if there were ways all county kids could receive a library card.

"At the time, if you lived in the city, you could get one — if you didn't, you couldn't," Tucker recalled. "And if parents couldn't afford a card, the children didn't get one either."

During summer break, they didn't even have the option of using a school library.

The program started in Seaside and Astoria and spread to Warrenton with state funding, based on the goals of being "scalable, replicable, creative, sustainable," Tucker said.

Today students from Jewell, Knappa and Hamlet previously unserved by libraries can now participate.

Astoria's Pearson said he is working with kids at Tongue Point to provide library privileges.

"They need a card as well," Pearson, a retired Army sergeant, said. "That's part of their growth and development and the ability to read and read freely, which is what I love. The other side of that means you cannot read at all."

"We want every child to have that barrier removed," added Moberg. "We feel getting those books in the hands of kids is really important."

Today the situation of not having



Seaside Library Director Esther Moberg; former Astoria Library Director Jane Tucker; Warrenton Library Director Nettie Calog; Astoria Library Director Jimmy Pearson; ROCC outreach coordinator Suzanne Harold; Seaside children's librarian Marian Rose; and Rep. Suzanne Bonamici.

SEEN FROM SEASIDE

R.J. MARX



a library card unless your parents can afford it is past, Tucker said.

Every child who walks in gets a library card. Courier services between schools and libraries aid the return of library materials for rural children and a countywide summer reading program includes satellite school libraries open in the summer months.

Results are in the numbers. Seaside kids logged 1,538 hours of reading this summer. The three libraries issued 2,091 library cards of the course of five years. More than 21,000 resources were circulated in 2014-15.

According to a library survey, 75 percent of children participating say they have read more books and 55 percent enjoy reading more than they did before they got their card.

Another 47 percent think they are doing better in school and 49 percent "feel better about themselves."

Funding needs

Of the county's library outreach budget total for the current year of \$25,000, the county pitches in about \$5,000.

A state Ready to Read grant brings in \$3,500, with another \$8,000 coming from local fundraisers.

Funds go to a contractor to run the program, supplies, and fees, all with the goal of the 2,900 children unserved by libraries in the county.

The first five years of the program were fully grant funded by a Library Services and Technology Act grant. The program transitioned to local community support after Libraries ROCC formed as a 501(c)3 in 2015.

Additional funding comes with events like the annual fundraiser at the convention center, including the sale of homemade "little free libraries."

Intergovernmental agreements help the county leverage more money from the state and to apply for grant funding.

More funding brings more program options, including better delivery services for hard-to-reach areas.

"In 2017, it is hard to understand there are still some places without access," Bonamici said.

Bonomici said federal funds for infrastructure upgrades could include internet access to rural communities.

'Challenging time'

Acknowledging "it's a challenging time with government funding right now," Bonamici said she plans to explore funding possibilities at a federal level.

Bonomici serves on the Committee on Education and the Workforce,



Seaside Library Director Esther Moberg looks on as Rep. Suzanne Bonamici signs children's books for local libraries.

and is especially interested in early learning.

"It's such a good investment to make sure kids are reading," she said.

Reading helps kids be more prepared, successful and reduces the dropout rate, she said, ultimately contributing to the economy.

"It requires long-term thinking — which is sometimes in short supply in my world," Bonamici said.

The Trump administration's budget proposed at the beginning of the year would have eliminated funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities, Bonamici said, but the House of Representatives almost fully restored it in their appropriations bill, which has not yet been signed into law.

Trump's budget also would have eliminated funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services, which includes the Library Services and Technology Act. That funding was restored by the House in July.

Since budget negotiations in Washington, D.C., are ongoing, funding levels for the coming year won't be known until December.

But this is a long-term mission.

Preserving the record — and making it available to all — has never been more important. Reading Outreach begins in every home and spreads from the county to our highest levels of our civic life.

Seventy-five years from now, when a researcher goes to the library, they may look at this moment in time, just as we did when turning back to 1943.

That is, if there are still libraries.

Remember when Halloween was really scary?

When I was a kid growing up in south Jersey, the big event of the season wasn't Halloween as much as it was "Mischief Night."

Mischief Night was the night before Halloween when local police turned a blind eye to adolescents armed with rolls of toilet paper and shaving cream, who ran around for an hour or so in the dark. Mischief makers used these items to swiftly decorate somebody's house. If you were a homeowner targeted for shaming, it was because you were the grumpy, miserable, child- and teen-hating neighbor constantly complaining to the cops about kids riding bikes in the street or drawing with chalk on the sidewalk.

I'm still mystified why the police in that community chose to look the other way, even when they spotted us from their patrol cars crouching in the bushes, toilet paper and shaving cream clutched in our sweaty hands. Maybe they thought we kids were exacting some kind of justice, or maybe they didn't like those homeowners much either.

Mischief Night has pretty much fallen out of favor these days.

For at least 20 years, Halloween has been co-opted by people adverse to dark and devils and anything scary. What used to be a hallowed celebration of the dark and death, across the country Halloween is now is a playful affair involving family pumpkin carving and dressing up as action figures and super heroes and Disney princesses. And candy. Lots of candy, distributed by friendly shop owners in malls and retail parts of town in daylight and under highly supervised circumstances.

My own most treasured memory of Halloween involved my 8-year-old self, unaccompanied by any adult, ringing a doorbell, my candy collecting pillowcase gripped in hand. I remember the door opening to a man whose face was covered in black and white paint, his Harlequin features illuminated by flickering candlelight. Spooky music poured out from speakers mounted outside the house. I was terrified. My friends Claudia and Jimmy squeaked out a nervous "trick or treat" that sounded more like a question than a demand. In a low voice I imagined might sound like a wolf speaking English, the man responded, "First, a song. You must sing for me."

I don't remember what song we sang, but sing we did.

This year I finally live in a house where it's possible I might get trick or treaters. This is very exciting. The last time I had trick or treaters was in 1995 in New York, which is the year Melissa, a slightly older and infinitely more mature 7-year-old friend of my son, decreed she would no longer trick or treat on our quiet street because she wanted to go into town where all the action was. So while I trick or treated in town with Melissa, my son, and Melissa's dad, my husband and his pal Lance hung out at our house waiting for trick or treaters. They had no takers at all except for Dan, who lived next door, who rang the doorbell late, on his way home from trick-or-treating at the condos.

This Halloween I plan on lining the front walk with votive candles and, weather permitting, sit waiting on our porch. I'll have candy, miniature Snickers bars and Nestle Crackle and M&Ms I giddily purchased last week at Rite-Aid. For a moment I thought about buying candy neither Mr. Sax nor I like, in hopes of discouraging us from eating it if no trick or treaters show up. There are at least four young children on our new street, and a family with three kids live in the house behind. I'm hoping they come by. I might ask them to sing. I'm pretty sure we'll wind up eating most of the candy. That's what happens every time.

MEETINGS

Wednesday, Nov. 1
Seaside Improvement Commission, 6 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

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

Gearhart City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 698 Pacific Way.

Thursday, Nov. 9
Seaside Convention Center Commission, 5 p.m., 415 First Avenue.

Thursday, Nov. 2
Seaside Parks Advisory Committee, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Monday, Nov. 13
Seaside City Council, 7 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

Tuesday, Nov. 7
Community and Senior Center Commission, 10:30 a.m., 1225 Avenue A., Seaside.

Wednesday, Nov. 15
Seaside Tourism Advisory Committee, 3 p.m., 989 Broadway.

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

Thursday, Nov. 16
Seaside Tree Board, 4 p.m., City Hall, 989 Broadway.

LETTERS

'Yes' arguments are self-serving

It's just days to go before voters in Gearhart are asked if they should overturn the existing ordinance regulating short-term nightly rentals. The supporters of Measure 4-188 have just begun pitching new arguments. They are now arguing their measure is about jobs and Gearhart's economy. To say their self-serving arguments are snake oil, insults snake oil.

Vacation rental management

companies have much to gain if Measure 4-188 passes. Oregon Beach Vacations has donated \$4,000 to David Townsend's political action committee that is trying to repeal and replace Gearhart's existing Rental Ordinance 901. Another supporter is Seaside Vacation Homes in Seaside. Did you see their signboard that read "GEARHART FRIENDS PROTECT JOBS VOTE YES 4-118"? Yup, they even got their measure number wrong. Do these vacation rental management corporations really

believe the voters of Gearhart believe their motive for supporting Measure 4-188 is jobs? And not the thousands of dollars they will make managing even more short-term nightly rentals in Gearhart?

Then we have the recent report titled The Economic Impact of Short Term Vacation Rentals in Gearhart commissioned by David Townsend's political action committee. This is the same Mr. Townsend, a Sacramento political strategist, quoted in the Daily Astorian as bragging that

a judge had rewritten 99 percent of the ballot measure description. The truth is, the judge changed just a few words and combined two sentences. That's it, nothing more.

Justin L. Adams, the author of the above mentioned report is another Sacramento resident. Mr. Adams advertises himself as "providing insightful economic research and analysis to help clients achieve their policy objectives." In this case, Mr. Townsend and his associates are the clients. They will profit enormously

if the short-term rental ordinance is repealed and replaced by Measure 4-188. The Sacramento connection between Mr. Townsend and Mr. Adams is no coincidence; they want to keep this local.

In all his wisdom, Mr. Adams has no understanding of the core values of Gearhart. He says the goal of short-term rental regulations is to eliminate nightly rentals over time. This is false.

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