

Gearhart Elementary kids take the 'kindness' challenge

By KATHERINE LACAZE
For Seaside Signal

In an effort to increase kindness and positivity at Gearhart Elementary School, school counselor Kaile Jones organized a "kindness challenge" that took place throughout January.

"Right before Christmas break, I noticed a lot of unkind behaviors from a lot of the kids," Jones said during her presentation at the Seaside School Board meeting Feb. 18.

As she was researching methods and activities to decrease negativity and unkindness and create a more welcoming environment, she came across a national campaign called the "Great Kindness Challenge."

Schools across the country can host the challenge at their school, determining individually how much effort they want to put into the individual tasks and activities.

Jones signed up Gearhart Elementary School and they embarked on their own four-week kindness challenge upon students returning from winter break. However, Jones put her own twist on the campaign, turning it into more of a game.

"I wanted to incorporate some kind of challenge to make it fun in each of the classrooms," she said. "Each week, the different classes got different challenges they were all working on secretly completing."

The challenges arrived to each classroom in an



Kaile Jones/Gearhart Elementary
Jordan, a student at Gearhart Elementary School, helps put the "I" in Kind, one of the many activities that took place at the school in January during the Great Kindness Challenge.

envelope marked "top secret." Students were challenged to complete a variety of tasks, such as smiling at 15 people, paying compliments, switching it up at lunch, playing with someone new at recess, or writing teachers and peers kind notes. They could also complete some of the challenges at home.

The school also got the bulletin board involved as an interactive component. One week, for the "Be the 'I' in kind" challenge, teachers took pictures of students in front of large letters spelling out the word "kind," except the students themselves stood in for the "I."

For another activity, students were asked to spot other kids executing acts

of kindness and then write them down on slips of paper to post on the board. There were also numerous slips containing random acts of kindness that the students could voluntarily take and complete.

"We had to keep replacing them," Jones said.

One feature that turned out to be more successful than she anticipated was challenging students to sit with different peers at lunch. She noticed several occasions where "kids were sitting by themselves and other kids who don't normally sit with them would go over and keep them company."

Nearing the end of each week, she added, "I saw a huge change in where the kids were sitting and who

they were talking to."

Principal Juli Wozniak said she feels the challenge was successful and students have continued displaying thoughtful behaviors, like opening the door or asking "How are you?"

"It's carried on," she said.

District news

In other district news, at the February board meeting, Michael Aloï, an audit compliance manager at Portland-based Pauly Rogers & Co, gave a report on the district's audit for June 30, 2019. The firm audits the district's financial statement and checks for compliance based on standards set by Oregon Administrative Rules, as well as federal and state laws



Kaile Jones/Gearhart Elementary School
Caleb and Jasmine, students at Gearhart Elementary School, share lunch together during January's Great Kindness Challenge. One of the challenges students were tasked with was sitting with new people during lunch.

pertaining to grant recipients. According to Aloï, there were no findings and "everything was great."

The Cannon Beach Academy has submitted an application to renew its charter. According to Roley, the board will review the application and discuss it in a meeting with the district's curriculum personnel. The curriculum meeting will take place before the March school board meeting, at which time the board can approve the application. According to Cannon Beach Academy Director Amy Fredrickson, the application

addresses the academy's history; where they currently stand in terms of staffing, enrollment, and test scores; and their goals to continue expanding the student body, staffing, and funding. The school's long-term goal in relation to its current facility, Fredrickson said, is to enroll 75 students, with maximum classroom sizes of 25 students.

The Seaside High School Associated Student Body hosts a blood drive with the American Red Cross at the school starting at 8:30 a.m. Friday, Feb. 28. The public is welcome to sign up and attend.

Ecola closure may impact more than park

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Astorian

Ecola means "whale" in the Chinook Wawa trade language — and, much like a whale, parts of Ecola State Park are charging out to sea.

The park is closed indefinitely following a landslide in February that damaged the primary entrance road and sent a portion of a trail, trees and salal bushes cascading over a cliff edge.

With the closure, the state expects increased tourism and recreational pressure on other state parks, especially parks like Oswald West farther south.

What a prolonged closure might mean for the local economy is anyone's guess. Ecola State Park is one of Cannon Beach's main attractions, coming in second below the iconic Haystack Rock, said Jim Paino, the executive director of the Cannon Beach Chamber of Commerce.

"Right now I'd say the impact isn't huge," he said. "But we still get people in the visitor center who came to go to the park and are surprised that it's closed."

Ecola sees more than half a million day-use visitors every year. State park sites on the North Coast in general have only been growing in popularity in recent years.

While Paino can't quantify the economic impact of Ecola being off limits — Cannon Beach hasn't had to weather a long closure in years — he believes

there will be a hit to a certain extent, especially if the closure extends into the summer tourism season.

The chamber published a new page on its website that lists alternative places to visit, both to get the word out about Ecola and to show visitors there are still other options. Listed are sites primarily south of Ecola, including Falcon Cove and Short Sand Beach in Oswald West.

The state has prepared a request for bids to repair the damaged section of Ecola Park Road and is waiting on contractors. An update to park staff stated it was "still too early to even guess about a completion date."

Once the road is made safe, work can begin to repair water and communication lines also damaged in the slide. Repairs to the trail below the road that was washed out by the slide are expected to take even longer.

Work to reroute a trail between Ecola Point and Indian Beach that was cut in half by a slide in 2016 has been on hold because of winter weather. Depending on how long the road repairs take, the reroute may also be delayed.

Sections of Ecola Park Road need to be repaired to some extent nearly every winter as landslides are exacerbated by heavy rainfall and storms. Access to Indian Beach has occasionally been shut down. Still, there have not been lengthy closures at the park in years. In 1961, a landslide at Ecola

Point damaged 125 acres and the park was closed for 10 months. It was closed again for four months in 1975 because of a slide that affected the entrance road.

Following repairs this time, the state plans to revisit a broader repair strategy.

"We may still come to the same conclusion — that continuing repairs to the current road is the way to go — but we will also consider the benefits and costs of finding a different route for cars into the park," Chris Havel, associate director at the Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation, wrote in an email.

"That's a much longer-term, more expensive option," he continued, "and we would need a more detailed geotechnical report to guide that discussion."

Park officials are referencing a geotechnical report and list of recommendations from 2016 and 2017 that looked at four different landslides affecting roads in the Oregon State Parks system. Two of the landslides were in Ecola State Park; the other two were also in coastal parks.

"The landslide moves periodically when precipitation is the highest and can be expected to continue to do so," the memo stated about Ecola State Park and a slide

that affects the same section of road in need of repair this year.

Engineers recommended long-term maintenance, and said slide movement should be expected to continue indefinitely, requiring ongoing maintenance.

"Without mitigation, the slide may grow or accelerate," the study noted in a table outlining the risks and limitations of mitigation options.

"Landslides of this size are often relatively expensive to mitigate compared to the maintenance costs," the study continued. "Therefore continued maintenance is common for large landslides."

For now, cables and signs block trail routes through the park and the gates are closed on Ecola Park Road.

When the landslide tore apart the trail from Ecola Point to Indian Beach, rangers put out signs, but people tracked their own paths through the landslide area anyway.

This time, Ben Cox, the park manager, opted for stronger wording. The sturdy signs erected depict a small figure stumbling down a hillside amid falling debris.

"Absolutely no entry," the sign states. "Active landslide."

Cannon Beach City Council authorizes elementary school sale

By R.J. MARX
Seaside Signal

The Cannon Beach City Council authorized the purchase of Cannon Beach Elementary School from the Seaside School District for \$400,000 on March 3.

The city delivered \$50,000 earnest money to the district and will fund the remaining \$350,000 of necessary to purchase the property. Closing costs are additional.

The school closed in 2013 due to tsunami fears, and has been largely vacant since. The Cannon Beach Food Pantry leases part of the space for operations from the school district.

More costs are ahead as the city considers future potential uses, City Manager Bruce St. Denis said.

"We are getting prices for environmental site assessments and building

surveys," St. Denis said. "We'll come back to you for funding when that is figured out because it was not budgeted."

The space could be used to promote cultural and historical attractions, and to provide meeting space for hospitality operations, he said.

Funds for the \$400,000 purchase come from about \$298,000 in collections from the county's transient room tax and \$102,000 from an inter-fund loan from the Cannon Beach Tourism and Arts Commission.

Council members unanimously voted to "confirm and validate the actions taken by staff," regarding the school building, and to undertake future negotiations with the food pantry.

Both St. Denis and school district superintendent Sheila Roley anticipate the deal to be completed within the next three months.

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