

Family affair for local firefighters

SEEN FROM SEASIDE

R.J. MARX



On a Saturday morning in April, Josh Lair and his daughter, Amy, share a common destination: the Gearhart firehouse. Both are fire department volunteers.

The job isn't what most people expect. "You think of firefighters just putting fires out," said Amy Lair, who recently earned her emergency medical technician license. "But there are some intense scenes that we come onto, and a lot of sad things happen. It's kind of amazing to watch a whole group of people come together for one common cause, and just as volunteers."

Josh Lair and his wife, Liz, moved with their five daughters from the Park City, Utah, area about four years ago. He joined the fire department in 2018.

Amy Lair spent summers and holidays with the family while pursuing her associate's degree in health science at Dixie State University in St. George, Utah. After Amy received her degree, she moved to Oregon to join her family in early 2020.

"Amy's plan previous to her move was to continue her health science degree at the University of Maine, after receiving an academic scholarship in that field," Liz Lair said. "However, she witnessed what her dad was doing with Gearhart fire and came to the realization that she wanted to help people as a first responder."

When the University of Maine decided to suspend classes due to the coronavirus pandemic, Amy saw an opportunity to make a change in her life path and joined the fire department as intern.

"I pretty much make sure everything's working so that when we go to calls, nothing is missing and we have everything we need," she said.

She learned to drive the firetruck from the previous intern, James Hutchinson, now a fire lieutenant.

"There's a process to learning to drive the apparatus," Josh Lair said. "Drivers must log a certain amount of time behind the wheel before certification. It's really up to each volunteer to commit their time to that. And Amy



Gearhart firefighters Josh and Amy Lair.

R.J. Marx

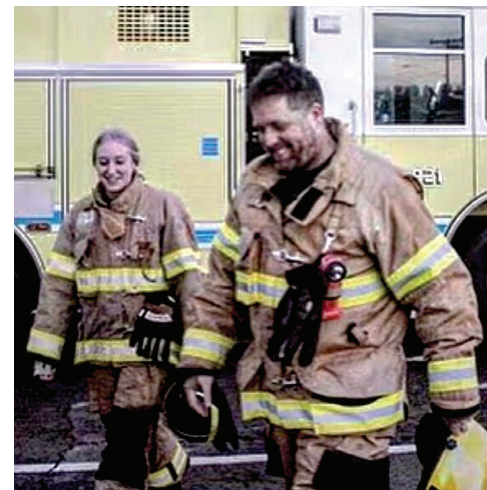
did that very quickly. You want to learn how to drive as many apparatus as she can."

She is certified on everything except for the department's Unimog, he added, referring to the department's all-wheel truck.

"We've been on some really basic calls and some pretty intense calls together," he said. "You get a little particularly scared or upset when you see her taking some risks. The fire-

fighter part of me is saying, 'Let's get after it, let's go into it.' But knowing that this is my daughter, there's a different level of concern for me when we're on those calls together."

Amy Lair said she found it comforting to have her father at her side. "I know what to expect and that he knows my abilities," she said. "There's no questions there. But he's a person that I turn to when I think I'm going



Gearhart Fire Department

Amy Lair and her father, Josh Lair.

into a stressful situation for comfort and his experience."

Along with firefighting, Josh Lair is maintenance manager of WorldMark in Seaside.

Amy Lair is a waitress at Mo's in Seaside and coaches junior varsity softball at Seaside High School.

Of the five daughters — the oldest is 24 and the youngest 7 — daughter No. 4, Delilah, is "very much willing to follow in the footsteps of her big sister," Josh Lair said. "It's pretty cool."

Gearhart is recognized for a high number of women fire volunteers, with seven active with the department. "I think a lot of it has to do with the culture of the fire department," Amy Lair said. "There are a few women that have been on there for a while now. And they make it a safe and comfortable place for other women to want to join."

The Lairs hope their model will serve as an inspiration to future volunteers.

"It takes a special kind of person to be able to do these things," Josh Lair said. "And we're always looking for those special people to join us. The culture of the Gearhart Fire Department is such that we're welcoming of anybody and everybody who wants to learn how to do this. And if you become an intern like Amy, you can get a fire science degree and become an EMT, and the department pays for all those things for you."

"Being on those calls with her, it just makes me incredibly proud to be her dad and watch her do what she does."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

What has changed at the park and recreation district?

What has changed?

Several years ago, the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District board told the taxpayers, it would be more cost effective to build a new recreation center than purchase the old, and dilapidated, Broadway Middle School.

At that time, the estimate was \$20 million to buy and rehabilitate the building for use. With very minimal input from the public, they purchased the school last January with no concrete plans how to use the building and make the necessary repairs.

This was after they were told by experts of the health concerns and extensive work needed to be done, i.e., mold, asbestos, new windows, roof and so on to make the building usable. They have now, after the fact, formed committees for input on how to use and pay for this white elephant.

I urge voters to elect a new board to represent the taxpayers. Vote for Al Hernandez, John Huismann, Patrick Duhachek, Jackie Evans, and Stephen Morrison to be the SEPRD board. These people have sound business sense, are independent thinkers and will listen to all of the public.

Margene Ridout

Former SEPRD Board member

Everyone must get vaccinated

Today's headlines in the Daily Astorian, one on top of the other, with absolutely no irony: "County appeals to governor to lift virus restrictions," and "County reports 14 new virus cases" (note there have been 36 cases in the last seven days).

Clatsop County has a goal of vaccinating only 70% of its population and it has not even achieved half of that to date. But the county wants the governor to allow everything to be open for business with no restrictions? The endless opening and closing of businesses is frustrating and there is only one way to stop it.

Every single person must get vaccinated. Enough with allowing people to refuse to get vaccinated and demand that they have the right to go about life as usual, while it puts the health and well being of others at risk. They're blocking COVID herd immunity. They are solely responsible. Cases in the state keep going up by the hundreds. It's

time to require that people get vaccinated. No one has the right to continue to perpetuate a deadly public health risk. No one.

Either everyone gets vaccinated and everything is able to open up and come back to life or COVID cases continue to go up and restrictions are imposed, eased, and re-imposed because of a never ending cycle of illness.

Christina Buck
Seaside

New rec center comes with many memories

When I look at the new Sunset Recreation Center, formerly Broadway Middle School, I remember ...

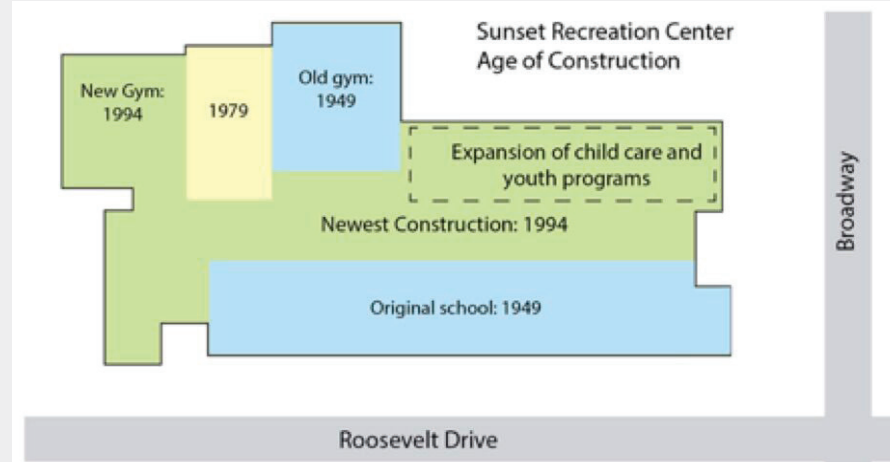
I remember being a toddler, accompanying my father, Wally Hamer, to school athletics' practices. I remember every sight and sound of the old gym, watching my parents coach basketball, volleyball, and every other recreational activity you could imagine. I remember learning to swim in the Sunset Pool, my wonderful teacher, Ann Shaffer, helping me to float on my back and looking up at the ceiling daydreaming as the water rushed over my face. I remember SEPRD's gymnastics' program for youth, taught at Broadway Middle School by our wonderful PE Teachers in the Seaside School District, Ginny Hamer and Brian Sigler.

Now, as a parent, I have been able to watch my children grow up in SEPRD. They have learned to swim in our new learners pool and have established friendships and life skills through the preschool and the Start Smart sports program. They have learned a love for recreation and sports through SEPRD.

Imagine the possibilities that the Sunset Recreation Center, formerly old Broadway Middle School, can bring to our community to expand these already great programs and initiatives and improve the local economy through sports tourism.

When I look at the new Sunset Recreation Center, I see the center of our community. I see the future of our community within the walls of the school. I see a recreation center that will draw new families to our community. I see sports and recreation for the young people of Seaside, where they can play and learn within a

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Take a tour of the Sunset Recreation Center

It has been just over 100 days since the Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District closed on the Broadway Middle School Property at 1120 Broadway.

That acquisition represents a historic landmark in the provision of indoor recreation space, expanded preschool/child care programs and the continued/expanded usage of that space for contributing to sports tourism.

In the time period since then, the district has completed a deep analysis and review of the building and property. There is a lot of potential for great programs and services to the community. There is also a need for the district to fully understand the building condition and we have invested resources and time to complete that assessment. For a review of the reports and information compiled, we encourage you to look on the district website.

Despite our best efforts, we recognize that there are some in our community who still express concern about the condition of the building and the safety of using it. In response to that, we'd like to share with you the below points:

- The building is 72,557 square feet in total. The vast majority of that building (45,000 sq. feet approximately) was constructed in 1994 and built using standards and materials that are completely safe.

- The entire building was used by the Seaside School District as a middle school building as recently as March, 2020.

- The portion of the building that was

constructed in the 1940s is not being utilized by the district for programming but rather for storage and potential development in the future.

- The older portion of the school does contain some asbestos containing building materials. The contractor hired by the district tested 60 sites and 10 came back positive for those materials.

- Based on industry knowledge, the presence of asbestos containing building materials is expected for a building of this age. The materials are encapsulated in the floor of the building and, just as it was safe for children in the middle school, it is still safe for district patrons, staff and guests.

- While there are other areas of potential improvement for the building to operate at its maximum efficiency including the roof, windows and HVAC system, the building is in very good condition and usable for recreation purposes.

The building has been approved for conditional use by the city of Seaside, the Clatsop County Health Department and the district's insurance provider.

We invite you to come and tour the building on these dates:

- Monday, May 10, 5-7 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 12, 12-1 p.m.
- Thursday, May 13, 5-7 p.m.

We also invite you to share and collaborate with the district on the future of this significant property. The district has a long history of dedicated service and with this landmark acquisition, we are poised to continue that dedicated service moving forward.

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Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District

SEASIDE Signal

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