

# SEASIDE Sports

**A8**  
FRIDAY  
October 29, 2021  
SeasideSignal.com



## An adaptive surfer has dreams of the Paralympics

By **NIKKI DAVIDSON**  
The Astorian

**M**onique Kelley never expected to become a surfer. The Brookings native grew up watching from the sand as others caught waves. The murky, cold water made her uneasy.

Then something happened that changed her definition of fear forever.

She woke up pinned to the ground, trapped in her SUV after it slid, hit a tree and flipped on black ice in 2017. Her then 5-year-old son miraculously escaped the vehicle uninjured. He saved Kelley's life by waving down help.

The accident broke her ribs, punctured a lung and caused a burst fracture. Rescuers were able to free Kelley from the wreckage, but the accident left her paralyzed from the waist down.

Determined to get the best recovery care possible so she could eventually independently raise her son, Kelley moved to Portland. She was fueled, in part, by grief from another tragedy. Her accident happened just three weeks after her brother was killed in a road rage crash on Interstate 5 in Medford.

"I think that after what I've experienced I would have every excuse to wallow in self-pity, but I told myself from the get-go that the sun rises and sets without me each day," Kelley said. "So it's up to me to make the most of it. What good would it do me or anybody else if I choose to wallow with that?"

**An unlikely friendship**  
While Kelley relearned how to function, Gabe Smith, the managing partner of Bahama Boards Cannon Beach, experienced a life-changing transformation of his own.

The volunteer firefighter worked at the surf shop in 2019 when it teamed up with the Haystack Rock Awareness Program's beach wheelchair accessibility initiative.

People interested in renting one of the beach adap-



Monique Kelley uses her upper body to ride a wave in Cannon Beach.

Gary Peterson Photography



Kelley has dreams of qualifying for the Paralympics.

Nikki Davidson/The Astorian

tive, fat tire wheelchairs would call the shop, and Smith would help transfer them into the chair and push it through the sand.

"For two years I was listening to people say, 'This is the last time I'm going to have my grandfather or dad on the beach,'" Smith said. "I was helping this 95-year-old guy one day. Later on, while working with the fire department, I went on a call for a guy who passed away. It was the same guy I had taken out on the beach. His family wasn't kidding, this was his last time seeing it."

After helping countless families, Smith felt an unstoppable pull to increase access to the beach.

"It's affected me enough

to understand how it affects everyone around them," Smith said. "I've been motivated personally. I don't have a physical problem. I've got nothing to complain about in life so I can't compare the difficulty of what people have to go through."

When Bahama Boards obtained a surfboard specially crafted for people with mobility issues, he recruited as many people as possible to take free adaptive surf lessons. When he came across Kelley's story on social media, he reached out.

"He just really sold me on this idea that we could make a positive impact in the disabled community and the community of Oregon as



Kelley is pushed in a beach wheelchair out to the water.

Gary Peterson Photography

a whole," Kelley said.

She agreed to give surfing a try, launching a friendship that's created a ripple effect through the Bahama Boards adaptive surfing program.

### A new purpose

An adaptive surfboard is wider than a typical board, adding stability and making it possible for surfers like Kelley to ride waves while on their stomachs. From that position, the surfer can paddle through the water to catch a wave.

"It's very therapeutic," said Kelley, who started surfing in May. "I surprise myself every time I come out here. It was really challenging in the beginning, but each time I come out here it becomes more natural to me."

A team of volunteers makes Kelley's training and

the adaptive surf lessons possible. They'll hoist Kelley onto the board, carry her out into the water and spread out so they're able to intercept if there's a problem.

Kelley is now training to make it to the Paralympics. Earlier this month, she received a sponsorship that will award her with new adaptive surfing equipment.

"I wasn't an athlete before. I grew up riding dirt bikes and skateboarding and stuff but never considered myself an athlete," she said. "I never in a million years would have seen myself even playing a sport at all. Surfing, especially not. It's been one of the most amazing, exciting journeys in my life."

### The accessibility challenges

While the Bahama Board's adaptive surfing pro-

gram has grown to six students, the team involved in making it happen has realized just how little access there is to the beach for people living with mobility issues.

There are no wheelchair ramps that lead directly to the water on North Coast beaches. When Kelley comes to Indian Beach for a surfing session, a team of five people takes turns carrying her wheelchair down the steep and primitive path to the water.

"It's labor-intensive, all of these people have to work," Kelley said. "I have to get carried or I have to get pushed super far in these beach chairs that are provided by Cannon Beach. If we had a power chair, or an Action Trackchair, it would go a long way."

"This is definitely not just about surfing, it's about beach access," Smith added.

According to the Oregon Office on Disability and Health, 12% of the state's population has a mobility disability.

A survey conducted by the office reported that while 79% of adults in the state engage in some type of exercise or physical activity outside of work, only 65% of disabled adults reported they had exercised or engaged in physical activity in the past month.

Smith and Kelley believe there is much more local and state governments can do to give people living with a mobility disability options. While they train for the Paralympics together, the pair is working to spread awareness about the obstacles that exist.

At this time, Manzanita, Cannon Beach and Seaside have rentable beach wheelchairs. The pair hopes to get more adaptive equipment like an Action Trackchair and tools for other recreational activities on the coast. They hope one day a ramp will be built that would allow people living with a disability to get to the water on their own.

"These are not inventions we are trying to make up. These currently exist in other places," Smith said. "They don't have them here. We have some really ideal places we could get them."

## Astoria volleyball tops Seaside in Clatsop Clash

The Astorian

The Astoria and Seaside volleyball teams staged a memorable finish to the 2021 regular season on Oct. 21 at the Brick House.

The Lady Fishermen swept the match, and highlighted the Clatsop Clash with a marathon 30-28 victory in Game 1, followed by 25-14, 25-18 wins in Games 2 and 3.

In the first set, a kill by Astoria's Landri Mickle gave the Lady Fish an early 3-2 lead.

But Seaside had the third of nine ties, then gradually took command, building leads of 9-4 and 15-9 after serving runs by Jessa Mutch and Amelia Gastelum.

The Gulls led 22-20, before Astoria's Mollie Matthews got hot at the service line and served the Fishermen into a 24-22 lead, capped by two aces.

A kill off the block by Seaside's Alyssa Chen tied it at 24-24, with additional ties at 25, 26, 27 and 28, before Astoria reeled off the last two points with a kill by



Astoria's Mollie Matthews (3) puts up a block on Seaside hitter Sandee Adriano (4) in last week's Clatsop Clash game.

Christina Tucker

Matthews and a block at the net.

Astoria honored seven seniors before the match, including Matthews and Mickle, along with Delfina Acfalle, Megan Davis, Avrie Ewing, Bailey Kaul and

Tenley Matteucci.

The Fishermen finished the regular season with a 2-6 league record, 3-12 overall.

The Gulls were 0-8 in league and 2-16 overall, but Seaside loses just one senior, Sandee Adriano.

### PREP SPORTS ROUNDUP

#### FOOTBALL

#### Cheesmakers defeat Gulls at Broadway Field

Seaside's Lawson Talamantez had 55 yards rushing and made a 25-yard field goal in the second quarter, but the rest of the night belonged to Tillamook, which posted a 28-3 win over the Gulls in Cowapa League football action last Friday at Broadway Field.

The Gulls head to Astoria on Friday for the Clatsop Clash game at CMH Field at 7 p.m.

#### BOYS SOCCER

#### Seaside defeats Astoria, 3-1

With their two wins over Astoria this season, the Seaside boys soccer team has taken over the

all-time lead in the Clatsop Clash series, with the Gulls' latest victory a 3-1 decision Tuesday night at a breezy Broadway Field.

With the exception of a 2-2 tie in 2017, Seaside has now won 11 of the last 12 meetings with Astoria since 2015. From 2011 to 2014, the Fishermen were 7-0-1 against the Gulls.

Seaside plays at 1 p.m. on Saturday in a playoff game at Hidden Valley.

#### GIRLS SOCCER

#### Seaside holds off Astoria, 2-1

With second place in the league standings on the line, the Seaside girls soccer team picked a great time to score their first Clatsop Clash win since 2018.

Seaside built a two-goal advantage, then held

off a late charge by Astoria for a 2-1 victory over the Lady Fishermen, Tuesday night at Broadway Field in the regular season finale for both teams.

In addition to snapping a four-game losing streak in the Clatsop Clash, Seaside finishes the regular season with a 6-3-1 league record, 7-6-1 overall, while Astoria drops to 4-3-3 in league, 6-5-3 overall. Astoria will still head to the playoffs ranked 16th, ahead of the 19th-ranked Gulls.

League champion Valley Catholic put the finishing touch on a perfect league season (10-0) with an 8-1 win over Rainier. Astoria was coming off a 7-1 win at Rainier Monday night.

Astoria was set to play Molalla in a playoff game at 4:30 p.m. on Thursday at CMH Field. Seaside was set to play Estacada at home in a playoff game at 7 p.m. on Thursday.

**BOB McEWAN CONSTRUCTION, INC.**  
PROUD SUPPORTER OF THE SEASIDE SEAGULLS!  
OWNED AND OPERATED BY MIKE AND CELINE McEWAN  
**503-738-3569**  
34154 Hwy 26, Seaside, OR  
P.O. Box 2845, Gearhart, OR  
SERVING THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST SINCE 1956 • CC46902

**Best of Luck this Season!**  
NEWMAN'S 988  
Simple Elegance  
503-436-1151  
988 S. Hemlock Street, Cannon Beach  
www.newmans988.com

The Bruce's Family will be cheering on the Gulls this Fall!  
We hope the season is a sweet one!  
Proudly supporting SHS activities for over 58 years!  
**Bruce's Candy Kitchen**  
Downtown Cannon Beach • 503-436-2641  
www.brucescandy.com

**GO GULLS! Seaside OUTLETS**  
At the beach in Seaside, Oregon  
**seasideoutlets.com**

**Carpet Corner**  
Flooring Installation  
Carpet Cleaning  
3470 Hwy 101 Suite 102  
Gearhart, Oregon  
503.739.7577 • carpetcornergearhart.com