

# Former L.A. execs live restaurant dream in Gearhart

SEEN FROM SEASIDE  
R.J. MARX



**A**lan Arora was a CEO for a software company before becoming a consultant specializing in business development. Jennifer Arora, a senior vice president for Sony Pictures in media and marketing, was on the studio lot every day. When Sony restructured, the couple saw an opportunity to reimagine their future. "I was portable," Alan Arora said. "It was pretty easy for me to leave LA, so we made the move to Oregon."

They both worked from their home in Lake Oswego. When the pandemic hit, they began to evaluate what life would be like coming out of COVID-19.

They are the proud new owners of the Pacific Way Cafe and Marketplace.

"We both fancied ourselves foodies," he said. "I used to joke in the middle of my corporate career — I guess it was a joke — wouldn't it be nice if I could just have a chalkboard bistro out on the highway somewhere, that I wrote on a chalkboard what I had that day? And if you liked it, you came on in. If you want a bottle of wine, there's a rack, pick it out. That was sort of my dream, but I couldn't really see how to connect the dots."

They began their search for the right fit on the Oregon Coast. When the Sweet Shop became available, they zeroed in on Gearhart. When that sold, Arora reached out to Lisa and John Allen at Pacific Way.

"We thought, it's got a really nice character," Arora said. "I called John up one day and said, 'Hey, I'd love to come by and introduce myself. I'm not a Realtor, but really like the vibe of your place.'"

The Allens opened at the corner of Cottage and Pacific Way in the late 1980s. The restaurant gained favor with locals, visi-



Son Jagyr, Jennifer Graham Arora, daughter Allysha Arora, and Alan Arora.

tors and foodies from all over, with glowing reviews from leading food and wine publications.

At the start of the pandemic, the restaurant closed, but the Allens reopened as a bakery and micro market.

Arora felt at home as soon as he entered. "I wasn't interested in flipping it upside down," he said. "I wasn't interested in any radical transformation."

Arora loved what the Allens had created: a social hub with food involved. "There's good wine and beer involved. There's morning coffee involved, but it's a hub," he said. "And all the pieces fit together."

They negotiated for about six months

before announcing a deal in February.

While terms were not disclosed, the Allens retain ownership of the building. The family bought the restaurant, the fixtures and equipment. They dropped the "bakery" in the name and will reopen as Pacific Way Cafe and Marketplace.

The Aroras plan to continue serving pastries and coffee in the morning. They'll reopen the former cafe space and expand the micro market with specialty items. One side room will contain cafe seating and the second a wine room. Including dining in the fireplace room and covered outdoor area, the restaurant will have a combined seating of 52. The restaurant will be dine in, take-



Alan Arora and John Allen in front of the Pacific Way, right after they signed their deal.

### PACIFIC WAY SCHEDULE

Pacific Way Cafe and Marketplace is located at 601-609 Pacific Way in Gearhart. Hours are Friday to Monday, 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. Updates will be posted in the menu box outside the cafe near the main entrance and on their Facebook and Instagram pages. Call 503-738-0245 or text 971-404-7604.

out or some combination of the two. "It's going to be a hybrid," Arora said. To add to the menu, the Aroras purchased the recipes and the trailer from the former Pacific Crab Co., the business founded by Rhenee Mady and her husband, David Farrell, who moved to Wisconsin. The Aroras will bring Pacific Crab Co. to the Portland Seafood & Wine Festival in late March and the Crab, Seafood & Wine Festival in Astoria in late April. For now, Arora said the career change has invigorated him. He said he can "never say never," but doesn't have the capacity to continue his consulting at present. "Revitalizing the Pacific Way space in a way that respectfully honors its Gearhart heritage is my No. 1 priority and focus," he said. "I'm getting up in the morning and I can't wait to get to work. I haven't had that feeling in — I don't know how many years."

## Gearhart needs new fire and police station

Those of us who are fortunate enough to live in Gearhart have the opportunity to vote "yes" on Measure 4-213 to build a new fire and police station.

Our volunteer fire men and women are the community's first responders to emergencies — fire, accident, medical, storm, and at some point, earthquake and tsunami. In addition to responding to several hundred calls each year, they spend many more hours of their own time training to improve their readiness and professional skills.

They do this operating out of a 60-year-old building that has served the community well, but is too small for current needs and is structurally unsafe.

The arguments against Measure 4-213 seem to center around "Yes, we need a new station, but" — not in that location, not that big, or not that expensive.

We are in danger of making the perfect the enemy of the good. I urge you to vote "yes."

**Dianne Widdop  
Former mayor  
Gearhart**

## Firehouse bond will be money well spent

Owning a home in Gearhart since 1992 has never been dull. An honest debate on town issues is always invigorating. But the battle over a new fire and police station is downright gnarly. The proposed \$14.5 million price tag has poison tongues wagging.

To find clarity on what my tax increase would be I looked at my home's assessed value and had an awakening. Gearhart's assessed property values are especially, thankfully low. For the first three years of the bond I would pay about 93 cents a day extra in tax and as the water bonds are paid off the price tag drops to less than a quarter and dime a day. Money well spent.

It's critically important to challenge the twisted facts and focus on the real fiscal bottom line — saving lives. Those precious lives of our family, friends, and neighbors alike. Our awesome paid staff and volunteer first responders know they may be risking their life each time a call comes in. But they are there for us. We need to be there for them.

Yes the tsunami threat is real — it scares the bejesus out of me — yet personal disasters like a chimney fire, highway crash, heart attack are possible every single day. A vote no won't make these go away. Gearhart is growing and so will the calls. A vote yes for Measure 4-213 replaces an outdated crumbling firehouse, provides the tools, training, and higher

ground facility our town needs. Come together. Vote yes!

**Vicki Abrahamson  
Gearhart**

## Vote yes for safety and survival

What does \$14.5 million look like to me? It looks like safety and survival for my family. Passing this bond is crucial to safeguarding our loved ones and neighbors.

What does \$14.5M look like to me and you?

Saying yes to the bond gives our First Responders the home, tools and training facility critical to our survival in a car crash, fire and God forbid, tsunami. \$14.5 million seemed like a scary monster number until I figured out my own share based on our property's assessed value. A yes to Measure 4-213 will add the cost of a daily McDonald's coffee, about \$1.14 a day to my taxes. This will be money well spent, a very good value. Definitely not a monster.

The need for a new fire/police station will not go away. Our current facility is crumbling, inadequate for our modern-day needs. Call the fire department non-emergency number for a tour of our current station. If we don't do this now, we will only be revisiting this issue in the near future, at a much higher cost to all of us. Construction costs increase with each passing year, they don't decrease.

Please, let's do this by joining together! Support our fire and police with a yes. It is an investment in a resilient future for our priceless Gearhart community.

Vote yes on Measure 4-213.

**Jeanne Mark  
Gearhart**

## Extension cords posed safety hazard at pool

I'm a regular three times a week user of our community pool and I've been going there for over 15 years. On Monday I was completely dumbfounded and horrified by what I saw happening.

The main pool is currently closed. I'm told it's because of the failure of a main pump. They are apparently awaiting a replacement.

Now I was taught at an early age that combining electricity with water is a very quick and easy way to die. I've read more than one story about folks dying when a radio or heater falls into a bathtub. Imagine my surprise (and concern) when I saw not one, but two 120-volt extension cords plugged into the wall outlet and sub-

merged into the water on opposite sides of the pool. There was no management on-site, but employees assured me that it was "OK" in their words.

It's OK to have 120-volt power flowing into the pool when there are patrons in close proximity to the water? Most of the patrons are seniors when I attend and we are not as quick as we were in younger years. We also have a much greater propensity to slip and fall. One slip in this situation could mean instant death for a pool patron. This would be followed by lawsuits that could cripple Sunset Empire Park and Recreational District and cost Seaside millions of dollars.

I have to ask: Where was facility management and why did they allow this very obvious safety hazard to even exist? It seems to me to be a lack of common sense on the part of folks we trust to manage this pool.

Is this the best that we can expect of Sunset Empire Park and Recreation District?

**John Huisman  
Seaside**

## Response to Sunset Pool pump concerns

Our maintenance department takes the safety of its patrons, staff and visitors very seriously.

Electrical cords were on deck operating submersible pumps to keep the pool water moving while staff were tending to an inoperable motor that operates the pool pump. This reduces the chances of an immediate algae bloom which can occur with no water movement combined with the temperature of the water and ambient air temperature coupled with the required humidity levels of the natatorium.

The pumps that were used are approved to be submersed in the water and were connected to an extension cord that was properly secured to poles with approved watertight fasteners. The connection of the cords to the pumps were secured at a height of 10 inches above the pool deck. In places where the cords impeded the walkway of the pool deck, an ADA-approved cord protector was installed to reduce the chances of a trip hazard with cones on each side.

It is not uncommon for pool professionals and operators to have equipment powered by electricity in the water, especially during a maintenance activity related to the body of water. Modern day pool vacuums have an electrical cord that is plugged in to an outlet of appropriate size. Our pools have underwater lights that are powered by electricity and pose no immediate threat to users due to equipotential bonding. These strict regulations are set forth by the National Swimming Pool Foundation,

National Electrical Code, and other federal, state and local regulations and codes.

The comparison of a commercial swimming pool and a bathtub electrocution cannot be compared due to the vast number of regulations and code requirements. Ground fault circuit interrupters have been required near swimming pools since 1971 and 1975 in houses, specifically bathrooms.

Staff was not apprised of any such concerns from any patron. Our management team was available and received no inquiries from patrons or staff regarding any safety concerns.

Staff were acting in the most professional manner regarding the safety of patrons and staff, in an effort to minimize a complete facility closure.

**Levi Conner  
Director of facilities and maintenance  
Sunset Empire Park and Recreation  
District**

## Swiss cheese

The initial problems with short-term rentals are the nuisances, the noise, the dogs, the parties, the traffic and parking. But move along a bit in time and it becomes the more serious lack of people living in an area to provide needed services, paid and volunteer services that tourists just cannot help with. Tourists don't volunteer at the schools, don't help with the community events, don't volunteer to fight fires. And neither do the short-term rental owners who live elsewhere.

A community becomes like a block of Swiss cheese with so many holes where once there was a close-knit fabric of people who helped each other and knew each other. The holes don't fill in. They stay open, empty and useless to the community where they exist.

Imagine instead that those holes were filled with families. Families who would become productive members of our community. They would volunteer at our schools, our community events, their child's school. They would live here, work here and thrive here. But when you favor investors over residents it erodes the community. It creates those holes and once the holes grow big enough, there is no community left.

Please Clatsop County commissioners, reconsider your short-sighted plan to make Swiss cheese out of our small, coastal neighborhoods. At their April 13 board meeting at 6 p.m. the commissioners will consider a proposal from the county to change the zoning for every zone in the county to allow short-term rentals — do you want mini-motels next to you?

**Charles Dice  
Arch Cape**

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