

**SignalViewpoints**

# Remembering band director Rieger at Seaside High School memorial

*“Thank you for always being there, thank you for being my friend. I will always remember you as the best teacher. Thank you for being my teacher.”*

*“Coming back to school in person, our band was pretty shaky, but Mr. Rieger put in so much effort and patience for making us amazing again.”*

*“I most appreciated about Mr. Rieger was how kind he was and how much he believed in our band. There’s never going to be a band teacher as kind as him.”*

**SEEN FROM SEASIDE**

R.J. MARX



Students, staff, family and friends gathered last Tuesday to remember Kyle Rieger, the Seaside band director killed in a two-car collision over Memorial Day weekend, less than a year after his arrival on the North Coast.



**Kyle Rieger**

“This is truly a celebration of what Kyle brought to this community and the impact that he had on the young people that he got to interact with every day,” principal Jeff Roberts said. “And also his colleagues. They got to work with him every single day.”

Rieger was born Feb. 24, 1996, in St. Louis, Roberts said. “He was a dedicated and talented musician, composer, conductor and teacher and was the band director for Seaside High School, middle school and jazz band in Seaside, Oregon,” Roberts said.

Roberts recalled how Rieger would open up pep band rehearsals with the shout, “Hey, band!” His instrumentalists would shout in return: “Hey, what!” The chant would be repeated to fever pitch.

Rieger was an incredible young man, Roberts said, a son, brother, musician, friend, colleague and teacher. He was one of 31 applicants for the job in Seaside.

Graduating senior Gracie Klemp, a musician, was a student representative at Rieger’s Zoom hiring meeting. “After his interview was done, I knew he was the only person for this job,” she said.

Kara Rieger, Kyle’s 21-year-old sister, was accompanied by her parents at the memorial. She recalled his love of music, inspired by his father, who had been a saxophonist in his high school band.

There weren’t really any instruments he didn’t play, she said, from drums to didgeridoo, accordion, remembering bagpipes, singing bowls and conch shells. “The last gift he gave me for Christmas was a small kalimba to take on camping trips.”

She said she had never had seen her brother as excited as when he received the offer to teach in Seaside. “Even the entirety of this interview process was virtual,” she said. “But let me tell you, I’ve never seen my brother happier than when he got this job. He was extremely proud of himself for getting the job.”

She accompanied him on his move from Missouri to Oregon last summer, she said. “We packed as much stuff in his car as possible. And we drove for three whole



Photos and cards honoring Kyle Rieger.

Photos by R.J. Marx



Gracie Klemp shares memories of band class.



Students, family, friends and staff at the Seaside High School memorial.



Kyle Rieger remembrance at Seaside High School.

days. Along the way, Kyle saw mountains for the first time in Colorado. As we got closer, I remember he just kept saying, ‘Oh, my God!’ ‘Oh my God!’ increasingly louder. He was absolutely beaming.”

Rieger brought with him a love for the St. Louis Cardinals, dinosaurs, the German language and fun facts — and music. Rieger held a bachelor’s degree in music composition — he minored in German — and a master’s degree in music education and instrumental conducting from Truman State University in Kirksville, Missouri. His compositions, some of which were played at the memorial, have been performed internationally.

In Seaside, looking out from the high school to the west, social studies teacher Mike Hawes said, Rieger was awed by the panoramic view.

Rieger developed an early passion for nature, surfing and seafood, along with his love of conversation and storytelling until late hours.

Staff and students shared stories of Rieger’s energy, enthusiasm and his amazement at the Oregon way of life.

Science teacher Vinh Pham recalled asking Rieger if he liked seafood. “He answered, ‘You have no idea. I’m from St. Louis. There’s no fresh seafood in Missouri.’ I promised, this summer, to go

crabbing with Kyle, and fishing and clamming and mushroom hunting, and we had set plans to go do so later in the summer.”

Rieger was awed by “horizontal rain” and snow in April.

“I like to show new teachers around the area when they first show up here,” math teacher Doug Mitchell recalled. “And I did the same with Kyle. And one thing was different. Later on, I saw him on those trails. One week later, two weeks later, I kept seeing him there, which really showed how much he loved the area.”

He encouraged musicians to reach to their limits, students said in remembering Rieger, even when it meant taking chances or going out of their comfort zone.

He showed more excitement on stage and in rehearsal than anyone, students said.

“I just loved watching him conduct because he got so into his music he would be dancing on the podium,” Klemp said.

The day after his jazz class’s concert, he was already planning next year’s concert, Pham said. “I think to me, it demonstrates the skill and the passion that he had not only for the students, but for his profession and his craft as a composer.”

Others described how much his attention and faith in their skills served as an inspiration.

“Even though you were here for a short time, you had a big impact on my life,” wrote a student in one of dozens of tributes at the memorial.

After the memorial, Kara Rieger, a communication disorders major at Truman State, said she shared her brother’s love for education. “It’s so incredibly important especially today after times of isolation that kids have mentors they can trust and grow from in the classroom.”

She said the Seaside memorial reflected the spirit of her brother.

“Kyle had a very specific type of humor and intense passion for the things he was interested in, so it was absolutely amazing to see how well his students had gotten to know almost every aspect of him within just a short year of teaching,” she said. “We could absolutely feel the spirit of Kyle within them.”

“Moving out here was a huge change for Kyle,” she continued. “I think being here was a big encouragement for him to be even more adventurous. I probably would have never pictured him as the surfing type, but he was working on it.”

**OP-ED**

## Let’s keep North Coast wildlife wild

**GUEST COLUMN**

BETH QUILLAN

**MORE ONLINE**

For more information on young wildlife visit <https://myodfw.com/wildlife-viewing>.

Young wildlife are rarely orphaned, so leave them where you find them. The advice you are likely to hear if you bring a young wild animal home is “put it back,” and you might get a warning or citation from Oregon State Police, too.

Because of the damage it can do to both wildlife and people, removing an animal from the wild is illegal under Oregon wildlife laws. (ORS 497.308 – No person shall remove from its natural habitat or acquire and hold in captivity any live wildlife in violation of the wildlife laws.)

Unfortunately, every year around this time, ODFW offices, licensed wildlife rehabilitators, and even Oregon State Police are flooded with calls from people who

picked up a deer fawn, elk calf, fledgling bird learning to fly, or other young animal they assumed was orphaned because it was alone. When removed from the wild, the animal misses the chance to learn where to seek cover, what to eat and how to escape from predators and other dangers.

Here’s how to help instead:

Keep pets and other domestic animals away to help wildlife this time of year. Pets will stress wildlife, especially if there are young wildlife or fledgling birds in your yard. Keep dogs on a leash when recreating outside.

If you are certain an ani-

mal is orphaned because you saw its parent die, or you see an animal that is injured, please call ODFW, a licensed wildlife rehabilitator, or OSP for advice.

**Deer and elk**

Oregon’s deer and elk give birth from May through July. It’s natural for mother animals to leave their young alone and hidden for extended periods of time while they go off to feed, so never assume a young animal is orphaned when you see it alone. The mother will return when it’s safe to do so, when people, pets or predators aren’t around. Deer and elk see dogs as a threat to their young so may act aggressively in response to disturbance from a dog.

**Marine mammals**

The advice to leave animals in the wild applies to all wildlife—including adult and young marine mammals that are commonly seen

alone resting on rocks or the beach in spring and summer. Beachgoers should stay away from resting seals and sea lions and keep dogs away from these animals as well. Marine mammal strandings should be reported to OSP’s hotline at 1-800-452-7888.

**Birds**

Some baby birds, called fledglings, may become separated from their parents as they learn to fly. These are sometimes mistaken as abandoned birds. Unless obviously injured, fledglings should be left where they are or lifted carefully back into the nest or onto a branch to avoid predators, so they have the best chance at survival.

Ducklings and goslings frequently become separated from their mothers due to disturbance from humans or predators. If you spot young waterfowl without a mother, please leave them alone and leave the area so the mother can return.



Joyce Hunt

Elk scrambling from the estuary into Seaside after storms.

With the recent detections of highly pathogenic avian influenza in Oregon, it is more important than ever to avoid close contact with waterfowl (ducks and geese) this spring and summer. Do not feed ducks and geese. Feeding congregates susceptible birds and enables the disease to spread between

birds more easily. Also, note that Oregon’s wildlife rehabilitators are not currently accepting sick ducks and geese to protect other avian patients and education birds in their care.

*Beth Quillan is public information officer for the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.*



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