

SignalViewpoints

Seaside’s ‘Cam the Cuddler’ goes for chugging championship

SEEN FROM SEASIDE  
R.J. MARX



On July Fourth, Seaside’s Cameron McKirdy will join other competitors in New York’s Coney Island for the Nathan’s second annual chugging contest. The chugging contest accompanies the Nathan’s Famous Fourth of July International Hot Dog-Eating Contest. ESPN will air the event, with a live audience of 35,000 fans.

McKirdy is one of seven chuggers chosen to take on Eric “Badlands” Booker, the “godfather of chugging,” social media star known for chugging gallons of liquid in a small amount of time. Badlands was the champion of last year’s chugging contest, drinking a gallon of lemonade in 40 seconds.

McKirdy, a “professional eater,” hopes to bring the “chugging championship trophy” back to Oregon, what he calls “the true epicenter of gastric-centric sports.”

McKirdy, 38, has worn a variety of hats in his career — none of them taught in school — DoorDash driver, professional cuddler, van-life aficionado and creator of the YouTube channel Survival Bros.

“I honestly learned about my own eating greatness at Pizza Harbor as a third grader,” he said. “I remember eating 18 slices of pizza with cake and ice cream and still being able to play games.”

McKirdy first got into competitive eating after watching the movie “Stand by Me.”

“I love the pie-eating scene, and wanted to be just like Lardass,” he said, referring to the character known for his legendary indigestion.

McKirdy has competed up and down the West Coast, even challenging against hot dog champion Joey Chestnut in a deep-



Cameron McKirdy at a 2013 hot dog contest fundraiser at Broadway Park.

fried asparagus-eating competition in Stockton, California.

McKirdy’s personal best is 26 hot dogs and buns at a competition in Las Vegas, only to be disqualified when he was unable to keep the food down.

“I am done eating franks in competition,” he said. “The meat sweats are brutal. I prefer sweets, like pie. I will never get sick of dessert.”

On the Fourth, McKirdy will stick to lemonade.

He alternates speed-training one day, capacity another. He chugs at supermarkets and convenience stores, posting videos of himself downing lemonade at Fred Meyer and Gatorade at Dollar General.

“Taqueria Pelayos 3 is my go-to in Seaside for massive burritos and to chug horchata. They have to make more of the cinnamon beverage after I order.”

McKirdy, who at one time worked at Seaside bumper cars, said the Coney Island backdrop reminds him of his hometown.



Cameron McKirdy practices his technique in a video.



Eric “Badlands” Booker and Cameron McKirdy at Asparagus Stockton, an asparagus-eating competition.

“Coney Island is and was America’s playground,” he said. “Seaside took inspiration from Coney Island. Look at the bumper cars, amusement park, and oddball attractions. I can’t wait to ride the scooters at Coney. I’m gonna smash everyone, no matter the age.”

While he has the money to get to New York, he doesn’t have enough to get back

to Oregon.

But, he added, “I’m fine being stranded there.”

McKirdy is confident he can stand belly-to-belly with Booker, who he described as a “6XL beast, a living legend.”

“I’m gonna get in his head,” McKirdy said. “I could be named the best chugger on Earth.”

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dehumanization is next

Regarding the Supreme Court’s overturning Roe v. Wade:

Roe v. Wade guaranteed a right to privacy that extended to all people, not just women. That right has been revoked and it will affect everyone, even you. And when the court is coming for contraception next.

Men benefit from abortion just as much as women do. Men are the cause of all pregnancies.

Women are going to die because abortions happen in so many scenarios where otherwise a woman would die. And all of the girls and women forced to give birth (no matter by whom or by what means) will risk losing their lives from giving birth.

There are either human rights or there are no human rights. There is no parsing these rights out to certain people while denying them to others. Believing that to be true is what got us here in the first place. This country is not even remotely prepared for what is going to happen as a result of this obscene decision. They are coming for the LGBTQ community next. After that, well, who knows? One thing is certain, no matter who you are, your dehumanization is next.

Christina Buck  
Seaside

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Contact local agencies for latest meeting information and attendance guidelines.

TUESDAY, JULY 5

Seaside Community Center Commission, 10 a.m., Bob Chisholm Community Center, 1225 Avenue A.

Seaside Library Board, 4:30 p.m., 1131 Broadway.

Seaside Planning Commission, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 6

Seaside Improvement Commission, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

Gearhart City Council, 7 p.m., www.cityof-gearhart.com.

THURSDAY, JULY 7

Seaside Parks Advisory Committee, 6 p.m., 989 Broadway.

MONDAY, JULY 11

Seaside City Council, workshop, camping ordinance, 6 p.m., regular meeting, 7 p.m., 989 Broadway.

THURSDAY, JULY 14

Seaside Convention Center Commission, 5 p.m., 415 First Ave., Seaside.

OP-ED

Oregon, the State of Homelessness, can learn from Scandinavia

GUEST COLUMN  
DICK HUGHES



Imagine a community where homeless individuals aren’t living downtown, in parks and along busy streets and freeways.

That might be reality in parts of Oregon, but not in Salem, where I live, or in Portland, Eugene, Bend or many other cities.

Yet there are cities without visible homeless encampments and without panhandlers, without streetside trash and with little if any graffiti. There are cities where trust is so ingrained in the public psyche that bicycles can be left unguarded, and where outdoor cafes and public plazas have chairs with pillows for public use with nary a security device in sight.

It was a shock last month – a welcome one – to discover these cities are the norm in Scandinavia. It was with sadness that our drive home from PDX showed we indeed were back in the State of Homelessness.

That is why I am writing this column, the second and presumably final one related to my May trip to Northern Europe, primarily Scandinavia. It’s not to say, “Look at me. I spent almost three weeks in Europe and came home with the answers to Oregon’s problems.”

Not at all. My look was cursory. However, one value of travel is it can shake us out of ruts and broaden our perspective.

If the Nordic countries can substantially reduce homelessness, they give hope for the rest of us. We must figure out what works best in our situations and be fully committed.

Two things stood out: 1. Finland and Norway took concrete steps and didn’t let up. 2. They addressed homelessness as a housing issue, not a moral failing. That should give reassurance to public officials who doubt the “housing first” model and who believe homeless individuals who are drug/alcohol-dependent or mentally ill should first be “cured” before receiving housing.

I’m not suggesting Scandinavian systems could or should be transferrable to other countries, particularly the United States. But our minimal progress through the decades – despite thousands of committee meetings, umpteen bookshelves of plans we’ve written, and millions or billions of dollars we’ve spent – is a local, state and national disgrace.

This is not to disparage the boots-on-the-ground work being done in my community

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and elsewhere by many excellent organizations. But where is the overwhelming public leadership and political will to match Oregonians’ belief that homelessness is the state’s No. 1 issue?

Some ideas can be transferrable. For example, visits by Oregon legislators and corrections officials to Norwegian prisons a few years ago inspired prison reform here. The Department of Corrections has launched initiatives on employee wellness, the institution environment and rehabilitation of adults in custody.

However, Scandinavian society is unique. The countries are smaller in population than the large U.S. states. Trust in government, in the private sector and in collaborative decision-making is woven into their societal fabric. Though Scandinavians have an exceedingly high cost of living, they report a high quality of life and rank high on the global happiness scale. In contrast, Oregonians and our fellow Americans remain distrustful of government ... and of one another, it seems.

Scandinavia and the other Nordic countries also embrace an unusual welfare system: Everyone receives services regardless of household income. To support that system, Scandinavians pay far higher taxes and have a far larger public sector workforce than in America. Citizens receive mostly free universal health care; free education from preschool through college; and generous old-age pensions. Many of the benefits enhance participation in the workforce, such as highly subsidized childcare and after-school programs.

Make no mistake. This is not a paean to how wonderful Scandinavia is.

For example, the region lags the U.S. on accessibility for the mobility impaired. The absence of ramps around steps, the lack of curb cuts, and the ubiquitous cobblestone streets and paths made wheelchair use difficult.

I experienced this first-hand. I’m still regaining strength from my breakthrough COVID-19 case last fall and wound up breaking a wheelchair on Stockholm cobblestones. And at one museum, the elevator didn’t work. At another, there were escalators but no elevator.

In contrast, it was good to read that Lincoln City is following other communities by providing rollout pathways and free beach wheelchairs at three beaches.

A few other things that struck me about northern Europe:

Patriotism, participation in national holidays and reverence for history were evident throughout the culture.

Scandinavian students are required to learn English in school and often must take a third language.

Movement among countries is normal. Our Stockholm minibus driver was from Estonia. Our Copenhagen driver was a 69-year-old Brit who lives in Denmark with his Danish wife and their family. They also have a vacation home in Spain.

Public university in Poland is free to students who earn high enough scores in high school. Students whose scores are too low can pay to attend private universities.

Norway, Denmark and Sweden are democracies with monarchies. People apparently like having royalty although their government runs on a parliamentary system.

Scandinavia is becoming more religiously diverse, including an increasing number of Muslim residents. The population as whole is turning more secular, like the Pacific Northwest.

Norway has a love-hate relationship with fossil-fuel industry. North Sea oil drilling has saved the economy and the national treasury. Yet a majority of new passenger vehicles sold are electric and are heavily promoted by the government. Fuel prices are so high that many commuters rely on bicycles. Everywhere we went, pedestrians were alerted to watch out for bicyclists.

Drivers seemed less aggressive than in the U.S.; a recent report by Insurify said Oregon motorists rank sixth nationally for rude driving. Meanwhile, Oregon is ranked as our nation’s second-most bicycle-friendly state, trailing only Massachusetts in the League of American Bicyclists’ annual report.

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