

## Guilty Verdicts For Vaughn Couple's Murder and Arson

**Four people were charged for the 2020 crime; two pleaded guilty, two were convicted at trial.**

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

The last two of four defendants accused of murdering Vaughn couple Ted Ralston, 71, and Joanna Gormly, 73, in their Vaughn home in 2020 were found guilty at trial in Pierce County Superior Court June 8.

Ezra Ralston, 26 at the time of the deaths, was convicted of two counts of aggravated first degree murder, first degree conspiracy to commit murder, and first degree arson. He is the couple's grandson and was living with them at the time. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Ezra was tried alongside Sean Higgins, 23 at the time of the murders, who was also convicted of two counts of aggravated first degree murder and first degree conspiracy to commit murder. He will be sentenced Aug. 18.

Spencer Kleine, then 23, accepted a plea deal to testify against Ezra and Higgins. He was sentenced to 45 years.

Rebecka Neubauer, Ezra's then 22-year-old girlfriend when she committed the crimes, pleaded guilty to second degree murder and first degree conspiracy to commit murder April 20. She was sentenced to 33 years, four months.

The married couple were murdered in their Vaughn home during the early hours of May 17, 2020, as part of a plan for Ezra and Neubauer to allegedly take control of the property. Ezra set the house on fire later that day to cover the crime, according to the Pierce County Sheriff's Department. The quick reaction of neighbors who turned garden hoses on the fire helped preserve crucial evidence, according to the Key Peninsula Fire Department.

See accompanying article on page 3. ■



The floating docks have been removed, but will the historic building remain? *Tina McKail, KP News*

## Lakebay Marina Project Begins Community Outreach for Historic Project

**Acquiring the troubled marina was just the beginning of a years-long process to redevelop the local jewel into the recreational treasure it could be. Neighbors and residents have expressed many concerns.**

LISA BRYAN, KP NEWS

The anticipated redevelopment of Lakebay Marina won't happen overnight, but planners suggest community input matters.

The first community outreach meeting, led by Associate Planner Beth Batchelder of Seattle based MAKERS Architecture and Urban Design, was held via Zoom June 14. Community members, some of whom live in the residential neighborhood that surrounds Lakebay Marina, expressed keen interest, concerns and ideas that provided a view into the complexities of redevelopment.

The marina was purchased by the Department of Natural Resources and the Recreational Boaters Association of Washington in 2021 with the goal

of addressing environmental concerns, preserving the history and providing recreational opportunities. The redevelopment project partners include DNR, RBAW and its Marine Parks Conservancy, as well as Washington State Parks.

The Washington State Legislature recently allocated \$1.3 million in the 2023-25 capital budget for next steps in the redevelopment project.

"One of the biggest issues is really addressing the issues that have arisen from an aging facility — health, safety and code compliance," Batchelder said.

There are parts of the site clearly in poor condition. The seawall is deteriorating, so there are plans to restore native vegetation to restabilize the beach there. The hard armoring of the pier will need to be replaced with soft armoring

to restore that habitat. The boat launch needs to be replaced. All the restoration will be accounting for sea level rise.

"And we don't want to forget the rich history as many of you have known it dating back to 1884, highlighting the pivotal role of the Mosquito Fleet and the Washington Cooperative Egg and Poultry Association," she said.

"This has been a great space for the community, so much so that it's on the state register of historic places as well as Pierce County. This project is really intended to highlight and preserve that rich history."

Glencove resident Carl Albrecht said he's been using the marina for years and "actually tried to buy it at one point to



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## Becoming One With Nature

# Here's What I Think About That

LISA BRYAN  
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Morning comes early in summer. Between the light and the rising chorus of birdsong, catching a few extra winks of sleep is hard to do.

The summer solstice brought sunrise to its furthest point north along the eastern horizon, and from there the sun begins its steady march southward.

If you're lucky enough to have a bird nest nearby, you're all but certain to catch sight of parents winging in with the next meal delivery and hear the intermittent cries of nestlings clamoring with mouths open wide, each one begging not to be missed.

On an evening stroll to visit friends up the road recently, I turned my head to the left and stopped instantly in my tracks. I was face to face with a large doe. We both froze in place. Our eyes locked and there we stood motionless, looking at each other for the longest time. Minutes passed and yet our gaze remained unbroken.

I became aware that signs of civilization were absent within my field of vision. Behind and all around the doe there was not a fence post, a house, or any building in view. We were so close that I could have reached out and touched her. Having some experience with wildlife after years working at a wildlife recovery center, I wanted to avoid any sudden movement to prevent her from bolting in fear the

very instant I moved.

After a while, I softly spoke, "I'm a friend and you are safe with me." She was untroubled, listening, yet still locked in the moment.

I continued, "I've so enjoyed our time together but must be on my way." I very slowly raised my arm, pointing toward the direction I was headed, and walked away. She didn't spook, not at all. I turned around about 20 feet later to look back and she was still

watching me. I smiled and gave her a wave. She dropped her head and began nibbling grass.

This is the kind of thing that happens in our more rural neighborhoods, and likely one of the few places where even on the highway many minutes pass between speeding cars. Life has a slower pace here in summer and with it comes the awareness that we are far from alone. There is a whole natural world we often lose touch with during other times of the year.

Wildlife photographer Izzy Edwards spends countless hours searching and tracking like a hunter, essentially becoming one with the habitat of the creatures she seeks to capture on film. Once she finds her spot, she waits. And waits. Here, in Fox and Feather, a young fox right here on the Key Peninsula introduces us to

its delightfully playful nature.

I can't recall if it was during the early stages of the pandemic, but I made a concerted effort to sit outside in silence at the same place every day for at least 15 minutes and simply notice all the life that went on around me.

The demands of the civilized world to pay attention to it are endless. So many things vie for our time in our digital lives that it

becomes difficult to focus on any one thing, always rushing off to the next thing, trying to keep up.

Sitting in silence and simply observing what surrounds us at that moment each day restored some of the balance I felt I was missing.

As I've written here many times, the Key Peninsula is extraordinarily unique, and it is the people who live and love it here who make it so. Month after month our reporters, writers and photographers bring individual people into view who are willing to share their life perspectives, their challenges and struggles — their passion for life.

In this edition, we bring you incredible stories of tragedy and triumph. We hope you will share in the depth of love and strong hearts that rise above it all to carry on. ■



"Fox and Feather" on the Key Peninsula this spring. *Izzy Edwards*

# Remembering Ted and Joanna, Our Friends and Colleagues

We take one more opportunity to honor our absent friends.

KP NEWS STAFF, FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The Key Peninsula community lost two family members when Ted Ralston and Joanna Gormly were murdered in May 2020. It was the beginning of the pandemic, and we hardly knew how to react, what to do with ourselves, or how to treat one another.

The first memorial came in just a day, spontaneously, with 60 or 70 people standing outside the civic center in Vaughn, six feet apart, sharing moments and memories and plastic cups of single malt whisky, Ted's preferred beverage. A formal service came over a year later at the same place, attended by a couple hundred mourners.

Many in the community still have — and will always have — strong feelings and fond memories about Ted and Joanna. We thought it would be appropriate to express some of them here one last time.

## **Bruce Macdonald:**

My mind often drifts back to a night that captures my attachment to life here on the Key. A group of us sat around an imaginary fire, smoked cigars and sipped fine whisky. We were protecting the civic center fireworks stand overnight from the hordes in Key Center. For the first time, for me, Ted began to reveal some of his history. His part in the SALT negotiations, working for Sen. Warren Magnuson, taking guitar lessons, and piloting a Cessna. Why did I not know these things? Well, I thought, there will be many more nights and much more whisky. But there wasn't. (See "An Ode to Volunteering" by Ted Ralston, August 2019.)

## **Cort and Karen Montague:**

We were privileged to have Ted and Joanna as our nearby neighbors since 2005. They were smart, fun, kind and generous people. Sitting around a campfire with a cocktail, Ted would never run out of entertaining stories. Joanna, more reserved, was very wise and insightful. They had such love for their family and were incredibly devoted to helping make their lives better. The classiest of couples. We miss them.

## **Norm and Britta Brones:**

Ted and Joanna were friends and family to us, as were Joanna's parents. The Gormly home and beach was our second home in many ways since the 1970s. We miss them in so many and random ways. The Gormly family substantial birthday cake with lots of butter icing. Ted's soups. Scrabble on the Vaughn spit after rowing across. Tea from delicate Russian cups. Bike rides up 100 Step Hill. Elaborate scotch tastings. Sunsets and fires on the beach terrace. Esoteric discussions



Ted and Joanna dressed for "Hollywood Nights" at the KP Civic Center, October 2018.

*Lisa Bryan, KP News*

on history, politics and philosophy. So much more that we can't fully express or explain.

## **Anna Brones and Luc Revel:**

Going through a stack of papers recently, we found an old birthday card from Ted and Joanna. In typical style, it was signed with a sweet note from Joanna and a joke from Ted (OK, more of an eye-roll joke). This was often the dynamic, and we remarked at how quintessential "Ted and Joanna" this card was, their personalities perfectly captured on paper. These annual missives, diligently sent every single birthday whether our mailing address was at the Vaughn post office or somewhere farther flung, were a reminder of a deep and constant friendship that was loving, supportive and full of laughter.

## **Don Swensen:**

The deaths of Ted and Joanna were not only a personal loss to me and many others, but a huge loss to the KP community as a whole. Their commitment and dedication to issues important to the betterment of our community is well known and the hole left by their passing will remain hard to fill for a long time, if ever.

## **Jeff Frederick:**

My favorite memory of the two of them was at a Friday night at the Blend. Ted had been playing with the band and they were on a break. The two of us were sitting on the bench outside and he was sneaking a smoke. We were talking about the Seahawks, the ridiculousness of politics, life, the usual. Joanna arrived late and was walking up out of the dark when Ted noticed her mid-drag. He quickly put out the cigarette and mumbled, "Uh-oh," followed closely by her laughing and calling him a bad boy. They talked a few minutes, laughed some more, and then went in together. It was the look in their eyes, the

playfulness, and my realization that they adored each other.

## **Larry Seaquist:**

I miss their example of meaningful lives lived fully, step after thoughtful step, one day's challenge and the next day's joy always met with integrity and encouragement. Johanna was famous among my political campaign volunteers for her gourmet-menu meals served from an improvised field kitchen. Ted was continually inviting people to gather at the Blend for some blended perspectives on the issues of the day. They were, indeed, model citizens.

## **Dave Gillespie:**

Ted and Joanna extravagantly invested their time, money and heart into their family. They were also devoted to their friends, and their friends to them. They enjoyed making music, Joanna recently releasing her inner singer at the Blend. She was a fine example of still waters running deep — reserved, with delightful flashes of exuberance. Ted wasn't just a friend, he was the best kind of friend. The kind you read about and wish you had.

## **Mark Easton:**

Ted and I worked together at MCC, the micro-electronics and computer technology corporation, which touched off the artificial intelligence boom. We were responsible for monitoring advanced technology around the world. The CIA studied us as a model for how civilian technology intelligence could be gathered and disseminated. Ted was a brilliant and versatile analyst and thinker. Everyone, from our boss Admiral Inman, through the ranks of some of the most brilliant people in computing and electronics, mourns the loss of this fine man.

## **John Kirry:**

The lives of Ted and Joanna meant a great deal to me and many other people in the

community. Ted and I met in junior high and were best friends for 60 years. He was an only child and became like another brother in my larger family. In 1969 I was the best man at Ted and Joanna's wedding; in 1970 he was the best man at mine. We enjoyed a great many common interests like bad golf, hydroplanes, great road trips, and flying. On what would have been Ted's 73rd birthday, I was honored to pilot the airplane that took Ted on his last flight, when we scattered the remainder of Ted's ashes over his beloved Vaughn Bay.

## **Sue Dixon:**

Joanna and I had a weekend at the ocean, and we went into a gift shop that had many types of small, beautiful stones with healing properties. We were there a long time selecting some. She was looking for stones to give her grandson specific strengths to help him with his countless struggles. It was like we were weaving a spell with these stones to make heart changes in ourselves and others. Joanna never failed to be thoughtful and kind to others. I loved being with her.

## **David Tirr:**

I first met Ted at Queen's College, Oxford. He had come to study Russian history and I was writing a thesis on the great migrations in Dark Age Europe. Our common interest in the beginnings of modern Europe brought us together, but it was really Ted's personality — quiet, friendly, cosmopolitan but unassuming, the very opposite of the "brash American" of European folklore — which cemented our friendship. I got to know Joanna, too, when I visited them at the cottage they had rented. Despite living at opposite ends of the hemisphere, we managed to meet in a number of different places. In Brussels, when he visited with Sen. Leahy, and where my wife and I still live (my daughters fondly remember Ted's pancakes). In Washington, D.C., when my work took me stateside. In 1979 Ted and I took a few days off to drive down as far as Charleston, a trip where I learned more about life in America than I had before or since.

Watching what has been happening on the wider world stage but also knowing the dreadful fate reserved for Ted and Joanna, anyone would be tempted to follow the example of the late Roman aristocrats: civilized people who reacted to the collapse of society by withdrawing, even as the barbarians hammered at the gates. But that was not Ted and Joanna's way. They would always have wanted to be active, right to the very end.

Read more about Ted and Joanna's lives at "A Song for Ted and Joanna," KP News, July 2020. ■

# The Heart of a Survivor: Playing Bad Cards With Strong Hands

Ingenuity helps a double amputee resume a normal life after tragedy. Be advised: This article discusses violent sexual assaults. Part II of III.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

If you see Mary McGriff shopping at Key Center Food Market and ask what happened to her hands, she'll tell you more than you probably wanted to know.

"I got my arms chopped off by a serial killer."

The poignant answer catches people off-guard, and most ask if she's joking.

No. She's not.

But after that fateful night in Sept. 1978, she likely can use her "new hands" as good as most people use theirs.

Nearly 45 years ago in Berkeley, California, the former Mary Vincent, 15-years-old at the time, accepted a ride from an older man while she was hitchhiking to visit her grandpa near Los Angeles. What followed was a night of rape and torture that ended with her attacker, 51-year-old Lawrence Singleton, chopping off both her arms below the elbow with a butcher knife and leaving her for dead down a 30-foot ravine somewhere outside of Modesto.

Incredibly, she was able to crawl out and hike three miles naked and covered in blood to find help. Her attacker was caught nearly two weeks later thanks to her account, and sentenced to 14 years in prison. He was released for good behavior after only serving eight.

Singleton allegedly killed more than a dozen women in his lifetime, but the only one on his record is the 1997 murder of a Florida woman when he lived in Tampa. Vincent's testimony against Singleton, along with her following advocacy and legislative work against rapists and child molesters, is said to have helped others from suffering a similar fate as her.

McGriff recovered in the hospital for a month after the attack and was quickly fitted with prosthetic arms. Technology being what it was in the 1970s, her prosthetics weren't anything fancy, but it was enough to make a statement when she pointed at her attacker during his trial less than six months later.

Her new arms were functional, but not too practical. What from faraway look like hooks are actually curved metal pincers, each working like over-sized tweezers. McGriff was limited to just moving them up and down. As an active teenager with tons of hobbies, her hands were her life. She didn't want the lack of technology standing in her way of doing what she loved to do. She needed her hands to rotate and be flexible. So she took it upon herself to make improvements to her prosthetics.

"I come from a family of tinkerers," McGriff said. She kept going back to the prosthetic place and bringing items with her she found around the house.



Mary McGriff at home in her kitchen prepping vegetables for dinner. *Tina McKail, KP News*



"They'll never make a prosthetic device that can do more than mine can," McGriff said.

*Tina McKail, KP News*

The mechanism from an old slot machine that makes the lever go up and down helps give her the flexibility she needs. She used a disk from the bottom of the dishwasher that allows her hands to rotate. Her arms also have parts from a bike and a stereo.

"And see how I can put it in lock mode to keep it from moving? That's from clicking a ballpoint pen."

It's that type of ingenuity that's helped give a double-amputee as normal a life as possible. This was a teenager, remember.

What she uses as her arms today is pretty

much the same as it was more than 40 years ago.

She said they don't look like what someone would expect a prosthetic arm to look like in the year 2023, but she wouldn't change it.

Her design is so unique that prosthetic companies can work with McGriff to make fixes and changes, but they can't replicate it until she patents the product. That's something she's working toward but said a patent costs more than \$25,000.

"They'll never make a prosthetic device that can do more than mine can," she said.

"I love what they've done with technology. They have prosthetic arms that look like real arms and hands with fingers that move, but you can't really lift any weight and you'd look like a Barbie doll."

McGriff draws, cooks, gardens, drives, does her own makeup and hair, and carries groceries. She's a skilled pool player and even threw out the first pitch at a San Francisco Giants game in 1999.

Two things she doesn't do well with: cell phones and computers. "I have so much metal in me and on me. I've shut down whole computer systems."

But other than that, "Anything you can do, I can do," she said. "I can probably do a lot of things with my hands you can't do with yours."

And when people ask her how she takes a shower or uses the bathroom, she takes the opportunity to give a similar snarky response as when she's offered a helping hand:

"I use soap and water in the shower, and I use toilet paper in the bathroom. Why, how do you do it?"

In the final part of this three-part series, Mary McGriff describes how she turned her darkest days of depression into works of art. She's sold thousands of drawings and paintings created with her prosthetic arms. ■

# KP Fire District Still in Planning for Properties, Existing Facilities

The board of fire commissioners will consider recommendations from its Capital Facilities Planning Committee and the Citizens' Advisory Panel.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

The Key Peninsula Fire District 16 board of fire commissioners is nearing completion of its research to determine the future of Key Center real estate parcels it purchased in 2021 for a possible new headquarters and to decide on the long-term maintenance of existing stations.

The district hired the architecture firm Rice Fergus Miller in 2021 to evaluate its facilities across the peninsula and Herron Island for needed repairs and possible remodeling. The firm presented its preliminary findings to the commissioners May 9, detailing options from simple renovations to new construction, ranging from \$1.7 million to \$22 million.

The district's Capital Facilities Planning Committee, which includes commissioners and district personnel, asked for significant revisions to lower those costs and is waiting for a revised report before making recommendations to the full board of commissioners, which will then seek public input.

The district also hired the consulting firm FCS Group of Redmond earlier this year to evaluate the financial health of the district and how to best manage its resources, including paying for capital improvements or new construction. Its final report will be delivered after evaluating the architect's revised options.

"I'm anticipating in the next few weeks, first part of July, we should have all the information that we need to move forward and make some sort of a decision," said fire commission Chair Stan Moffett.

"The whole capital facilities plan involves not only a new station in Key Center but also seismic upgrades to the existing stations, and there's some roof and HVAC work, basic infrastructure things that need to be done," he said. "We could say we want to move forward and do a survey to get a feel for how the public feels ... We could say we don't feel the public thinks this is needed, and we may table the whole thing."

The purchase of the real estate in Key Center has been a source of frustration voiced by many in the community who have stated at public meetings and elsewhere that the properties were either overpriced or unnecessary. The parcels include what is called the Olson estate, a residence with a pasture behind located almost immediately across the KP Highway from Station 46, the KPFD headquarters, and the Calahan property, site of the former O'Callahan's restaurant on the corner of KP Highway and Olson Drive NW.



KPFD owns the Olson estate home, part of the pasture behind it, and the former O'Callahan's property on the corner. *Apple Maps and KP News*

"I know that we have people who are very much against what we are attempting to do, people who have not agreed with the purchases of the property," Moffett said. "Personally, I would be very much in favor of selling that corner (Calahan) property, retaining the other (Olson) property, and bringing up the issue of a headquarters building at a later date.

"We're continuing to work on this because I know the board as a whole has felt over the last five years since we originally brought this up that it is something important that we need to look forward to, 20, 25 years down the road," he said.

At the May 9 board meeting, KP resident and volunteer firefighter Dave Vezzani spoke to the commissioners about not treating the capital facilities plan as something inevitable or perhaps well-founded.

"In December 2017, Chief (Guy) Allen went to the committee and said we really need to start looking (for a new HQ) and we should stay in Key Center. That February,

the Citizens' Advisory Panel (CAP) made a motion and said, 'Yeah, let's try to stay in Key Center.' There were five individuals at that meeting, and the commissioners continue to use that as all the justification for what happened across the street (with the property purchases) ... My biggest fear is the blowback from all this is going to be taken out on (the next levy) ... All this energy that we're spending on this — with the community not happy — I hope the same kind of energy is being spent to give our firefighters the equipment and the apparatus they need to do their jobs now."

John Pat Kelly, secretary for the CAP, told KP News the district needs to start listening.

"A lot of this could have been avoided by taking the community's temperature before jumping in," he said. "I think the first thing we need is a real honest snapshot of where we are right now. If we had to sell the properties, for example, what could we get? From there we can lay out

## Property Manager Sued

KPFD terminated its contract in April with Randy Boss of Harborside Management LLC, the manager overseeing the two properties purchased by the district, and filed a lawsuit against it to reclaim \$20,000 the district said was improperly retained from rental income.

Boss invoiced the district in April 2022 for \$18,000 as a 5% commission on a lease for the Calahan property, which was later canceled.

"The commission was in no agreement, it was never written down, we had no idea," said fire commission board Chair Stan Moffett. "We were somewhat lax I have to say in not discovering that earlier."

Harborside collected a monthly \$595 fee plus administrative expenses, according to its statements. The only income was from the Olson house rent of \$1,900 per month. Boss told KP News at the time his fees and commission were industry standard.

The district signed with a new company, Soundview Property Management. It will receive 9% of monthly rent, or \$171, and an \$800 commission for any new tenant it finds.

our options.

"By all means, let's do any kind of deferred maintenance that needs to be done, any kind of small projects that could really help out, but as far as building a brand new fire center on that property, I don't think that's in the cards until the board proves itself more fiscally responsible."

Kelly is running for fire commission position 5 in the November election in a bid to replace outgoing Commissioner Ben Rasmussen.

Cambria Queen, the CAP chair, is running for the same seat. She joined the panel in 2021, after learning of the real estate deals.

"The existing headquarters, in my opinion, is too small for what we need. If there is a way that we can find as a community to make, for example, the Olson property work at a reasonable cost and perhaps sell the lot that the current headquarters is on and the corner Calahan property, that would make sense," she said.

"I invite any citizen of the peninsula to any of the CAP meetings. They're held the third Wednesday of every month at the Home station, usually from 7 to 8 p.m. If anybody ever has any questions that I may be able to answer, I am more than willing to talk to them." ■

**Carolyn Wiley**  
DEVIL'S HEAD DIARY



## Practicing Without a License

Practicing medicine requires training and certification. Few legislators are qualified, so can they be held liable for practicing medicine without a license?

Since June 2022, 24 states including my home state of Texas (the “Friendship” state!) have restricted health care access for women. Some even include penalties for women who leave their home state to obtain medical care elsewhere, or want medicine by mail. Other laws have targeted sexual minorities, forbidding treatment needed by transgender teens and even adults.

How, I wonder, are such laws to be enforced in our democratic republic? Sure, in Russia or Iran, or the Free State of Florida, it would be easy. But do we know how to do that kind of thing in America?

One convenient way might be to require all females capable of having a child to submit to a pregnancy test before leaving their state. (They sometimes do this in certain wealthy Persian Gulf countries already, so we can learn from them!) All females testing pregnant at pre-departure would be re-tested upon re-entry to catch all previously pregnant individuals who return unpregnant and without a newborn. Thus, when needed, the state will have factual evidence that will stand up in court when these women are prosecuted.

Same goes for transgender care. Routine hormone harvesting while traveling and a strip search on exit and re-entry will tell the state all it needs to know to protect transitioning children from their parents, or adults from themselves. And of course our youth sports teams will be safe from anyone silly enough to sacrifice their identity or very existence to gain a competitive edge at track meets.

While we’re at it, since we’re searching baggage already we can confiscate any children’s or young adult books that might fall into the wrong hands, like children or young adults.

Limiting surveillance to airports makes sense, since screening is already part and parcel of air travel. Of course, the state would still be vulnerable to anyone seeking health care by crossing state lines, but the cost of installing testing stations at bus and train depots and at every road leading elsewhere would be a prohibitive drain on the public coffers. There would be no money left for picking up vulnerable immigrants in Texas to fly or bus to other states

without warning.

If doctors practice medicine and lawyers practice law, why don’t legislators practice legislating? At least 24 state legislatures, by my count, are in need of serious rehearsal before going live. Can their educations have been that poor? Did they not read any of the books they’re banning?

Perhaps it’s all my fault.

Not only am I a Texan, I am also a teacher. Or at least I was before retiring some decades ago.

Perhaps I shouldn’t have retired. Or perhaps I shouldn’t have “taught.” Perhaps I should have been “practicing education.” If I’d put it that way, maybe the pay would’ve been better, or maybe I would’ve been taken more seriously.

Teachers teach readin’, writin’ an’ ’rithmetic, and along the way citizenship, fairness, cooperation, critical thinking and problem-solving. Teachers encourage children to ask questions, giving them the keys to unlock all the information needed to satisfy their curiosity about the world.

Hmm. Maybe that’s the problem?

Some undereducated legislatures seem to have a “school” of thought that seeks to discourage curiosity and limit inclusive thinking. They want to keep the keys to themselves, but why?

The stated concern is that knowledge of systemic biases, institutionalized social inequities and bigotry might make children “feel bad.” Little thought seems to be given to the fact that treatment of nonwhite and sexual minorities in America may have made other children not just “feel bad,” but made them targets of bullying and discrimination and untimely death.

For one easy example, it’s just a plain, simple, Texas-sized fact that our revered Founding Fathers believed slavery was acceptable or at least tolerable because it was a foundation of economic growth in large swaths of our then young country. What would children think if they learned that 17 of the 55 delegates to the Constitutional Convention were slave owners, 11 of the 39 signers of the Constitution were slave owners, and eight of the first 12 presidents of the United States were slave owners?

Maybe they would learn to “think?” And then maybe do something about it?

Institutional injustice is at the very heart of our Constitution. Children have chipped away at it over generations, battling prejudice, inequality — even the Confederacy — and now “originalists” who challenge any law that doesn’t have its roots in 18th century America, or at least doesn’t suit their bottom line or whatever direction their moral compass is pointing at the moment.

But it doesn’t mean we have to throw it all away. And it certainly doesn’t mean we turn a blind eye to our past. We could always use those keys ourselves. Maybe with a little practice.

*Award-winning columnist Carolyn Wiley lives quietly, for the most part, in Longbranch.*

**Vicki Biggs**

A SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE



## Wound Care

Who among us on the Key Peninsula has not been wounded by blackberries? Even when taking the utmost care, those persistent vines can open up an ugly wound quicker than you can say ouch. It is possible to receive a puncture wound caused by thorns, or perhaps a laceration — the tearing sort of wound. Wading deep into a blackberry patch can result in multiple skin tears, all for the sake of a luscious cobbler or preserving a quickly disappearing path.

Many of us have had wounds of a more serious kind — from trauma, illness or accident. Wounds that are sometimes life threatening, that are painful and slow to heal.

Recovery from physical wounds requires time and attention. The human body is remarkably adept at repairing itself, given a chance.

More serious wounds need professional medical attention. In order to avoid long term complications and achieve a fully functional recovery, the wounded person requires proper nutritional support, a supportive environment and adequate medication for pain control. Frequent follow up with medical professionals is necessary. Healing is not a solitary undertaking.

If all of the necessary ingredients for healing are provided, a good outcome can be anticipated.

What happens when our wounds are emotional, not physical? What if we suffer a deep, gut-wrenching wound to our psyche? The death of a loved one, or the loss of a love relationship? We suffer these, too, as gaping, excruciating wounds. A loss that seems impossible to heal, and no amount of bandaging seems to stem the flow of agonizing pain. Where do we turn? What kind of help can possibly begin to close these wounds, allow tissue to reform around a broken heart?

Just as with a physical wound, so should we approach wounds to our soul. Wounds of the soul need the support of mental health professionals, spiritual guidance,

faithful friends; those who will walk alongside us through the valley. Expertise in assessing the extent of the wounds is helpful and should be welcomed. Is the grief complicated or extending far longer than is deemed normal? Is medication needed? Is the pain reaching a place of no return when the suffering threatens to overcome the sufferer? Just as in the physical realm, those wounded emotionally need a team approach for healing.

Healing wounds of the psyche require time and attention, in the same way our physical wounds need ongoing care. Persons living with emotional pain do better when they reach out to others and accept their help. Weeping, wailing, conversation, prayer, laughter, writing, singing, movement and rest are all therapeutic for the person suffering emotional pain. Having supportive companions who will not shrink from the pain, but will sit patiently and empathetically with the sufferer go a long way towards healing.

In addition, the traditional gifts of food are truly helpful. When the sufferer is unable to manage the most basic of tasks without being overwhelmed, comfort food is exactly what is needed. Rest and nutrition are valuable components of healing. The gifts of assistance with household chores, transportation, and multiple hugs bring healing energy even when the sufferer is too broken to comprehend much beyond the pain of the moment.

Finally, with the support of family and friends, guidance and advice from experts in the field, and a sufficient amount of time, the person suffering emotional wounds will make progress towards healing. This is not to suggest there will be no scars, no longing, no intruding memories. Instead, there can be reconciliation. Acceptance of the current status can be achieved. Life will be changed, but it does go on.

*Vicki Biggs is a longtime social worker. She lives in Home.*

**Joseph Pentheroudakis**  
ON THE WING



## Charlie Sehmel

I moved to Herron Island from Seattle around 2015 after being a weekender for years. The Key Peninsula had been flyover country for me until that time, but once I made the move the place and its people started coming into focus. I transitioned to thinking of myself as a local, became

part of the community, and began referring to the peninsula as the KP as required for citizenship.

Still, my odds of crossing paths with Charlie Sehmel, a retired logger in his 80s, were as long as could be. I had no obvious connection to Charlie, and even though I would later learn more about the Sehmels, an important early settler family in Rosedale near Gig Harbor, at first the name was unfamiliar to me.

That changed in the summer of 2018.

Sometime in late spring of that year a photocopy of a listing agreement was posted in the cabin of the island ferry. The agreement, dated January 1957, was between William and Gyda Sehmel, owners of Herron Island, and Tommy Morris of Purdy Realty. I don't spend much time in the ferry cabin so I could easily have missed it. The document disappeared a few weeks later; we never found out who put it up.

By 2018 I knew of the Sehmel family, but not of any connection to the island, so my curiosity was piqued. After asking around I was directed to William and Gyda's son, Charlie, who lived near Wauna.

As I learned after a painful evening calling voters during an election in Seattle about 20 years ago, I'm terrible at cold-calling, but here I had exactly nothing to lose. When Charlie picked up the phone I made sure the words "Herron Island" were clear in my nervous and jumbled introduction. "Herron Island? You live on Herron Island?" he asked a little incredulously, adding, "My dad and I logged the island!"

Amazingly I managed not to miss a beat. Would he be willing to tell me more? Why yes, yes he would. Pay dirt. Turns out Charlie was a gifted and eager storyteller, and a few days later I was on my

way to the house where he lived with his wife, Sue. As a result of a stroke he had suffered a couple of years earlier while on a hunting trip in Eastern Washington, Charlie could only walk with difficulty and had to spend most of his days in a recliner in his living room, bowls of fresh fruit that Sue had cut up for him arranged on an end table. "I'd be lost without her," he would later say. "I'm just as helpless as a 1-and-a-half-year old kid."

He agreed to let me record him, so I turned on the app on my phone. The stroke had not yet affected Charlie's memory or his storytelling. The stories came pouring out. There was his father Bill, a no-nonsense logger that Charlie drove a truck hauling logs for in high school and who bought Herron Island in 1951 when Charlie was 19. His mother Gyda, who didn't think going into debt to buy the island was such a good idea until Charlie translated the giant firs into visions of profit that the family eventually realized. Then there were the challenges that island logging presented, like getting heavy equipment across before there was a ferry. And being the boss's son in charge of the logging crew, a role that took inexperienced 20-year-old Charlie some time to grow into. That, and the lack of entertainment that a young man his age needed, made him think of life on the island at first as a jail sentence. He didn't mince words: "I hated being on the island," he said.

And finally about how all that changed over the years as he grew to love the place: the hunting, the salmon, the whales, the beauty of it that was all his to enjoy, even though by then the island had been pretty much all clear-cut.

Once the island was logged his parents saw no point in holding onto it to keep paying taxes. Charlie wished they could

keep it but by that time that island was a liability. Tommy Morris sold it in April 1957; the rest is the history we know.

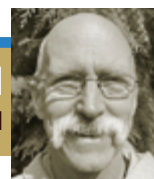
"Am I boring you?" Charlie would stop and ask from time to time. I had to laugh; was he kidding? This was catnip for me; I couldn't get enough. I was looking at a past that had been completely hidden from view since none of it had made it past the arrival of the developers. That sent me down the local history rabbit hole that I occupy with glee to this day. It was also a privilege to get to know one of the principals in the story, a rare opportunity for a historian.

Charlie Sehmel died at home earlier this year, three weeks shy of his 91st birthday, of complications from his stroke. He did not want a service.

But he said nothing about a shoutout in the local paper. Thanks for sharing your stories, Charlie. I owe you.

*Joseph Pentheroudakis is an artist, historian and avid birder who writes from Herron Island.*

**Mark Michel**  
RIDE ON



## A Wolf in Fish Clothing

Beware of a wolf in sheep's clothing. That warning is a paraphrase of a passage from the Gospel of Matthew.

As a much younger man I made my living as a carpenter. It seems like a lifetime ago, and I'm still grateful for the lessons I learned on that job. I apply the woodworking and building skills periodically, but the most important lessons might have been about people.

I was still a student back then. Until I

completed my undergraduate degree, I was the least educated on the job — not only in carpentry but also in academics. As a crew, we built one or two houses a year. Each house was well above what any of us would likely be able to afford in our lifetimes.

Most of the owners were great. Occasionally, we built a house for an owner who felt superior to us and made us aware of it. Without knowing a thing about us, they believed their education or career made them better than others. That may have been the worst part of the job. But I took pride in what we built, enjoyed the job and the people I worked with. They were hardworking and, for the most part, honest. I respected them and believed they deserved respect from others. It was a good crew. We were happy to have a stable, secure job doing honest work.

The oil industry suffered a downturn in the early 1980s. In parts of the country where oil was a major part of the economy, the boom cycle of previous years dried up and took the construction trades down with it. Many times a truck with out of state plates would pull up to our worksite and a man would step out and sheepishly ask for work. One time, as a truck drove away, one of my coworkers said, "There's a fish on that guy's back window."

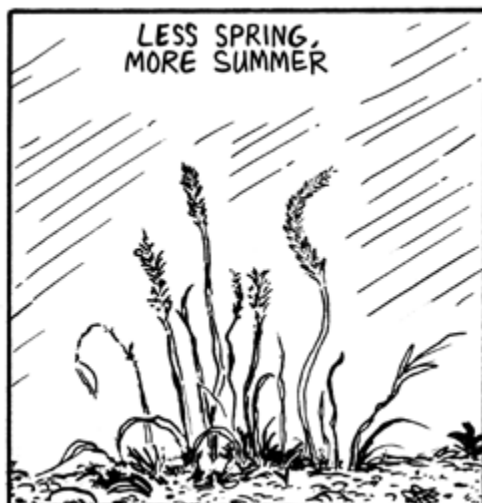
I had no idea what he was talking about, and it must have showed because he continued. "I never trust someone with a fish on their window. They're the ones most likely to rip you off."

I didn't understand the link between a fish emblem and Christianity at that time, but I nodded convincingly enough to end the conversation.

Since then I've learned that the fish

CONTINUED PAGE 8

## José Alaniz WE LIVE HERE: ANTHROPOCENE HAIKU



is related to Jesus. In the New Testament, He told His followers, “Come after me, and I will make you fishers for men.” There’s also that bit about the loaves and fishes. But more deliberately, maybe, in the ancient world the fish was a pagan fertility symbol early Christians co-opted as a visual code when they had to hide their faith to survive. It became a Christian symbol from the Greek word “ichthys,” an acronym in Greek letters for the words “Iēsous Christos, theou uios, sōtēr,” meaning “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.”

In no way is this a condemnation of Christians, a complaint that often comes up when someone like me says something critical of those who broadcast their convictions. Some of my friends are the best people on the planet and also very religious. They just don’t shout it in the faces of strangers. I’ve observed over the years their actions speak louder than any sticker could.

Judgment is a natural and necessary human behavior. But it’s also a skill.

Whether someone is wearing a tool belt, has a body embellished with tattoos, drives a car with fish bumper stickers or waves an American flag, it’s on us to determine what kind of person they are behind the branding. We have to ask ourselves, “Are this person’s actions in keeping with the teachings of Christ, or the founding fathers?”

Often, the harder they wave the flag, or alter it to mean something else, or the more aggressively they say what they “are,” the more they are betrayed by their actions. They can hug the flag or wave a bible publicly while undermining morality and the institutions which truly make America great, or even attack democracy itself.

Social media and a perpetual “news” cycle makes deciding who is trustworthy even more challenging. Someone can represent themselves as a man of God or a patriot even though what they’re actually doing contradicts that facade. They can boost an image with no background in action or even reality. Again, it’s up to us to keep an open mind to the possibility that the carpenter, pundit or politician may not be who they seem — for better or worse. That requires a bit of effort.

When we take people at face value, “judge a book by its cover,” or fail to look under the wool for fangs, we’re vulnerable to being exploited by perceived familiarity and give undue and unearned respect. It may take a little work to form an educated opinion. It’s even more difficult to be open to the possibility our current beliefs

may be wrong. But that effort might save us from becoming victims of a fraud, and slaughtered by the wolf instead of saved by the carpenter.

*Mark Michel is a recently retired commercial airline pilot and Key Pen Parks commissioner. He lives in Lakebay.*

## April Godwin TECH TALK



### Smartphones at School?

During a recent chat with my 14-year-old niece, I was surprised to learn that she takes her phone to school every day. Not only that, but she uses it while she’s in class, with no repercussions. I suspected as much since the two of us are part of a Wordle text thread where we share our Wordle scores every day, and her scores often arrive during school hours.

I like to think of myself as someone who’s young and hip, but back when I was in school, we got into trouble for passing paper notes back and forth during class. I can’t even imagine what it’s like for students today. To have a personal computer in your pocket that gives you nonstop instant access to your friends, social media, videos, the news and whatever else is out there, all throughout the school day. (Wait, do young people still use the word “hip?”)

As with most topics in the public arena, people are divided about whether or not smartphones should be allowed in schools. Good reasons back each stance. But the single biggest factor, in my opinion, is that cellphones have become a fixture in modern life for all of us, including students. Most of us are within a few feet of our cellphones at all times. Think about how you feel when you misplace your phone, your battery dies, or worse yet, it’s broken. I don’t know about you, but at this point my phone is like an extension of myself; without it I feel a little lost (sometimes I’m literally lost).

There are benefits to having phones at school. They give students instant access to information. They allow for quick research that can enhance the learning experience and empower students to deepen their understanding, explore different perspectives and stay up to date on current events. Many educational apps and online platforms offer interactive learning experiences that can supplement classroom instruction. Phones also enable

seamless communication and collaboration between students, teachers and parents. And they come with built-in productivity tools that can help students stay organized.

For safety and peace of mind, some parents insist that their children always have access to their cell phones. And it’s hard to blame them, with the number of school shootings and other frightening incidents that regularly occur on school campuses across the country.

But there are downsides to having phones at school. One of the biggest is distracted learning. The temptation to engage in social media, play games or browse unrelated content can divert a student’s attention and decrease focus leading to poor learning experiences. And there’s the possibility of physical and mental health effects. Online anonymity and accessibility can expose students to psychological pressure such as cyberbullying, harassment and inappropriate content. And the digital divide can create disparities among students with some benefitting from smartphones while others are left behind.

Some tactics for harnessing the benefits of smartphones in school while also reducing the drawbacks include establishing clear usage guidelines, implementing parental or other controls, and outlining acceptable usage during class hours. (Some people have made compelling arguments for preventing students, particularly younger students, from accessing their phones during the school day.)

Some families and schools already benefit from digital literacy programs that educate students about online safety and responsible cell phone usage. They typically include topics such as digital etiquette, safe interactions, and psychological well-being. Implementing these kinds of programs widely could be incredibly beneficial.

Because smartphones have become such an integral part of our lives, I think it makes sense to teach students how to use them responsibly inside and outside the classroom. I also think it makes sense to design programs that help teachers incorporate them into learning when appropriate. Smartphones aren’t going away. Parents want their kids to have them, and kids love them. No one has all the answers yet. And opinions vary widely. Clear guidelines and learning opportunities would go a long way toward helping schools strike a balance.

*April Godwin is an IT specialist. She lives in Lakebay.*

## Letters to the Editor

### GRATITUDE FOR MINTER CREEK ELEMENTARY

With my daughter moving on to Key Peninsula Middle School this fall, I wanted to extend my thanks to all the teachers and staff at Minter Creek Elementary that guided her from kindergarten to the young woman she has become. I want to thank her teachers: Mrs. McCourt, Miss Colescott and Shawna Olson. Her third-grade teacher, Amanda Hefa, spent hours one-on-one with Kara via computer during the pandemic.

I especially want to thank Dawn Barnes, the specialist who taught Kara to read and went on to foster her love of reading and writing in both the fourth and fifth grades. The staff, headed by Principal Todd Hering, was also important in Kara’s development, including Michael Huseby and Tara Bows in the office. Paraeducator Alicia Kile also worked extensively one-on-one with my daughter with great success.

I would recommend Minter Creek to all parents in our community as a safe and fun place for a child to learn and grow.

*John Pat Kelly, Wauna*

### SAVE BURLEY LAGOON FROM GEODUCK FARMING

A fight has been brewing over the fate of a beautiful estuary just north of Purdy Spit. On one side of the tug-of-war is Taylor Shellfish Co., which owns the leases and is turning the beaches into an industrial shellfish farm. On the other side are the residents and environmentalists looking on and wanting to preserve a pristine estuary while we can.

Already it’s too late. The tidal pools were raked flat and the creatures within them were removed. Clams were then seeded, and huge nets were spread over the top so birds couldn’t eat the clams. The nets feel like “no trespassing” signs to beach walkers. Out in the middle of the lagoon there are now hundreds of plastic oyster grow-bags sitting on the beach, busy looking unnatural in a natural setting. For most of the last 10 summers or so, when oysters were harvested the growers would load those oysters into 4-by-4-foot metal cages, and they would sit on the beach for a couple of days until they were picked up. I remember one Labor Day weekend counting 45 big steel cages in the middle



## OBITUARIES



### Naomi Lavonne Spear

Naomi Lavonne (Dear) Spear of Gig Harbor passed away at Tacoma General Hospital April 3. She was born Nov. 27, 1948, in Massillon, Ohio, to the Rev. Roy and Alice Dear.

Naomi graduated from Evangel College in Springfield, Missouri, in 1971 with a Bachelor of Arts in English and began her career teaching high school in Willard, Ohio. In 1977, she visited Oahu, Hawaii, and decided to stay, continuing to teach high school English. While in Hawaii, Naomi married Fred Paladino. In 1981, the couple was transferred by the U.S. Air Force to Fairchild AFB, Spokane. They divorced in 1982.

In 1985, Naomi met Jim Spear. She earned her Master of Arts in Education in 1990 from Eastern Washington University in Cheney and married Jim the following year. She continued to teach high school English in the Spokane area until she and Jim moved to Key Center.

Naomi taught English and alternative education at Bremerton High School. She found her true calling in the alternative education system helping students to glimpse and “go for” their dreams and realize their individual worth. She retired in 2014.

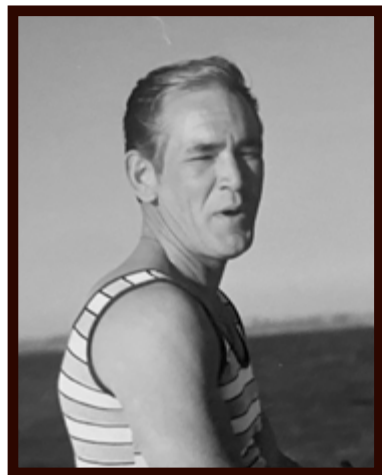
She loved all animals, especially cats, and could always be counted on to take in and nurture strays that needed help. She

also loved gardening; their beautiful home overlooking Carr Inlet and Glen Cove was awash in colorful roses and other flowers and plants. She was always happy to share her botanical and zoological knowledge with anyone with questions or problems.

Naomi was preceded in death by her parents and by her sister and brother-in-law, Faith and the Rev. James Bryon from Akron, Ohio.

She is survived by her husband, Jim; her brother, the Rev. Paul (Norma) Dear; nieces and nephews Debbie Dear, Steve (Holli) Dear, Rhoda Bryan, Sylvia (Christopher) Long; and numerous great and great-great nieces and nephews.

Naomi will be missed by all that knew her. A celebration of life is scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 19 at 11 a.m. at the Miller-Woodlawn Cemetery Chapel in Bremerton.



### Melvin Riley

Melvin was born in Maryville, Missouri, June 19, 1944, and resided in Washington state most of his life. He was a registered nurse and contractor. He built many houses in Mason and Pierce Counties. From 1990 to 1995 he owned Riley's Auto Parts in Key Center. He lived on Harstine Island for 20 years but recently moved to Gig Harbor, where he died June 6.

Melvin is survived by his wife Barbara, three daughters, six grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren, and two sisters in Oregon. Donations in his memory can be made to Lifeline For Vets, 5777 West Century Boulevard, Suite 350, Los Angeles, CA 90045.



A memorial service honoring the life of Hugh McMillan of Home was held June 18 at the Peninsula High School gymnasium. Family, friends and dignitaries including US Rep. Derek Kilmer eulogized the well-known community booster and beloved newspaper columnist and photographer who sought to highlight elementary school students throughout the Peninsula School District. Kilmer arranged for a US flag flown over the Capitol in Washington D.C. in

McMillan's honor to be presented to son Lance McMillan in appreciation for his father's service to country and community. See "Saying Goodbye to 'Huge' McMillan," KP News, March 2023. *Anne Nesbit*

## PSD Names New Assistant Principal to KPMS for Next School Year

### STAFF REPORT

After interviewing numerous candidates, Peninsula School District announced that Kim Kinney was selected as the new assistant principal of Key Peninsula Middle School beginning in the 2023-24 school year.

Kinney has five years of experience as a reading interventionist in the South Kitsap School District, seven years of teaching experience between PSD's Minter Creek and Discovery Elementary schools. She spent the last year at Minter Creek as dean of students.

Principal Todd Hering of Minter Creek

Elementary called Kinney an excellent leader who is great with kids, and said his staff really appreciated all the hard work she did.

"It's hard to believe she's only been here (as dean of students) for one year because she's made such a big impact," Hering said. "I'm excited both for Kim and for KPMS."

"It's comforting sending our kiddos up there knowing that there is such a great team at KPMS between Luke Grunberg and Kim," he said. "I think they're going to do a wonderful job. I know them both well enough to know that KPMS is in really good hands." ■

### LETTERS FROM PAGE 8

of the bay. The prospect of further industrialization of aquaculture, will have even more impact on our boating activities and access to beaches.

But the biggest threat and the ugliest, noisiest and most heart-wrenching change

will be the introduction of geoducks. Taylor is seeking a permit to turn 25.5 of our beautiful acres in Burley Lagoon into acres and acres of either PVC pipes, or HPDE plastic net tubes — both of which are unsightly and can end up being swept out onto surrounding beaches or pushed up into marshlands in rough waters. If

you live anywhere near a geoduck farm in Puget Sound, you have seen this plastic pollution on our shorelines.

The planting and harvesting of geoducks involve the use of diesel-powered pressurized hydraulic wands that either aid in the planting or aid in the harvesting, but in both instances they

liquefy the substrate and send a plume of sand into the water column, endangering forage fish and migrating salmon.

The residents of Burley Lagoon are trying to stop this, and we need your help. Please visit [www.friendsofburleylagoon.org](http://www.friendsofburleylagoon.org)

*Karen McDonell, Burley Lagoon*

# Longbranch Photographer Shares Her Art of Storytelling

Gretchen Shepherd proves that good stories don't just come from a book, and has 20 years of work to prove it.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

Gretchen Shepherd was getting ready to head to church camp at Camp Ghormley near Yakima. It was summer in the 1960s, and to capture the special moments between all the worship and fellowship, her grandma let the 10-year-old borrow her camera. Shepherd spent the week snapping photos of the new friends she made and all the daily festivities. The camera felt natural in her hands, so once camp was over she dreaded returning it to her grandma.

"She never asked for it back," Shepherd remembered.

Fast forward more than 55 years and Shepherd, now an influential photographer, and many other local artists will have booths in Key Center Aug. 2 from 4 to 8 p.m. for the annual Art Walk. The event is put on by the Two Waters Arts Alliance, where Shepherd is a board member.

Shepherd bought her first camera — a Kodak Instamatic — when she was 11. She still has that one, the one she "borrowed" from her grandma, and many others she has picked up along the way in her home studio in Longbranch.

For Shepherd, photography was a casual hobby until she decided to set the camera down for about 20 years to concentrate on being a mom to her two daughters, and to work as an elementary school teacher and librarian in the Monroe School District northeast of Seattle.

It wasn't until taking a photography workshop with renowned Seattle-based photographer Art Wolfe in 2009 that she gathered up the confidence to evolve from hobby to profession. With encour-



Gretchen Shepherd shows her wares at the Crandall Center. *Tina McKail, KP News*

agement from Wolfe, whom Shepherd now calls a friend and mentor, she pursued a new career.

She sold her first photo just six weeks later and it wasn't long until her artful compositions drew the attention of a larger audience. "My motto is to find beauty in plain sight," Shepherd said, adding that she learned from her mom that everything needs some light, dark, and bright.

Shepherd thought she'd strictly be a landscape photographer until she agreed to join Wolfe on a trip to Katmai National Park and Preserve in southwest Alaska in 2015. Her pictures of Alaska brown bears now grace her studio wall and inspired Shepherd to expand her mind as well as her portfolio.

"If you focus on just one thing, then you miss out on so much else," she said.

She now considers herself a landscape, wildlife and abstract photographer. Whether that's of 100-foot-wide marula trees while on safari in Botswana, 900-pound grizzlies in Alaska, or close-up shots of colorful

lichen growing on the bunker walls of Fort Worden in Port Townsend. But unless it's culturally significant, like her recent visit to the Day of the Dead celebration in Oaxaca, Mexico, she doesn't do photos of people.

"I'd rather stand in front of a bear than a bride."

Whatever it is, she wants her photos to tell a story, each one infused with a sense of emotion and narrative. But don't be fooled, she warns aspiring photographers, most photos seen in galleries have been edited to help tell those stories.

"Editing has always happened, even in the dark room," she said. "Look at it and ask, 'What's the purpose of the picture? What am I trying to convey?' Maybe by altering it a bit you can tell a different story. Do what you need to do. It's an art form."

Photography is an exercise in patience, she said, and only sometimes with the right light at the right time of

day can you find a photo that doesn't need editing.

Her husband, Bob Shepherd, equates it to a perfect golf shot; it doesn't happen often, but when it does you tend to remember it.

Bob, a retired executive from the beer, wine and soft drink industry, has been extremely supportive of Gretchen's photography career, and even picked up the skill two years ago when Wolfe pulled him aside during a workshop.

"I understand the passion she has, so we always wanted to feed her passion," Bob said. "Every time she goes to a workshop she comes back with more ideas and more inspiration. It's so wonderful to see her growing as an artist."

The Shepherds, who have been married for 45 years, just last month wrapped up a 60-day gallery show at The Crandall Center, which houses the offices of The Mustard Seed Project above Key Center. They moved to the KP in 2019.

Even though she was a teacher for more than half of her life, Gretchen considers herself a life-long learner.

Videography, video editing and YouTube is a new self-taught venture Gretchen got into during the pandemic. She took advantage of the time at home to build an online community of like-minded artists. The former school librarian got the unique idea of not only reading children's books online, but delving into the story behind the author and illustrator.

"A lot of people don't appreciate children's literature for what it is, the depth that it has, and the artistry behind it," she said.

What started with her using her iPad is now a five-camera, three-monitor production with high-quality audio and fun graphics. In under three years she has more than 600 videos on her YouTube channel (@ImagesbyGretchen) and goes live Thursday and Sunday nights.

Both of the Shepherds will be displaying and selling their photos at the Art Walk in August.

"It's an evening of fun and a way to celebrate the art in this community and how we support each other," Gretchen said.

For more information on the Art Walk, go to <https://twowaters.org>. ■



# KPMS Student Takes Bike Riding to a Whole New Level

**Caleb Durkin is currently the No. 2 BMX rider in the country for his age group, but is on his way to a higher ranking.**

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

For many middle schoolers, hopping on a bike during the summer months means goofing around with friends or riding around the neighborhood streets.

For 12-year-old Caleb Durkin, going for a bike ride has a whole different meaning.

Durkin is one of the top amateur BMX riders in the country.

BMX — which stands for Bicycle Motocross — is a style of bike made for off-road competitions and even trick riding. For the races Durkin competes in, it's less about tricks and more of a focus on speed and agility.

Races are done on indoor or outdoor dirt tracks consisting of flat areas, obstacles, jumps and large banked corners helping racers keep speeds around 30 miles per hour. Adding to the challenge is that racers are normally side-by-side within inches of each other. That means if you fall behind, or just plain fall, you likely stay behind. It's 30 seconds of nonstop intensity.

Durkin picked up the sport when he was 2 years old. His dad, Cory, would take Caleb to watch some of Cory's friends race at nearby tracks. Cory, himself, is an accomplished motorcycle motocross racer, so Caleb had his choice of a bike with or without an engine.

"I have a dirt bike, but I'm happier on a non-motorized bike," Caleb said. His mom, Alissa, agreed.

"What I like is he has more control of his bicycle," she said, adding that Cory has broken his ankle and collar bone during races. But Caleb, knock on wood, has only suffered scratches and bruises in his 10 years of bike riding.

Besides the national races, Caleb spends almost every weekend competing locally.

Racers need to be in tip-top shape to control their bodies to control their bikes. In addition to training on a track twice a week in SeaTac, his workout routine includes lots of leg and ab training. He also puts his bike on rollers, which essentially makes it a stationary bike, where he can practice doing 15-second sprints, 15 to 20 times, while indoors.

Caleb, who turns 13 in August and will be an eighth grader at Key Peninsula Middle School in September, said BMX racing is a unique sport that even his classmates don't know much about. About once a month during the school



Caleb Durkin warming up at 360 Park. He typically trains on a more technical course in King County. *Tina McKail, KP News*

year the Durkins head out of state for most national races, so Caleb has to keep up with homework while on the road. BMX racing has recently taken the family to such places like Virginia, Florida, North Carolina and even Canada. A typical race week means leaving on a Wednesday, getting some practice in on the track on Thursday, with races Friday

through Sunday. They come home on Monday. The two parents have their role on the trip: Cory is more of the technical coach and Alissa provides the motivation and emotional support.

"It's an exhausting week," Alissa said. "He can be on-point and (because of how packed the track is) the smallest, slightest mistake by him or another racer can



Done for the day. *Tina McKail, KP News*

wipe out an entire weekend of racing."

Riders compete at national events from Jan. 1 to Dec. 15 each year to earn points. According to USA BMX, the rider's bike number (called a National Age Group, or NAG, plate) changes based on their ranking in points. Caleb is currently sitting as NAG 2, meaning he ranks No. 2 in the country in his age group with six wins this season. As of June 20, he has the 32nd most points for any age group.

If Caleb picks up two wins in Reno this month, he could move to NAG 1. That ranking matters come Thanksgiving weekend every year when "The Greatest Race on Earth" takes place in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Known formally as the Grand Nationals, the race features the best BMX riders in the world and determines final rankings each year. This is Cory's third Grand Nationals.

As in most sports, the better you are, the more recognition you get. Caleb was invited to join a factory-sponsored team four years ago and being part of that helps pay for some of his racing fees, along with getting his bike and equipment paid for. The owner of his factory team is Donovan Long, the father of two-time BMX Olympian Nic Long.

"There's always things to work on, no matter your skill or age," Caleb said. "How can I get over this jump faster? How can I be faster out of the corner or in the straightaway?"

He continues to hone his skill to meet his ultimate goal of turning professional, which he can do when he's 16. He'd also like to be competing for a spot on the 2028 Summer Olympics team.

"He loves the challenge of it. In the end, it's really whatever his aspirations are," Alissa said. "We're here to support him. At any moment if he says he burnt out and done, that's OK with us. We'll go as long as he says he wants to keep going." ■

# Key Free Clinic Reopens in Key Center Corral Office

Now in its 10th year, the nonprofit part-time clinic is open to all comers, with or without insurance.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

Founded in 2013 and closed since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, the Key Free Clinic reopened in new quarters June 22 in the KP Community Council office in the Key Center Corral, located at 9013 Key Peninsula Highway NW.

The clinic opens at 4 p.m. on the second and fourth Thursdays of every month, for the time being, and is available to anyone.

“Right now we’re thinking twice a month, depending on the availability of our volunteers,” said Executive Director Anne Nesbit, who has been the executive director since 2015.

Staff will include a doctor or advanced practice nurse practitioner, two or more nurses, and office workers, including Nesbit.

“They are medical professionals in the community who are donating their time,” she said.

“Anybody can walk through the door, insured or not, it doesn’t matter,” Nesbit said. “It’s a drop-in clinic, no appointment necessary, first come, first served. In the past we’d see four or five people a night, and that was a good, busy night. We’re open for two or three hours.”

Blood draws, lab work and imaging will be provided at no charge to the patient by St. Anthony Hospital in Gig Harbor.

“We have a great partnership with St. Anthony,” Nesbit said. “They’re being



The Key Peninsula Community Council office houses a variety of agencies. *Ted Olinger, KP News*

very generous.”

The clinic will also continue its relationship with Project Access, she said, “to connect people to continuous primary care. We are not going to be someone’s primary physician; we’re available for people who need acute care.”

Nesbit said that supplies at the clinic are limited.

“If you show up and need more help I’m going to call 911, but if it’s just a few stitches or glue to close a wound we might patch you up and send you into town,” she said. But that kind of situation has been rare; most patients need help with their blood pressure or other chronic problems, or need a non-narcotic prescription renewed.

One potential hurdle for some patients is just getting to the clinic.

“We don’t have the means to go home to home, although it would be awesome to be able to do that, but at this point they have to find a ride,” Nesbit said. The Mustard Seed Project in Key Center can provide patient transportation, but rides must be arranged in advance. ■

## Wildfire Danger Increasing on Key Peninsula as Summer Heats Up

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

Vegetation and wildland fires have been occurring more frequently and earlier in the season on the Key Peninsula in recent years, according to Public Information Officer and Volunteer Battalion Chief Anne Nesbit of KP Fire District 16.

“All the models are predicting a big wildfire season for Western Washington this year,” she said. “So far, we have had small spot fires that haven’t needed anything more than a single engine response and they’ve been quickly handled.”

A burn ban went into effect in Pierce County June 7 prohibiting all but small

recreational fires in appropriate fire pits. KPFDF is not issuing burn permits. Burning yard waste or for land clearing is prohibited; burning garbage is always illegal.

“I think the danger is present every year and we’ve been very lucky because our community has been pretty good about being mindful of burn bans and taking care of their homes. But it’s dry already and it’s going to get worse, and now we’ve got fireworks to contend with.”

New county prohibitions restrict firework use to the hours of 10 a.m. to midnight July 4. “I posted the new law on KPFDF Facebook page; it’s up to the Pierce County deputies to enforce,”

Nesbit said. The responses she received were not encouraging.

There’s a reason for the restrictions.

“Five years ago, on the Fourth I personally responded to 15 calls, and they were all fireworks related and took a couple of hours of work to put out fires that could’ve turned into more,” Nesbit said.

“I don’t want people running for the hills, but the potential for a wildland fire out here is high,” she said. “We’ve been really lucky, but it doesn’t mean it can’t happen here.”

Fighting a wildfire is substantially different than a structure fire.

“We always staff up for Fourth of

July but we’re manpowered starved out here,” Nesbit said. “If we get a big fire, we have what it takes for the first wave. But you always need support, even big entities like Central Pierce need support if it’s going to go on for hours. You need a second and third wave. Wildland is a different kind of firefighting — it’s not a five-hour structure fire, it’s a three- or four-day event. That’s what I mean by support.”

South Sound 911 said July 4 is typically their busiest day of the year and should be used only for emergencies. Complaints about fireworks can be made to a non-emergency line: 253-287-4455 or 1-800-562-9800. ■

## Bears on the KP: Stories and Notes on the Local Bear Situation

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

Last October, for the first time in recent memory, a bear paid a visit to Herron Island. By the time word got out and folks went looking, it was nowhere to be found, swum back to the mainland.

For how big they are and how much they move, it is surprising how sneaky black bears are on the peninsula. Even longtime residents have had a handful of sightings at most.

**Into the  
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The number of local bears is unknown, but the sightings and stories accumulate: bears in driveways, bears on security cameras, bears in backyard bramble patches, on the trails of Key Central Forest, on the beach of Filucy Bay. A few weeks ago one swam across Von Geldern Cove.

If I were to distill the essential KP bear story, it would be a moment of mutual shock, as when Lynn Larson rounded her deck to find a mama bear and two cubs. While Larson beat a retreat to the safety of her house, the mama bear hustled her cubs up a tree.

One found Britta Brones in her front yard. While she froze among the rose bushes, it circled the house and wound up behind her car. “It was curious, not furious,” she said. It waited for her to go into the house before continuing its foray.

Naturalist Robert Michael Pyle, writing about Sasquatch, specifically the objection that such a creature could not possibly find enough to eat in the wild, turned to bears for comparison, writing, “Here is a beast at least as unlikely as Bigfoot.”

“In bears we have a beast of huge proportions who demands prodigious amounts of food, whose habits are mostly secretive, who is threatening in reputation if seldom in fact, intensely mythologized by our culture and many others, and far more often spoken of than seen.”

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife estimates 20,000 black bears live in the state. They typically stick close to forest cover. Around here, they especially like marshy areas.

Imagine being a bear, waking from hibernation having lost 30 percent of your weight — down to 140 pounds from your usual 200, say — and it is early spring. Not much growing yet. What do you eat?

The first thing is probably skunk cabbage. For this reason, Native people did not usually hunt bear in spring. (Some did not hunt bear at all, saying it looks too much like a human when



Bob and Barb Green watched this bear lick seed out of their bird feeder at Driftwood Point. *Bob Green*

skinned.) Indigenous bear hunters preferred to wait until June, when bears climb crabapple trees to feast on fruit.

Bears eat many things: shoots, grasses, roots, insects, seeds. In summer they love salmonberries and blackberries. In August, according to indigenous hunters, the flesh is bad again; bears raid the two-foot-high towers of thatch ants and gorge on ant larvae. In tent caterpillar years, they strip tree branches of the tents and eat the caterpillars. In fall, bear flesh becomes best as they fatten up on huckleberries and salmon.

That such a large animal can grow fat every year as a forager rather than as a predator is a testament to the productive abundance of our native landscape.

Of course, things don't always go to script. Bears are generalists, opportunistic. WDFW receives 500 complaints annually about black bears, and 95 percent are “the result of irresponsibility on the part of people.” Unprotected trash, bird feeders, and pet food are windfalls for bears, especially close to hibernation time. While most bears will choose natural foods over human-sourced foods, some realize that human foods are constantly available. They become habituated. This is not necessarily new. Native people declined to hunt bears that hung around their camps, as the meat was thought to be tainted by their refuse.

This winter a bear around Mahnke Road and Pitt Passage remained active throughout the hibernation period. In February it stole a cooler full of breakfast off Barb Floyd's

porch. “The bear ate the bacon and eggs, left the fruit,” reported Floyd. The bear knocked over garbage cans in broad daylight, even carrying off a supposedly bear-proof can.

Then there is the story around Joemma Beach of a bear that climbed into a hot tub.

Since bear mothers guide their cubs through the yearly cycle of how and where to find food, garbage-eating bears raise garbage-eating cubs. The best solution is for people to keep bear attractants where bears cannot get them. Failing that, and in cases where individual bears become intractable, relocations may occur. Though rare, there have been a few on the Key Peninsula, such as one Longbranch bear that was spending time under the deck of an elderly woman, who was more terrified for her cat than for herself.

Think of this. With their brute strength, local bears could tear up our projects faster than we could curse them if they turned mean on us. But our bears seem to recognize the imbalance in who now controls the landscape and thus practice the art of nonconfrontation. They stay mostly nocturnal, deep in the woods, wanting only to turn tail when they are encountered.

One more thing I've noticed in the stories I've collected. The bears seen along roads are the ones seen galloping rather than moseying. Bears recognize roads as dangerous.

Fifteen years ago, early in the morning, Richard Wooster was driving up 92nd toward Key Center when a bear came out of the woods. The bear ran next to his car for 50 yards or so. “I could have rolled down my window

and tugged his ear he was so close,” he said.

Richard Miller, driving near Penrose State Park, found a mother bear with two cubs. When the mother saw his car, she smacked one cub halfway across the road. It scampered into the trees. “The second cub then started across on his own, but too slowly for mom,” Miller said. “She slapped him hard on the butt and he slid all the way across the road.”

Patrick Pina witnessed a bear hit by a car. The bear slumped on the road's shoulder. The car sped on. When Pina got out of his car, he saw that the bear was breathing. Staying by his vehicle, he talked to the bear. “It walked right up to my feet like a dog,” he said, “as if to say, thanks for checking on me, and then walked off into the brush.”

“I'd like to think it lived on to be a healthy old bear.”

I think for every mama bear teaching her cubs to raid garbage cans, there are 20 teaching their cubs to be awful careful around people and their brutish cars. Roads are formidable barriers for many types of wildlife. Habitat is not just being lost on the Key Peninsula, parcel by parcel, it is being walled off by traffic and noise.

Despite many efforts to conserve habitat on the Key Peninsula, it remains a dangerous world for a bear, as Martha Konicek can attest. Several years ago she watched as a bear swam across Pitt Passage to reach McNeil Island. People in a power boat noticed it and came to circle and harass it. While Konicek watched, her screams either unheard or unheeded, the bear eventually drowned. ■



PSD Middle Schoolers Maya Holmes and Abigayel Hone each earned second place wins.  
*Peninsula School District*

## PC Fire Marshal: Fireworks Allowed Only July 4 (and New Year's Eve)

**Report any firework use before or after the annual holiday to a non-emergency line: 253-287-4455 or 1-800-562-9800.**

### STAFF REPORT

The Pierce County Fire Prevention Bureau wants the Key Peninsula to enjoy fireworks on the Fourth of July. Just don't do them before or after.

Beginning this year the fire marshal, in consultation with the county executive, will have the authority to temporarily ban fireworks if the conditions are unsafe for their use.

Detonating fireworks in unincorporated Pierce County, including the Key Peninsula, is only allowed Tuesday, July 4 from 10 a.m. to midnight. Using them before or after may result in consequences.

"Just because we've had some rain and cooler temperatures (in June) doesn't negate all that dry brush out there," warned Pierce County Fire Marshal Ken Rice.

The Fire Prevention Bureau says to soak all used fireworks in a pail of water overnight to prevent accidental flare-ups.

"A lot of fires start because people throw (used fireworks) in the garbage soon after using them while they're still hot," Rice said.

Firecrackers and bottle rockets are illegal on the KP, and M-80s, cherry bombs, tennis ball bombs and pipe bombs are illegal everywhere in the state. Report firework complaints to Pierce County's non-emergency complaint line: 253-287-4455 or 1-800-562-9800. Rice said to keep an eye on [www.piercecountywa.gov](http://www.piercecountywa.gov) for the latest on fire and firework bans. ■

## Local Students Win Pierce County Artwork Awards

**Peninsula kids continue to compete well against much larger districts across the county.**

### STAFF REPORT

Two Peninsula School District students received awards for their artwork in the 27th annual Our Own Expressions Teen Writing and Art Contest presented by the Pierce County Library System May 20.

Abigayel Hone of Key Peninsula Middle School won second place for her photo-

graph, "The Power of Sunsets."

Maya Holmes of Kopachuck Middle School won second place for her short story, "Give Us Hope."

More than 740 Pierce County public, private and home-schooled teen artists from grades seven through 12 competed in the contest. The Pierce County Library Foundation awarded the winners with prizes

worth up to \$150.

All entries were subject to a double-blind judging process. Library staff judges first reviewed anonymized entries. The finalists moved on to a second round of professional judging.

The winning artwork can be seen at <https://mypcls.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2023-oox-booklet.pdf> ■

### MARINA FROM PAGE 1

redevelop it with a neighbor who simily bought a run-down pier in Gig Harbor and turned it into kind of an institution."

Albrecht listed his suggestions and priorities in order, with No. 1 being the fuel dock, followed by a restaurant, temporary moorage, a faster timeline, and preserving the old-time feel, including the plank dock and building. He said he doesn't care about the boat ramp as there are more suitable places in the area, a point that other community members present agreed with. Lastly, Albrecht listed keeping the emphasis on marine access to keep the community from having too many cars on the roadway.

Home resident Cathy Williams, who worked with former marina owner Mark Scott to gain historical status from both the state and Pierce County, said her concern was that the marina be kept as it is, as much as possible, but improved. "There are a lot of people, I think, who are very interested in making sure the integrity of the building and site is maintained."

Dr. William Roes said his interest includes a desire to save both buildings on the site, specifically the little white

house on the uplands that once served as a doctor's office during the 1930s and where some of his patients were delivered as babies.

"I have a number of pictures, a really cool one of the doctor standing there with his family with a cigarette in hand."

Neighbor Anne Nesbit said the frontage road along the water is collapsing and with increased traffic volume, anything new needs to consider road improvement as much a part of the planning as preserving the building.

"It is a great treasure we have that needs to be preserved but it's in the middle of a neighborhood," she said. "It's not in a commercial marina district. I really want that to be at the forefront of everybody's planning."

DNR Aquatic Policy Analyst Britney Poirson said, that from the agency's perspective, "We're going to do everything we can to save the building, but as you know, it's an extremely expensive redesign. We're exploring a lot of funding possibilities to save that because DNR as an entity would not be able to pay outright for something like that. It would have to

be a capital budget request and that's what we're exploring now."

Brad Ginn, project manager for Bremerton-based Art Anderson, an engineering firm with extensive experience in challenging marine environments, was hired for the redevelopment project. He said if the building were structurally unsound it would be a lot harder to renovate and preserve.

"Based on the inspection we did, it looks like it's actually in surprisingly good shape, so that kind of lends toward trying to preserve it," he said. "Whether or not

it's going to be kept as an alternative is what we're analyzing, and public input is a big factor in determining if that's

going to be the case."

Before moving forward with design decisions, Ginn said they will be showing alternative designs, both with and without the building, for public input.

The Lakebay Marina Redevelopment Project is hosting an open house July 7 at nearby Lakebay Community Church from 5 to 7 p.m. and will also have an information booth July 8 at Key Pen Parks Summer Family Fun Fest at Gateway Park. ■

**"WE'RE GOING TO DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO SAVE THE BUILDING, BUT AS YOU KNOW, IT'S AN EXTREMELY EXPENSIVE REDESIGN."**

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# Pierce County Updates Its Solid Waste Program

Expansion in organic waste collection is being planned to increase what can be accepted, but might be less than meets the eye.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

This spring Pierce County upped its game in collecting organic waste. It will now allow vegetable and fruit trimmings, tea bags and coffee with paper filters in yard waste collected at curbside and transfer stations.

The change was in response to the Organics Management Law passed by the Washington State Legislature in 2022, and in part it requires local governments to provide collection and management of organic materials.

About 20% of what ends up in landfills is organic waste, nearly half of which is edible food and a quarter yard waste. In landfills, waste is compressed and subject to anaerobic processes that lead to methane production, a potent greenhouse gas. Although about 75% of that is captured for use, a significant amount makes it into the atmosphere. The law is designed to prevent methane production in the first place.

The county is considering what additional kitchen waste it will accept and the impact it may have on its program at Purdy, where yard waste is turned into compost. The current composting process takes just over five weeks and adding other materials may add to the time it takes to produce an equivalent product.

“Our program will be food-focused and not ‘compostable’ focused,” said Ryan Dicks, sustainable resources administrator for Pierce

County. “We want to stay confident we have a high-quality product that is in demand and goes back to the land.” It is not likely to include some of the items now allowed in Seattle’s program such as compostable eating utensils, plates and old pizza boxes.

Other aspects of recycling are largely unchanged since 2019. Dicks said that 14% of what is put into trash should be recycled, and 20% of what goes into recycling should go into trash. During the pandemic there was an increase in cardboard and food containers.

“All recycling is local. It needs to have a value, and must be able to be collected, sorted, and sold to a buyer who turns that material into a new product,” Dicks said. “Our philosophy is to focus on things that can be made into new products, and materials that have the biggest impact on reducing greenhouse impact, which are papers and metals. Recycling is not a cure-all. Plastics are not always recyclable, and even if they are they usually can only be used once before they end up in landfill.”

Pierce County Planning and Public Works oversees planning for solid waste in the county and serves more than 280,000 homes. Tacoma has its own system. Murrey’s Disposal, a member of the Waste Connections family of companies, contracts with the county to provide curbside pickup for garbage, recycling and yard waste on the Key Peninsula. Pioneer

Recycling manages recycled materials.

“Unequivocally things are recycled,” said Murrey’s District Manager Josh Metcalf. “We are a hauler. We have no vested interest in where it goes.” He said, though, that occasionally a driver may think he is helping a colleague by picking up a recycle load and saving him a trip. If that happens, he said, the driver is coached.

Everything from Pierce County ends up in the same locations. Garbage is taken to a 320-acre landfill site in Graham. Yard waste is turned into compost at Purdy. Mixed recycling (plastic and paper) is consolidated at Purdy and taken to the materials recovery facility in Frederickson to be sorted and distributed for reprocessing.

Dick explained the restrictions on what is accepted in the recycling program. Glass breaks in recycling bins and contaminates paper. It is not collected curbside, even separately, because the energy it takes to collect at households exceeds any benefit. Glass can be taken to transfer stations and is then sent to Seattle for remanufacture.

Paper cartons are often coated with plastic and are not recyclable and should be placed in the trash can. Plastic bags gum up the sorting machines and can’t be mixed with other recyclables. They can be dropped off at the Key Center Market for remanufacture into products like composite decking.

Recycling plastics can be confusing because rules vary from municipality to municipality. Don’t bother trying to decide if something can be recycled based on the resin identification numbers — those triangles enclosing numbers from one to seven, said Karen Hultgren, recycling and solid waste analyst, in a county presentation last October.

In Pierce County, she said, plastics are recycled based on size and shape. Bottles, jugs, tubs and buckets can be recycled. Clamshells and other containers will collapse and end up getting sorted as paper. Lids and caps cause the same problem and should be placed in the trash.

Mixed paper and cardboard are valuable, as are aluminum and steel cans. Cardboard should be flattened and packing tape removed. It is not necessary to remove staples. Cans should not be flattened, and paper labels do not need to be removed. A quick rinse is sufficient for cleaning containers and cans.

The Pierce County Solid Waste Advisory Committee serves in an advisory capacity on matters relating to solid waste and recycling. It includes community members and business professionals. There are openings for members from unincorporated Pierce County. “We would love to have someone from the Key Peninsula,” Dicks said. Applications are available on the Planning and Public Works website at [www.piercecountywa.gov](http://www.piercecountywa.gov). ■

## County Updates Roadside Vegetation Management Program

Pierce County now uses its own crew to spray; heavy early rains delayed the start date and testing of a new mix of herbicides.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

In late May and early June drivers may have noticed wider than usual swaths of dead vegetation along the sides of many Key Peninsula roads. A combination of factors, including unusual early spring rains and changes in the county’s integrated vegetation management program explained the situation, said Jeff Rudolph, environmental biologist with Pierce County Planning and Public Works Department’s Maintenance and Operations Division.

The county has used a variety of herbicides since the 1990s, along with mechanical brush cutting and tree trimming to manage vegetation.

“It’s a safety issue,” Rudolph said. “You need good visibility and a clear zone if someone needs to swerve. And it is important to have proper drainage of water off the road and into a ditch.”

The county had contracted the herbicide program out since 1998 but decided to self-manage in late 2021. That meant training and

licensing crews and retrofitting and licensing equipment, with both processes completed this year. No herbicide spraying took place in 2022 as the program transitioned.

The Key Peninsula typically is one of the first areas in the county to be treated, usually starting in early March and ending two weeks later. Brush cutting and tree trimming take place year-round.

Spraying does not take place during heavy rains as a matter of safety. “Any risk goes up if application takes place in wet conditions, if the water table is high or there is flowing water,” Rudolph said.

This year, because of the heavy rainfall, spraying did not begin until the end of April and wasn’t finished until June 7. The combination of a late start and no treatment in 2022 meant that there was more vegetation growth prior to spraying than usual and more dead plants to see once the treatment was completed, Rudolph said.

Roads with moderate to high traffic volume

— 131 lane miles or 45% of the 285-mile total on the Key Peninsula — were treated this year.

The county used a new combination of herbicides from the Washington State Department of Transportation, consisting of Roundup Pro, Esplanade 200 SC, Milestone and Escort XP. Rudolph will evaluate its efficacy this summer. It usually changes formulas every three to four years, he said.

The herbicides themselves are approved for use by the state and are degraded by sunlight or the soil microbes over about 30 to 45 days. Toxicity is measured in three levels, with “danger” as the highest, followed by “warning” and finally “caution,” he said. The county uses those at the lowest toxicity.

To assure the safety of the crew the herbicide is pre-mixed. If people or pets are walking along a road the crew comes back another day. Not all areas are sprayed. Stream crossings are marked by green fiberglass posts with salmon insignias and are avoided. The crew, all of whom have had 60 hours of training

and passed a state test, know to avoid wetlands, areas with gardens and yards adjacent to the roads, and areas within 60 feet of marine waters or 200 feet of schools.

The county is evaluating the impact of the spraying on pollinators for the first time this year.

Rudolph said they may map out areas they know have bee populations and avoid spraying there, or may try to spray earlier before flowers begin to bloom.

For those who don’t want their land sprayed, the county offers an owner maintenance program. About 90 people in the county participate.

“As long as the owner can maintain and keep vegetation from encroaching on the roadway, that’s fine with us,” Rudolph said.

Owners can call or apply online and must renew each year. The county provides a sign for the landowner to display.

For more information, call 253-798-6000 or apply online at [www.piercecountywa.gov](http://www.piercecountywa.gov). ■



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### Collapse, decay, political intrigue and rebirth —The Life and Times of the Purdy Bridge—

Using archival documents and rarely-seen photos, local historian Joseph Pentheroudakis traces the history of the iconic bridge, the engineers that built it and the communities it has served for over four generations.



This colorful 48-page book builds on a series of KP News articles published last summer. Now available at [www.purdybridge.com](http://www.purdybridge.com), local museums, Cost Less Drugs and Amazon.



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## Even Dolly Parton's Coleslaw is Larger Than Life

KATRINA HERRINGBOTTOM

Dolly Parton and I go way back.

In the earlier 1970s, my siblings and cousins and I got ferried around a lot by one of our slightly older cousins in a sky blue Plymouth Valiant, the one with the gear shift on the dash. The car had been our grandmother's but after she died it got passed around the family for a few years. I don't know why, maybe they couldn't decide who should get it or maybe no one wanted it. But it was useful for hauling half a dozen of us around at a time, so our 20-something cousin got stuck with it and us.

The only improvement he made to it was adding an 8-track tape player.

For those who have forgotten, or never knew, an 8-track cassette was an awkward plastic box about the size of three decks of cards that contained a single tape on a continuous loop with songs on parallel tracks. When the tape reached the end of a track, sometimes mid-song, the player would emit a stentorian "thunk" as the heads switched to the next track, indefinitely. Seriously, it would keep doing that until someone turned the thing off or yanked the cassette to toss out a window.

That happened many times in the Valiant.



Eventually we were down to just three 8-track tapes: Boston, Frank Sinatra, and Dolly Parton.

Whenever I could wrestle my way into the middle front seat, and thus in control of the 8-track player, it was Dolly Parton all the time. I didn't like her music, but my siblings positively despised it, and I took enormous pleasure in punishing them for their slights against me whenever I could.

But a weird thing happened. After listening interminably to the same tape over and over again for hours and days and years, even with that big "thunk" right in the middle of "My Blue Ridge Mountain Boy," I started to like Dolly Parton. And when we got old enough to drive, the trouble really started because we all wanted that Valiant. The assorted parents must have seen the looming danger because one day it was just gone, unceremoniously sold off for a couple hundred dollars — with the 8-track player and those three tapes.

So, I've always had a fondness for Dolly, even if it was just because she helped me torture my family when I needed to most,

and thus give me some form of agency — which is what she's all about. ("You know I sure am a feminist," she said on Johnny Carson one night in the '70s. "I burned my bra, and it took three days for the fire department to put it out!")

Of course, she has also become an American Hero Adored By All, and rightly so, but I've never been moved to actually buy any of her 5,000 songs. No need since I've got those 12 from that 8-track seared in memory. Still, when her name pops up I pay attention out of gratitude.

I thought I was the only one who did in our family until one of the remaining cousins I still speak to gave me a copy of "Dollywood Presents: Tennessee Mountain Home Cooking" (1989). It was meant to be a joke, but there's some decent stuff in it. I usually grab and change any recipe I find until I've convinced myself and anyone who will listen that it's my own creation, but in this case I will admit that not even I could improve on the work of Dolly Parton.

And I don't even like coleslaw.

- 1 green cabbage, about 2 pounds sliced thin
- 1 medium onion, minced
- 1 carrot, diced or grated

- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- ¼ cup sweet pickle juice. I prefer Claussen or Mount Olive sweet, pickled jalapeños
- ¼ cup white vinegar
- 1 tablespoon dill pickles, minced or 1 tablespoon pickle relish: again, Claussen or Mount Olive jalapeños
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon Kosher salt, less if using fine

Chop and generously salt the cabbage in a colander or similar. Give it a squeeze after 15 minutes or more to remove as much moisture as possible. Meanwhile prep the other veggies.

Mix dressing in a separate bowl. I prefer to let it chill while the cabbage is draining to develop character and add whatever I feel is missing. That can range from more pickle to celery or more exotic salts to cayenne, depending on my mood and guest list.

Toss it all together and serve immediately. You can cover and chill, but prepare to drain any sogginess that may develop. Dolly does sappy, not soggy. ■

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## Learning to Love Worms and Their Gardener's Gold

Whether by the can or the kilo, worms are a valuable tool in the gardener's tool box, and fun to have around the house, supposedly.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

This spring I fell in love with worms. Red wiggler worms to be exact.

Why do I love them? Let me count the ways. They have five hearts! They eat half their body weight each day! They breathe through their skin! They love moderate temperatures, just like me! They work faster than a compost bin! It's fun to show them off to friends and grandchildren!

Best of all, they produce high quality compost for the garden.

I've had an ongoing relationship with red wigglers for quite a few years, but my actual fondness for them is recent. When we first moved out to the Key Peninsula, inspired by some friends with a worm bin on their back porch, my husband bought a worm composting system. He was enthusiastic. I was willing to go along.

We read the brochure and got started. We took our fruit and vegetable trimmings and coffee grounds to the bin and periodically my husband would deliver the resulting vermicompost to our vegetable garden.

This spring I was worried about my worms. They hardly ate anything all winter long. Even with warmer weather their appetites had not improved, and the population seemed low. I reached out to fellow gardener Waneen Post-Marks, and she made the trek from Vaughn to assess the situation.

It turns out my concerns were misplaced. We separated the nesting boxes and worms were happily swarming in the lower trays. There was plenty of food in the top tray and it didn't smell bad. "Your worms look great," Post-Marks said. But she noticed there was no bedding on the top. Some fine tuning was in order.

I attended an online class through Pierce County and got educated about keeping worms happy.

Red wiggler worms are not native to the area and won't survive for long if released into the garden where earthworms burrow and reproduce. But put them in a bin and feed them decomposing vegetables and they will not disappoint.

They can survive temperatures from 32 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit but thrive in the 60s to 80s. At their peak they will eat up to half of their body weight in a day and double their population in three



A simple compost-by-worm bin for your kitchen counter. No, really. *Pierce County*



months. Worms are hermaphrodites — they need a mate to reproduce, but they have both male and female sexual organs. Red wigglers mature in two months and produce two to three cocoons each week, and four or five baby worms emerge from three weeks later.

Worms depend on bacteria and fungi to break down the food they eat, but they also have a crop and a gullet that require some grit to work, so adding some crushed eggshells is not a bad idea. Bedding — shredded cardboard or newspaper, dipped in water, wrung out and placed liberally over the top of the kitchen trimmings

— keeps the moisture level optimal and discourages fruit flies.

We purchased a tiered worm bin, but it's easy to build your own and the county website has simple instructions. You can build a wooden bin that sits on the ground or create your own nesting system using plastic tubs with holes drilled to let oxygen in.

Red wigglers are available online. There are about 1,000 worms to the pound and a half pound will get you off to a good start.

It takes time for the worms to adjust. Be sure the floor of the bin is welcoming. If you are using a plastic tub, place a thin layer of bedding on the bottom. Add a few handfuls of rotting fruit and vegetable trimmings, followed by your worms and then a liberal layer of moistened bedding. Cover and be patient. It may take a little

time for the worms to adjust. Feed about once a week, adding more scraps when you can't recognize what you originally put in the bin.

When the vermicompost is ready it's time to separate worms from the gardener's gold. There are many techniques to encourage the worms to move away from what you want to collect, and they are described on the county website, but honestly I think it's fun to put on a pair of gloves, pull the worms away and toss them back into the worm bin.

My fingers are crossed that my 7-year-old granddaughters think so, too. Red wigglers are going to play a part in grandchild entertainment this summer.

For more information, look for the sustainable solutions class at [www.pierce-countywa.gov](http://www.pierce-countywa.gov). ■

# What's All the Stink About Septic System Inspections?

Local experts want to help give longevity to your underground sewage treatment plant, because what you've got working now is the least expensive option.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

Septic systems are the unsung heroes for homeowners on the Key Peninsula.

They work tirelessly and discreetly handling nature's call, and until something nasty happens, they're often not given a second thought.

Though it's important they are out-of-sight, local experts want to make sure septic systems aren't out-of-mind.

## Your Own Personal Wastewater Treatment System

For a complex system of tanks, pumps and pipes, septic systems have a pretty simple job: "Floaters float and the sinkers sink. All the liquid in the middle is pulled away and treated," said Robert Suggs, an environmental health specialist for the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department. The most common septic systems on the Key Peninsula are gravity and pressure systems. Gravity systems are less expensive, but that doesn't mean your property can support it.

### Dirt Matters

If you're building a home, the soil on your property helps septic designers determine the right system. Deep, undisturbed course soil is best. Gravity systems need about 48-inches of good soil for the drain field — about 36 inches below it and 12 inches on top. That's a little tougher to find on the KP. Pressure systems are good for 36 inches of good soil (24 inches below and 12 on top). There are other options, but the rule of thumb is generally: the shallower the soil, the more expensive the system.

Tom Purdum from American Septic Design in Wauna said the soil in areas like Palmer Lake is ideal for gravity systems, but if you're building a home in Lake Minterwood's shallow and finer soil, be prepared to pay for a pressure system.

Purdum urged buyers to do research before getting a piece of property. He said it's worth the investment to do soil tests to make sure the property can support an affordable septic system. "It's cheap insurance. Otherwise you'll end up owning an expensive campsite."

### Maintenance is Key

Septic systems don't have a life expectancy, but maintenance can be key to their longevity. Suggs says regular maintenance every three years, including pumping as needed, can extend a system's life by one-third (see "First Cycle of Septic System Inspection Program Concludes in June," KP News June 2023). Septic companies like Hemley's in Gig Harbor can look at your system above ground and



This photo well illustrates how shallow a drain field is. Tacoma-Pierce County Health Dept.

below ground, from the tank to the drain field, to make sure everything is settling or moving like it should.

"A well-maintained system can last for decades," said Hemley's owner Jerry Hemley. "Failed systems can pose threats to clean water and healthy ecosystems."

### There's Financial Support To Help

Maintenance is important, but can be pricey. TPCHD is ready to help those in need. Filling out a 10-minute form could help get \$125 off routine inspections, \$125 off riser installation, \$200 off a tank pumping and up to \$500 off for minor repairs. Show a septic company the approval letter and that amount will come off your bill. TPCHD reimburses the septic company directly.

### Who You Gonna Call?

A plumber or a septic company? That depends. If something just isn't going down a drain that may be a job for a plumber. If sewage is coming back up through other drains (check the lowest drain in your house — usually a bath tub), that's a septic issue. "If

it gurgles and burps, or makes funny noises, that's telling you there isn't enough air in your plumbing lines," said Suggs. "That's giving you a hint that something bad is coming."

### Educate Yourself

If you're buying a home or if you don't know what kind of system you have, get your septic system's "as-built" at [www.tpchd.org](http://www.tpchd.org). The as-built is essentially the blue prints and map of the system.

According to Hemley, it's common for homeowners to build patios or add sidewalks over their septic tank without realizing it.

Shannon Grina, a horticulturalist and owner of Grina Landscape Design in Gig Harbor, said she looks at the as-built before starting any design job. Her goal is to make sure her designs add to the longevity of the systems while also making it accessible.

### Gut Health

"A septic system is like your stomach," Hemley said. "The more that goes into it, and the more stuff you put in that doesn't belong there, the more it's going to get upset."

Keep common household items like bleach, grease and fats, feminine hygiene products, coffee grounds, paint, paper towels and medicine from going down your drains. As for septic-safe wipes — there's no such thing, so don't flush them down.

### Rental Home Owners: Beware

Renters are some of the top offenders for putting stuff down the drain that shouldn't be there. Hemley said rentals are where they see some of the bigger problems, especially during the pandemic when there was an increased use of baby and antibacterial wipes.

"If it can be flushed, we've found it," said Hemley, whose family has been operating the business locally since 1962.

### The Root(s) Of All Evil

Keep trees at least 30 feet away from your drain field, but the further the better. Trees any closer should be cut down, but not removed from the ground. You don't want to disturb the soil or cause damage to your system. Any plant with an aggressive root, especially during dry summers, goes looking for water and food. Septic systems have both readily available. "Once one root finds it, he'll tell all his friends and they'll all come over for dinner. You'll have a big problem," Suggs said.

### Keep It Pretty, While Keeping It Practical

Grass is best for a drain field. Yes, it's likely in the sunniest spot on your property and, yes, it's like an underground sprinkler, but Grina said that doesn't mean it's ripe for a vegetable garden. In fact, don't do that. There are pathogens in drain field soil that you don't want in your food. Plus, plants like vegetables and annuals need a lot of water, something your drain field doesn't.

Don't put any fertilizers or weed killer near your drain field that may kill beneficial microbes in the soil. You also don't want to put down any weed barriers or bark that stops oxygen from helping bacteria do their job.

If you do get the itch to plant something other than grass, Grina recommended shallow-root shrubs, a wildflower garden or just some ground cover plants.

As for those eye-sore green lids and white caps that pop up above ground, hide them with a lavender garden, ornamental grasses or any shallow root perennial that can spread out and cover the lids. You can also cover them with light-weight cobble rock.

"Don't just do what you think will look nice or else you'll have problems," Grina said. ■

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" I READ THE DICTIONARY. I THOUGHT IT WAS A POEM ABOUT EVERYTHING. "

## 'The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows' by John Koenig

Everything you need to know about everything you didn't know you need to know. It's a heroic poem, and you're the hero.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

One day last month I was standing in line at my neighborhood gas station with a six-pack in one hand and a three-day-old corndog in the other when a tall, younger (than me) Black man with a semi-automatic pistol on his hip walked up beside me.

I nodded and smiled, which he acknowledged with a micro-nod. I paid up and went out to my car.

While fumbling for my keys, I watched out of the corner of my eye as he came out and brushed by a white man about his age and build on his way in. They both turned and looked at each other, and the white man said, "What?"

The Black man said, "Harold?"

They embraced. They wept. They shouted "hooah!"

They were soldiers once. Everything they could remember about their war

poured out of them like water through a breached dam. They wiped away more tears, standing in front of the gas pumps, clinging to each other, shouting "hooah!" over and over and beautifully oblivious to the cars that had to maneuver around them.

I very deliberately slowed down the fumbling of my keys to eavesdrop. I could not help absorbing what I'd feared, what I witnessed, what I felt, but I didn't know what to call it or where to file it in memory. There's got to be a word for this, I thought.

Where does one turn for guidance in such matters?

"The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows" is one gateway.

"It's a calming thing, to learn there's a word for something you've felt all your life but didn't know was shared by anyone else," writes John Koenig in his introduction. "It makes you wonder what else might be possible — what other morsels of meaning could've been teased out of the static, if only someone had come along and given them a name."

Koenig wrote this book (Simon & Schuster, 2021) over the course of a decade while working on his popular blog on the subject. It began as a peculiar whim to push against those boundaries identified by the philosopher Ludwig



Wittgenstein, who said, "The limits of my language are the limits of my world."

This dictionary is a collection of invented words defining emotions many of us may have experienced but never thought to define or thought could be defined — our obscure sorrows — by turns light-hearted or tragic, and always poignant. Koenig was inspired to write the book by responses he got to his blog.

"There was the young woman in Pakistan who would observe her 96-year-old grandfather across the dinner table every night, mystified by the enormity of his life experience, so different from her own. There was a deployed U.S. Marine who secretly dreaded video chatting with people back home, because it made him feel never closer but never farther away."

Koenig's writing is poetic, though I hesitate to say that since there are no poems in these pages and the very word may scare off those who could benefit most by reading them.

Having said that, "it's a poem about everything," he writes. "These words were not necessarily intended to be used in conversation, but to exist for their own sake. To give some semblance of order to the wilderness inside your head, so you can settle it yourself on your own terms."

And so we find such samples of shared experience as:

**Apolytus:** n., the moment you realize you are changing as a person, finally outgrowing your old problems like a reptile shedding its skin. (From "apolysis," the stage of molting when an invertebrate's shell begins to separate from the skin beneath it + "adultus," sacrificed.)

**Ozurie:** adj., feeling torn between the life you want and the life you have. ... Some days you wake up in Kansas, and some days in Oz. (From "Oz" + "prairie," with "you" caught somewhere in between.)

**Thwit:** n., a pang of shame when an embarrassing memory from adolescence rushes back into your head from out of nowhere, which is somehow no less painful even if nobody else

remembers it happened in the first place. (Acronym of "The Hell Was I Thinking?")

**Zielschmerz:** n., the dread of finally pursuing a lifelong dream, which requires you to put your true abilities out there to be tested on the open savannah, no longer protected inside the and delusions that you started up in kindergarten and kept sealed as long as you could. (From the German "Ziel," goal + "Schmerz," pain.)

In the years writing the blog that became his book, Koenig was often asked whether his words are real or made up. He struggled with that question for years before finally understanding that all words are made up — "no more real than the constellations in the sky."

"Really, that's all a

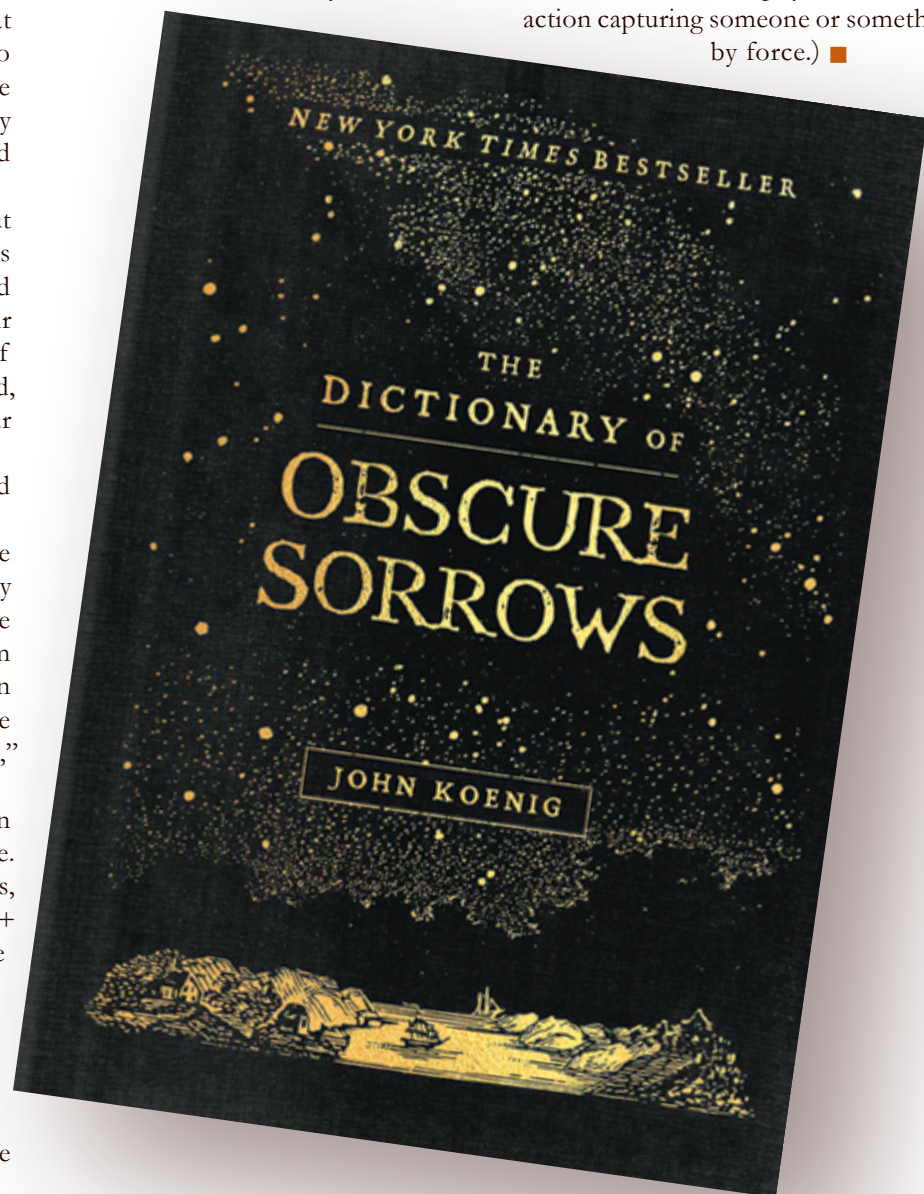
word is: a constellation of thoughts and feelings that our ancestors traced into memorable shapes," he writes. Some took hold, some disappeared.

"The meaning of things isn't an emergent property of how long they last. We are the ones who define them for ourselves, if only for our own satisfaction. ... To the honeybee, summer never ends."

And about what I saw at the gas station. I'm no John Koenig but once I became open to thinking like him, a new word did suggest itself to me.

**Circumseizure:** n., an event of startling clarity one is helpless to resist, that overrides all preconceptions and desires to change it, making room for something else to flood in. (From "circumstance," a condition connected to an event + "seizure," a physical attack or action capturing someone or something by force.) ■

"TO THE HONEYBEE,  
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# Stay Safe in the Heat and Smoke!

Extreme heat and wildfire smoke can harm your health.

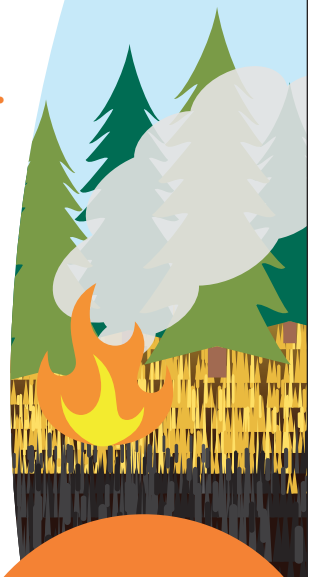
Both at the same time are worse.

When heat and smoke show up:

- Shelter indoors.
- Stay hydrated.
- Keep cool.
- Know the signs of heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

Learn how to stay cool and protect yourself from wildfire smoke at

[tpchd.org/emergency](http://tpchd.org/emergency)



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**Health Department**  
*Healthy People in Healthy Communities*



The Longbranch Foundation

Moving Forward

# AUCTION FOR EDUCATION

*The Longbranch Foundation thanks some very special Scholarship Donors:*

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**Chuck West** for a Vocational Scholarship to Ethan Hill to study to be an Electrician

**The Parks Foundation** for a scholarship to Clara Whitmarsh to study Environmental Sciences

*Many thanks to our attendees, item donors, volunteers, and our generous sponsors who made the April Auction for Education a Success!*



Barb Floyd & Barb Doat  
Sheryl Low & Polly Robinson

Jim & Kelly Hettinger



[www.longbranchfoundation.com](http://www.longbranchfoundation.com)

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**Mimi Chau, MD**



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Obstetrics  
**Kiera Hayes, MD**

Behavioral Health  
**Heidi Yamamoto,  
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PRINT AND ONLINE CALENDARS ARE UNDERWRITTEN BY A GRANT FROM THE ANGEL GUILD

# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

To add a listing for your event or find the latest details, visit [www.keypennews.org/calendar](http://www.keypennews.org/calendar)

**July 1 Bird Walks** 8:30 a.m., rain or shine. Meet nature guide Chris Rurik at Gateway Park pavilion.

**July 1 Sunrise Beach Low Tide Beach Walk** 9:30 a.m., HarborWildWatch. Meet on the lawn near the parking area, look for HWW staff and volunteers wearing blue.

**July 1 Gig Harbor Art Walk** 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., downtown Gig Harbor. Celebrating creativity in the Harbor. Ebbside Gallery, Gallery Row, and Waters Edge Gallery.

**July 2 Penrose Point Low Tide Beach Walk** 10 a.m., HarborWildWatch. Meet on the lawn by the fire pits closest to the beach, look for HWW staff and volunteers wearing blue.

**July 3 Bingo!** 1 – 2 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project.

**July 4 Home Fourth of July Parade** 10 a.m., line up on the KP Highway shoulder from the corner of A Street and the bridge. Vehicles, floats and marching participants welcome.

**July 4 Kitsap Steamers Fourth of July Run** 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., South Kitsap Regional Park. Free train rides by volunteer train enthusiasts, donations welcome and appreciated.

**July 5 Purdy Beach Low Tide Beach Walk** 12:30 p.m., HarborWildWatch. Meet at the top of the boat launch at the scheduled time, look for HWW staff and volunteers wearing blue.

**July 6 Fresh Express Mobile Market** 11 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., Key Peninsula Community Services. SNAP EBT, cash and credit/debit accepted.

**July 6 Joemma State Park Low Tide Beach Walk** 2:00 p.m., HarborWildWatch. Meet at the top of the boat launch, look for HWW staff and volunteers wearing blue.

**July 7 Lakebay Marina Redevelopment Open House at Lakebay Community Church** 5 to 7 p.m. Learn more about the project and provide feedback on initial draft alternative concepts for the marina.

**July 7 Sunrise Beach Low Tide Beach Walk** 2:30 p.m., HarborWildWatch. Meet on the lawn near the parking area, look for HWW staff and volunteers wearing blue.

**July 8 Lakebay Marina Redevelopment Community Outreach** 12 to 3 p.m., Key Pen Parks Summer Family Fun Fest at Gateway Park.

**July 8 Garden Talk: More Trees Please** 10 – 11 a.m., WSU Extension Pierce County Master Gardener Program. Gig Harbor Demonstration Garden at Sehmel Homestead Park.

**July 8 Family Fun Fest** 12 – 3 p.m., Key Pen Parks. Gateway Park. Free entry, food trucks, carnival games, prizes, bounce houses and face painting.

**July 8 Summer Sips!** 12 – 6 p.m., Uptown Gig Harbor Pavilion. Greater Gig Harbor Foundation, ticket prices vary.

**July 11 Insect Safari** 11 a.m., Key Center Library. Summer reading program for kids, all children must be accompanied by an adult.

**July 11 TacomaProBono Legal Aid** 1 – 3 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Free civil legal help.

**July 11 The Artist's Way Workshop** 5:30 p.m., Gig Harbor Library. Interactive workshop based on artist Julia Cameron's book "The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity."

**July 12 Gig Harbor Literary Society** 6 p.m., Gig Harbor History Museum. "The White Cascade" by Gary Krist.

**July 13 Earth's Rot Recyclers - Kids' STEAM Activities** 11:30 a.m., Gig Harbor Library. Presented by Pierce County Environmental Education, all children must be accompanied by an adult.

**July 15 Youth Gardening Workshop: Flowers and Pollinators** 10:30 a.m., Gig Harbor Demonstration Garden at Sehmel Homestead Park. Registration required.

**July 15-16 Summer Art Festival** Peninsula Art League. Events throughout the weekend in downtown Gig Harbor. Food, live music, literary events, kid's events and a local art show.

**July 18 Stomp Rockets at Gateway Park** 11 a.m. Outdoor interactive STEAM program for kids. Pierce County Library System. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

**July 18 Hootenanny** 2 – 4 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Folksong sing and play along.

**July 19 Cribbage Club** 2 – 4 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Everyone is welcome, no experience required.

**July 20 Fresh Express Mobile Market** 11 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., Key Peninsula Community Services. SNAP EBT, cash and credit/debit accepted.

**July 21 Baby Lounge** 12 p.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center. A gathering for connection with other parents.

**July 22 CHEW Dog Rescue Adoption Event** 12 – 3 p.m., Wilco Gig Harbor Farm Store.

**July 25 Building Madness** 11 a.m., Key Center Library. Summer reading program for kids, all children must be accompanied by an adult.

**July 26 Youth Night** 6:30 p.m., Peninsula Life Church. All youth are welcome.

**July 27 Tales at the BoatShop** 10:30 a.m., Gig Harbor Boatshop. Nautical storytelling for children.

**July 27 KP Book Club** 11 a.m., KP Historical Society. "Snow Falling on Cedars" by David Guterson.

**July 27 Science Heroes - Saving the Earth Together** 11:30 a.m., Gig Harbor Library. Summer reading program for kids, all children must be accompanied by an adult.

**July 30 MOPAR Magic** 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., Peninsula High School. Car show, charity raffle with proceeds to benefit Kitsap Foster Care Association.

## WEEKLY EVENTS

**Monday Al-Anon Keys to Sanity** 5 p.m., KP fire station. Family group.

**Monday Yoga at the Civic Center** 6:30 - 7:30 p.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center. Schedule classes online at the civic center website.

**M-W Yoga at the Civic Center** 9:30 - 10:30 a.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center. Schedule classes online at the civic center website.

**M-W SAIL** 3:30 p.m., KP Community Services, 253-884-4440. Flexibility and balance for those over 60.

**M-W-F SAIL** 10 a.m., The Mustard Seed Project, 253-884-9814. Stay Active and Independent for Life.

**M-F REFIT/Rev+Flow Workout** Mon 7 p.m., Fri 9:30 a.m., WayPoint South, heartfitwp@gmail.com. Women's free fitness classes.

**M-F Tai Ji Quan** 11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Exercise training program for improving balance and preventing falls.

**Tuesday Summer Sounds at Skansie Brothers Park** 6 p.m. Free concerts start July 11.

**T-W-Th REFIT/Rev+Flow Workout** Tue and Wed 5:30/6:15 p.m. Thu 9:30/10:30 a.m. WayPoint North, heartfitwp@gmail.com. Women's free fitness classes.

**T-TH Toddler Indoor Park** 9:30 – 11:30 a.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center gym.

**T-TH Tai Chi** 9:45 a.m., KP Community Services, 253-884-4440.

**T-TH Summer Lunch in the Park** 12 p.m., Food Backpacks4Kids. Gateway Park and Home Park.

**T-TH-SA SAIL** 8:30 a.m., KP Community Services, 253-884-4440. Flexibility and balance for those over 60.

**T-SA KP Historical Museum** 1 – 4 p.m. Open hours through November.

**Wednesday Summer Concerts at Sehmel Homestead Park** 6 p.m. Free

concerts, starts July 12.

**Wednesday Gentle Yoga for Older Adults** 11:15 a.m., The Mustard Seed Project, 253-884-9814.

**Thursday Summer Stories for Families** 10:30 – 11 a.m., Key Center Library. For families with young children.

**Thursday County Council District 7 Constituent Office Hours** 11 a.m. – 2 p.m., Councilmember Robyn Denson and her staff. Call 253-798-6654 for information.

**Thursday Senior Bingo** 1 p.m., first and third Thursdays, KP Community Services, 253-884-4440.

**Thursday Waterfront Farmers Market** 1 - 6 p.m., Skansie Brothers Park, downtown Gig Harbor.

**Thursday KP Toastmasters** 8 a.m., WayPoint Church, 425-243-2618.

**Saturday Eddon Boatyard Tours** 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., Gig Harbor Boat Shop.

**Saturday Community Boat Restoration Program** 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., Gig Harbor Boat Shop. Call 253-857-9344 to register.

**Sunday WayPoint Community Dinners** 6 p.m. Free community dinners at WayPoint North and WayPoint South churches.

**MONTHLY MEETINGS**

**26th LD Democrats** First Thursdays, 6:30 p.m. Meeting locations vary, check 26d.org for monthly updates.

**Brunch** First Mondays, 11:30 a.m., The Mustard Seed Project.

**Caregiver Support Group** Third Mondays, 2 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project.

**Key Peninsula Advisory Commission** Fourth Thursdays, 5:30 p.m. piercecountywa.gov/5937

**KP Business Association** Luncheon, third Fridays, noon at El Sombrero. kpbusinessassociation@gmail.com

**KP Business Association** Business meeting, first Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m., All Around Gutters in Key Center. kpbusinessassociation@gmail.com

**KP Community Council** Second

Wednesdays on Zoom, 6:30 p.m. keypencouncil@gmail.com

**KP Citizens Against Crime** Third Thursdays, 7 – 8:30 p.m., Key Center fire station.

**KP Civic Center Association** Board meeting, second Thursdays, 7 – 8:30 p.m., Whitmore Room, KP Civic Center, 253-884-3456.

**KP Democrats** Third Mondays, 7 p.m., Home fire station, johnpatrick@aol.com, 253-432-4256.

**KP Emergency Prep** Third Thursdays, 7 p.m., KP Civic Center, eprep@kpciviccenter.org.

**KP Fire Regular Board Meeting** Second and fourth Tuesdays, 5 p.m. on Zoom, keypeninsulafire.org, 253-884-2222.

**KP Historical Society** First Tuesdays, 11 a.m. at museum, kphsmuseum@gmail.com.

**KP Lions Club** First and third Wednesdays, 6 p.m. Potluck at Key Center fire station, 253-525-0802, keypeninsulalions@outlook.com.

**Key Pen Parks Board of Commissioners Meeting** Second Mondays, 7 p.m., Home fire station, 253-884-9240.

**KP Veterans** First and third Mondays, 7 – 8 p.m., KP Lutheran Church, 253-884-2626.

**Lakebay Fuchsia Society** First Thursdays, 7 p.m. KP Civic Center, Whitmore Room, 253-884-2283.

**Longbranch Improvement Club** Third Wednesdays, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., Longbranch Improvement Club, 253-200-0308 or licweb.org.

**Peninsula Emergency Preparedness Coalition** Second Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m., check pep-c.org for meeting location.

**Peninsula School District Board Meeting** Fourth Thursdays, 6 – 7:30 p.m., 253-530-1000.

**Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department** Tues & Thurs, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Key Center Corral. Call 253-432-4948 for the schedule. Air Quality, Triple P, COVID-19, General HD, Water/Wells and Healthy Housing advice.

Spend Summer at **RED BARN** Youth Center  
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**AGES 6-11**  
 GOING INTO 1<sup>ST</sup>-5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE IN THE FALL  
 EXCEPTIONS MADE FOR SUMMER BIRTHDAYS

LAKEBAY MARINA REDEVELOPMENT

**OPEN HOUSE**  
 July 7th at 5-7 PM

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website - [waypoint-church.org](http://waypoint-church.org) Questions? Email the church - [office@waypoint-church.org](mailto:office@waypoint-church.org)

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GUEST SPEAKER NOELLE MURRAY

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TOP: A Harbor WildWatch tour explores the Purdy Spit at low tide. *Tina McKail, KP News*

CENTER LEFT: An orca pod in Burley Lagoon captures lots of attention on the last day of spring. *Amber Dunigan*

CENTER RIGHT: The osprey of Herron Island ferry. *Tina McKail, KP News*

LOWER LEFT: "They hid the keys from me again." *Tina McKail, KP News*

BOTTOM LEFT: A bee seems to slide off the petals of this blossoming lily. *Tina McKail, KP News*

BOTTOM RIGHT: Rachel Easton with Harbor WildWatch shares her knowledge. *Tina McKail, KP News*

