

## KP News Wins Record-breaking 25 Statewide Awards

KP News earned 14 awards in 2022, 17 in 2021, 14 in 2020, eight in 2019, and three in 2018.

### STAFF REPORT

Key Peninsula News staff and contributors shattered their own record Oct. 7 by earning 25 awards at the statewide Washington Newspaper Publishers Association 2023 Better Newspaper Contest at its annual ceremony, held this year in Kennewick.

Now in its 136th year, WNPA awards outstanding newspaper work published over 12 months.

Forty-seven newspapers across the state submitted 1,477 entries for the 2023 contest. KP News competed against daily and weekly publications in markets with a circulation of 6,500 or more. The competition is judged by a different state news organization each year. This year that was the Montana Newspaper Association.

Writers Eddie Macsalka and Chris Rurik dominated the competition, receiving five and four awards respectively.

Macsalka won first place in the long news story category for "Allegations of Unchecked Bullying at Middle School Made by Parents." The judges called it "well written and careful to present various perspectives on an issue of significant public interest."

He also took first place for an animal feature for "Be Goatful for What You Have"; second place for his profile of Lakebay resident Ed Gilkison in "Nationally Renowned Motorcycle Expert on Local Life"; third place for his sports story "New PHS Girls Basketball Coach Wants Seahawks Soaring to New Heights"; and third place for his artist profile "Working in Holly-

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Whiteman Cove with YMCA camp canoers. The causeway on right will be breached and bridged. *Jim Bellamy*

## Whiteman Cove Restoration Set to Begin in 2024 After Years of Study, Debate and Resistance

YMCA Camp Colman wrestles with impacts to camp facilities that will affect its programs and future.

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

Restoration of salmon habitat at Whiteman Cove is set to begin in 2024, following a \$6.9 million appropriation in the state capital budget.

The project, led by the Washington Department of Natural Resources, will restore the cove's historical channel, putting the cove under full tidal influence for the first time in six decades. YMCA Camp Colman has been wrestling with the impacts to its camp programs.

DNR Project Manager Birdie Davenport said that 90% of the design has been completed. DNR aims to put out a request for proposals by the end of the year. The plan consists of a 100-foot-wide channel in the same location as the

historical channel spanned by a concrete bridge with precast girders. The new bridge will be just north of the current roadway, allowing the road to curve more gently with better lines of sight.

DNR aims to do the work in late 2024, after Camp Colman's summer season ends.

Outdated water control structures will also be removed, including two large metal culverts, both failing, that were installed to allow water from Case Inlet into the cove. Following partial excavation on the Case Inlet side, the culvert pipes will be cut off. The section that remains will be filled with concrete before being buried when the beach is restored. A tide gate, originally meant to control water level in the cove and

currently inoperable, will also be demolished.

"This is the last major fish passage barrier on DNR-managed land," Davenport said. "It's a really significant project in that sense, in terms of our meeting the federal injunction to restore fish passage and also honoring our commitments to tribes to do this work, particularly the Squaxin Island Tribe, who is keenly interested in this project."

Whiteman Cove was impounded by the state in 1962 as a salmon-rearing facility. It was a failed venture. The lake-like cove had water either too turbid or too warm for young salmon to survive. "At the time they knew a lot less about salmon life

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CALENDARS, AWARDS AND UNICORNS.

## Here's What I Think About That

LISA BRYAN,  
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

"You know, there really is a lot of great stuff going on here," Meredith Browand said, smiling over a cup of coffee last week. A longtime columnist for this newspaper, Meredith took on the additional role of KP News Community Calendar editor about 18 months ago and found she really loves the work.

"After a while, you get to know people more. I get to hear their passion and see the pride they take in what they're doing. I keep learning more and more," she said.

When a frequent online calendar user hadn't entered the latest reading selection for the local book club, it was so out of character that Meredith reached out to make sure everything was OK. Together they laughed over how easy it is to get busy and simply forget.

But how heartwarming is having your absence noticed? What happens when you miss the familiarity of chatting with the grocery checker who relocated to Tennessee? Or when your friendly barista, who never did learn your name but knew your favorite afternoon drink preference, switches shifts? It doesn't take long to begin feeling a little lost in your own town.

There is a whole lot of living going on here that only a small fraction would know about if it wasn't for having a hyper-local focused Key Peninsula News.

The success of Key Peninsula News belongs to all of us. We are readers, volunteer staff and contributors, supporters and donors, and local business owners advertising their shops and services.

Several KP Newsies made the trek over the Cascades to Kennewick Oct. 7 for the annual Washington Newspaper Publishers Association convention. What strikes me every year is the devotion to journalism and dedication of these professionals to keep the presses rolling, all proud of their communities and the work we all do. There is always curiosity about us since we're one of the few nonprofit publishers. "How do you do it?"

I confess I love little more than sharing the strength of support we receive from our mostly rural community. "People don't just like it," I say. "They tell us again and again how much they love the paper. Everyone has an opportunity to read news with an entirely local focus whether they can afford to subscribe or donate or not."

The nonprofit Key Peninsula News has

been publishing for over 50 years. We operate without paywalls because we believe our community is reinforced by discovering these seemingly random threads that serve to bind us. Our online archives provide a wonderful look at the KP's past. The long-held idea that "all politics are local" has been slowly replaced by news of national politics and commentary becoming a divisive force. In the process, it looks like we've forgotten how to reach compromises to govern effectively.

At the Kennewick awards banquet, the name Key Peninsula News was called so many times we lost count altogether. We were, in a word, giddy and came home with an astonishing 25 awards.

And then came the unicorns, naturally. About mid-way through the evening, a friend shot me a text message, "You're going to love this photo!" I could hardly believe my eyes.

Once home, I was able to arrange a private interview with the chief unicorn.

"It's one of those things, like you said, the world just felt off-kilter," the chief unicorn told me. She was at Target and spotted three adult inflatable costumes on the rack, and wondered what fun they could be.

She called her close friend and said, "Don't think I'm crazy but we are going to

be unicorns." The friend never questioned it and declared herself in on the spot.

We said, "Let's just go cheer people up. First stop, visiting a local woman who recently broke her hip."

Later, photos and videos posted on Facebook of the unicorns spotted frolicking along quiet KP country roads or out on the water on paddleboards and kayaks, and more drew the attention of a Tacoma News Tribune reporter.

They asked for an interview but the unicorns initially declined, until the reporter agreed not to reveal the identity of

any unicorn.

"It's not about us, it's about the fact that we are doing this together to create joy and cultivate community," the chief unicorn said. "How are we going to have difficult conversations with people in the community if we don't even spend time with them?"

Coincidentally, that is our mission at Key Peninsula News.

All of our board, our entire staff, writers, photographers and distribution team members give thanks to all of our readers, advertisers and supporters for making it possible.

And if you have a thought on how to improve on that, please do not hesitate to send a letter to the editor at [editor@keypennews.org](mailto:editor@keypennews.org). ■



A herd of unicorns is called a blessing. *Richard Miller*



# Wildwood Hollow Farm: YouTube Farmers on the Key Peninsula

A young couple called to farming found their way to Lakebay. Now they want to learn how to best benefit the community.

VICKI BIGGS, KP NEWS

Brandon and Alanya Vuysteke are a farming couple who have big plans for their property on the Key Peninsula. The couple met in 2012 and married in 2015. “Farming came to us organically and was not something either of us necessarily was planning on,” Vuysteke said.

The couple moved to Washington from Colorado in 2020, landing in Port Orchard. They began to develop their acreage at that location but soon understood they would need a flatter piece of property for farming. They also realized that a piece of property with easier public access would be important to get their products to the community. That realization led them to 8 acres on the Key Peninsula Highway between Home and Key Center.

Their plot was originally purchased in 1999 by the Lakebay Community Church for the future home of their congregation. The church envisioned building and made a beginning by creating a community garden space that was well-used. However, it became evident to the church that they would not be able to build as they would have liked. “The church’s idea was that the property would somehow be a blessing to the community,” said Pastor Dan Whitmarsh.

The church entered an agreement with the Hope Recovery Center. HRC aimed to build a facility for drug and alcohol rehabilitation. However, as the community became more aware of those plans, public sentiment grew against the project. As a result, the sale was never completed. “There was disappointment that the project did not work and became such a flashpoint, with anger, rumors and innuendo,” Whitmarsh said.

The property was sold by the church to Harbor Hope Center in 2021, a social service organization dedicated to helping homeless youth find housing and skills as they age out of the foster system or other homeless situations. Although the plans were modest compared to HRC, the organization decided a Key Peninsula location was not optimal for its needs.

At this point in the timeline, Brandon and Alanya began communicating with Harbor Hope Center. The parcel seemed to have everything they were looking for; topography, community relationships and a centralized location on the Key Peninsula for making produce available locally. They bought it in March 2023.

“We want to make sure we are fitting into the needs of the community,” Alanya said. The couple envisions many things for their



“We want to make sure we are fitting into the needs of the community,” said farmer Alanya Vuysteke. *Brandon Vuysteke*

property. They will begin construction of a home and have plans for a market stand and a community gathering place. They want to stay local and limit the amount of “food miles” as much as possible — the number of miles food is transported before reaching consumers. “That was the big calling — how can we bring food to people? And beyond that, how can we maybe employ people?” Brandon said.

The couple will practice what is known as “regenerative farming.” They plan to use goats, pigs and chickens to help clear and nourish the land, and the animals will be rotated around the property to clear brush and vegetation. They will use organic methods and hope to be certified as an organic or natural farm.

Among the first products to be available for customers on the Key Peninsula will be dahlias and microgreens, the shoots of salad vegetables picked just after leaves have developed. They also plan to produce poultry and pork for consumption.

Neither Brandon nor Alanya have farming backgrounds. “We are YouTube farmers. We watched and followed many farmers on YouTube until we were able to meet more local farmers to work alongside and pick their brains, and share stories. In-person learning is



Brandon and Alanya Vuysteke on the farm. *Vicki Biggs*

so much more helpful,” Brandon said.

They network with other small farmers in the area and have gained valuable experience from their farm in Port Orchard. They were successful sellers at the Port Orchard Farmers Market this year with a variety of products.

The Vuystekes have extended family who come to visit and help with the labor-intensive farm chores. There are many tasks to complete before the Wildwood Hollow Farm on the peninsula is fully operational; they plan on two years. ■



# Local Actor William Michael Paul on His New Film ‘Kola’

The longtime actor and filmmaker reflects on his past, his challenges and what brought him to his latest work.

VICKI BIGGS, KP NEWS

At age 81, Key Peninsula resident William Michael Paul has just written and starred in his first short film, “Kola.” Since its premiere at the Blue Mouse Theatre in Tacoma, the film has been shown in more than 16 festivals including the Gig Harbor Film Festival in October. However, Paul is not resting on his laurels and is working on his second film.

“Kola,” meaning friend in the Lakota language, is about healing and friendship. The story is based on the life of Paul’s grandmother, Unci Mary, who raised him on the Standing Rock Reservation in the Dakotas. Paul is an enrolled member of the Hunkpapa Sioux and traces his ancestry back many generations.

“My grandmother is what we call an FBI — full-blooded Indian,” he said. She was a shaman woman and deeply spiritual. “She taught me Lakota language pretty good; I speak nothing but Lakota in the movie.” She raised him with all the Lakota traditions — pow-wows, sweats, dancing and language — which he continues to honor.

Some years ago, after retiring from his first career as an engineer, Paul began singing karaoke. One night he was approached by an audience member, asking if he had any interest in community theater. Paul took him up on the offer and his second career took off from there. He began doing stage work and photo shoots. When he landed a role in a movie with Sylvester Stallone, his acting career went to the next level. He can be found on the IMDb website with a filmography of 31 credits.

Paul and his wife Katie have lived on the Key Peninsula for 22 years, originally planning that it would be a move lasting just three years. However, they fell in love with the area and decided not to leave. “What an honor it is to live on the Key Peninsula. I don’t think people realize what they have. All you have to do is cross the Narrows Bridge and it changes. What we have out here is just this perfect little Camelot that no one knows about.”

Following the death of his daughter Julia Anne from cancer 12 years ago, and then his own health challenges with cancer, Paul found a growing desire to honor his grandmother. His wife supported him in this effort. Given his



William Michael Paul has 31 credits on his movie resume. *Tina McKail, KP News*

talents and connections, a short film seemed the best way to accomplish that. “I am in my winter season, so that is why I wanted to do this. Some type of legacy. Some people leave books, but I am blessed with movies,” he said.

“My grandmother was 4 foot, 11 inches,” he said. “She had a struggle with white people. They took her to the school, cut off her hair, forbid her language. She was totally abused all the time. She

was afraid to go out at night, I had to go with her. She was terrified. I had to escort her wherever we went. I always complimented her and told her how pretty she was. It was a struggle for her and to this day I thank her for getting us off the res and into Catholic boarding school. I did not like it at the time and did not speak for a year. I was so mad I wanted to run away. But I thank her for giving me an education and a spiritual



Raised on the Standing Rock Reservation, Paul works hard to preserve his heritage.

*Tina McKail, KP News*

foundation.”

Paul said he grew up with his grandmother until he was 18, and does not have much memory of his parents. His parents both died of acute alcoholism, “a disease that captures natives easily.” Paul said he believes in the truth of historical trauma and how it affects Native Americans, but he also believes people are responsible for themselves and need to “stand up and be proud of who you are.”

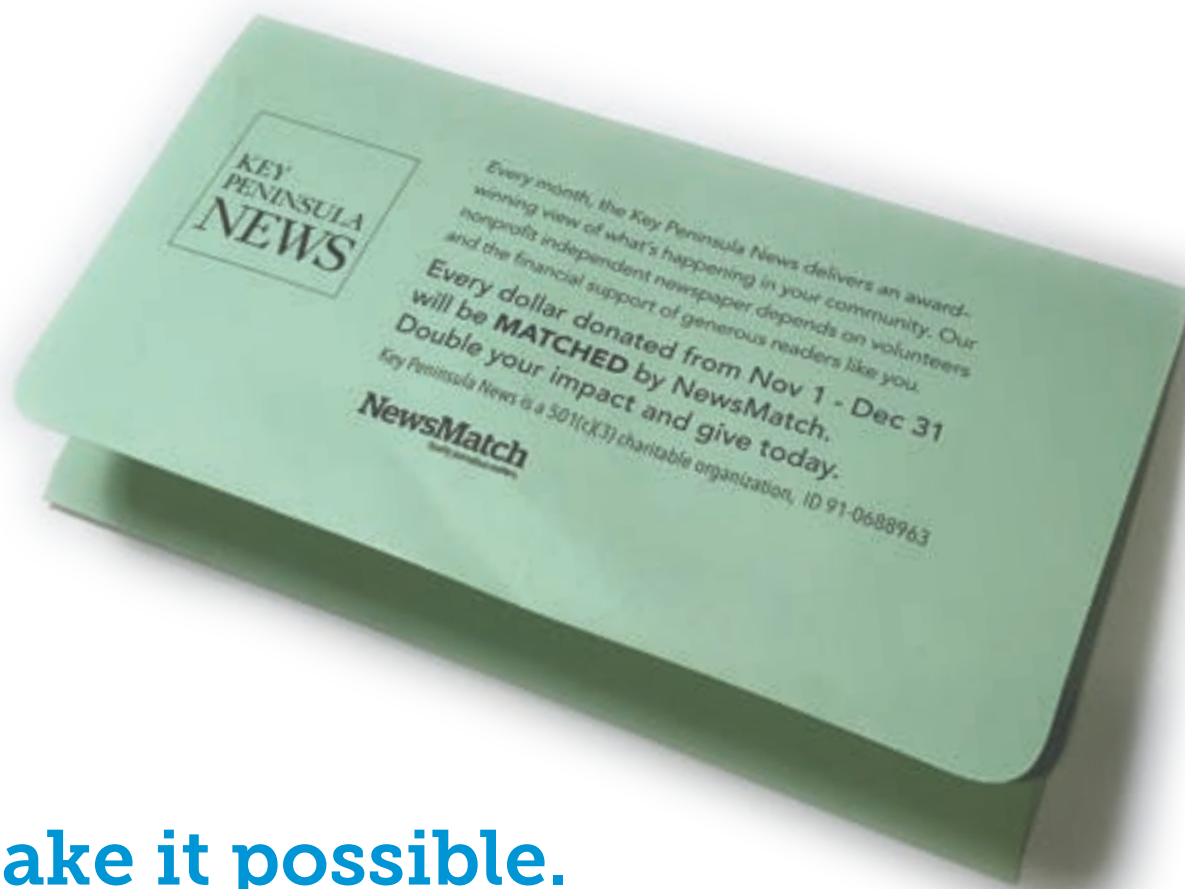
“Kola” was filmed on the Key Peninsula, with various locations including Paul’s own kitchen, a local park, with scenes in Gig Harbor. Two hundred actors were auditioned, and Kit Wilson of Gig Harbor came aboard as director. Paul’s wife was the executive producer. “It takes a year to get a movie together — no matter how hard you try,” he said.

Paul uses the word “blessing” often in conversation, referring to past events and day-to-day life. “I know I should not be here. I have had many near misses. There is a reason I was saved. I just try to do acts of kindness and be nice to people. Some days you do not feel like it. I’m the greatest guy in the world till I get out the door and meet people.” Paul’s message throughout the film is “how fragile we all are and how healing heals hearts. It is all about forgiveness. It all comes down to that, we just cannot go around being cold.

“A lot of the grandkids have embraced the Native way. We embrace the Native way along with Christian beliefs. I have come full circle, grew up in small towns, and now I am back in a small town. I love it.”

“Kola” is being showcased at film festivals around the world but will be available on YouTube early next year. ■

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**José Alaniz**  
WE LIVE HERE



## Class, Despair and 'The Maple Cutter'

Fellow KPers — get thee to YouTube and watch “The Maple Cutter,” a 2023 documentary by Daniel Hoffman and Lynn M. Thomas.

The 45-minute film tells the story of Justin Wilke, whom the feds charged with causing the August 2018 Maple Fire. The disaster charred over 3,000 acres of the Olympic National Forest in the vicinity of Hood Canal. In July 2021, after a trial, Wilke was found innocent of starting the fire, but guilty of public theft and illegal timber trafficking. He served over 20 months in all.

But Wilke’s journey is just the surface of what this riveting film explores. Gazing deeper, we find a tragic portrait of inequality, drug addiction, and ecological destruction in an economically distressed region practically at the KP’s doorstep.

Thomas, a history professor who specializes in Eastern and Southern Africa, and Hoffman, an anthropologist who directs the Jackson School of International Studies, are my colleagues at UW Seattle. I sat down with them for a chat about the film.

Hoffman told me that when they contacted Wilke, “He really wanted to talk.” While *The New York Times* and other major news outlets had covered the wildfire, no one interviewed him. With his bald pate, bright blue eyes and rather antic demeanor, the 40-year-old Wilke comes across as someone eager to get out his side of the story — even if that story has some Olympic-sized holes in it. That said, he is certainly intelligent, even magnetic, handsome. He looks in good shape. Physically, anyway.

“He’s very charismatic, but it is a kind of high-energy charisma,” said Hoffman.

As Wilke tells it, he and two accomplices were poaching maple trees in the middle of the night. “Someone” lit up a wasp or hornet’s nest using an accelerant, likely gasoline; the fire got out of control and became the Maple Fire. Drugs and alcohol were probably involved. But Wilke expresses outrage that anyone would think that he — who claims a long lineage of responsible loggers in the region — would have ever started that fire. “That’s my home!” he says of the forest.

Maybe because I’m teaching Dostoevsky’s “Crime and Punishment” this fall, but to me Wilke gives off a strong Raskolnikov vibe. At times he seems outright manic (in most scenes he is smoking or drinking a sugary beverage), and you get the sense that in addition to deflecting blame, he’s telling these fancy

university professors what he thinks they want to hear. It’s a fascinating onscreen cat-and-mouse game.

“That’s part of what we were trying to get across: Is he a reliable narrator?” Hoffman said. “Every time we left after spending a day with him that was the conversation we were having. How much of this does he believe, how much of it should we believe?”

And what about the drugs? About two-thirds of the way in, we arrive at a climactic moment. It happened during their third shooting session, out in the woods. The filmmakers wanted Wilke to address his meth use more directly; up until then, he’d mostly avoided it.

From offscreen Thomas asks him what he thinks “meth maple” means. (“Lots of people use that phrase,” she explained to me.) Wilke gazes uncertainly at the camera, for once at a loss for words. After a few seconds, he mutters something about how maybe it means to feel “sketchy” in the woods.

“To us, that’s the most complicated, unnerving moment in the film,” Thomas told me. “I think he took so much pride in himself as someone who was knowledgeable about cutting maple that he never wanted what he understood as a craft reduced to a meth addiction.”

But perhaps the best thing about “The Maple Cutter” is that it moves past the vexed issue of Justin Wilke’s trustworthiness to address the socioeconomic reality that leads people like him to do what they do. For one thing: why maple? Most consider that a low-value timber; at one point Wilke even calls it “the weed of the forest.”

True, but some specimens of maple have “figure,” a rare wood pattern prized especially by guitar-makers. As discussed in the film, Carlos Santana’s performance at the 2000 Grammy Awards led to a surge in demand for figured maple. People in rural areas that have gone through hard times can make quick money meeting that demand by poaching in the national forests.

The film quotes Anne Minden, a retired Forest Service special agent, saying that these are crimes of opportunity and desperation. “If they lived in the city,” she says, “these are the same people who would probably be stealing catalytic converters.”

At his trial, everyone agreed that Wilke is a hard worker who knows the forest intimately.

To hear him tell it, he had to cut those trees to make it through a rough patch. “I bought a truck” with the money, he explains, which led to a full-time job and other benefits. “I got rid of those people out of my life that were dragging me down,” he adds. “Then one day,” he says, grimly, “I get a knock on the door.”

I believe Wilke. He was hurting. That poignant moment also made me wonder what a micro-loan program — or just a better safety net in general — could have done for him.

Thomas and Hoffman explained that Wilke never rose to critique the complex systemic factors that lead to tragedies like this, though he did think that the federal prosecutors had their priorities reversed. Why were they going after the lowest folks in the food chain, the poachers, instead of the mill owners who bought the illegal product or the guitar companies profiting at the end of the supply chain?

The codirectors also told me that they were attracted to Wilke’s story because matters related to resource extraction and inequality are often discussed in the media only about developing countries (like the African nations where they’ve done fieldwork) — but they’re not often brought up in a U.S. context, and never by urban middle-class folks. Or as Thomas put it, by “people who like to go hiking in the woods.”

Yet the dynamics are virtually identical. I was most moved when Wilke, as he often does, expresses awe in the presence of the woods; he clearly loves the forest. Then, in the same breath, he’ll joke about a tree he stole. Usually, in our mediascape, you’re either a “leave it alone” tree hugger or a “cut it all down and sell it” capitalist; it’s not often you see those two mindsets co-existing in the same person at the same time. And yet such attitudes are common worldwide: the entanglement of the aesthetic, even spiritual, experience of the forest with its monetary, extractive value — as raw material to be chain-sawed and dragged off. “Those were not distinguishable in (Wilke’s) mind,” Hoffman said.

“The Maple Cutter” is a sobering, even-handed examination of how economic blight fuels both human suffering and the ecological crisis. It does similar work to Lyndsie Bourgon’s book “Tree Thieves: Crime and Survival in North America’s Woods,” bringing the story very close to home. Thomas and Hoffman told me they’d be happy to arrange a screening of the film on the KP, with community Q&A afterward. I hope it happens.

*José Alaniz is a professor in the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures and the Department of Cinema and Media Studies (adjunct) at U.W. He lives blissfully with his wife and many animals in Longbranch.*

**Carolyn Wiley**  
DEVIL’S HEAD DIARY



## Banned but Not Forgotten

As the countdown clock ticked away the waning days of summer, school and library boards around the country were besieged with demands to limit access to an ever-expanding list of books. September and most of October

went by in a foggy Groundhog Day slow-mo repeat as I twiddled my thumbs and watched the news while state after state placed severe and restrictive limitations on libraries.

“What” is taught and “How” it is taught has taken on a hair-on-fire urgency. Since 2019, book banning efforts have risen by 40% and, according to the American Library Association’s lists of banned books, a growing percentage of the targeted books are those written for the youngest readers.

“And Tango Makes Three” by Peter Parnell and Justin Richardson has led the pack of frequently challenged books since it was published in 2005. This is a primary-level, nonfiction picture book about penguins. It’s the story of Roy and Silo, two chinstrap penguins at the Central Park Zoo who developed a close bond. During nesting season, zookeepers noticed that the two penguins were attempting to hatch a rock. Zoo personnel replaced the rock with an abandoned egg. The pair successfully incubated the egg and assumed care for Tango, their baby chick.

Since Roy and Silo are both male and Tango is not, concerns arose about the penguin book promoting acceptance of non-traditional families for penguins and humans both.

Even more interesting than the fact that a book has been banned, is figuring out why. In some instances, the bias that prompted the challenge is easy to identify, others not so much. Curiosity aroused by this book-banning activity birthed a review of easy-reader picture books that have been loved by children for generations.

One such book is the 1947 publication “Goodnight Moon” by Margaret Wise Brown, which was banned from the New York Public Library shelves for 25 years. The reason? It was overly sentimental and had no moral lesson. However, in 1972 it was also banned because the back cover photo of Clement Hurd, the illustrator, included a cigarette. This pro-smoking subliminal messaging was eliminated in 2005 when Hurd’s son gave permission to have his father’s photo digitally altered.

Dr. Seuss’s books are often targeted for themes that encourage general mischief. The 2014 challenge against “Hop on Pop” (1963) was more specific: It “incites violence against fathers.”

The original complaint included a plea to allow fathers to sue libraries and librarians for injuries suffered by male parents who may have been hopped upon.

“Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?” and all other books written by Bill Martin Jr. were on the chopping block until someone realized that the complainant had confused Bill Martin, Jr. with Bill Martin, author of “Ethical Marxism: the Categorical Imperative of Liberation.” That challenge was withdrawn.

In the read-aloud or catch-the-film category,

both “Alice in Wonderland” (1865) and “The Wizard of Oz” (1947) were banned. In 1900, Alice exposed children to offensive language, sexual fantasy, and diminished respect for authority figures. Sixty years later it was banned again when sensibilities were trampled by that hookah-smoking caterpillar. Dorothy and Toto were banished from shelves upon publication in 1947. The pesky Wizard and those witches used magic, Dorothy promoted socialist values, and uppity females challenged authority.

Normally, to remove a book from circulation a formal written complaint is filed with a governing board, but there is another type of censorship witnessed by a school librarian (not in the Peninsula School District).

It was check-out time and the third graders were queuing up with their selections when there was a ruckus. One of the boys was wailing in pain, and the girl next in line was howling in righteous indignation. Her explanation was that she had told him he could not check out his chosen book. He had responded negatively to her directive, so she was forced to wield the power of the written word. She whacked him upside the head with her chosen books. Her goal was to save him from going to hell. Somehow she had gotten the idea that Harry Potter and his ilk pave the path to eternal damnation, so she felt justified in her efforts to protect him from that dire fate.

Although I never fielded a formal complaint in my years riding herd in the education rodeo (by which I mean “teaching”), book banning is a sensitive issue with me because my personal kid-book collection was subjected to what I consider heavy-handed censorship.

Developing an agenda to inculcate my students with subversive ideas is beyond my capabilities, so I was taken aback when I realized that one parent was systematically confiscating my books. Folklore and legends (Norse, Greek and Native American) were the first to disappear. The blasphemous content included

animals that talked, mystical creatures who romped through the pages, and main characters who were small “g” gods. She instructed her son, an avid reader, to “borrow” all the books in the offending category. She may have had other themes in mind but I intervened before she had collected enough books to ignite a newsworthy bonfire.

The formal censorship process may be accepted practice, but in my book, direct censorship is not just unacceptable, it is also extremely rude. Assault is rude. Theft is rude. Stifling a child’s freedom to explore ideas is rude. Be courteous, and respect their right to read.

One can no more predict what a child will get out of a book than what they will dream that night. And that is because those two things come from the same place and that is the heart, where love rules and inspiration is born.

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

**Anna Brones**  
FRESH TAKE



## Lead With Humanity

A few weeks ago, I flew home to Seattle from Missoula. I was looking forward to getting home, excited that the flight wasn’t more than an hour. I settled into my window seat and watched as the final passengers boarded. I popped in my earbuds in an attempt to tune out the world around me.

A family that I had seen earlier in the waiting area got on board. Two kids led the way, followed by their father and mother. Behind the mother was a third child, an incredibly agitated daughter. You could tell she was resisting getting onto the plane with every ounce of her body. “I don’t want to go!” she

shrieked, as her mother held her firmly by the wrist.

I wondered when the tantrum would subside.

It didn’t. The girl, probably 8 or 9, continued to scream and put her body weight into trying to pull away. The family managed to get to their row, which happened to be right behind mine. I kept my earbuds in, but she was screaming so loudly I could barely hear what I was listening to.

I could sense the agitation on the plane, and even more so in her parents. I overheard the father, exasperatedly apologizing to his fellow passengers, “I’m so sorry, she’s autistic, she’s stressed about flying.”

I immediately took my earbuds out. This didn’t feel like a situation to avoid, it felt like a situation that required presence.

A flight attendant came up and sweetly talked the girl through how the plane would take off and what it might feel like. She offered up the quintessential pair of wings to pin on the girl’s shirt. The woman sitting next to me mentioned that she worked with children, and offered her pillow in case the girl wanted to hold it. I turned around and asked if art supplies might help, knowing I had pen and paper in my backpack. She didn’t want either but the father smiled at us both thankfully.

A man from the front of the plane walked up and sat down in the middle of the aisle. He was holding an infant. He held the infant up and introduced her. “You know, the first time she went on a plane she was scared too,” he said, making an immediate connection. He stayed there, talking to the girl calmly. Meanwhile, someone passed a bag of “magic M&Ms” to the mother.

It was a moment of humanity. A moment of everyone’s best side. When people need help, we have the capacity to provide it.

Eventually, the parents managed to get the daughter in her seat with a seatbelt on. “I don’t want to look out the window,” she said to her

mother. Her mother lowered the window shade and situated her daughter with a pair of headphones. She held her while they watched something on an iPad as if they were sitting on a couch at home.

The plane took off, and the child’s agitation dissipated. I looked back about halfway through the flight. The daughter had swapped her aisle seat for her mother’s window seat, and the shade was open.

Sitting there in my seat and reflecting on the situation, I felt embarrassed at my own initial response. If I hadn’t gotten a sense of context about what the child was experiencing, how would I have felt then? Could I have led with more compassion instead of initial annoyance?

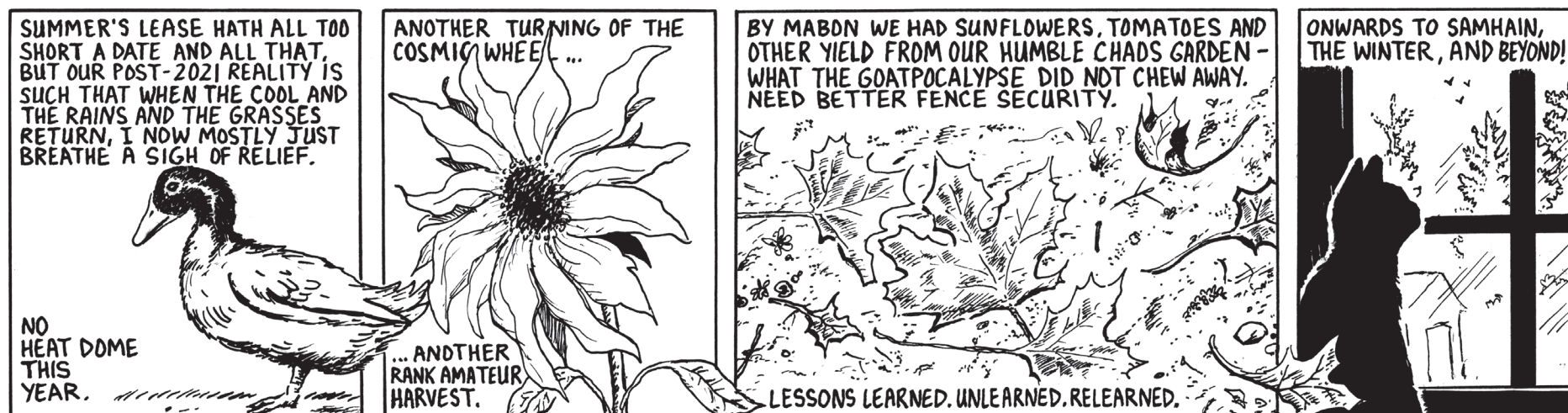
Our brains make judgments of people in split seconds, an evolutionary response that’s intended to keep us safe. Which means that we have to actively work at pushing past those initial impulses. We have to ask ourselves: do we turn away from someone, or do we turn towards them?

We can do this on a personal, individual level, but I also think it’s required of us on a larger, more global level. This is often harder, more complex. When we don’t have a personal experience or a personal connection point, it’s much easier to make overarching assumptions about entire people, entire cultures.

We don’t know what is happening in people’s internal worlds. But we make assumptions and judgments as if we did. To lead with our humanity is to choose to lead, not with preconceived notions, but with our curiosity. We do not need a qualifier to empathize with someone who is going through pain. We do not need context to extend our own humanity. We can feel, we can connect. It’s in our nature to do just that.

Empathy might be part of our overall human capacity, but it’s still something that we can get better at — empathy functions like a muscle,

## José Alaniz WE LIVE HERE: POST EQUINOX



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and the more we work at it, the more we do it, the easier it becomes. Our brains might elicit an initial snap judgment, but we can make a choice to override that and lead with curiosity, we can extend outwards when it feels a little uncomfortable, we can work at challenging our own assumptions.

As the plane landed in blustery Seattle, an enormous rainbow covered the sky. I snapped a photo.

When we were gathering our bags to disembark, I overheard someone asking the girl how the flight ended up being. “Not that bad!” she said.

I reached over the seat and showed her my picture. “This is what I saw out the window on my side of the plane,” I said. She promptly responded, “We didn’t have that on our side. Bummer!”

I smiled. “Maybe you’ll see one on your next flight.”

*Anna Brones is a writer and artist who lives in Vaughn.*

**Jack Dunne**  
FROM THE CITIOT DESK



## Blackberries in Heaven

I would like to skip the question about whether heaven exists, maybe another time, but let’s think about the idea of heaven. I’m sure some of you have a pretty clear picture, maybe based on what you’ve learned growing up or read, or heard more recently, and I think that’s great. My own ideas are evolving, maybe as I age it becomes more interesting, at least to me.

Are there blackberries in heaven? I bet. Do they take over everything? Probably not. They are always ripe, surely. Do they have thorns? This is the interesting part for me. I’ve asked a few friends, and the thoroughly valid consensus is no. I even got a “hell no,” from one respondent, and I’ll leave the irony alone. But I bet yes. In my heaven, things are not that easy. You need to use a little caution, think about what you’re doing, and get a little feedback on choices, including a little pain when appropriate. I hope no one will mind if I curse a little when I get pricked in heaven. I’m not sure I can pick blackberries without cursing a little.

Who’s there? Maybe everybody; certainly comics, songwriters and musicians, artists. I haven’t imagined Hitler around, but Nixon’s there, and he still doesn’t have a lot of friends. Seventy-two virgins, our own planet? Some

ideas are really tough for me to accept, for a lot of reasons, but good luck to anyone so chosen. My heaven has no guy with a list, no gates at all. I bet folks disagree sometimes, but they don’t get mad about it. I bet we finally understand a lot more than we do now, and that makes it hard to get angry. It’s harder to be really selfish if you understand more because selfishness is stupid in the big picture, and if I hope for anything in heaven it’s the big picture. So I bet we get along pretty well.

David Byrne wrote, “Heaven is a place where nothing ever happens.” I’m not sure that’s what he really thinks but it’s an interesting idea. But I bet lots happens, things change, time still makes sense, there’s stuff to do, or not do. There’ll be choices, seasons, things to learn, surprises, maybe some minor disappointments.

I don’t think there are guns at all. Why would there be? There might be football, a grand game of chess-level coordination where violent forces clash, but no injuries in heaven. There’s baseball for sure, and sometimes we’ll strike out, but we’ll get to try again. We’ll get hungry sometimes, but there’s plenty of food, and some of it will be really, really good, but not all of it. There’s lots of laughter, but mostly that slow and easy kind like when a friend says something witty.

Bees? Sure. And they’ll work just as hard, and defend themselves, with stings like the blackberry blossoms they love, but maybe less of the toxin that hurts for so long. It won’t take much for me to respect them and leave them to their lives and hives. All the dogs will be there, and the horses, and they’ll have plenty of room to run free. I hope everyone speaks the same language, or there’s some kind of subtitle technology so that we all understand each other. I like our words and the whole process of thinking out loud or on paper. No mindreading. A little privacy please, and let me think before I speak. Maybe you can imagine that I’m a guy who needs editing.

No dementia. No cancer. We’re all fine. But how about mortality? What will life be like when there’s no end to it? That scares me some, but I suppose I’ll get used to it.

Can we see the living world from there? I kind of hope not. Or maybe it just won’t matter much, and we won’t pay any attention to it. I bet there’s no cell signal. Do we even know we’re dead? Or did I already die, and nobody told me. In my heaven, it’s a lot like this.

*Jack Dunne lives gratefully in Lakebay.*

## Letters to the Editor

### REGARDING “EV POWER TO THE PEOPLE”: GREEN ENERGY ROBS POWER

This column (October 2023), though well written, is a real headscratcher for me.

Fracking for oil in shale is bad, but de-watering is good?

De-watering is the process used in fracking or extracting minerals (lithium, cobalt, copper, nickel, graphite) from mines.

Extracting lithium requires 500,000 gallons of water per metric ton, while copper requires about 100,000. We should rejoice in our “power”?

Tell that to farmers, both domestic (Nevada) and in the so-called “Lithium Triangle” which includes Chile and Argentina, where groundwater for communities and livestock is being depleted for extraction of minerals. Where is the farmers’ “power” as their protests fall on the deaf ears of government? Bolivia will be next, as it has the most underdeveloped lithium reserves.

The Cortez Hills project in Nevada has lowered the water table 1,200 feet through de-watering, or artificial draining of aquifers. The aquifers could take 100 years to replenish, affecting streams, wells, watersheds and wildlife. Residents of Lander County have been promised by the mining companies, “We’ll put the water back.” However, the water is put back in a different place, not where it was drained, because it’s physically impossible to do so.

Green energy in many cases is as detrimental to the environment as the fossil fuel industry and there is an agenda to push it forward no matter what the cost to farmers, community water access and worldwide water sources in general. Many of the above-listed minerals are from drought-stricken countries and arid regions, which makes the green push even more questionable.

I don’t see much difference between driving a gasoline-powered car or a battery-powered car. I would rather give the “power” to farmers and communities whose livelihood is based on clean, available water. Green energy robs those people of that power.

*Victoria Nelsen, Lakebay*

### READING THE TEA LEAVES

Already I have lived longer than my dad and brothers. At 68 I find myself living happily in Longbranch after a lifetime as a third-generation Californian. We moved up to be closer to our grown

kids and grandkids. We quickly realized that the freeway system here isn’t what it is down south, so frequency of visits was an early dream. Now we are settling in, knowing that winter is on the way and the season will be punctuated with welcome holiday family visits.

So now in Longbranch, I find myself reading and watching the tea leaves of nature: the turning leaves, the moving clouds, the shifting breezes. I can tell now when the rain will stop as the birds quickly return to their feeders. If only I could have read the tea leaves of my life more carefully in the past. I had no idea how different and how good my life would become. Not saying it hasn’t been difficult. As parents, we have watched our kids struggle while they attempt to read the tea leaves of their own lives.

We are observing a cataclysmic upheaval of hatred play out in various parts of the world and also in our own country. It has become so easy to target one another with hate. Did we collectively read the tea leaves correctly? Are we intended to live this way?

Are the world leaders consulting the teacups? Where are they obtaining the wisdom needed to safely guide us all to a safe harbor? They need to sit down with many cups of tea, I think, to consult the leaves, to speak with us, and to listen to each other.

Here in Longbranch on this gray day, I am sipping on my chai spice tea and hoping to see good things for all of us at the bottom of the cup.

*Suzanne Brint, Longbranch*

### FIRE COMMISSIONER, POSITION 3 RACE

I appreciated John Pat Kelly’s letter to the editor regarding the current KP fire commissioner position 3 election where he expressed his disappointment that I am running unopposed (“Write-in Candidate for Fire Commissioner,” October 2023). What he failed to mention is that Candidate Kelly originally filed for the position 3 seat only to drop out shortly after I decided to file for re-election.

My reasons for seeking another term remain the same as when I submitted for appointment in 2016. I felt then, as I do now, that I would bring a calm, reasoned voice and analytical mindset to decisions confronting the fire district to address both the present and long-term needs of our community.

While I can respect that there can be differences of opinion regarding certain



decisions made, both by the previous fire chief and the current board, they have always been made in the best long-term interest of this community. But Candidate Kelly prefers to use charged language like “squandering” and “scheme” when referring to policy or decisions that he disagrees with.

And now advocating a write-in candidate this late in the campaign for a position that both he and retired Assistant Fire Chief Hal Wolverton chose not to pursue, is just typical politics.

Yes, you read me correctly, Wolverton also originally filed as a candidate for position 3, only to then withdraw his name the following Monday. Why the change of heart now? This is something that all voters have a right to ask.

If he was truly interested in seeking the office rather than enjoying his well-earned retirement, the honorable decision would have been to not withdraw his name and instead commit to a campaign

of integrity, including complying with Public Disclosure Commission requirements expected of all candidates for public office.

It's been my honor to serve and as always, I remain committed to serving to the best of my ability. Ultimately the decision is up to you, the voters. All I ask is that you do your own research to reach a fully informed decision regarding who has earned your support and your vote.

*Shawn Jensen, Vaughn*

#### **FIRE COMMISSIONER, POSITION 3 RACE**

If chosen by the will of the citizens of the Key Peninsula, as a write-in candidate for fire commissioner position 3 with Pierce County Fire District No. 16, I, Hal Wolverton, vow to bring back fiscal responsibility, focused planning on the needs of the people, and to strengthen our volunteer force to the level it was before the 2019 administration. The current board of commis-

sioners have lost focus on their duties by continuously defunding the volunteer firefighter program, and the facility maintenance and apparatus replacement budgets each year. Our reserves are at an all-time low. Yet they have purchased controversial properties (with no real plan) putting the department in higher debt and our community at risk. We need to take control back and focus on what is best for the Key Peninsula.

*Hal Wolverton, Lakebay*

#### **FIRE COMMISSIONERS ON THE BALLOT**

I encourage all voters to cast their ballots for two very deserving candidates for fire commissioner positions.

Shawn Jensen, position No. 3, has been a fire commissioner for the past seven years and has shown that he is very capable and has worked tirelessly on behalf of the Key Peninsula citizens and the Key Peninsula Fire Department. I have been fortunate to work

with Commissioner Jensen these past years and he is professional, knowledgeable, detail-oriented and extremely hard-working. He takes a very common sense and balanced approach to his position and fiduciary responsibilities in keeping our community safe.

Cambria Queen, position No. 5, has served on the Citizens Advisory Panel for the last several years, recently as chair. She is an attorney and an advocate for the fire department and community. She has been endorsed by our local firefighters' union. Her desire to bring her expertise, balance and knowledge to the position is clearly evident and I believe she will make an outstanding fire commissioner on behalf of all community members.

Please join me in voting for these outstanding candidates for fire commissioner positions.

*Stan Moffett, Lakebay*

*Fire Commissioner and Chair, Position No. 2*

## OBITUARIES



**Robert Boll**

Beloved husband, father, grandfather and son, Rob Boll died Sept. 22 at the age of 61.

Rob and his wife Kathy left the Gig Harbor area and moved to Independence, Kansas, last year, seeking a more peaceful life in the country. Rob instantly fell in love with the area and told his wife he'd be happy never leaving the state.

A former Key Peninsula resident, Rob was a master carpenter who thoroughly loved the process of building and worked in construction for over 40 years. Before leaving Gig Harbor he was employed at Harrison Homes, where he built many beautiful homes but, more

importantly, many relationships.

He was recently employed with Koehn Construction Services in Fredonia, where he was just beginning to enjoy new friends and their shared camaraderie. He felt he found a new family there and was eager to begin his projects.

Rob leaves behind his wife Kathy; children Jessica, Robert and Anna; stepchildren David (Amy) and Alisha (Jeremy); grandchildren Logan, Haley, Natalie, Robert, Katie, JJ, Bea and Sam; new great-grandson Damien; and his mother, Patti Boll.

Rob had a tremendous love for the Lord, and he will be greatly missed by his family and friends. A memorial service was held Oct. 14, at the First Baptist Church in Independence.

#### **Elizabeth Jane Thompson**

On the evening of Sept. 16, we lost our matriarch. Elizabeth Jane Thompson died at her Longbranch home one month shy of her 100th birthday.

The daughter of a naval officer, she spent most of her childhood in China and Hawaii. Her whole family was witness to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Her father was on the Yorktown. The rest of the



family watched from their home in the hills above the harbor.

As a student at the University of Hawaii, Jane wanted to learn to drive. Her father's driver offered to teach her. He survived the ordeal and they were married in 1944.

While stationed in Germany in the late 1950s, the family fell in love with Bernese mountain dogs and brought home several to raise on their farm in Longbranch, a descendant of which was with Jane when she passed.

It is difficult to distill a full life into a few paragraphs. Jane was a lady of a bygone era. Etiquette, reliability, and proper grammar were paramount. She

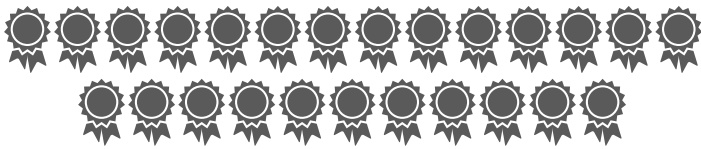
wrote wonderful letters. She was the original Google. You could ask her a question on any topic and on the rare occasion she didn't know the answer, she'd find the book that could.

She is survived by six of her seven children.



**Stephen Owen**

Steve Owen went to be with the Lord Sept. 12, at 5:02 a.m. He was 75 years old. Come join us to celebrate his life and hear Steve's life story at noon, Nov. 11, at Gig Harbor Covenant Church located at 4901 Gustafson Rd. NW, just off Wollochet Drive in Gig Harbor.



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Holiday shopping could get easier for some KP residents.. Shutterstock photo

# Pierce County Funds a Free Holiday Weekend Shuttle for the KP

If well utilized, the short-term pilot program could pave the way to further funding and expanded service across the peninsula.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

Thanks largely to efforts by Pierce County Councilmember Robyn Denson (D-7th, Gig Harbor), Key Peninsula residents will be able to take a holiday weekend shuttle between the Longbranch Improvement Club and Gig Harbor for shopping and errands at no cost. The service begins on the Friday following Thanksgiving and will run every Saturday and Sunday through Dec. 24.

The county will provide \$15,000 to fund two vans with a 15-passenger capacity including two wheelchairs. The vehicles will provide eight trips, leaving the Longbranch Improvement Club approximately hourly between 8:30 a.m. and 3:45 p.m. Stops include Evergreen Elementary, Key Peninsula Middle School, Key Center, Lake Kathryn Village, Costco-Target, downtown Gig Harbor near Heritage Distillery on Harborview and Pioneer, and three in the Gig Harbor shopping areas near Ross, Fred Meyer and Safeway. From Safeway, the vans will loop directly back to Longbranch with the last van arriving in Longbranch at about 6 p.m.

All ages are welcome, but those under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

The shuttle is a pilot program, part of a long-term plan to bring safe and reliable transportation to the community. "We've been talking about this forever," Denson said. "Transportation is mentioned over and over again by residents as a need on the Key Peninsula. It's not just low-income people without cars asking for transportation, it's people of all income and ability levels."

Shuttle drivers will document ridership, and utilization will provide evidence of need, which will in turn impact possible funding in the future. "The best way to support the system is to ride the system," said Steve Hutchins,

owner of Around the Sound, the company hired to provide the service. Around the Sound contracts with healthcare systems in the region to provide transportation to medical appointments. Hutchins said that eight riders per trip would demonstrate sufficient demand for such a service.

"Drawing from the data collected by the KP Partnership for a Healthy Community," Denson said, "I worked with county human services, county finance, and local transportation experts to come up with a program that fits with funds available." (See "Another Attempt to Address Transportation on the Key Peninsula Emerges," KP News, April 2023.)

Daeveene May, a Pierce County Human Services Department transportation program specialist, said of that survey, "My key take-aways were that 96% of transportation is in private vehicles, people want safe and reliable transportation, and the primary destinations are Key Center, Lake Kathryn Village, Gig Harbor, Port Orchard, and Tacoma. People also want good walking and biking trails."

Partnership co-director Susan Paganelli said that another key finding was that lack of transportation led to social isolation, especially for young people.

"We are actively searching for funding to support a more comprehensive and KP-specific set of options," Paganelli said. "These would include electric vans running scheduled loop routes throughout the KP (not just along the KP Highway spine) and that will connect reliably to other transportation systems in Purdy. These regular KP routes, along with some on-demand options, are what our community is asking for."

The holiday shuttle schedule will be available by mid-November at [www.piercecountywa.gov/kpdrives](http://www.piercecountywa.gov/kpdrives).



## RESTORATION FROM PAGE 1

cycle and their needs,” Davenport said. “That was a time with a lot of learning.”

Josh Sutton, facilities executive for YMCA of Greater Seattle, said, “What’s ironic, is now, in the name of salmon, some 60 years later, the state is going to come back and undo what they did.”

Camp Colman moved to its current location on the south shore of the cove in 1966, when the state no longer needed land adjacent to the cove. The camp hosts summer campers and school-year students in the thousands. It focuses on outdoor skills, personal empowerment and environmental education. Boating and swimming on the placid cove have been hallmarks of the camp experience.

Two years ago, the YMCA received an appropriation of half a million dollars to study the impacts on the camp of the cove’s restoration. “We’ve been through a few iterations of conversations, some of them more adversarial, more of them lately friendly, with DNR,” Sutton said. “Where we’re at, it is what is going to happen. And it does provide great opportunity to have conversations. We have thousands of kids who come every year for outdoor environmental education. It provides a great opportunity to teach about salmon habitat and the importance of salmon in the community and to our environment. We like that.

“But the impacts are huge. Depending on how you stage it out, we’re talking 40, 50 million dollars by the time you’re done. For us, that’s not something we can do on our own. That’s something we need the state to help us with for the impact that they’re creating.”

While the camp’s main lodge is safe, two cabins and a campfire area will have to move, as the return of tidal action creates a risk of hillside erosion. New fire suppression systems will be required. Without dependable water levels, swimming will have to move to an as-yet-unconstructed pool. The boathouse and dock will be removed and possibly rebuilt on the Case Inlet side, where boating conditions are generally rougher.

With 120 acres, Sutton said, the camp has room to work with. But the challenge of finding funding means they will be forced to adopt a phased approach. “It will be a better habitat when it’s done,” Sutton said. “That’s absolutely true. This will become the largest classroom.”

While Whiteman Cove does not have a spawning stream, it has been identified as key habitat for salmon. Studies



The causeway to YMCA Camp Colman along the cove will see significant changes in 2024. *Tina McKail, KP News*

in the South Sound have shown that juvenile salmon circulate throughout the South Sound, seeking food and shelter in pocket coves as they grow. Similar projects throughout Puget Sound have created a network of safe havens for young salmon. Whiteman Cove is in an important location within Nisqually Reach, according to Davenport.

Historical photographs and nautical charts going back to the 1800s show remarkable consistency in the configuration of the cove’s sandspit and tidal channel, according to Merri Martz, project engineer with the firm Anchor QEA. Earlier project proposals involving tide gates and fish ladders, which aimed to maintain the cove’s current water level, were rejected by DNR as being too likely to injure juvenile fish. Several rounds of hydrological modeling have resulted in the design of a 100-foot bridge spanning a natural channel in its original location.

Martz said that juvenile salmon tend to avoid water with currents over two feet per second and high turbulence. Only by restoring the cove’s full tidal prism through a wide channel could the design ensure that juvenile salmon would be able to enter and exit the cove at all tidal stages. There will be space under the bridge for the channel to meander and morph naturally.

### A recap of “The Culvert Case”

Twenty-one Washington tribes, joined by the United States, asked the U.S. District Court in January 2001 to compel the state to repair or replace culverts that impede salmon migration.

In 2007, the district court sided with the tribes’ contention that building and maintaining culverts diminished the size of salmon runs, violating the state’s treaty obligations.

In 2013, the U.S. District Court ordered the state to increase the rate of removal of state-owned culverts and replacement of culverts that adversely impact salmon habitat by 2030.

The state appealed to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, which delivered a unanimous decision allowing the U.S. District order to stand.

Attorney General Bob Ferguson appealed that decision to the U.S. Supreme Court. The Court rendered a split decision June 11, 2018 — a tie vote that was a win for the tribes and ended the 17-year-long legal battle.

Most of the cove at present is two to three feet deep, with water up to eight feet deep near the Camp Colman docks. At low tide after restoration, the cove will be a mudflat with branching finger channels. At high tide, it will fill with water. Martz said she expects its fringing salt marsh to “expand and create a high and low marsh, edging down toward the mudflat.”

The project includes extra funding to elevate the roadbed along the sandspit, much of it on YMCA property, by 18 inches, putting it above the level of the 100-year flood tide. “That’s as high as we can elevate it without taking out a lot of madrone trees,” Davenport said. Several

trees near the bridge will be removed.

While the additional work on the roadbed will ensure that access to Camp Colman remains safe, Sutton said the project’s impacts reach far beyond the channel and sandspit.

“I think we’re all going to learn a lot in the next few years,” Sutton said.

“For salmon? Maybe it’s worth it. If you had asked us five years ago, you would have heard a lot more heartburn, a lot more heartbreak. We still have a lot of heartburn about how this actually happens, how we actually make it work, where does that money come from. But that being said, it’s going to happen. We’re adaptive. And kids are.” ■



# PHS Girls Basketball Gearing Up for Another SSC Title Run

Kaylia Heidelberg and Grace Richardson could compete for league MVP honors in 2023-24, according to last season's Coach of the Year Hannah Lekson.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

Run it back but with a few tweaks.

That's how the defending South Sound Conference champion Peninsula Seahawks girls basketball team is looking at the 2023-24 season.

"With the players we have returning, we have the ability to (win the conference championship) again," said second-year Seahawks head coach and reigning SSC Coach of the Year Hannah Lekson. "But it's not going to be easy with a target on us."

Aiming for the center of that target, according to Lekson, are Gig Harbor and Timberline, as well as league runner-up, North Thurston. North Thurston returns the league's Most Valuable Player, junior Soraya Ogaldez, who played a big part in handing the Seahawks two of their losses last year.

The Seahawks, who went 18-6 and 13-1 in conference play, lost two key players, Sophie Casello and Brooke Zimmermann, to graduation, but welcomed back a trio of All-SSC guards who Lekson is excited about: First-teamer senior Kaylia Heidelberg (18 points per game, 4.7 rebounds per game), second-teamer junior Grace Richardson (11.1 PPG, 6.8 RPG and 4.2 assists per game) and senior Daisy Peay (6.2 PPG, 3.9 RPG, 2.3 APG), who was



Seahawks senior Daisy Peay (PG) drives to the net. *Tina McKail, KP News file photo*

named honorable mention. Heidelberg and Richardson combined to score more than half of the team's total points last season.

"Three solid players like them are hard to come by these days," Lekson said. "I can breathe a sigh of relief when those three are on the court together."

With all the skills her team has, the one important feature they lack is something Lekson can't coach: height. No player

on the roster is above 5 foot 10 inches, which caused a problem for the Seahawks during the state tournament back in February. Lekson, a defensive-minded coach, drills her players to use their speed to get rebounds to make up for their height disadvantage. The team averaged 35 rebounds a game and outrebounded their opponents 828 to 637 last season.

"Rebounding is hard work that most players don't want to do, so to have players

who naturally want to go rebound — I'm lucky as a coach."

It's their skills paired with their work ethic that make Lekson believe Heidelberg and Richardson could be up for league MVP honors this season.

Lekson said a lighter schedule early last season may have contributed to ending the season losing three straight to what she called the team's toughest opponents. To get them ready for a potential post-season run this season, Lekson arranged a grueling mix of conference and non-conference games in December. The Seahawks play seven games within 11-days and will likely play at least 11 games total in the month. The Seahawks girls team is joining the PHS boys in San Diego later in the month to play in the Surf n' Slam Holiday Tournament Dec. 26 to Dec. 31.

"(This type of schedule early on) may impact the win-loss column, but I learned last year how important it is to have some challenging games up front, so we're not surprised in the post-season," Lekson said. "They're going to have to work harder than they've ever had before if they want the same success as last year."

The Seahawks start their season later this month at the Auburn Jamboree. They host both their first home game and conference game Dec. 6 at 7 p.m. against Central Kitsap. ■

# Bitten by the Injury Bug, PHS Boys Basketball Looks to Bounce Back

The Seahawks return a key player from a leg injury only to lose two to knee injuries, but it's a chance for younger players to step up this season.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

Here's the good news for the Peninsula Seahawks boys basketball team: Cole Muilenburg, the team's 6-foot, 6-inch senior guard who suffered a leg injury during last football season and missed all of the 2022-23 basketball season, is back and healthy.

The bad news: Isaiah Brown, the Seahawks all-conference guard and leading scorer last season, tore his ACL in August and is out for the 2023-24 season.

Some more good news, though: younger guys get to step up and make an immediate impact this season.

But some more bad news: Will Wheatley-Ross, another starter from last year's team, also tore his ACL recently and may be out for the season.

"I've never faced the adversity of losing such key players like this," said Sean Muilenburg, who is in his second season as the boys head coach and fifth overall with the program. "But it's a great opportunity for some of our younger guys."

At this point, it's not a rebuilding year for the Seahawks, who went 8-12 overall and 5-9 in South Sound Conference play; it's a reloading year. Names like seniors Reece Redal and Joaquin Jackson, junior Isaac Shultz-Tate and sophomore Troy Arnold will be heard a little more this year. Freshmen like Brendan Taylor and Muilenburg's youngest son Aiden might see some playing time after getting their feet wet at the junior varsity level.

"We were missing Cole last season," the coach said about his oldest son. "But losing Isaiah (this season) definitely hurts — he

could've been the league MVP." Muilenburg added that Brown played a majority of the conference season last year with bruised ribs. "He is tough as heck."

The speed his team has this year, though, gives Coach Muilenburg something to get excited about. The boys play man-to-man defense and he wants to push the ball up the court with a faster-paced offense. Rebounding is another area he sees will improve, especially with Cole back.

"Some of our (losses last year) came down to rebounding and Cole is a big, aggressive rebounder," Muilenburg said. "We lost a few we shouldn't have."

The Seahawks once again face a tough conference schedule. Last season PHS was 6-2 heading into January and only won two more games after that. He thinks Timberline and North Thurston will give

SSC teams the most heartburn.

The youth that will make up this year's Seahawks squad is pretty appropriate seeing as Muilenburg and girls coach Hannah Lekson are building a basketball culture in the middle schools that feed into PHS. His goal this year is to encourage more athletes from Key Peninsula Middle School to participate in both playing and coming to support the Seahawks during the season.

"KPMS has some great athletes. We need to make it more accessible for them to participate. It's an important piece for Hannah and myself," Muilenburg said. "There's a lot to be excited about for our future."

The PHS boys first game is against Bainbridge Island Nov. 29. Tip-off is at 7 p.m. Their conference season starts Dec. 6 at Central Kitsap. ■



# When is the Best Time to Buy a House on the KP? Now, Experts Say

High interest rates and inflation shouldn't stop you from buying a home if you can afford it. Because it's not getting any cheaper.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

Home prices on the Key Peninsula skyrocketed during the pandemic and post-pandemic interest rates continue to soar. Early last month the national average for a 30-year mortgage rose to a 23-year high of 7.49%, according to the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (Freddie Mac). That means even with a good credit score and a 20% down payment, a \$550,000 home in Lakebay could come with a \$3,200 monthly mortgage.

Despite that news, local realtors agree that if you have the money for it, now is the right time to buy a home on the KP.

Jo Jensen, a realtor/broker for the Jo Jensen Group, said buyers should not be afraid of an interest rate number. "You can always refinance and drop your interest rate later, but you can't compete with inflation," she said, adding that home prices increased 10% between summer 2022 and summer 2023.

According to Northwest Multiple Listing Service, average home prices in the area between Minter Creek and the Purdy Spit jumped from \$450,000 in 2020 to \$750,000 earlier this year. Homes across the rest of the KP more than doubled in value during that same time frame: from \$275,000 to \$580,000

north of Key Peninsula Middle School, and from \$210,000 to \$460,000 south of the school. Prices dipped a little over the summer, but are slowly climbing back up this fall.

The Key Peninsula's relative affordability, open spaces and access to natural beauty and recreation make the area an attractive option for urban dwellers wanting to escape the hustle and bustle of city life.

"We have our share of homelessness and strangeness, but that's everywhere," said Rob Home, the branch manager for Windermere Real Estate/Key Realty. Home, who has lived in the area for 46 years, said the more cost-friendly neighborhoods are in Lake Minterwood, Lake Holiday, Lake of the Woods, Palmer Lake and Taylor Bay Estates.

Housing inventory across the Key Peninsula is low. Of the 69 homes available in early October, 32 of them were already pending sale by mid-month. Paige Schulte, a realtor with Team Schulte & Co., attributed low inventory to owners having little motivation to sell. "(Even with more equity in their home) they'll likely not want to trade a lower interest rate on their current house for a higher rate on a more expensive home."

While some sellers are hesitant to sell in the fall and winter, Schulte said

seasons don't affect the value of a home. However, homes generally sell faster in spring and summer because that's when more people go home shopping. But Schulte said that's also when bidding wars are more likely to happen.

"If a home is well-priced and marketed properly, it'll sell no matter what time of year it is," Home said.

While buying a piece of land to build a house sounds like a cheaper alternative to buying, Home urged caution before going that route. "It's so expensive and time-consuming to build," said Home, who said it takes about two years from the purchase of a property for the home to be ready. He blames the Pierce County government for over-regulating the construction process for the time it takes to build.

For homeowners looking to sell in the future, start thinking about home improvements now. The agents consulted agreed that the days of overbidding and waived inspections for homes not move-in ready are gone.

"Buyers today want turnkey places," Schulte said. "If your house needs a ton of work, you're in trouble. You'll need to lower your price based on condition and have to convince a buyer it's worth their time (to fix it up)."

Stephen Higgins of Higgins Custom Construction said remodeling kitchens

and master bathrooms — two important features in homes — takes about six weeks, so sellers need to account for that in their plans.

If a homeowner can't afford a big remodel project sellers should at least invest in painting, flooring and light fixtures, Schulte said. "Those will make your photos look better and that's what drives people to come look at your home."

But before making any big investment into a home, Jensen said to talk to a realtor. They can help suggest where to spend money to attract buyers. For buyers, local realtors can help navigate the complexities of buying in rural areas, like water rights, septic systems, and zoning regulations.

Home, Jensen and Schulte all agreed the KP and rural areas around the state will keep growing, especially as remote work continues to be a viable option. Home said that 5,000 new homes need to be built each year for the next 20 years to support growth in the state.

But a warning for potential buyers still waiting around hoping for interest rates to drop — be careful what you wish for.

"If the interest rates go down, we're going to go back to multiple offers and every single buyer will come out of the woodwork," Schulte said. ■

## Seahawks Wrestlers Eager to Get Back on the Mat — Boys and Girls Both

The PHS girls could field their largest team in its eight-year history and return three state qualifiers. The boys face new weight classes.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

The Peninsula Seahawks boys and girls wrestling teams look to start their season building on the success they had at the 2023 WIAA State Wrestling Mat Classic last February.

"It's always about individual wrestlers placing higher than the year before and getting even better as a team," said Gary Griffin, who is in his 12th season at the helm of Seahawks wrestling.

The girls team has three state qualifiers returning from last season: Junior Mira Sonnen (140 lbs.) and sophomores Bailey Parker (135 lbs.) and Georgina

Johnson (100 lbs.).

Senior Kylie Michalke (120 lbs.) was an alternate and is coming back for her final season.

Sonnen finished third at the state championships, winning six straight matches to earn the honor. Parker took fourth place in her first year of wrestling. Griffin predicts even better results this year.

Washington State is one of the original six states to sanction high school girls wrestling. The team had 13 girls participate last year and Griffin expects more than 15 this season, the most in the eight years there has been a girls team. He said he's excited about the future of girls wrestling at PHS.

"It just takes a handful of girls to foster

the growth. Watching how positive and encouraging these girls are is just infectious," he said.

The boys had to deal with some changes to weight classes starting this season. Previously there were 220 and 230 lbs. classes, but now it jumps significantly from 215 to 285 lbs. There are slight changes in the lower weight classes as well.

"This will cause some lineup issues, for sure," Griffin said. "We'll have to navigate this for a little while."

Senior Justin Phipps, who wrestled at the state tournament in 2022 at 106 lbs. and again last year at 113 lbs. could be jumping to 120 lbs. this season. Marcus Reum (145 lbs.), who excels on the school's water polo team, is coming back for his senior season after placing

seventh at state last year in just his first year of wrestling.

"I expect big things from Justin and Marcus has just steadily (got better)," said Griffin, who is also a marketing teacher at the school. "We're fielding a very competitive program this year."

Griffin said that as in recent seasons, Yelm will be the team to beat in the South Sound Conference, calling the Tornados program a "juggernaut."

The boys have their first tournament Dec. 2 at White River High School while the girls will be at Emerald Ridge High School that same day. The boys and girls teams will participate together at the Hammerhead Invitational at Kitsap Pavilion Dec. 15 and 16, and the Pacific Coast Championships at Clark County Fairgrounds Dec. 21 and 22. ■

**"WATCHING HOW POSITIVE AND ENCOURAGING THESE GIRLS ARE IS JUST INFECTIOUS."**

# Susan Arends: Bringing Fresh Produce to the Community

Local woman's passion for nutrition connects Key Peninsula with Washington state farmers.

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

"I'm a Pisces," said Susan Arends. "I go with the flow."

Arends, who founded Key Pen Produce Express three years ago with her second husband may go with the flow, but she is no passive voyager. With intelligence and determination, she has shaped her life and the lives of others through her belief in the importance of healthy eating and a commitment to the community.

Arends was born in Germany, part of a military family, and grew up in the Everett area. She left home at 17, working in the food industry. A chance for promotion brought her to the local area in 1991.

"I had never heard of the Kitsap Peninsula, but I took a ferry over with a friend," she said. "The rhododendrons were in bloom. It was beautiful." She moved to Port Orchard where she planted her first vegetable garden, much to the delight of her neighbors.

From Port Orchard, she began her southward journey. She and her first husband moved to the far north boundary of the Key Peninsula in 2004 — a place that was finally big enough for the horses she was accustomed to keeping.

Her daughter loved horses and Arends spent many weekends at events. The two fed themselves, but when she noticed that other kids arrived with just chips, bananas and Top Ramen to eat, she offered to cook for friends. The demand grew and she found herself serving three meals a day for 30 to 40 riders.

Nearly 10 years ago, following a divorce, she bought a place in Vaughn. She joined the Key Peninsula Facebook group soon after. "That really pulled me into the community," she said.

Looking for something meaningful to do after an arm injury prevented her from working, Arends responded to a posting from the Red Barn Youth Center and joined as a volunteer in 2014. The next year she was hired to manage the kitchen. One of the students, working on an assignment, was cutting out pictures of food and complained she couldn't find anything to add once she identified Oreos and hot dogs. Arends pointed to pictures of carrots and other produce. "The girl got this look of 'Oh, that's food,' and I knew I had work to do," she said.

Facebook brought her and Ray



Designed for efficiency, drive-thru customers pick up thousands of pounds of produce from Arends ordered each week during harvest season. *Tina McKail, KP News*

together. When a post suggested that people meet for burgers at Jimmy D's in Wauna, they both showed up, though it took a second dinner before they connected. The relationship started as a friendship; Ray helped install horse fencing for months before they became a couple. They moved to Ray's 8 1/2 acres and married in 2018.

The couple pivoted in 2020. Susan had been working three jobs, they bought, refurbished and sold a house, and Ray retired from a 26-year career at Boeing and took a trucking job. "Covid sent us in another direction," she said. A posting on Facebook described onions going to waste in a warehouse because the pandemic had wiped out the farm's customer base. Fifty-pound bags were available for 10 cents a pound. Ray was willing to make the drive, five hours in each direction, people were interested in buying them, and Susan put her organizational skills to work. (See "Key Pen Produce Express Brings Fresh Produce to the Key Peninsula," July 2020.)

"Susan has the ability to see the real need in a person's life and connect them with the people who can fill that need," said Kellie Bennett, executive director of the Red Barn. "Her mind has the

capacity to file away the things people need or have to offer and just provide that wealth of information. She thrives when she is assisting the community, helping others."

Each Monday and Tuesday Susan contacts the farms and posts what is available on their Facebook page. Members place orders (there are over 2,000 but on average about 160 are active) and on Thursday morning Ray heads out in their refrigerated truck to Wapato or Othello to pick up produce. They empty the truck on Friday morning before he leaves for Kent to pick up local produce while Susan and her volunteer crew organize and get ready for customer pick up that afternoon and following morning drive-through style at their Vaughn home.

They developed relationships largely through word of mouth with a few other farmers and since then have expanded to about 40 farms. Susan estimated they deliver 5,000 to 6,000 pounds of produce each week.

They now offer more variety and smaller volumes of produce to their

customers, with a season that begins in April and ends in November.

"It has definitely changed," she said. "Pandemic canning was a real thing. It was crazy. Everyone was stocking their pantry with everything they could get their hands on. Over the last couple

**SUSAN ESTIMATED THEY DELIVER  
5,000 TO 6,000 POUNDS OF  
PRODUCE EACH WEEK.**

of years, life has returned to somewhat normal, except that grocery prices have skyrocketed, and people are just

trying to survive right now."

The business has yet to turn a profit. There have been some expenses including the truck, driveway work, and a structure to cover the pick-up area. They may consider a roadside stand as an alternative model in the future.

At this point, though, Susan is thinking about how best to serve the community. She would like to deliver to locals who can't leave their homes. They have already partnered with Food Backpacks 4 Kids; Ray drives to Emergency Food Network every week to pick up food for its pantry and they store and distribute produce if FB4K doesn't have room. What they distribute is free, but they encourage donations to FB4K through its Facebook page. ■



# Fourth-Grader Graduates from Cancer Patient to Cancer Survivor

One child's school year taught him more than he bargained for. And there's more to come with years of follow-up and monitoring side effects.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

Lakebay resident Brayden VanderDoes, 9, stood in front of a large brass ship's bell mounted in a Seattle Children's Hospital lobby, surrounded by family, staff and fellow patients Aug. 11.

He was a little embarrassed.

"I felt like, where am I supposed to go? Am I supposed to do this?" he said.

Someone yelled, "Ring it! Ring it loud!"

He pulled the rope and the crowd burst into applause.

Brayden had just signaled the end of 14 months of treatment for his brain cancer.

"I don't know where it (the ritual) came from," said his mother, Amy VanderDoes. "But I do know it was something we'd been looking forward to for a long time."

Brayden got sick in the fall of 2021 when he was in second grade at Evergreen Elementary School. He vomited in the mornings. He began to lose his balance. He had to keep one eye closed because of double vision. He couldn't ride his bike anymore.

There were blood tests, X-rays, a CT scan, an endoscopy and, finally, after eight months, an MRI at Mary Bridge Children's Hospital in Tacoma.

"We thought we were just going to go in, get an MRI, and wait for a couple days for answers," Amy said. "But that's not what happened."

Brayden was immediately sent to Seattle Children's Hospital and underwent a seven-hour brain surgery that night.

He was diagnosed with medulloblastoma (muh-dul-o-blas-TOE-muh), an aggressive pediatric brain cancer that starts in the cerebellum, which governs muscle coordination, balance and movement. While rare, striking just 500 children in the U.S. each year, it is the most common cancerous brain tumor in kids, who have a 70% survival rate.

Brayden had just turned 8 years old. He missed the end of second grade.

He spent the next five weeks in the hospital recovering from surgery, which paralyzed part of his face and affected his speech. He spent the time relearning how to talk and walk on his own, dangling from a harness while stepping on blocks.

Then came six weeks of radiation, which he completed just in time to start third grade, and a year of chemotherapy.

"He was still pretty wobbly, so we had some accommodations in place," said Amy, who is a secretary at Evergreen.

Brayden fatigued quickly and had lost weight and all his hair. So did his dad, Martin, who



After 30 radiation doses, 44 chemo infusions, five surgeries, three blood transfusions, 51 inpatient hospital days, 87 outpatient appointments and seven trips to ER, Brayden VanderDoes, age 9, rings the bell at Seattle Children's Hospital in August at the end of more than a year of treatment for a brain tumor.

Amy VanderDoes

shaved his head in solidarity. His parents were worried about him returning to school, even with Amy there. Other kids might not understand. They might be afraid of him and not want to be his friend.

When Brayden missed school for treatments or illness, a big stuffed monkey named Buddy took his place.

"He does all the work for me when I'm gone," Brayden said.

It was part of a program promoted by Children's Hospital called Monkey in My Chair, created in honor of Chloe Watson Feyerherm for children who miss school because of cancer.

"They take it very seriously, taking it everywhere they go and making sure he's doing his work for Brayden," said his teacher, Alena Shepard, describing Brayden's classmates. "They can definitely tell what it represents."

Brayden kept a small version of Buddy with him when he was gone and would exchange photos of the two monkeys, at school or the hospital, with his classmates.

"It's hard watching any child go through anything so terrible, and then once you get to know them, it's really tough," Shepard said. "We talked about being empathetic (with her class), going out of our way to be kind to him, including him. But it was hard for them sometimes. Students would come up to me and ask 'Is there anything I can do for Brayden? He's not going to die, right?' Sometimes it was tough for them."

It was her second year of teaching.

All told Brayden's treatment included 30 radiation doses, 44 chemo infusions, five surgeries, three blood transfusions, 51 inpatient hospital days, 87 outpatient appointments and seven trips to the ER or Urgent Care. In February 2023, the VanderDoes' home was nearly destroyed by fire and the family had to relocate. It's still being rebuilt.

At the end of third grade, Brayden gave the small stuffed Buddy to Shepard as a thank you. The big one sits on his bed at home.

Brayden is now in Shepard's fourth-grade class.

"People are seeing more of his personality now and so am I," she said. "He's always doing the right thing, going out of his way to be extra kind to people."

Since about 30% of children with medulloblastoma experience a relapse, Brayden will be followed by medical teams for many years.

"Chemotherapy caused some hearing loss, so his hearing will continue being monitored and he is continuing to receive physical therapy for his balance," Amy said. "He also has a neuropsychology and endocrinology team that will help him through the various side effects he will have throughout his life from his cancer treatment."

Brayden and his dad go swimming every week at the YMCA in Gig Harbor and finish the day with a slow run around the track. He's got his eye on the climbing wall there too. "That looks like maybe it's fun," he said.

But he takes it easy on the playground and



Brayden in wheelchair with Buddy the monkee at the beginning. Amy VanderDoes

hasn't been back on a bicycle. "I'll probably get too tired," he said.

"That isn't something that we've tried yet, but riding his bike is something that he really does want to start," Amy said. "He had to relearn how to walk, so I know the bike will be a learning curve. But we want to do that. He loved riding his bike so much before."

Brayden had some advice for other kids going through cancer. "Get one dollar for every radiation" session. And then he added, "Keep going."

He wants to be a scientist when he grows up. "I want to invent medicines and cure things," he said. "Like cancer." ■





Tina McKail won first place for her "standout feature image" in "Evergreen Elementary Girls on the Run" (June 2022), her fourth award overall for her photography in KP News.  
*Tina McKail, KP News*

**AWARDS FROM PAGE 1**

wood While Living the Key Peninsula Lifestyle."

Rurik won second place in animal features for "Eagles and the Genius of Bird Flight" and second place for a topical column for his series "Into the Wild," which inspired one judge to comment "Not my usual read but it took me out of my armchair and to another place." He also won third place in environmental coverage for "Trees Come Down at Camp Seymour to Improve the Forest."

And Rurik earned third place as feature writer of the year.

Executive Editor Lisa Bryan took home first place for her business feature "KP Businesswoman Makes Her Passion Her Work."

Associate Editor Ted Olinger won first place in the health category for "Third Grade Evergreen Cancer Fighter Tells It Like It Is," which the judges called "a great story, empathetically told ... and touching artwork to go with." He also earned second place in sports reporting for "Peninsula Seahawks Win Fish Bowl 44," his second win for Fish Bowl coverage.

Sara Thompson took first place in the short news category for "Crabbing Not Likely to Return Near KP in Foreseeable Future" and second place in government reporting for "Rep. Michelle Caldier Reveals Sight Impairment." The judges called it "a great job revealing the humanity and personal backstory of an elected official." She also took third place in personality profiles for "Carolyn Wiley: A Star

is Recognized," when Wiley won the Rotary Star Award.

For her part, that same Carolyn Wiley won third place in the arts feature category for her story about 11-year-old Zoe Ewald, "Making the World a Better Place, One Lemonade at a Time."

Joseph Pentheroudakis won second place in the history feature category for "The Bay in the Woods: The Story of Glencove."

Phyllis Henry won her third award in as many years for what the judges called her "poignant, thoughtful" column "Coast to Coast," taking second place in the general interest category.

Meredith Browand followed her with a third-place win for her own general interest column "Key Issues," which the judges called "clear, well-written (on) topics of the day."

Krisa Bruemmer took third place in the animal feature category for "Local Farm Animal Rescue Organization Saves Lives."

Staff photographer Tina McKail won first place in portraits for "Izzy Edwards, Photographer and Conservationist," and first place for her feature photo in "Evergreen Elementary Girls on the Run," which judges called "a standout feature image."

Designer Heather Meier earned second place for her front page design layout, powered by photos from Tina McKail, in a design the judges called "squeaky clean (and) very visually appealing."

Graphic artist Tim Heitzman won first place for his ad for Cost Less Pharmacy and second place for Sunnycrest Nursery. ■

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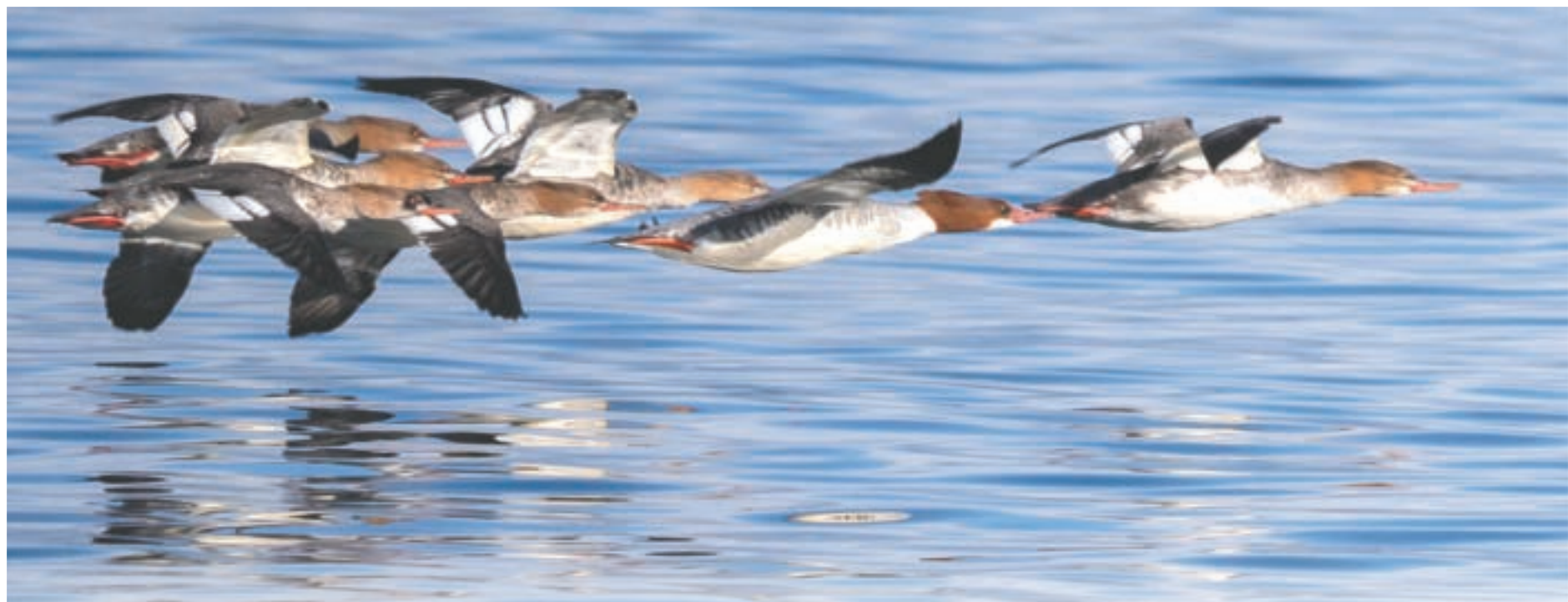
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A female common merganser (center) can be told from the red-breasted mergansers around her by her distinct white chin patch. *Ollie Oliver*

## Three Birds That Follow Rivers

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

It is November. Gullies are soggy. The exact edges of creeks are hard to define. The last leaves are limp yellow rags that drag across my shoulders as I make my way downhill. Sometimes I get a wet slap in the face. This morning's tramp is a miniature of the journey that several local birds have recently made.

Underfoot, the black-brown leaf litter is broken here and there by pale deer mushrooms and shed orange cedar foliage and logs ablaze with moss, the torch of colors having been passed from the big trees to their cast of peculiar earthbound associates. Crystal-clear creek water pools alongside roots.

I emerge at a rain-soaked beach. The rocks shine like they have been buffed.

The beach looks empty of life until I approach the water's edge, where a clear thin whistle, tripled, rings out. A shorebird arcs away, flying a semicircle on stiff narrow wings that it holds so downcurved in flight that their tips occasionally tap the water. When it lands, it bobs its rear end up and down like a marionette.

That goofy bob is a good way to recognize a spotted sandpiper when you don't have binoculars. They are smaller than killdeer and only stray from water's edge in flight. With binoculars, you will be

treated to a cement-gray bird with a white belly and dingy yellow legs and, hunched forward as if looking for a lost contact, a blunt bill for picking through beach rocks and seaweed.

It walks forward deliberately, instinctively bobbing whenever it pauses, a pint-sized chunk of feather and blood that has recently come downriver from the uplands. Spotted sandpipers breed along large rivers and lakeshores well up into the mountains. While many of Washington's spotties migrate south, others do an elevational migration, following rivers to elevation zero at Puget Sound to spend a wet winter here. In fact, Christmas Bird Count records show that the South Sound is the likeliest part of Washington to find spotties in winter. Elsewhere they are fairly rare.

On summer breeding grounds, where spotted sandpipers sport black Yayoi Kusama dots on their chests, females run the show. They are polyandrous, meaning they mate with multiple males. Males build nests and do most of the incubation of eggs while females claim and guard territories. For a species that nests among the sparse grass of sandbars, where even with the best camouflage predation is high, this system is probably protective. Giving females the freedom to move about and feed gives them the ability to jump in and replace a nest if it is destroyed.

As I walk, the spotted sandpiper with its low arcing flights stays ahead of me. Finally, it flies far out over the bay, calling

all the while, before circling back to the place I first flushed it. For a while I am alone. I aim for a cluster of rocks in the surf.

Halfway there I jump at a rush of stiff breeze behind me. No. Wind over dozens of wings.

A formation of ducks comes over my shoulder and banks and flaps hard and low up the shoreline, their thin heads and bills pointing urgently forward like arrows.

Common mergansers. Most are gray and brick red, females and juveniles. A few are white with dark green heads, males. These diving fish-eating ducks with serrated bills are another species that heads downriver in fall. They breed near forested lakes and the backwaters of rivers. As soon as their broods of up to 12 ducklings hatch they slip into the rivers, the babies floating like corks behind the mothers as they make their way toward saltwater. By the time they arrive, the ducklings are grown.

It is a sight to see a pack of mergansers dive into a ball of bait fish. They run across the water's surface with heads low like speedboats and when they hit the action they carry their momentum underwater with bubbles streaming off their bodies.

Now that I've seen two elevational migrants, I wonder if I might see a third. But no varied thrushes or golden-crowned kinglets appear in the trees along the shoreline. It is not until I reach the rocks

in the surf that my pulse quickens.

Two ducks stand silhouetted upon the rocks. Their portly bodies and perfect posture give them the look of butlers ready to assist. But I am not yet close when they slip into the water and keep their distance. Harlequin ducks.

The male harlequin duck looks sculpted and painted, made of stone rather than feathers. It is a species quite uncommon in the South Sound. Seeing them is special. It feels like they appear when conditions are borderline too raw for me, when a gale flings spray or the beach fractures and becomes impassable. They are birds of elemental forces. They breed on roaring mountain rivers, where they pass unscathed through rapids that would chew up a kayak. Our wintering birds come from mountains across the West: Banff, Glacier, Grand Teton, the Olympics.

Buoyant, elusive, wild, they remind me of the words poet Gary Snyder found on a Chinese painted scroll of winding mountain pathways and rivers: "The water holds up the mountains, the mountains go down in water."

Around the harlequin ducks, rocks bob in the surf. Hillsides duck through sprays of falling water. Along with spotted sandpipers and common mergansers, harlequin ducks move like the water cycle, rising again and again into the uplands only to follow the rivers back down. Maybe they move like the rock cycle too, mountains climbing over mountains, ridges moving like waves, making homes for birds. ■

Into the  
**WILD**  
EXPLORING WITH THE  
KP NATURE GUIDE

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# Former KPFD Chief Announces Write-in Candidacy

Voters will choose between two newcomers, one incumbent, and a late-entry retired chief for two fire commission positions with six-year terms.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

Retired Key Peninsula Assistant Fire Chief Hal Wolverton registered with the Pierce County Auditor's office as a write-in candidate Oct. 5 for fire commissioner position No. 3, opposing incumbent Commissioner Shawn Jensen in the election Nov. 7.

Wolverton told the Key Peninsula News he first filed to run May 19 but withdrew at the last minute after a miscommunication during a family medical emergency.

He changed his mind again after a meeting with the KP Volunteer Firefighters Association, whose members urged him to re-enter the race at the behest of John Pat Kelly, himself a candidate for commissioner position No. 5.

Kelly had earlier registered to run against Jensen for position No. 3 but withdrew hours before Wolverton first joined the race May 19, and instead registered to run for position No. 5 against Cambria Queen.

Position No. 5 is being vacated by interim Commissioner Ben Rasmussen, who was appointed in January to fill retiring Commissioner Keith Davies's seat.

Wolverton's name will not appear on the ballot, but he and his supporters will urge voters to write it in. In a statement to KP News, he said he would not campaign but would answer voter questions and serve if elected. His priority as a commissioner would be "restoring fiscal responsibility" to the district by resolving the "Key Center real estate issues" and budgeting to maintain existing facilities and apparatus to keep costs down.

John Mohn, president of the volunteer association, said it is not endorsing Wolverton or any other candidate, since it cannot do so as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, though individuals may organize to support him.

Wolverton, 59, retired as assistant chief March 31, 2023, after 33 years with KPFD. He served as interim fire chief between the retirement of Chief Guy Allen in 2018 and Chief Dustin Morrow's start in April 2019, and then again starting Dec. 1, 2021, when Morrow left the district.

But Wolverton was put on paid administrative leave Dec. 14 by the board of fire commissioners when accused of



Ballot boxes will be open until 8 p.m. on Election Day, Nov. 7. Lisa Bryan, KP News

discriminatory behavior. The board reinstated him March 22, 2022, after an independent investigation found that "none of the accusations made could be substantiated," according to the board minutes.

In an email to KP News, Jensen wrote, "The reasons that AC Wolverton was suspended were serious enough in nature that the board was left with no choice but to place him on paid administrative leave pending an independent investigation into the allegations. This was the only 'fair' thing to do for all the parties involved."

Jensen was appointed to fill a vacancy on the board in October 2016 and was elected to his current term in 2017. Before that, he served on the Citizens Advisory Panel for the district for two

years. He has also been a Key Pen Parks Commissioner since November 2016.

"I wish Hal well in the write-in campaign," Jensen said. "But if he truly wants to serve the citizens, he should have stayed in the race, and we could have had those conversations (about serving)."

Register to vote by Oct. 30 at [VoteWA.gov](http://VoteWA.gov) or in person until Nov. 7.

Ballots will be mailed Oct. 20. Drop boxes will open Oct. 20 and close Nov. 7 at 8 p.m. Mail-in ballots must be postmarked by Nov. 7.

For more information, search for elections at [www.piercecountywa.gov](http://www.piercecountywa.gov) or call 253-798-VOTE (8683).

Read the Nov. 7 Voters' Pamphlet here. This article has been updated to correct candidate filing dates and quotations. ■



Mail-in ballots must be postmarked by Nov. 7. Lisa Bryan, KP News





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## RICE IN OUR TIME: WORLD PEACE BEGINS IN THE KITCHEN



## Saving the Free World Through the Miracle of Risotto, Two Bowls at a Time

KATRINA HERRINGBOTTOM

My dad hated rice. That and celery. He was a naval officer during the Korean War and spent a month on an ammunition ship getting ferried across the Pacific to meet his destroyer for much unpleasantness in the Sea of Japan. Rice and celery were mostly all he had to eat for that month.

Rice and celery.

That war had taken us by surprise, or at least my dad, who was on his way to law school in 1950 when he was recalled to active duty following his service in World War II. “I was awfully put out at the time,” he said. He was further discomfited by the necessity of shooting at and being shot at by, as he put it, “otherwise reasonable people. It was quite irritating.”

Ammunition ships were dangerous by definition, and nobody was meant to serve on one for more than six months at a time. The crew my dad sailed with hadn’t been rotated for over two years, and they were edgy.

Their quartermaster took it upon himself to do whatever he could to make life better, buying the best food he could find for the wardroom whenever providence allowed. Often, it wasn’t much. But my dad, raised in dust bowl Kansas, ate fresh pineapple for the first time on that ship and raved about it for the rest of his life.

“You just can’t get pineapple like that anymore,” he’d lament, cursing the ungrateful succeeding generations he’d twice gone to war to defend who somehow failed to provide him proper fruit.

Rice also made an impression, albeit negative because it was present at every meal, and he came to despise it.



KPCooks

Until one day.

“We got some butter at Wake Island somehow,” he said. “And we had this greasy canned cheese, which I liked.”

The ship’s cook, probably sick of rice himself, managed to produce some memorable cheesy rice casserole for the wardroom, which Dad somehow got into his head was “risotto.”

“It was rice, but the cheese and butter covered it up,” Dad said. He made a point of ordering risotto at restaurants for the rest of his life as certain people do so he could then complain about it: “You just can’t get good risotto anymore.”

One time I snapped back at him with, “I know, Dad — why did you even bother fighting the war?”

He stared at me and declared, “World peace begins in the kitchen!” It was a declaration both startling and enigmatic. I and everyone else in the restaurant that night went home with a fresh metaphysical truth to contemplate.

After much reflection, I at least became convinced that in the interest of defending democracy every freedom-loving American needs to know how to make risotto, that iconic Italian creation. Like all good things, it’s simple. But like all worthy things, it takes practice. And once you’ve practiced enough, you’ll have a go-to dish that will amaze your friends and confound your enemies, who will then become your friends because they want your risotto too — leading, eventually, to world peace.

Yes, it might be just that simple.

### World Peace By Risotto For Two

Ingredients:

- 3 cups broth, chicken or veg, low salt preferred, nothing overpowering
- 2 or 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, maybe more, divided
- 1/3 cup chopped sweet or white onion or a couple of minced shallots. (Some people will add garlic, which I like, but not here.)
- 1/4 cup dry white wine, plus more for the cook as needed
- 1/2 cup proper risotto rice (see below)
- 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese but anything similar can pass: Pecorino Romano, even Gruyère or whatever with a dry, nutty flavor. Dad used American, which has its own idiosyncratic charm.

Anyone who has read any recipe I have written for these pages knows I am cheap, cheap, cheap, except on a date. I have made this with all kinds of rice, even brown rice — the most hated of all the ugly grains — and, yes, American “cheese.” But I am here to tell you that in this case, at least start your journey of discovery with the highest quality short-grain white rice you can find. That means arborio, baldo, carnaroli, vialone nano or roma. For reasons I don’t care about, they all absorb stock well to produce the tender texture that defines risotto. If you’re lazy like me, just mail-order a bunch so it’s always around.

Directions:

Simmer broth and keep on low heat.

Gently melt the butter and sauté onion in a wide pan until tender but not brown with a small pinch of high-quality salt, meaning something that

actually tastes good to you. I use this crazy chunky stuff from Scotland that comes mixed with seaweed for some reason.

Stir in the rice and cook for another few minutes, until the edges become translucent.

Gradually add the wine and stir steadily until it is all absorbed. Might as well absorb some yourself, too. You’re gonna be here a while.

Add broth about 1/2 cup at a time, stirring gently until the liquid is absorbed again. Keep doing that. Relax and absorb some more wine why don’t you?

Start tasting the rice while you’ve still got a cup or so of broth left. Rice should be cooked but firm in the middle. Al dente, they call it, if that helps. Keep at it until the texture is what you want. Some say this takes 20 minutes or so, but I’ve gone as long as 45 depending on the rice, the weather, and the amount of wine I’ve absorbed.

When the texture is right, remove from heat and gently add cheese. I also add more butter by eyeball and sometimes a smattering of fresh herbs if I’ve got them, and then serve it at once. Some people will contaminate their hard-won creation at this point with asparagus or mushrooms or shellfish. Those things are fine on their own plates in their own time but here the rice is the star, so concentrate on that for the sake of the freedom-defending democratic republic that safeguards our right to make it. ■

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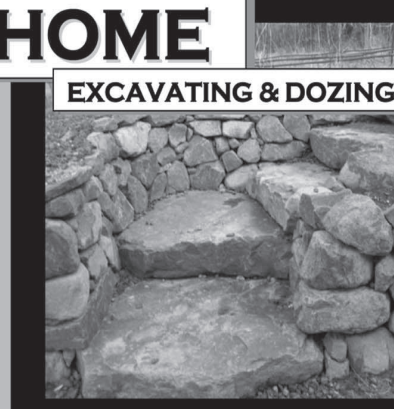
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# New Teen Mental Health First Aid Classes Come to PSD

The Peninsula School District and local partners want to teach teens how to help each other. They are often the first to know about a friend in crisis.

VICKI BIGGS, KP NEWS

The last scheduled class for Teen Mental Health First Aid was completed Aug. 18 at the Key Peninsula Fire Department. Eleven of the 16 teens who began the class were present to complete the 90-minute session, number three of a three-part series.

In broad terms, the class aimed to teach a greater awareness of the mental health challenges of others, paired with a set of skills to assist students with mental health struggles. Students learned the warning signs of mental health issues, and how to reach out to other students in a nonjudgmental and supportive manner. Students are encouraged to make contact with trusted adults for assistance.

“There is an enormous support system available. There are dozens of people willing to help you,” said student Brody O’Shea.

The classes presented to high school students in the Peninsula School District are the result of a multi-agency collaboration to provide funding, space and instructors. All Henderson Bay students received the training last year. The KP fire department, Tacoma Pierce County Health Department, Peninsula School District, Communities in Schools of Peninsula, Gig Harbor-Key Peninsula Suicide Prevention, and the Boys and Girls Club are all participants in helping to provide the program to teens. The evidence-based curriculum is the first created specifically for teens.

“We all need help, and we all need some sort of connection,” said student Jane Edgar. “I’ve never dealt with a class like this before. It shows how many changes have happened in 20 years. Connection is so important. If your mental health isn’t good, it affects every aspect of your life. The class really emphasizes that. It should be part of every health class.”

Instructors Anne Nesbitt of KPFD and Becky Maffei of PSD have been team-teaching the classes for students in 10th to 12th grades. “Seven percent of high school kids say they do not feel safe at school, due to bullying or other causes,” Nesbit said.

Bullying is a major source of distress for kids. “Conflict is not bullying; bullying is about power differences,” Maffei said. “Reporting bullying and blocking social media are two important ways of taking away that power.”

Numerous studies, such as those from



Help is available 24 hours a day at 988, but teens can make a difference when given a chance and the proper tools.

*Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*

Yale University (April 2023), the University of Texas Houston School of Public Health (July 2023), and the National Institute for Mental Health (May 2023) show that the rate of teen suicide is as high as it’s ever been, and is the third leading cause of death for teens currently. In addition, the data shows that incidences of ER visits and hospitalizations rise from October through May — the months that school is in session.

The Texas study concluded there is a pattern of suicidality related to the academic calendar year. Teens report overwhelming issues related to bullying, parents divorcing, drug and alcohol use, and peer pressure, creating a crisis that is too much for them to bear.

Against this backdrop, TMFA is meant to bring awareness and a toolbox for teens to provide coping skills for themselves and others. The program was developed with an international panel of experts.

Students use a workbook that first describes the characteristics of good mental health, and proceeds to discuss various issues affecting students’ mental health. Students receive basic information about anxiety, depression, trauma, psychosis, ADHD and eating disorders.

Panic attacks, self-injury, suicide, bullying, violence, substance abuse and overdose are also covered. Students work in pairs to problem-solve. They particularly learn the importance of friendships in mental health.

“They learn to ‘embrace the awkward,’ improve listening skills, and that silence is OK,” Nesbit said.

Students become familiar with signs and symptoms of distress or crisis and practice empathetic conversations. The program emphasizes the importance of reaching out to trusted adults. Students never diagnose or attempt treatment. The goal is for students to provide peer-to-peer friendship, support and awareness. Many students are fearful of the stigma associated with mental health difficulties, and students in the class learn the importance of normalizing the struggles on the long list of possible issues for teens.

The students all had experiences that made them aware of the needs of others and the importance of having support people available.

“We are all human, we all struggle, and we all need help,” said student Brooke Czekanski. “Everyone should take this class; it would give them a better under-

standing of our mental health crisis.”

The importance of friendships for teens cannot be overstated, Nesbit said. “Your friendship is not defined by the challenges your friends are facing.” In other words, you are not your diagnosis. Nesbit points out that isolation is not healthy for humans, something we learned during the Covid crisis.

“Safety nets were not there, face-to-face contact is so important,” she said, using the example of fika culture in Sweden, where coffee with a friend each day is part of a cultural recharge.

“I have learned that taking small steps are important,” said student James McCourt. “It doesn’t have to be really big strides to help someone out. Just start by asking someone ‘How are you doing?’ because it shows that you care.”

Nesbit and Maffei are working to continue presenting the Team Mental Health First Aid classes in the upcoming school year in as many settings as possible, ideally as part of each health class.

“So many people say things like ‘Boys don’t cry,’” O’Shea said. “That comes from a place of miseducation. It’s important to have these conversations because people are overlooked.” ■



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## ‘Free Speech: A History from Socrates to Social Media’

This 2022 book by Jacob Mchangama is more relevant than ever as people rise in protest and publishers cower in fear.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS



Violence tests us in unexpected ways. It puts a bit of strain on our identity when the time comes to defend all those fancy principles we think we hold.

I was suitably humbled when I heard the author Jacob Mchangama interviewed sometime last spring and immediately bought his book. I’d been lazily dipping into it over the summer until events in Israel and the reaction in this country made me start over to read it straight through.

The public expressions of loathing for Hamas, for Israel, and that Americans espoused for each other from college campuses to cable news over the conflict is, I respectfully submit, proof of how poorly so many of us fare when tested.

Our nation was founded largely on the five freedoms codified in the First Amendment but perhaps they can be fairly summarized by a popular slogan: Words are tools, not weapons.

Mchangama takes the reader on an eye-opening tour of the relentless demands on conscience of free speech. There was the birth of the concept in ancient Greece, where Pericles “extolled the democratic values of open debate and tolerance of social dissent” in 431 B.C.E. This was the same society that executed Socrates, revered in his time as a war hero and unwashed philosopher, for practicing it.

I was astonished to learn that as Muslim caliphates expanded from the Indus to the Atlantic, a writer named Ibn al-Rawandi, born in Persia around 815 C.E., produced more than 100 books attacking Islam, calling the Qur’an an “unpersuasive book full of inconsistencies.”

Expressing such a sentiment, even in private, could bring a death sentence now.

Al-Rawandi’s dissent wasn’t tolerated — it was welcomed. As the Islamic world developed the scientific method pioneered by the Greeks, it was understood that such challenges honed ideas. That world saved much of ancient literature at enormous expense. The work of apostates and minorities — what we moderns would call “diversity” — was valued because it tested and increased practical knowledge that would have been impossible under a system of political or religious censorship.

But that’s exactly what came next. Al-Rawandi’s books were eventually burned

as succeeding governments concluded that any challenge to orthodoxy was a threat to their political power, a pattern repeated throughout history.

The protests of an obscure German monk named Martin Luther attracted attention at the highest levels. The pope wanted him dead. The Holy Roman Emperor Charles V summoned him to an audience in 1521 and ordered him to stop his attacks on the one true faith, a tenet Luther embraced so fully he risked his immortal soul to defend it.

“I cannot and will not recant anything since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience,” he said. He was saved from burning at the stake by Frederick III, a powerful Saxon prince, who hid him in his castle for a year. Luther spent the time translating the New Testament into vernacular German and printed it in 1522.

Ordinary people could now read (or more often hear) the Word for the first time themselves without the filters of authority. There they found the letter of James to oppressors: “Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.”

Mchangama writes, “Taking a leaf out of Luther’s playbook, peasants staged a massive revolt in 1524-25, demanding the abolition of serfdom and razing castles and monasteries in the name of the Gospel.”

Luther was horrified and immediately began publishing pamphlets supporting the establishment and encouraging retribution. One hundred thousand people are believed to have been killed.

I was going to start in here about the effect of the internet and attempts to regulate it, but Mchangama spends 50 thoughtful pages on the conundrum of how a single thread of information can be spun into a dangerous web for us simple flies. Instead, I’ll just point out that by 1530, over two million copies of Luther’s work were produced for a population with a literacy rate of 9%.

In other words, even then there was no putting the genie back in the bottle.

Federal officials in the former and current administrations urged social media compa-

nies to remove content, especially when it comes to criminal activity or harmful political or medical disinformation, according to The New York Times, and Biden is now being sued for it. Meanwhile, state governors and legislatures in places like Texas and Florida passed laws against the removal of posts based on political opinion, even as they and 19 other states have passed other laws to remove books and curricula they don’t like from public schools.

Maybe we need more genies?

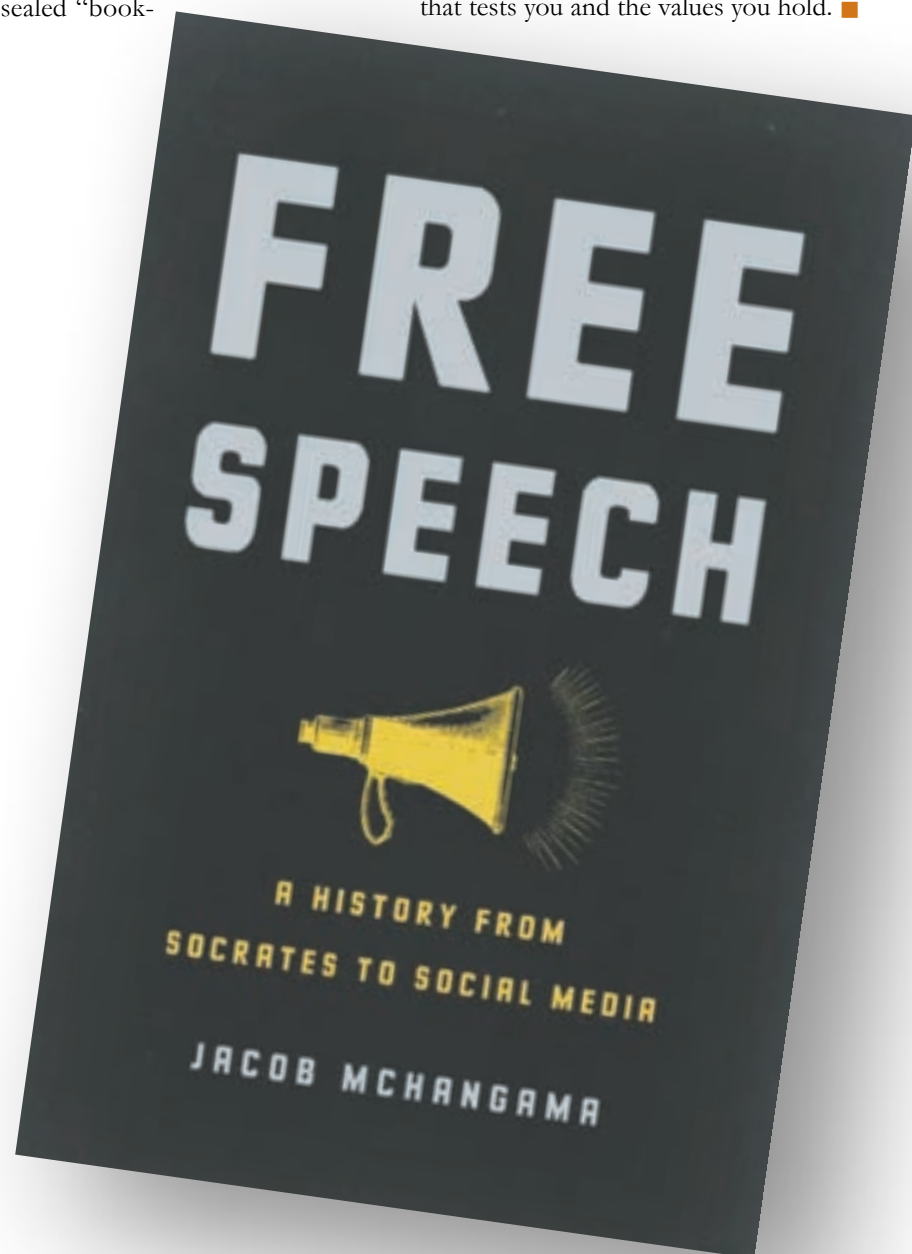
Because there remains the necessity of defending the rights of Nazis to parade in Skokie, Illinois (a famous ACLU case); of Black Lives Matter to assemble in overwhelmingly peaceful marches (look it up; I did); and — Scholastic, the world’s largest publisher of children’s books, segregating titles about race or LGBTQ issues into their own sealed “book-

case” at school book fairs to comply with laws restricting what children can choose to read..

The idea that unfettered speech short of explicit calls for violence should be restricted is misguided, ineffective and ultimately self-defeating, according to Mchangama.

“The fact that groups whose religious or ideological differences were once thought to be irreconcilable matters of life and death now flourish side by side in open democracies is a testament to the true power of a vibrant culture of freedom of speech,” he writes.

In other words, freedom of speech doesn’t survive without the obligation to listen, however unsavory you find the content or speaker. What matters most is what follows: how you confront the speech that tests you and the values you hold. ■



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)

**Nov 1 Key Pen Book Club: An Hour of Coffee and Conversation** 10:30 a.m., Key Center Library. "One, Two, Three" by Laurie Frankel.

**Nov 1 Cribbage Club** 2 – 4 p.m., Mustard Seed Project. Everyone is welcome, no experience required.

**Nov 2 Personal Preparedness Presentation** 10 a.m., Gig Harbor Library. Presented by Pierce County Emergency Management.

**Nov 2 Key Free Clinic** 4:30 – 7 p.m. (check in from 4:30 – 5 p.m.) KPC Office in the KP Corral. No RSVP or appointment necessary.

**Nov 3 Washington Old Time Fiddlers Association** 3:30 – 6 p.m., Crandall Center. All fiddlers, banjos, mandolins, guitars, and string basses are welcome to play.

**Nov 3 - 4 9th Annual Write in the Harbor Conference** Fri: 6 – 9 p.m., Sat: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Register online at [www.tacomacc.edu](http://www.tacomacc.edu).

**Nov 4 Bird Walks** 8:30 a.m., rain or shine. Meet nature guide Chris Rurik at Gateway Park pavilion.

**Nov 4 Coffee with Robyn Denson** 9 – 10 a.m., Madrona Café, Key Center. Join Pierce County Councilperson Robyn Denson to chat and share suggestions to better the KP.

**Nov 4 Introduction to the Ukulele** 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., Key Center Library. Bring your own ukulele or use one available at the library. Session led by Jeff Saxon.

**Nov 4 Gig Harbor Art Walk** 1 – 3 p.m., Downtown Gig Harbor. Celebrating creativity in the harbor. Ebttide Gallery, Gallery Row, and Waters Edge Gallery.

**Nov 4 Pier Into the Night** 6 p.m., Gig Harbor Maritime Pier. Harbor WildWatch. Divers livestream what they encounter below the surface.

**Nov 6 Bingo!** 1 – 2 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project.

**Nov 7 Baby Story Time** 10:15 – 11 a.m., Key Center Library. Enjoy simple picture books, songs, fingerplays, and movement games with your baby.

**Nov 7 Gig Harbor Literary Society** 6 p.m., Harbor History Museum. "One Two Three" by Laurie Frankel.

**Nov 9 MultiCare WIC Program** 12 – 4 p.m., Key Center Library. The WIC Clinic helps pregnant people, new and breastfeeding moms, and children under 5.

**Nov 11 Winter Warm-Up Holiday Crafts Fair** 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center.

**Nov 13 All Things Medicare** 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m., Gig Harbor Library. Bring your questions. Presented by Sound Outreach and Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors.

**Nov 14 Baby Story Time** 10:15 – 11 a.m., Key Center Library. Enjoy simple picture books, songs, fingerplays, and movement games with your baby.

**Nov 14 TacomaProBono Legal Aid** 1 – 3 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Free civil legal help.

**Nov 14 Maker Fun - Drop in Art and Science for Kids** 3:30 – 5 p.m., Key Center Library. Drop in art and science for kids.

**Nov 14 Key Peninsula Business Association Annual Dinner** 5:30 – 10 p.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center. Tickets are \$50 - RSVP to [kpbusinessassociation@gmail.com](mailto:kpbusinessassociation@gmail.com).

**Nov 15 Cribbage Club** 2 – 4 p.m., Mustard Seed Project. Everyone is welcome, no experience required.

**Nov 16 KP Book Club** 11 a.m., KP Historical Society. "The Tightrope" by Nicholas Kristof.

**Nov 17 Baby Lounge** 12 p.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center. A gathering for connection with other parents.

**Nov 17 TGIF at Longbranch Improvement Club** 5:30 – 9 p.m., Longbranch Improvement Club members and guests.

**Nov 18 How to Write a Graphic Novel** 12 – 1 p.m., Gig Harbor Library. Graphic novelist José Alaniz will share his experience and advice about writing graphic novels.

**Nov 21 Hootenanny** 2 – 4 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Folksong sing and play along.

**Nov 23 Gig Harbor Turkey Trot** 8– 10 a.m., Starting line on Judson Street near the post office. Register online at [gigharborturkeytrot.com](http://gigharborturkeytrot.com).

**Nov 25 - 26 Peninsula High School Winterfest Arts and Crafts Show** Sat: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., Sun: 11 a.m. – 4 p.m., \$5 Admission.

**Nov 26 Purdy Sand Spit Beach Monitoring** 8 – 11:30 p.m., Harbor WildWatch. Volunteers help collect data to monitor the health of local beaches, RSVP to [stena@harborwildwatch.org](mailto:stena@harborwildwatch.org).

**Nov 30 Pierce County Job Fair** 10 a.m. – 2 p.m., Pierce County and South Sound 911. Job fair located at District 7 Office in the Key Corral.

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

## WEEKLY EVENTS

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

**Monday Yoga at the Civic Center** 7 - 8 p.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center. Schedule classes online at the civic center website.

**Monday REFIT Workout** 7 p.m., WayPoint South, [heartfitwp@gmail.com](mailto:heartfitwp@gmail.com). Women's free fitness classes.

**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 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 Friends of the Key Center Library Book Donations** 1 – 3 p.m., Key Center Library.

**T-W REFIT Workout** Tue 6 p.m., Wed 5:30 p.m., WayPoint North, [heartfitwp@gmail.com](mailto:heartfitwp@gmail.com). Women's free fitness classes.

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

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

**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 Grief Support Group** 10 – 11:30 a.m., Envision Hospice. Open to the community. Call for information, 360-350-4875.

**Wednesday No Tears Tech Help** 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., 11/8, 11/15, 11/29. Key Center Library. Call the library to book an appointment, 253-548-3309.

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

**Wednesday Chair Yoga** 1 p.m., Mustard Seed Project, 253-884-9814.

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

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

**Thursday KP Toastmasters** 8 a.m., WayPoint Church, 253-514-2836.



**Thursday Family Story Time** 10:30 – 11 a.m., Key Center Library. For families with young children. No story time on Thanksgiving Day.

**Friday Skate Night** 6 – 9 p.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center, kindergarten-eighth grade. No skate night on 11/10 or 11/24.

**Saturday Amateur Radio Club of Burley** 9 – 11 a.m., Located behind Burley Post Office at 14831 Burley Ave SE. <http://w7jq.org>

**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. – 12:30 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Open to the community, \$5 per person.

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

**Friends of the Key Center Library Board Meeting** Third Fridays, 10:30 a.m., Brones Room of the Key Center Library.

**Key Peninsula Advisory Commission** Fourth Thursdays, 5:30 p.m. [piercescountywa.gov/5937](http://piercescountywa.gov/5937).

**KP Business Association** Luncheon, third Fridays, noon at El Sombrero. [kpbusinessassociation@gmail.com](mailto:kpbusinessassociation@gmail.com).

**KP Business Association** Business meeting. First Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m. November meeting location - Glen Cove Repair, [kpbusinessassociation@gmail.com](mailto:kpbusinessassociation@gmail.com).

**KP Community Council** Second Wednesdays on Zoom, 6:30 p.m. [keypenncouncil@gmail.com](mailto:keypenncouncil@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 Monday, 7 p.m., Home fire station, [johnpatkelly@aol.com](mailto:johnpatkelly@aol.com), 253-432-4256.

**KP Emergency Prep** Third Thursday, 7 p.m., KP Civic Center, [eprep@kpciviccenter.org](mailto:eprep@kpciviccenter.org).

**KP Fire Regular Board Meeting** Second and fourth Tuesdays, 5 p.m. on Zoom, [keypeninsulafire.org](http://keypeninsulafire.org), 253-884-2222.

**KP Historical Society** First Tuesdays, 11 a.m. at museum, [kphsmuseum@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:keypeninsulalions@outlook.com).

**Key Free Clinic** First Thursdays, 4:30 – 7 p.m. (check-in from 4:30 – 5 p.m.). KPC Office in the KC Corral.

**Key Pen Parks Board of Commissioners Meeting**, Second Monday, 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](http://licweb.org).

**Peninsula Emergency Preparedness Coalition** Second Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m., check [pep-c.org](http://pep-c.org) for meeting location.

**Peninsula School District Board Meeting** First Tuesday in November, 6 p.m. Swiftwater Elementary School.

**Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department** Tues and 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.

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*KPMS thanked us with these photos!*



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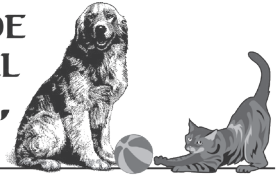
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TOP LEFT: Abella the cat stalks her prey along the banks of Minter Creek.  
 TOP RIGHT: The witch keeps watch on Key Center.  
 CENTER LEFT: The Whirlies played Oct. 7 at the KP Civic Center's Rhythm & Blues, Brats & Brews while celebrating the life of Phil Bauer, and in conjunction with The KP Farm Tour.  
 CENTER RIGHT: Scarecrow kids line the highway through Key Center.  
 BOTTOM LEFT: Gorton the Fisherman landed first place in the 2023 Scarecrow Contest.  
 BOTTOM RIGHT: A guided walk during the KP Farm Tour led by naturalist Chris Rurik at Kaukiki Farm on land recently placed in conservation through the Great Peninsula Conservancy.  
*All photos by Tina McKail, KP News*

