

## Local Teacher Arrested on Suspicion of Child Molestation

Current and former students accused the 34-year-old teacher, who taught at Evergreen for almost 10 years.

LISA BRYAN, KP NEWS

Fifth-grade Evergreen Elementary School teacher Jordan Henderson, 34, was arrested by Pierce County Sheriff deputies April 18 on suspicion of child molestation. He was under investigation for alleged misconduct and put on administrative leave in early March, according to the Peninsula School District.

The sheriff's office investigated allegations "which concerned boundary invasions, verbal statements, and potential touching," said PSD Superintendent Krestin Bahr in a March 15 statement to school staff and families.

Henderson was charged with nine counts of first-degree child molestation against at least three and as many as five victims including his former fourth and fifth-grade students. He pleaded not guilty at his arraignment April 19 in Superior Court and was released on \$100,000 bail and electronic monitoring. The court ordered him not to have contact with any children but his own.

Child molestation in the first degree is a Class A felony. According to the Revised Code of Washington, "A person is guilty of child molestation in the first degree when the person has, or knowingly causes another person under the age of 18 to have, sexual contact with another who is less than 12 years old, and the perpetrator is at least 36 months older than the victim."

One of the girls said in court that she has nightmares about Henderson and can't sleep without crying. She is afraid he will return to the school.

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The color guard at work in 2022. Tina McKail, KP News

## Aisle of Honor is a Memorial Weekend Tradition at Vaughn Bay Cemetery

Volunteers are needed to display 350 flags honoring military veterans who gave some or all for their country.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

The breeze was unusually calm for an early April day atop Vaughn Bay.

Christine Copeland and Barb Waddell were clearing the cement flagpole markers of a year's worth of cut grass and fallen leaves. The two longtime members of the Key Peninsula Veterans group were prepping the scenic and serene Vaughn Bay Cemetery for what they called the most highly decorated cemetery west of the Mississippi River over Memorial Day weekend.

That's when 348 casket flags attached to 18-foot poles, each bearing the name of at least one American Hero, are ceremo-

niously distributed throughout the lanes of the cemetery. In all, more than 500 service members are remembered during the Aisle of Honor, an annual KP tradition held on the Sunday before Memorial Day. Now in its 31st year, this year the event falls on May 26.

"If you can stand here when the wind is blowing and all these flags are flying and you don't feel a surge in your heart for your country, you're either dead or you have a problem," said Waddell, who comes from a family with a history of military service and has been helping with the Aisle of Honor since 2005.

The tradition is a joint effort by the KP Veterans and the Vaughn Bay Ceme-

tery Association that started in 1993. The program starts at 1 p.m. and includes a salute by the U.S. Army and the playing of Taps. Special guests will read the names of all those being honored. "Though it's not official and I can't promise anything, every year we have a bald eagle fly over the ceremony," Waddell said while pointing out an eagle perched high above in a nearby fir tree.

The Peninsula School District, recently named a Purple Star Award recipient by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Washington Association of School Administrators for its "commitment to military-connected families and students,"

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## REARVIEW MIRROR

# Here's What I Think About That

LISA BRYAN,  
EXECUTIVE EDITOR

At the April 23 meeting of the Peninsula School Board, I listened to a sophomore from Peninsula High School named Camri Clawson speak about the need for more social-emotional learning during students' developmental years to support diversity, equity and inclusion.

"There are very real struggles students face every single day within the halls of our schools," she said. "There's blatant homophobia, racism and sexism. I've heard male classmates talk about how they would torture homeless people if it were legal. How birth control is a woman's job and nothing for them to be concerned about. I hear the N-word every day, every day. Racial and homophobic slurs ring throughout the hallways more frequently than the tolling of the bells. This kind of hate is not in our nature, rather it is a learned behavior.

"These attitudes and issues prove that we need DEI and social-emotional learning so we can develop not only reading, writing and arithmetic but can also build character and encourage us to lean into personal growth that can only flourish when we are empowered to see and value perspectives beyond our personal experiences."

I was astonished by her clarity.

I was reminded of the founding principles of our nation, that everyone is created equal and has natural rights that cannot be infringed upon or taken away. It was an experiment at the time that overcame one obstacle after another to expand and strengthen us even during the most extreme tests of our character.

But racism has always existed and persists, as extremist views become more and more common. We make advances and then retreat. Right now, it feels like we need to advance against it again.

It's finally happened: I've turned into one of those people who think things were better when they were growing up.

Our neighborhood of modest starter homes had all sorts of people from

practically everywhere. There were Greek families, Filipinos, at least one family from Peru, a large Native family who lived off the reservation, several Black families, and lots of Korean mamas. At school, I traded my peanut butter and jelly sandwiches every chance I had for rice balls wrapped in salty seaweed.

We lived close to what is now Joint Base Lewis-McChord. Easily a third or more of the kids at our school were military brats. We'd make friends for two years and before we knew it, they were transferred, sometimes to bases as far away as Germany.

During the Vietnam years, one of my friends lost her father in the war. I recall feeling guilty, maybe even a little ashamed, that my dad wasn't military. Life wasn't fair.

It didn't occur to me at the time but looking back at my own growing up there were a good number of kids in our working-class neighborhood who were born first-generation Americans. I never thought of myself as one, despite my mother having fled as a child with her parents from Estonia, one of three independent Baltic countries considered the spoils agreed upon by the United States in exchange for Stalin's Soviet Union joining forces to defeat Hitler's Nazi Germany.

I met my first friend, Linda, in kindergarten. She lived up the street from us. Her parents, Klaus and Uta, were born and raised in Germany. They spoke English with thick but familiar accents. The smells from the kitchen were familiar with a unique twist. I liked eating there.

Linda's mom, like mine, stayed home while our fathers went to work. We weren't wealthy by any stretch, but far more families could live comfortably on a single income in the late 1960s and '70s than today.

Next door to us lived a soft-spoken Japanese couple with their high school-aged son. I remember the mother

coming over with a special Japanese delicacy to share with us, ikuru (brined salmon roe). To put this in perspective, this was long before anyone in America heard of sushi, much less considered consuming raw seafood, except oysters on the half shell — that was high class.

My mom thanked her profusely, I remember being excited to taste whatever it was, but she turned her nose up at it after our neighbor left and suggested my dad use it as fish bait. If only she knew then what we know now — it's the caviar of Puget Sound.

Funny enough, years later I remember fishing with my dad for chinook just south of Anderson Island with a visiting Estonian relative. She laughed as she watched my dad bait his hook with a shiny herring and said essentially the same thing: We fished with what Estonians fished for to eat.

A couple of doors down from us lived an Italian family with two towheaded toddler boys. They shared a cherished recipe for a sauce that 50 years later my family still calls "Abruscotto's spaghetti."

Further down the street was a Danish family with their three kids. Their dad invested in the trucking business and did very well. An older cousin, who was maybe 17, visited from Holland and stayed all summer. We all thought she was the coolest human being in the world.

The greatest gift my father gave me was the idea there are no strangers, just people we haven't met yet. He struck up casual conversations and made friends everywhere he went. Now I understand how lucky I was to have him.

"We're all the same beneath the skin, kiddo."

There was a time in our nation when we recognized this truth that helped make the United States of America exceptional. We were proud of being the great melting pot, or now a mosaic. As kids, we all got along, and nobody cared about the differences. ■



# Purdy Spit to Be Purged of Invasive Knotweed Species

Officially “undesigned” and long unmanaged, the Purdy Spit has been adopted by Wauna resident Bruce Murray. His story speaks to the coordination required.

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

A prominent thicket of invasive knotweed is getting the axe — and the loppers and the mattock in a full beatdown. Where it long stood next to the boat ramp, Wauna resident Bruce Murray envisions a recessed nook holding a pocket park.

“I see this as part of the welcome mat for the Key Peninsula,” Murray said. “I think it should be a warm welcome.”

What seemed at first a simple task to rid the spit of the big-leaved eyesore that has nearly engulfed the sign that welcomes motorists to the KP, led Murray into dealings with an unexpected number of local players.

On Saturday, April 13 a team of 10 local volunteers carried out the first phase of his plan.

“I see this as a multiyear process,” Murray said.

Pierce County Parks owns the beach on the spit’s south side. As Murray learned when he reached out for permission to work on the knotweed, the department labels it an undesignated park, which in practical terms means the county has chosen not to allocate resources to develop or maintain the parkland. The county was quick to give Murray permission to proceed with invasive species removal.

Adding a wrinkle, the highway and right-of-way are the responsibility of the Washington State Department of Transportation. The knotweed patch spills from the road’s edge to the upper beach, straddling state and county jurisdiction. While WSDOT expressed eagerness to Murray about having the weeds addressed, it raised the concern that excessive digging might destabilize the roadbed. He also learned that pursuing the cut-and-cover method of knotweed control, in which a patch is repeatedly mowed down and then buried under several feet of material, would require engineering and shoreline permitting.

Murray has officially adopted the spit under the Adopt-a-Highway Program, which has sponsors for vegetation management as well as trash pickup. The highway interchange at Wollochet Drive is an example, where a Rotary Club has recently planted a small forest of native species.

For Murray, the Wauna boat launch is special. It is the site of the former Goldman’s Store, an all-purpose store and post office built on pilings. The buildings were rotated to face the road after the bulk of peninsula traffic shifted from the Mosquito Fleet to the highway. Murray’s family first came to the KP in the 1950s. He remembers walking



Pierce County Council Member Robyn Denson (D-7th) spent hours attacking the Purdy knotweed with other volunteers. *Tina McKail, KP News*

down the beach to go to the store. “It was a special place,” he said.

He has been in talks with the Key Peninsula Historical Society about recognizing the site. He has also reined Key Peninsula Business Association into the effort. KPBA owns the sign.

“It’s really needed,” said KPBA member Stan Moffett, who also leads Key Pen It Clean. “It’s a mess down there. It looks just terrible.”

“The initial thought,” Murray said, “is to go in and remove everything and create what I would call a blank canvas. We can better see what we’ve got here to consider the next step.”

For many commuters crossing the Purdy Spit, the knotweed thicket that obscures the boat ramp is just another sign of the lush rural landscape to come. Those who know knotweed see something else.

Knotweed infests shorelines, waterways, streambanks and ditches, where it rapidly outcompetes native vegetation and causes soil erosion and sedimentation, according to Melody Meyer of the Pierce County Noxious Weed Control Board. Several species are invasive in the Pacific Northwest, most with their origins in East Asia. Murray has heard it likened to the Incredible Hulk: when you chop



This 4-inch tall just-emerging knotweed shoot looks like asparagus but will leaf out and grow upwards of 12 feet by early July.

*Tina McKail, KP News*

it down, it comes back stronger. And green. Its roots penetrate deep underground and will resprout for many years. They have the power to push aside concrete. Fragments of knotweed rhizomes, if not properly contained, create new plants.

Control requires either years of diligent cutting, massive excavation, or repeated chemical treatments.

Meyer said the legal definition of a noxious weed is “a nonnative plant that is invasive, destructive, and difficult to control.” Knotweed probably takes the cake as the most difficult-to-kill invasive species on the KP.

Drivers on the Wauna curves pass through a gallery of the impact of invasive species, where large stretches of Himalayan blackberry and English ivy have choked out native biodiversity.

For Murray, following his retirement from Chambers Creek Regional Park, adopting the spit is a chance to make a long-term commitment as a steward of his home place. And he’s no greenhorn in the battle against invasive plants. He became involved at Chambers Bay when the gravel quarry was first converted to a golf course and blackberry and Scotch broom covered the hillsides. Fifteen years later, he sees the huge difference that can be made with a collective effort.

On the spit, which he insisted should be called the Wauna Spit rather than the Purdy Spit, he sees the joy that the beach brings to kite surfers, clammers, orca-chasers, picnickers, and holiday revelers alike, along with the lack of stewardship by the agencies that own it.

“I just want it to be a nice space,” he said.

Moffett agreed. “You get a different feeling, crossing over the spit. It relaxes you, gives you a calmness. I think a nice entryway to the peninsula would go a long way in helping to support that feeling.” ■

# Firefighter Robert Fisher Named 2023 KP Citizen of the Year

*"We witness so many awful situations that we can't control, but through helping others I can somehow find a balance."*

VICKI BIGGS, KP NEWS

The Key Peninsula Lions Club honored local firefighter/EMT Robert Fisher as its 37th KP Citizen of the Year during an annual awards ceremony March 23 at the KP Civic Center.

Since 1984, the Lions Club has collected nominations from the community for anyone whose work — professional or volunteer — deserved recognition for its impact on the Key Peninsula (excluding the COVID-19 pandemic years 2020-22), but the award recipient is chosen through secret ballots cast by Lions Club members.

The 2023 award was given not for Fisher's duties as a firefighter, but for his off-time work in the community helping KP residents.

Fisher, 65, said that though he has received many awards over his 27-year career, beginning with Volunteer Rookie Firefighter of the Year, none meant as much to him as Citizen of the Year.

He began volunteering for KPFD in 1997 and was later hired in 2006. Though he lives in Steilacoom, he said the award is a statement about what it means to be a KP citizen involved in the community, supporting local businesses, and helping people where they live.

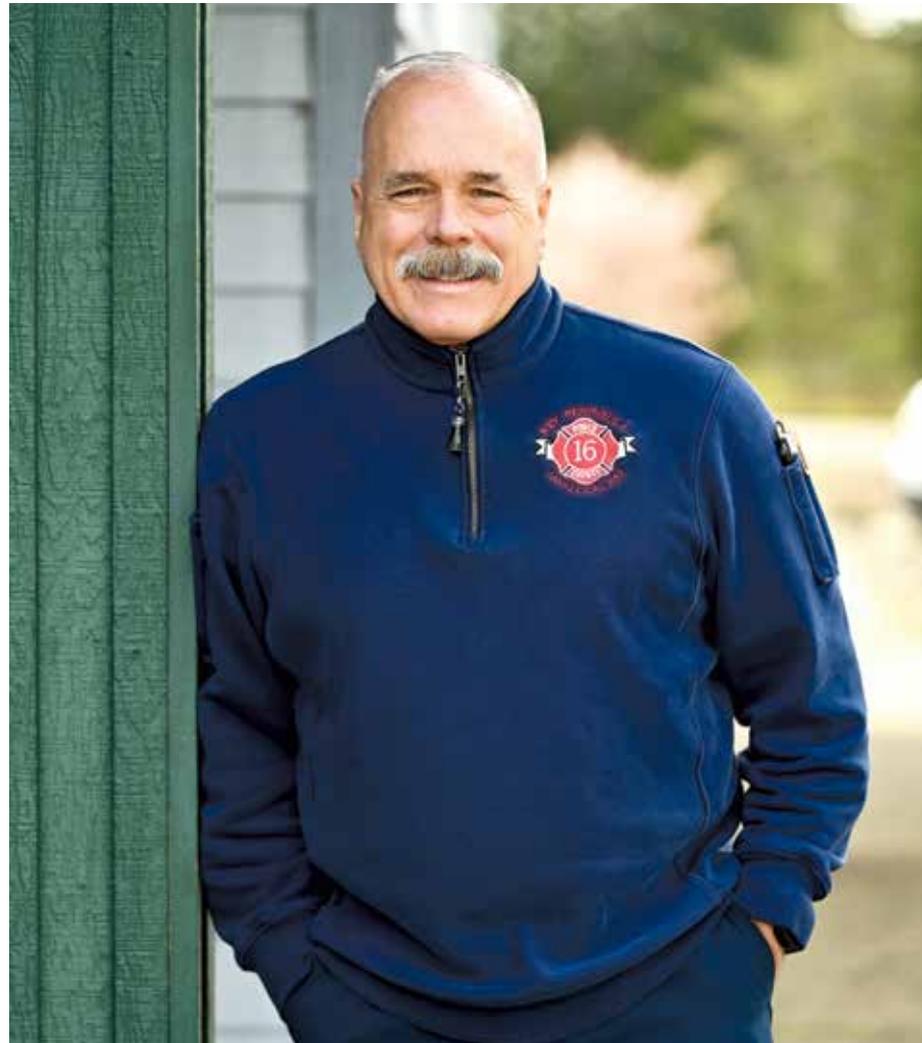
Fisher was born in Ohio, but the family relocated to Wautoma, Wisconsin, where he was raised in a family of five sons. Eventually making his way to Washington state, he met and married his wife, Lola. Now married for close to 30 years, they are a tight family, with two daughters and a son, and a couple of grandchildren.

He began his working life laying carpet, a skill he learned from his father. As time passed, Fisher knew he had to make some changes in his life and settled on firefighting.

But it is the time and attention that Fisher gives to the KP at large that earned him the Citizen of the Year award, he said. Fisher has spent his own time and at times his own money, to improve the lives of others.

Some years ago he was on a call and saw that the resident had no electricity and was unable to pay her bill. Fisher went home, discussed the situation with his wife, and then paid to restore the resident's service.

Some other projects included rebuilding a kitchen floor that had been held together with duct tape for a couple using a wheelchair, building a deck and staircase for a fellow firefighter in need, rebuilding



Twenty-seven-year veteran KP Firefighter/EMT Robert Fisher. *Tina McKail, KP News*

a bathroom for a young woman whose toilet was falling through the floor due to leaks, rebuilding a deck and ramp for an individual with limited mobility, providing Thanksgiving dinners for some community members, and cleaning roofs and decks.

Fisher sometimes works alone on a project and is sometimes assisted by other firefighters.

KPFD Public Information Officer and Volunteer Battalion Chief Anne Nesbit said Fisher "is wonderful to work with, and dedicated to supporting people as they age in place." He notices what someone might need, she said, and then provides it, like installing grab bars or railings to prevent falls.

"He did not win as a firefighter but as a citizen," she said. "Out in the community on his own accord, he goes back to help people in need."

Battalion Chief William Sawaya has worked with Fisher since 1997. "He serves with humility and compassion every day," he said. "He treats everyone he comes in contact with like family. I've learned a lot

from him — how he conducts his personal life parallels his professional life."

Fisher credited his family culture and Catholic upbringing for his desire to help people. He said he still feels a strong sense of compassion for people, who "we see at their worst" on their hardest days. He said he will silently pray on some of those calls and believes many other first responders do too. He has made tokens with the acronym ISAP, "I Said A Prayer," which he sometimes gives to people during his 48-hour shifts.

He described the time a young mother with three children in her car on their way to Tacoma pulled into the fire station. The fan and fan belt had come apart, and the crew at the station put their skills and resources together to get the young family safely on the road again.

"You've got a bunch of men and women who are all a bit of 'jack of all trades,' so somebody knows something about everything. We can always help someone. I think the guys see it and enjoy doing it. It brings you back to a balance of good and bad

## CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARD WINNERS

- 2023 Robert Fisher
- 2019 Marcia Harris (received in 2023 post-pandemic)
- 2018 Karen Jorgenson
- 2017 Dee Dee Kerkes
- 2016 Anne Nesbit
- 2015 Matthew Mills
- 2014 Jud Morris
- 2013 Danna Webster
- 2012 Jeff Harris
- 2011 Ed Robison
- 2010 John Biggs
- 2009 Mike Salatino
- 2008 Edie Morgan
- 2007 Chuck West
- 2006 Phil Bauer
- 2005 Tim Kezele
- 2004 Christi Watson
- 2003 Erlene Twidt
- 2002 Nancy Lind
- 2001 Marge Adams
- 2000 Tracy Manning
- 1999 Louis Aguilar
- 1998 Lulu Smith
- 1997 Irene Zimmer
- 1996 Fred and Mary Ramsdell
- 1995 Angel Guild group: Richard and Barb Hanna; Gerald and June Seich
- 1994 Cy and Eileen Young
- 1993 John Van de Brooke
- 1992 Ida Curl
- 1991 Tracey Manning and Cricket Stephenson
- 1990 Karla and Dick Crocker
- 1989 Ruth Bramhall
- 1988 Dale and Claudia Loy
- 1987 Marguerite Bussard
- 1986 Vicki Henschell and Laurette Jaggi
- 1985 Dr. William Roes
- 1984 Sally Cornman

together and hopefully the good outweighs the bad."

Fisher said that comradery is a favorite part of his job. "It's like working with a bunch of brothers and sisters and we meet these people by happenstance.

"As a firefighter in a small community, we witness so many awful situations that we can't control, but through helping others I can somehow find a balance," he said. "Most importantly, in some small way, it allows each of us to go home, reset, and return to work the next rotation fresh and ready for what life throws at us and the community we are dedicated to." ■



One of 250 small flags placed on the graves of veterans buried at Vaughn Cemetery. *Tina McKail, KP News*

**AISLE OF HONOR FROM PAGE 1**

will have musicians from Vaughn Elementary School and Navy ROTC members from Peninsula High School performing at the event.

“It’s unique because it can be either a very personal, community or national event, or it can be all three,” said Joe Dervaes, president of the Vaughn Bay Cemetery Association. “This community is extremely patriotic and there’s a long history of that.”

In addition to the 5-foot by 8-foot casket flags rippling in the breeze high above the ground, the graves of the 250 veterans buried at the cemetery will be decorated with smaller flags the weekend. The cemetery board members put them out on the Friday before Memorial Day and take them down on the evening of the holiday. Gideon Miter Davidson, one of the original KP homesteaders, in 1899 became the first military veteran buried at Vaughn Bay Cemetery. Davidson served in the Iowa militia in the 1850s.

Dervaes, who also is the treasurer of the Key Peninsula Historical Society and a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel, is one of the founding members of Aisle of Honor and gave the opening marks at the inaugural event 31 years ago. In his speech, he called the event “both a day to remember and a day of remembrance.” He said it started with only 60 flags.

Now with almost six times as many it takes an army of community volunteers to put on a dramatic display of this magnitude. Dervaes, Copeland, and Waddell are asking for help. “Most of the people who care about these types of events are older folks, and people like me aren’t getting any younger,” said Dervaes, who turns 83 this summer.

The local Boy Scout and Cub Scout troops

helped in the past, but participation has dwindled in recent years. Volunteers are needed to help place the flag poles in their cement fixtures starting at 6 a.m. Sunday morning, and helping remove them at 5 p.m. All flags will need to be properly folded. “If you don’t know how to fold a flag, we will teach you,” Waddell said.

Copeland, a retired Army veteran, said helping with an event like this build character and connects the younger and older generations.

“This is one of those unique KP events that needs to continue and some of the younger people need to take that on,” said Marcia Harris, a KP resident and former board president of the Peninsula School District who started attending the event in 2012 in memory of her father, who was a World War II vet. “It’s a remarkable experience. Every time I go it makes me proud to live here and proud to be an American.”

Lance McMillan used to volunteer at the event when his son was in Boy Scouts. “In small-town America, these types of events become an integral part of community involvement,” he said, adding that he wants the event to remain focused on “remembering the sacrifice.”

Those willing to volunteer can reach KP Veterans President Ray Flowers at 541-514-9371 or Copeland at 253-632-4757.

For now, Copeland, Waddell, and the rest of the KP Veterans will do what they can for as long as they can to make sure the flags continue to fly each year. The group supports the Aisle of Honor with the money it makes during their annual Fourth of July fireworks booth at Lake Kathryn Village and through flag pin sales.

“I’m very proud of my flag,” Waddell said. “I’m not always proud of my government, but I’m always proud of my flag.” ■



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## Ted Olinger

ANOTHER LAST WORD



### What I Remember on Memorial Day

My dad, Raymond Olinger, joined the Army in 1945 after graduating high school at the top of his class of 20 in Buxton County, Kansas, when he was 17 years old. He was in Minot, North Dakota, that summer training for the invasion of Japan when Hiroshima was bombed.

That was, he told me, the best day of his life.

“A secret weapon saved me.”

Then he went to Japan.

He deployed as a military police officer and was billeted in the former 3rd Imperial Guard Regiment barracks in Tokyo, even in its ruined state the most elegant city he had ever imagined.

His unit was meant to monitor and control the local population but spent the bulk of its time enforcing Gen. Douglas MacArthur’s first orders: allied personnel were not to accost civilians nor eat any of their scarce food.

Dad grew up on a southeast Kansas farm in the Great Depression and, though he didn’t know it, poor. By the age of 9, he knew how to work in the fields and at school, how to ride and shoot, how to trap, skin and roast rabbits, and how to roll his own cornhusk cigarettes.

He was appalled by the behavior of some of his fellow GIs. He told me stories of abuse he witnessed, stopped, or was forced to ignore that I will not repeat here. The only violence he experienced was at the hands of AWOL U.S. soldiers, one of whom opened fire on his jeep with an M1 carbine in downtown Tokyo.

When I asked him if he shot back, Ray said, “That wasn’t going to solve anything.”

He discharged his weapon in action only once, while serving guard duty on a train to Sasebo transporting Korean men conscripted by the Imperial Army for hard labor during the war. They were to be repatriated by force since many did not want to return to their homeland, reputed to be in worse condition than Japan. They wanted to make money working for the Americans before leaving on their own terms.

The guards were stationed on the train carriage roofs for the journey through the night with orders to shoot anyone who attempted to escape, and many did when the train slowed or stopped. My dad and

his fellow guards, 18- and 19-year-olds all, dutifully fired their rifles — into the air — having agreed that no one deserved to be shot in the back for refusing to go home.

Dad was later promoted to sergeant, climbed Mount Fuji, and dined with the daughter of Admiral Yamamoto, the man behind the attacks on Pearl Harbor and Midway. After returning to the States, he went to college on the GI bill at Kansas University and was on his way to law school but was talked into joining the Naval Reserve by his new brother-in-law, a PBV pilot who’d earned a silver star at the Battle of Santa Cruz. Dad was to begin flight training after graduation when he was recalled to active duty to fight the Korean War.

His unit, the 3rd Battalion of the 8th Cavalry — the storied Rocking Horse Regiment formed in 1866 — was overrun and annihilated by Chinese forces in the Battle of Unsan in 1950.

But by that time Dad had been sent to the Navy’s 90-day officer training school in New Jersey and then spent a month on an ammunition ship crossing the Pacific before finding his billet aboard the destroyer U.S.S. Eversole in the Sea of Japan.

He was 22 years old.

The Eversole shelled railroads and other strategic points along the coast of North Korea and served escort and blockade duty. As part of the latter, the ship spent two weeks at anchor in a tidal stream between the mainland and some strategic islands wanted by the Chinese. The crew rigged anti-boarding nets, kept steam up in the engine room, and Dad slept with a loaded .45 under his pillow.

One night at dinner in the wardroom, after the stewards had just served soup, the assembled officers were knocked out of their chairs by the concussion of an artillery barrage that fell short of their position. The ship began to move before the crew could release the anchor chains, so she got underway dragging all four anchors. Dad’s battle station was command of two deck guns manned by the wardroom cooks and stewards, all Black sailors clad only in tee-shirts and aprons, who fired their weapons at cannon flashes on the mainland ridge.

Two more barrages from the shore battery sent up walls of water where the ship had been anchored and where it was headed. They made a sharp turn to come parallel to the coast and fired a broadside, which produced catastrophic explosions along the ridgeline. There was no return fire.

Eversole earned seven battle stars before

the end of the war. Ray’s gun crews were decorated for their bravery. But the only other significant action my dad saw was applying a splint to the ship’s navigator, who sustained a compound fracture to his leg after being thrown across the bridge when the ship survived a 60-degree roll during a typhoon.

Dad remained in the Naval Reserve until the end of the Vietnam War when he retired as a lieutenant commander. Eversole was decommissioned and given to the Turkish Navy, where she remains in service as a floating museum in Izmit.

Ray died rapidly of bilateral lung cancer in 2003 but not before dictating a letter to my then 2-year-old son, Jack. He had been close to his own grandfather and knew what would be missed by both of them. His transcribed letter runs to 114 typed, double-spaced pages, but only covers his life up to age 9, by which time he had become that experienced field hand, hunter and smoker. When I asked if he’d had any sense at the time of the difficulties he and his family endured, Dad scowled. “It was a good life,” he said.

*Ted Olinger lives in Vaughn.*

## Carolyn Wiley

DEVIL’S HEAD DIARY



### Definition Depends on Perspective

An early spring sailing regatta out of Shilshole Bay got me thinking about reassessing my definition of fun.

I am a light-breeze and sunshine sort of girl, and this was a cold, blustery, grey day, rain was sheeting off my Tilly hat and I was chilled to the bone. Was this supposed to be fun? We had just rounded the mark, only one boat was ahead of us, and we were picking up speed. In a flash, I realized that this was the exact definition of real fun.

Sometimes the personal analytical process takes longer. Considering the irksome things in life — how many of them could be improved simply by rounding the mark and seeing things from a different perspective? It could lead to a redefinition of all sorts of situational elements. Having a clearer, cleaner definition of the odds keeps me from getting stuck rehashing what is and what was, and forces me to define what could be. Such a re-evaluation can provide the insight and basis for discovering “the meaning of life, the universe, and everything.”

According to Douglas Adams (as revealed

in “The Hitch Hiker’s Guide to the Galaxy”) the answer is of course 42. Adams averred that the answer is so elusive because “The Ultimate Question itself is unknown.” I disagree, for me the ultimate question of life, the universe, and everything, is simply, “Does it make me happy, or happier?”

Frequently, redefining the situation can brighten one’s outlook. For instance, we have all just come through the dreaded tax season. Few people delight in forking over their hard-earned shekels and choose to feel resentful about the redistribution of wealth. If this is your gripe, it may be time to redefine the situation. Start by standing up and claiming credit for the good your tax dollar will do. Feel free to demand public acknowledgment of your contributions to the common good. The simple solution is to exert your power by redefining the situation.

Frankly, in the whole scheme of things, the measly amount of tax I pay into local, state and federal coffers is quite insignificant. This may be true for you too. Therefore, it seems reasonable to me that I owe it to myself to define how it is to be spent.

For instance, I object to subsidies for the tobacco growing industry, so years ago I decided that I would not contribute to keeping those farmers afloat. Until they decide to plant something I can eat, they will have to rely upon someone else to pick up the tab. I heartily approved of the 2004 legislation to phase out tobacco subsidies completely.

Unfortunately, tobacco growers, particularly in North Carolina and Kentucky, were bankrupted by the inability to export tobacco to China due to COVID-19 restrictions and certain trade agreements. Sadly, in the spring of 2020, congress passed the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2, and tobacco subsidies were reinstated. I feel that this action was simply a ploy to gain votes before a hotly contested election but, who knows?

On the other hand, there are subsidies I wholeheartedly support. My budgeting process is admittedly selfish. One example is my commitment to the National Endowment for the Arts, which produces a direct return on my investment. Because others also contribute, I pay about 32 cents less for my season tickets to the opera and the ballet. It’s the American way — me first!

I would gladly allocate more to the arts for my entertainment if I didn’t derive so much pleasure from visiting National Parks, and seeing the results of environmental restoration. Social Services also get modest support because I don’t want to feel guilty about being heartless.

On the local level, when the upgrades

— curbs and sidewalks — were completed in our nearest downtown non-incorporated rural community, I didn't publicize it but feel free to thank me because I paid for about 2 7/8 inches of the rebar in the southern-most curb of the grocery store driveway. I'd like to thank the rest of you who anted up to finish the job. However, I suspect that several people neglected to pay attention and let their tax dollars be squandered on some project elsewhere in the county instead of keeping it local.

A gentleman once attempted to convince me that taxes didn't work that way, that I could not control how my tax dollar was spent, the government took the money and spent it as it saw fit. I countered his argument by explaining that when all the tax money was dumped into the pot in Washington, Olympia, or Pierce County, no one could tell which dollar was mine, or which dollar was his, because dollars all look the same and are valued the same — a dollar is a dollar, is a dollar. I explained that it was a personal choice. While he was free to let the Ubiquitous They decide where his dollar went, I determined how my dollar was used.

It may seem a bit underhanded, but since nobody can really tell where my tax dollar goes, I have the freedom and power to invest in activities that please me. I opted not to point out that those faceless governmental decision-makers actually work for me.

By the way, another investment that pleases me is my contribution to the upkeep of local roads. I believe that only the most obtuse driver would want to share the road with a pothole-dodging little old lady. Feel free to thank me for being so considerate and caring about your safety.

*Carolyn Wiley lives quietly, for the most part, in Longbranch.*

## Anna Brones

FRESH TAKE



### The Month of May

The birdsong begins early. It's better than any alarm clock. Sweeter, gentler, more alive.

With the bedroom window cracked open, I ensure that it's the first thing that I hear in the morning.

Over a decade ago, I moved to a tiny apartment in Paris. Five floors up, the windows of the apartment all looked to the interior courtyard, a view down to the romantic sight of recycling and garbage bins. While not quintessentially beautiful, the main benefit was that since there were no windows that faced out, street traffic noise wasn't a problem. There was a sense of quiet as soon as you pushed open the heavy blue entry door to the apartment building and stepped into that courtyard. From the window in the dining room — which in tiny apartment style also served as the office and living room — I could look out across the courtyard to the apartments on the other side. One floor down, I could see into the kitchen of a man who every morning read the newspaper and smoked a cigarette by the window. When I looked up, my sight extended past the top floor of the building, up to the sky. A small portal to the natural world.

A few months into living there, I traveled for a long weekend to Lisbon. We arrived in the evening, reveling that there was enough space in the rental apartment for an entire couch. Such luxury! In the morning, while making coffee, I opened the kitchen windows. They also extended out into a courtyard of sorts, an open space in

the middle of the block of apartment buildings. But this was much different: verdant and lush, vines creeping up a trellis. I sat there with the coffee, breathing in the bright morning air. Then I heard it: Birdsong. A morning serenade. I hadn't realized how much I missed it.

We need nature in our everyday lives. Green spaces in urban areas are essential, not just for climate resilience but also for wellbeing. If you've been here on the Key Peninsula for a while, it can be easy to forget that. We're surrounded by it, steeped in it. We don't have to go far to get to a water view or a park. What impresses visitors — enormous moss-covered maple trees, grandiose Douglas fir and cedar, entire forests covered in a sea of ferns, the flickering sunlight on the bay as you cross the Purdy Spit, the smell of salt water — become second nature to us. We can get so used to them that we forget to pay attention.

Yet the month of May is nature's call to action. It offers up the kind of flourishes that are meant to draw your attention. This is the month where I keep an eye on the foxglove leaves as they get bigger and bigger. The bright pink of salmonberry blossoms eventually leads to the Nootka rose coming to life. The trilliums fade and the oranges and yellows of honeysuckle emerge. Purple chive blossoms extend from the planter box, and forget-me-nots and buttercups bring color to the ground. If you're lucky, a patch with downed trees might give the promise of a lupine.

May feels like the precipice, the beginning of a robust season. It's ripe with potential.

That moment when you quickly hold your breath at the anticipation of something big taking place. The mornings start early, and the evenings stretch later. But it feels like a time that you're sneaking in a little extra. It doesn't have the pressure of summer.

Instead, the days are imbued with the dreamy landscape of potential. The sun right now rises and sets about the same as it does in August but think of how different these days feel than those late summer ones: You're not mourning the end of something, you're anticipating the beginning. You're surprised when one day you realize how bright it is at six in the morning. You're equally surprised at how late in the day the light lasts. As we inch our way towards summer solstice, those evenings only get longer and longer. You crave for them to stretch, for them to hold you.

We all know that none of this lasts. May, one of my favorite months of the year, holds as much magic and beauty while marking a reminder of deep loss, the two inherently intertwined. I remind myself that this too is the way of the natural world. The wildflowers fade, the days stretch with dry summer heat that dries out the ferns and threatens wildfires. Everything, always in flux.

But this moment right here? It's the morning birdsong. What better time than right now to pay attention. Open your window, let it in.

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

## John Broward

OFF THE MOUND

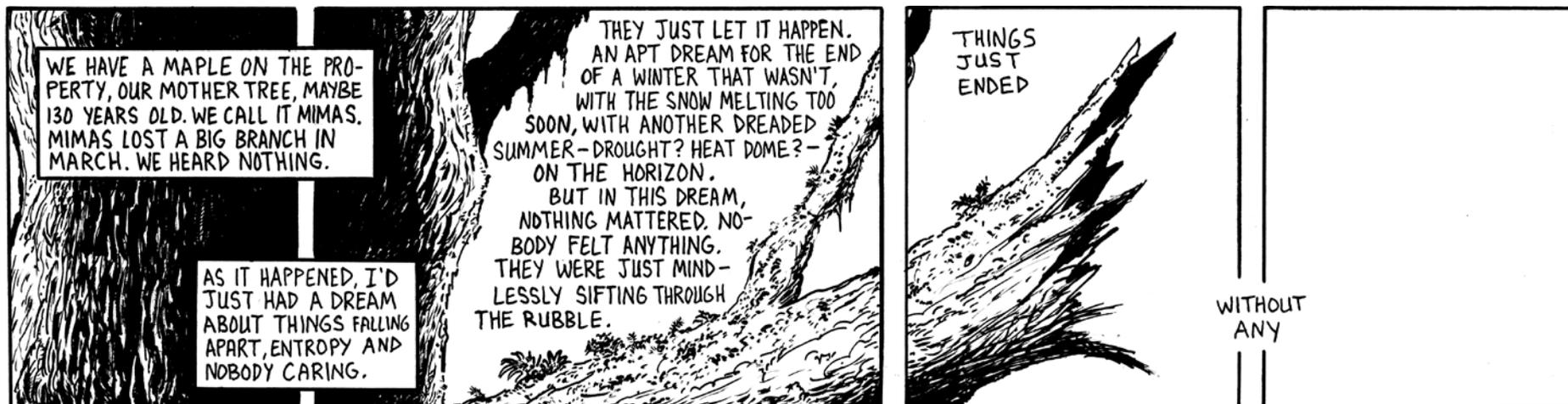


### Unified for All

I have been playing sports all my life, from water polo to flag football to golf, but I fell in love with baseball. Over

CONTINUED PAGE 8

### José Alaniz WE LIVE HERE: SLOUCHING TOWARDS SUMMER



the last several years, I have been so focused on my baseball development that I did not know there was another sport out there I would enjoy just as much without the pressure I feel when I'm on the mound.

Once I tried Unified Basketball, I knew I had found something special. I played my first season this year and it was, by far, the most fun I have had in sports.

I am a sophomore at Peninsula High School, and I heard about the Unified Club earlier this year on the morning announcements. I'm always up for trying something new, so I decided to go and attend the club meeting that Thursday after school. Unified Club is a gathering of students of all abilities designed to promote social inclusion and mutual respect while having fun and getting to spend time together.

It was a whole new environment that I quickly realized was a perfect place for me. From week to week more students started attending and the excitement for Unified Club grew. The teacher-leaders were extremely excited as they never had this many participants. Attending Unified Club quickly became something that I looked forward to and my new friends, of all backgrounds and abilities, made it fun.

During one club meeting, we learned about Unified Basketball and that PHS hoped to increase their participation to two teams this year. Unified Sports is a division of Special Olympics that combines athletes with intellectual disabilities with peer athletes for an inclusive competitive experience.

Starting from the first practice there was a lot to unfold and understand. It was more than just the fundamentals of basketball, I had to learn how to be a productive peer athlete for my teammates. In our division, we have three unified athletes playing with two peers on the court. Peers can only aid in the game and are on the court to support the athletes and help keep the game going.

Some Unified athletes benefit from a one-on-one peer who works directly with the athlete to play. This was my favorite part. I liked being paired up directly with Paige or Ian to bring out their best and help them feel successful with the basketball skills they had learned. Helping Ian dribble and helping Paige pass to her teammates reinforced for me the importance of teamwork and everyone having the chance to participate in team sports.

Although the season is short — the games only spanned four weekends — it was the most fun I have ever had

playing a sport. And I am not alone in this belief. Thomas, another peer athlete, explained, "My favorite part of Unified Basketball was being able to help all the kids play basketball and how fun it was hanging out with all of them."

What I remember most and what made me the happiest was the joy and excitement during the games. Whenever either team scored, the entire gymnasium filled with cheering and excitement from players, parents and fans. And when PHS unified athletes Jack or Justin would drop back and make a 3-point shot, the place went wild. It was next level.

I will continue to work hard as an ace starting pitcher for the Peninsula High School varsity baseball team, as that is my primary sport. However, I would also love to be known as a peer athlete for Unified Sports. There is nothing better than getting to play basketball on a team with my friends and being a supportive and inclusive teammate.

If you want to know more about Unified Sports come out to a PHS Unified Soccer game or Unified Track meet or visit the Special Olympics website at [specialolympicswashington.org](http://specialolympicswashington.org).

*John Browand is a sophomore at Peninsula High School.*

## Obituary



**Dee Dee Kerkes**

Dee Dee Kerkes of Home died April 17. She was 75 years old.

She was born in Renton in 1948 and attended South Kitsap High School, followed by classes at numerous colleges.

Dee Dee worked for the Key Peninsula Fire Department and volunteered for many other local organizations, including Ashes FD 16 Ladies Auxiliary, the KP Firefighters Association, and the KP Community Services senior center. She was also a member of Beta Sigma Phi and was instrumental in founding the KP Free Clinic.

In 2018, she became the 34th recipient of the KP Lions Club Citizen of the Year Award for her then-43 years of service to the community, when she first became a volunteer firefighter.

Dee Dee was later hired as a professional paramedic for Shepherd Ambulance while continuing as a volunteer firefighter/EMT for KPFD throughout the 1980s and '90s. She was also an EMT instructor and first-responder instructor. She finished her career working the front desk at the Key Center fire station in the early 2000s.

She is survived by her sisters Jackie Palumbo (Joe) of Kent and Linda Lane (Mike) of Port Orchard; her brother Ralph Sanford (Marie) of Oklahoma; sons Eric (Dawn) of Grapeview and Michael (Elton) of Belfair; granddaughter Julia Munguia (Everado); and great-grandson Ronin of Shelton.

There will be a private celebration of life May 4 at 2 p.m. in Grapeview. The family may be contacted through Dee Dee's Facebook page.

## Letter to the Editor

### TALKING ABOUT SUICIDE SAVES LIVES

Public negative criticism is easy and seemingly a sporting game for most of society on any social media platform. It is much more difficult to take the same few minutes to express appreciation and gratitude for something, anything.

That's unfortunate. I consciously try to give positive affirmations and avoid destructive, constant negativity. Yes, it's always a work in progress as it is with any of us. Anyone without that sin may now cast their stone at me.

At any rate, I must once again shout out my admiration and gratitude to the Key Peninsula News April 2024 edition, specifically to Lisa Bryan, Ted Olinger and Anne Nesbit and their collaboration this month in Lisa's recurring column "Here's What I Think About That."

The subject matter might make many squirm, but suicide should be openly discussed. It's the healthy approach to reducing it and, ideally, ending it. It is a grand idea and well worth pursuing.

Absorb the information and resources

shared in this outstanding public service article. Keep it handy for future reference. Tape it to your refrigerator.

Information will be right there if a crisis presents itself. This is a serious public health problem. Educate yourself and be prepared to save a life.

*Victor Sprague, Lakebay*

### WHY THE PIERCE TRANSIT RUNNER DOESN'T SERVE THE KP

The launch of the Pierce Transit Runner service in Gig Harbor has brought up the question: "Why not the Key Peninsula?"

The answer is simple: the Runner is a Pierce Transit program and the KP is not in the Pierce Transit Public Transportation Benefit service area.

The Pierce Transit service area is the Gig Harbor City limits. Most of the Gig Harbor peninsula does not get the Runner either. But the Pierce Transit service area does include the Purdy Park and Ride and Peninsula High School, so people could travel to and from there on the

Runner for \$2 or free if they are under 18 and have the free Orca card ([www.myorca.com](http://www.myorca.com)).

I have been working hard to get some transportation services on the KP. Last year (2023 was my first year as your County Councilperson) I worked with the county to give \$50,000 to the Partnership for a Healthy Community to do a transportation study (we need data to go after bigger grants for a long-term solution), and to provide the free Key Peninsula Holiday Shuttle (remember me begging people to ride last year?).

For the 2024-25 budget, I worked with colleagues to secure \$600,000 for three rural transportation pilot programs, one of which will be on the KP. This is unprecedented. I hope to have an update from county staff by May, so stay tuned to my Facebook page or newsletter.

Big thanks to the KP for advocating for itself and helping me bring additional services to the community.

*Robyn Denson, Pierce County Councilmember District 7*

# A Rare Encounter with a Local But Near-Mythical Snake

CHRIS RURIK, KP NEWS

The boa is wedged in a crack between a chimney of big round stones from the beach and the room's old drywall. Head down, most of its two-foot length can only be seen as a darker shadow in the crack. Near its tail, where a chimney stone juts, it loops into the room, motionless.

My neighbor, who called me to the scene, says at first glance he took it to be some kind of iron hook for a fireplace tool. His second look laid that notion to rest. My first instinct is to touch it. With a fingertip I do. It is smooth, soft, the skin a little loose, almost velvety, and it barely recoils. Of all the places to have an encounter with this near-mythical snake, the rubber boa, it is here in an unoccupied and water-damaged home on an ivy-choked bluff above the Sound.

It is bigger than I expected, the thickness of a garden hose. It is our only native snake that is not a garter snake, and it is a constrictor.

**WILD  
PENINSULA**

One of rubber boa's reported defenses is a secretion said to be on par with skunk spray, and as I begin

to tease the snake from the crack a milky liquid runs from its cloaca. The smell hits. It is pungent, sure, but as my already repulsed neighbor makes for the door and the snake resists my tugs, it strikes me that the smell is more like seafood than anything, like strong clams, and quite bearable.

At first, I worry that pulling the rubber boa's tail might cause its head to get stuck, but the strange rubbery skin shifts and the entire snake slips free, its head no wider than its body. It has an almost wormlike profile, its tail just as blunt as its head.

It has been called the two-headed snake. It is not known to strike when handled. Indeed, its next defensive move, as it slowly curls in my hands, strangely placid is to bury its head beneath its coiled body and leave its tail loose. I cannot think of another wild animal I have handled that is this calm in the hand. The few biologists who have attempted to study rubber boas have found tail scars to be common, evidence that the snake's predators are fooled into thinking that the free end is the head.

Rubber boas are difficult to find. They are nocturnal and fossorial, meaning they move at night and live mostly underground.

Yet their range is large, from British Columbia to California and east to Utah and



For naturalist Chris Rurik, seeing this native snake made for a giddy moment and his first ever chance to hang out with a rubber boa.

*Chris Rurik, KP News*

Wyoming, suggesting a fairly adaptable creature, and they are found in forests, grasslands, and scrubby areas from sea level to 9,000 feet elevation.

Isn't it wild that few studies have been conducted on the only boa in most of the American West? Our understanding of its diet, predators, reproduction, and seasonality are based on disjointed snapshots and chance encounters.

It's yet another example of how much life plays out beyond the edges of our perception. How many rubber boas live on the Key Peninsula? Where are they concentrated? Is the population healthy? Who knows. So many creatures may or may not be doing fine.

Here is some of what is known, most of it thanks to a few dedicated biologists in Oregon. Rubber boas spend most of their time in rodent burrows — young rodents seem to be their primary food, though they take birds, eggs, snakes, and lizards as well — and hibernate throughout the cold season. When temperatures are marginal, they use the sun's warmth to raise their body tempera-

ture, though not on the Earth's surface. They choose a thin rock or slab of bark and practice what is called subsurface basking. One of the best methods to find a rubber boa is to put pieces of metal roofing out as artificial cover and check underneath them regularly. When the temperature grows too warm, rubber boas retreat back underground.

Few predators have been confirmed, including the red-tailed hawk and barred owl as well as several snakes that do not live in our area. One rubber boa was found coiled around the neck of an alligator lizard while the lizard was biting the snake's head — it was unclear who was predator and who was prey.

Like most boas, rubber boas give birth to live young. They grow slowly. Females take at least four years to reach reproductive age. They do not have young every year. Everything about them is slow — ask the rodents they slowly squeeze to death. Animals with slow lifestyles, the geoducks and yews of the world, tend to be long-lived, and a hot-off-the-presses study using rubber boa data from a biologist, who searched for them in the same

sites for decades and used their variable scale patterns like zebra stripes to identify them as individuals, has confirmed that it is true for rubber boas as well.

Over 60 of the rubber boas in the study were estimated to be over 20 years old. Incredibly, one female was first caught as a large 27-inch adult in the summer of 1971. Growth models suggest she was between 20 and 36 years old. The biologist occasionally recaptured her until 1989, when he brought her into a cage for study. She reproduced a number of times in captivity. Finally, in 2006, she died. So according to the models, she lived somewhere between 55 and 71 years. This would shatter snake lifespan records. It is exceptional to imagine.

As for the inert rubber boa in my hands, I carry it into the woods and find a brush pile where I nestle it against logs and cover it with leaves. It does not move. I wish I could do something more for it. I wish I could know its next move, what it needs, where it will go. But some things can only be left to their own devices. ■

# Why is Cell Service So Bad on the KP? Some Help is Coming

**T-Mobile is looking to add up to two new cell towers on the Key Peninsula by 2025. Time to switch carriers – again?**

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

Spotty cell coverage across portions of the Key Peninsula has left some homeowners dependent on sometimes even less reliable landlines. Residents may well wonder why it is so bad and what can be done about it.

The Big Three carriers — T-Mobile, Verizon and AT&T — all attribute signal strength issues to the KP's terrain and heavily wooded surroundings.

Case in point: for all three, according to coverage maps, the closer customers are to either Case Inlet or Carr Inlet, especially Carr Inlet, the better service tends to be.

“While the Key Peninsula's dense forestry can be challenging, we continue to upgrade our sites on the peninsula to improve performance for customers and provide faster wireless speeds,” Lauren Peterson, Verizon's senior manager of corporate communications, told the Key Peninsula News.

Within the last four years, AT&T invested close to \$1 billion in their wireless and wireline infrastructure just across Washington State. The company also

Advice from carriers that may help in rural areas:

- If you have a phone older than 2021, don't expect 5G speeds. Unfortunately, you'll need to get a newer phone.
- If you have a new phone that doesn't mean you always get 5G speeds, especially on the KP. It may help to toggle your settings to 4G when at home.
- Use your broadband coverage to connect your cell phone through Wi-Fi to make calls or share data if allowed.
- It never hurts to restart your phone, especially if it is acting slow in an area that is normally fast.
- If you have a digital SIM card (most new phones do), you can try T-Mobile for free for three months to see if it works better in your neighborhood.

said it made recent updates to existing cell sites in the area to improve network capacity.

“We understand the importance of keeping our customers connected and continue to look for ways to improve our network,” said an AT&T spokesperson.

Although all three of the large carriers claim to offer great coverage on the Key Peninsula, their coverage maps show each has its bread and butter areas: AT&T seems to provide the best coverage from Purdy down into Key Center, T-Mobile takes care of most of Vaughn, especially along Lackey and Crescent Beach

Roads where a tower is close by, and Verizon is top-notch from Home down to Erickson Road SW and from Palmer Lake to Penrose Point State Park, as well as in Wauna down the shoreline to Minter Creek.

That is not to say each of those carriers doesn't have glad or sad customers in all of those areas.

Key Peninsula News randomly selected comments about cell service woes from local KP Facebook groups over the last few months and shared them with Verizon, AT&T and T-Mobile.

Only T-Mobile responded directly to

the feedback, saying they are adding a “cell site,” which means a tower, to help address issues in areas like Longbranch, where current Verizon and AT&T customers lean toward being happy with their service, but T-Mobile customers shared mostly bad news stories.

Bellevue-based T-Mobile also plans to address the dreaded dead zone stretch of State Route 302 and the KP Highway between 118th Avenue NW and Lake Minterwood that seems to affect all carriers and could be a major public safety issue or a minor inconvenience. Work in both areas will likely be done in 2025, according to the company, but it won't divulge exactly where the towers will go.

Knowing time, and speed, is of the essence, T-Mobile is making more immediate improvements on the KP. A company spokesperson said this past March T-Mobile expanded its Ultra Capacity 5G coverage which likely gave a boost to customers. The carrier says it already covers about 98.6% of the area with 4G LTE and 5G, “and we expect that number to improve as we continue bolstering our network in the region.” ■



Accident in April. *Eddie Macsalka, KP News*

## This Wauna Curves Guardrail is a Magnet for Mishaps and Mischiefous Local Commentary

**The “collision collector” on State Route 302 has been hit three times in 2024 and nine times since 2021.**

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

That one Wauna curves guardrail. Yes, that infamous one. It has been a stoic symbol of resilience on the Key Peninsula for the last three years.

All it can do is sit there, steadfastly, between mileposts 13.9 and 14 on westbound State Route 302. Waiting to be the next crash victim. Again.

If there are any positive vibes to send its way, it's that it has already met its annual quota for bends, bangs, bumps and bruises. Then again, it's only May.

According to the Washington State Department of Transportation, this unfortunate guardrail has already needed repairs or replacement three times this year. The same guardrail was hit three times in 2023 and another three times in

2022. That's an average of about once every three months since 2021.

This guardrail's main job was seemingly to protect westbound drivers from veering off the right side of the road as SR 302 curves left, but now it seems more like it is protecting an innocent power pole and hapless blackberry brambles from distracted drivers.

April was the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Distracted Driving Awareness Month.

“By driving distracted, you're robbing yourself of seconds that you may need to avoid a close call or deadly crash,” according to the administration website.

This particular guardrail on SR 302 comes up quickly after a left curve in front of it and could easily be missed if a driver is distracted or impaired.

Though the accident-prone guardrail has been the butt of jokes on local Facebook groups as of late, repairing it is no laughing matter, sometimes costing taxpayers up to tens of thousands of dollars.

“Whenever possible, we try to recoup the costs,” said April Leigh, a spokesperson for WSDOT.

She said it typically takes about five people to repair this guardrail, depending on the severity of the damage, and may slow down traffic considerably in both directions for a good chunk of the day.

Despite all these challenges, the Wauna curves guardrail is here to stay. Well, unless it gets knocked a few feet to the right and then needs replacing sometime in the next three months. But until then, it's here to stay. ■

# KP Commercial Real Estate Can Be a Tough Sell for Now

Commercial property is limited, but not overly wanted by businesses on the Key Peninsula, at least for now.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

Signs, signs, everywhere there's signs.

Despite prime locations along State Route 302 and the Key Peninsula Highway, where anywhere between 14,000 and 17,000 cars pass through on a weekday, there are vacant lots and empty spaces that have been sitting for months, some for years, with large for sale-like signs hoping to lure a potential business interest.

Commercial property takes up less than 1% of the entire Key Peninsula due to zoning restrictions, yet much of the space is going unused or undeveloped, hardly suggesting the KP is a mecca for new businesses.

The yellow First Western real estate sign feels like a mainstay in front of Lake Kathryn Village, but 10 years ago that would not have seemed necessary. Engineering plans from 2014 on the Pierce County permitting site showed what a nearly fully developed Lake Kathryn Village could look like, complete with a 5,000-square-foot restaurant and retail space east of the Wauna Post Office. Drawings had a mini-storage facility behind Purdy Cost Less and what is now Ace Hardware. A large grocery store was envisioned in the lot next to what is today Dollar Tree. There were also a few other spots on the west side of the property designed for retail space.

Those plans never came to fruition and today the KP's largest and most accessible shopping center has four of those lots for sale. That includes the 5.5-acre lot next to Dollar Tree and the 2.3-acre strip across the entryway from Burger King. Some development is on its way. The Wauna Post Office will welcome O'Reilly Auto Parts as its new neighbor sometime in the future and the property next to that was bought in 2023 but no plans have been announced for what will go there yet.

Another frequent sign drivers may see cruising along the KP Highway is the red and white Puget Sound Properties sign in front of Peninsula Community Health Services. It is not just a medical and dental clinic. The building is unassumingly large, but because of its odd shape it's tough for passersby to see other businesses that make up what is officially called "Key Plaza."

Kim Marvik, a realtor with the company, said there is a lot of flexibility and potential for a business in this building,



Property for sale at Lake Kathryn Village in Wauna. Lisa Bryan, KP News

with space ranging from 1,000 to up to 7,000 square feet. She thinks it is ideal for smaller businesses like art studios, salons, chiropractors, counselors and real estate offices, but with outdoor space, Marvik said it could even accommodate a daycare facility.

For those wondering when to test the waters in the business world, Marvik suggested now might be a good time while rent is extremely competitive. "Being in a rural area, we have a shallow pool of prospective tenants and the market isn't really hot right now for leasing," she said.

Commercial landowners like Lee Owens and John Holmaas understand why businesses on the KP may look to lease rather than build: it's expensive to do the latter right now.

Owens, with his blue two-tone sign, has been trying to sell his triangular-shaped property at the intersection of 134th Avenue NW and KP Highway, across from Bischoff Food Bank, off-and-on for 20 years. A recent archeological and cultural assessment shows the site has been undeveloped since it was first purchased in 1891, according to Pierce County records. Owens bought it in 1983 for \$19,000 and he values it today at about \$800,000.

"That was quite the investment." But it hasn't been easy to get a return on that investment yet.

He blames government at the local and national levels for making it hard on businesses. Current Pierce County commercial fire code requires enough water, 1,500 gallons per minute for up to two hours, to help put out a fire. For businesses on a well system, that may not be possible. The solution would be to store water on-site in a 200,000-gallon tank, which is big, and unless buried, takes up valuable real estate. It's a huge added expense on top of an already large investment.

"We're in a period of uncertainty and I don't blame anyone for not going forward with anything right now," said Owens. He said if he doesn't sell the property, he will just keep it in his family. "It's an element of my existence now."

Over the years the property has garnered interest from a McDonald's franchise owner, a storage facility, and a coffee shop. More recently he said there was interest in building a nursery similar to Watson's Greenhouse in Puyallup. "(Because of the structure of a greenhouse) that may be a way to get around

that particular fire code and would be a good option in this space," he said. A company also recently looked at the property to operate a storage facility, but ultimately that did not work out.

But Holmaas has that covered.

Holmaas, who recently developed the new 55-plus gated community near 138th Avenue NW and KP Highway, is turning two commercial properties he's been trying to sell or lease into "something that will serve the entire community well."

He plans to convert four of his 7.5 acres at the southwest corner of SR 302 and Wright Bliss, across from Drive-Thru Feed, into a well-lit, secure RV storage facility with a dump station. Holmaas has had a white and blue sign hanging on a fence to draw interest for over a year now.

Then on the southwest corner of SR 302 and 118th Avenue NW, he is looking to build another RV storage location along with climate-controlled storage units.

Another yellow First Western sign popped up in Key Center recently as a 4-acre commercial property is for sale at 9222 Cramer Road NW. Plans for this property back in 2020 called for a nearly 50-stall RV park. ■

# Early Settlers on the Key Peninsula: The Dawn of the Present

Just nine years after the Treaty of Medicine Creek in 1854, Isaac Pennypacker Hawk of Olympia filed the first claim on the Key Peninsula.

JOSEPH PENTHEROUDAKIS, KP NEWS

By the 1850s, six decades after George Vancouver and Peter Puget explored and charted the Pacific Northwest, the geopolitical map of the region had been completely redrawn.

The United States and Britain had agreed to split the territory in northwest America they had jointly occupied since 1818, assigning to the U.S. the country from California to the 49th parallel. The Treaty of Medicine Creek, signed in 1854 between Washington territorial governor Isaac Stevens and the tribes of south Puget Sound, stripped those Native populations of their ancestral claims to the land and its waters. And surveyors working for the United States General Land Office had fanned out across America's new territory, organizing it into a rectangular grid to control and manage its transfer to the anticipated waves of immigrants.

Surveyors were on the Key Peninsula from 1853 to 1858. Although white settlers had made it north to Puget Sound from Oregon by the early 1850s, none were attested on the peninsula, a region described by Vancouver as an "impenetrable wilderness of lofty trees." The instructions issued to surveyors also required them to document any "Indian towns and wigwams," but even though a Native village had existed at Minter, no mention of it is made in the surveyors' notes.

As surveys were completed and approved by the Surveyor General of Oregon, the Land Office opened the land to claims by the public. Settlers could avail themselves of one of four important laws intended to encourage and regulate settlement on public lands, three of which were invoked on the Key Peninsula.

The most popular was the Land Act of 1820, which allowed any citizen of the United States to purchase surveyed public land for \$1.25 an acre in cash, roughly \$30 in 2024, a process that came to be known as a "cash entry." The act replaced an earlier law that allowed purchases on credit or installments, which had proved disastrous during economic downturns.

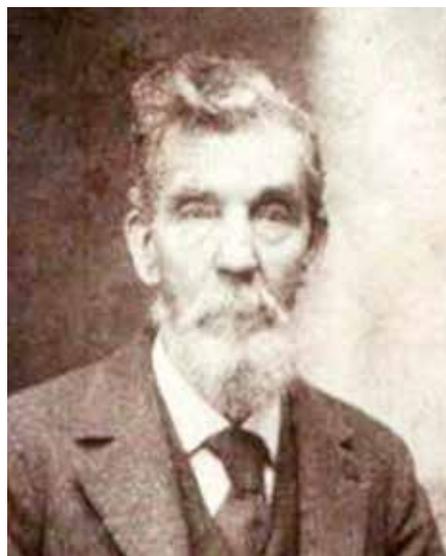
In 1841, to control squatting on surveyed lands, Congress passed the Preemption Act. The law allowed any man or woman who had settled on surveyed public land to buy a tract up to 160 acres at the same price of \$1.25 an acre before it was offered to the public.

Then in 1862, President Lincoln signed the Homestead Act, making it possible for settlers to claim up to 160 acres at the cost only of administrative fees, provided they

**STEAMER**  
**"BOB IRVING,"**  
THOS. GRANT, MASTER,  
Will depart for GIG HARBOR, ALDEN &  
FAY'S BRICK YARD, ARTONDALE, FOX  
ISLAND BRICK YARD, McLEAN'S  
LANDING, and HUGE CREEK on  
HENDERSON BAY, every  
**MONDAY & WEDNESDAY**  
At 7 o'clock a. m., from the Railroad Com-  
pany's Wharf. Returning same day  
via LAKE BAY.

Ad for the first steamer service between Tacoma and points on Henderson Bay.

*Tacoma Daily Ledger, July 11, 1884*



Isaac Pennypacker Hawk filed the first land claim on the Key Peninsula in 1863. *Undated photo, Hawk family*



Joseph Shettleroe's homestead in Lakebay (top) and Charles Taylor's on Taylor Bay (lower left). *Adapted from General Land Office 1853-1854 cadastral survey*

had lived on it and cultivated the land for a certain period, usually five years. Occasionally settlers converted homestead claims to cash purchases, for reasons that are not generally documented.

Finally, the Donation Land Claim Act of 1850 recognized claims on unsurveyed public land in Oregon and Washington Territories settled between 1850 and 1853; the law was later extended to 1855. No donation claims, as they were called, were

ever filed on the Key Peninsula.

A large part of the land on the Key Peninsula was first made available to the public in the summer of 1863. In November of that year, 28-year-old Isaac Pennypacker Hawk of Olympia filed the first claim on the peninsula, paying \$50 for 40 acres near Minter Creek, at the time known as Huge Creek. Hawk would go on to file for a total of 200 acres in Pierce County in the next few years, singly or with partners, but the size of his portfolio would

be dwarfed by what was to come.

In 1864, in a development that would have a profound effect on the history of the Pacific Northwest, Congress chartered the Northern Pacific Railroad, connecting the Great Lakes region to Puget Sound. The NPRR's western terminus wouldn't be selected until 1873 when Tacoma was picked over Seattle, but the prospect of eventual growth and the resulting higher demand for lumber was clear from the start.

Large mills like Pope & Talbot (later Puget Mill) in Port Gamble; George Meigs in Port Madison; Seabury L. Mastick in Port Discovery, and Renton & Smith Co. in Port Blakeley took notice. That same year they began purchasing large tracts of public timberland on the shores of Puget Sound; at \$1.25 an acre, it was a small investment with enormous return potential.

At first, the companies bought land close to their mills, but over time they had to look at more distant parts of the Sound such as the heavily timbered Key Peninsula, where they started buying large tracts in 1869. Smaller investors like William Pix and Alfred Robertson of Thurston County, Peter Dean of Mason County, and Albert H. Reynolds of Walla Walla County also entered the fray. Reynolds Bay, an earlier name for Dutcher Cove, was named after Albert Reynolds. In 1878 Congress would double the price for public timberland to \$2.50 an acre, but by then almost 6,000 of the peninsula's approximately 40,000 acres were in the hands of lumber concerns and land speculators.

No white settlers are recorded on the Key Peninsula until 1868. In August of that year, Joseph Shettleroe applied for the first homestead, claiming a 160-acre tract in Lakebay between Bay Lake and the north arm of Filucy Bay. Two months later, in October 1868, English-born Charles Taylor filed his own claim for 144 acres in the uplands on the south side of today's Taylor Bay.

Settlers did not always file their claims promptly. There is some evidence that Shettleroe and Taylor had settled on their future homesteads by the early 1860s. The news that buyers for the lumber mills were looking for land on the peninsula may have motivated the two men to travel to the land office in Olympia and file their applications to secure their claims.

A few more homesteads were recorded by 1880. That year the U.S. census listed 45 persons in nine households on the peninsula, seven of which were homestead claims totaling 1,120 acres. In addition to Shettleroe and Taylor, the list included the Tiedeman

# KP Native Named New Director of Harbor Soccer

Scott Stone wants to “keep the Key Peninsula on the Key Peninsula” by expanding the soccer program.

EDDIE MACSALKA, KP NEWS

Just like a soccer field he oversees Scott Stone has two goals.

The new director for Harbor Soccer Club’s Key Peninsula recreational program wants his coed players, ages 4 to 7 years old, to learn the fundamentals of soccer and have enough fun that they want to continue playing the sport.

“At this age, it’s not about drilling, it’s about enjoying yourself so (kids) can learn to love soccer,” Stone said.

He takes over a growing program that’s only in its third year on the KP. Last fall, the program had about 40 kids participate and he’s looking to add to that total. And with early bird registration at \$125 through the end of May, he believes programs like this and the Key Peninsula Little League are relatively inexpensive ways to keep kids active while teaching them the value of teamwork.

Stone himself started playing the world’s most popular sport when he was about 5 years old, back when the Peninsula Athletic Association was a thing. He continued playing the sport year-round through high school and the now 34-year-old Stone continues to play competitive indoor soccer.

Now he wants to pass along that passion to the next generation of young athletes.

Stone, who is also a volunteer coach for three different teams his kids play on, got involved with the Key Peninsula program in 2023. Before the Harbor Soccer program expanded to the KP, Stone would have to leave his day job as a project manager at the Bremerton naval shipyard twice a week to rush back to his Lakebay home to take his then 5-year-old son, Landon, to soccer practice at Kopachuck Elementary School in Gig Harbor. Then there were the Saturday games



Scott Stone kicking the ball around at Volunteer Park with Harbor Soccer kids Emma, age 6, and Landon, age 8. *Tina McKail, KP News*

that sometimes took the family to Tacoma.

“The travel just ate away at us,” he said. With the KP program, all practices and games are played at Volunteer Park, just south of Key Center. “We want to make this program accessible to parents and kids: less time for parents to stress, more time for kids to have fun.”

The Stone family is KP through and through. Scott grew up near Horseshoe Lake, went to Minter Creek Elementary where his mom was a teacher, and Harbor Ridge Middle School. He graduated from Peninsula High in 2008, where he met his future wife, Leisha, another product of the KP. Their two oldest kids, Landon and Emma, both go to Evergreen Elementary, while their two youngest,

Sidney and Tatum, are headed that way soon.

“Living here and having my own kids involved, I have a vested interest in seeing this program succeed,” Stone said.

One of Stone’s first orders of business in his role is exploring raising the age group to include 8-year-olds. As of now, any player over 7 years has to play in Gig Harbor.

“I’ve always wanted to keep the Key Peninsula on the Key Peninsula as much as I can,” Stone said. He’s also spreading awareness about Harbor Soccer and recruiting volunteer coaches. The coaches don’t need to be skilled soccer players with strong knowledge of the sport. Stone said he will supply coaches each week with a structured, yet easy-to-under-

stand practice plan, and he will be available to offer guidance as needed. Once-a-week practices start in late August and go through mid-November. Games will be played on Saturday mornings.

“I never realized how much I would enjoy (being a coach), and the satisfaction I’d get out of seeing kids develop throughout the season,” said Stone, who also coached Landon’s and Emma’s KPLL baseball teams the past two years.

Learn more about Harbor Soccer’s Key Peninsula program and get registration information by going to [www.HarborSoccerClub.com](http://www.HarborSoccerClub.com) or contacting Stone at [kppd@HarborSoccerClub.com](mailto:kppd@HarborSoccerClub.com). ■

## SETTLERS FROM PAGE 12

and Creviston families as well as settlers like William T. Rains and Joseph Folker, whose names have been all but forgotten.

The decade that followed would be a demographic watershed for the peninsula and the rest of the territory and future state.

Immigration soared, fueled largely by the completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad, almost 30 years after construction began. On the 1890 census, the population of the combined Minter, Vaughn, Lakebay, and McNeil Island precincts had grown to 643. There were now 95 homesteads, including three on McNeil Island, for a total of almost 11,500 acres, a more than

tenfold increase since 1880.

Demand for land was high. Some settlers, like Carl O. Lorenz in Lakebay in 1885, filed preemption claims for their land rather than a homestead; others bought land from earlier settlers or landowners ready to sell their property after it had been logged. In 1884, for example, William Pix, the land investor, sold 127 acres to George and Lucinda Minter on the bay that would be named after them, and the Ulsh family settled on a 15-acre parcel they bought from Henry Tiedeman on the southeast shore of Lakebay.

Logging would be an important source of revenue for several decades and into the present, but by the end of the 1880s, the Key Peninsula’s transformation into a farming

community that would soon be known for its fruit and berry production was well underway.

That transformation was facilitated by two significant developments.

In the spring of 1884 William Creviston’s son Ira and others filed the first petition with the county for a public highway on the peninsula. The proposed road ran from the north shore of Taylor Bay to the Kitsap County line at today’s 94th Avenue NW, a distance of 20.5 miles. In the 1920s several sections were included in the Gig Harbor-Longbranch Highway, the precursor to today’s State Route 302-Key Peninsula Highway.

And in the summer of 1884, the Tacoma Chamber of Commerce greenlighted the first steamboat service between that city and points

in Henderson Bay on the newly built “Bob Irving” after determining that there would be enough business in freight and passengers to make up for the cost. In Lakebay a committee for the Chamber had found a logging camp; Carl Lorenz’s sawmill; the peninsula’s first post office, Henry Tiedeman, postmaster, and about 50 settlers who were said to be growing produce and raising and shipping 200 tons of hay a year. There was “good land nearby open for settlement,” the committee added, and the current settlers were “all anxious for steamer service.”

Barely 30 years since the Treaty of Medicine Creek had pushed the past aside, those developments marked the dawn of the present on the Key Peninsula. ■

## ‘Father and Son: A Memoir’ by Jonathan Raban, His Final Journey

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

The great travel writer Jonathan Raban survived a stroke while sitting at his Seattle dinner table one evening with his 18-year-old daughter, Julia. Had she been at her mother’s or elsewhere that evening, her father surely would have died alone on his kitchen floor.

Instead, “I was transformed into an old man quite suddenly, on June 11, 2011, three days short of my 69th birthday,” he writes.

Half his body was paralyzed for the rest of his life, but he survived to research and write his final work, this memoir, which he typed with one hand over 11 years until his death in 2023.

After a few days in the hospital, the writer who had already given us 18 works of travel, fiction and writing instruction was sentenced to a rehabilitation facility on Pill Hill uncannily similar in age, appearance and attitude to the English boarding school where he spent the darkest years of his life.

Upon admission, the doctor in charge of his recovery opens his file and says, “Ah, yes, um . . . Jonathan. You’re the one who used to be a writer.”

Raban’s mind was left intact except for issues with numbers and short-term memory, and he retained enough of his former self to convince a nurse to smuggle in a half-rack of red wine for him. The demi-tasse cigars he favored were sadly out of the question.

“The first thing you discover when you are abruptly transformed into a hemiplegic is the terrible, unwieldy weight of your own body,” he writes.

He details the many indignities of attempting tasks an able-bodied person could do in moments, but each of which might take him an hour just to get help to perform. He learns to get out of bed and into a wheelchair with half a body, use a toilet with one arm and one leg, and operate a corkscrew with one hand.

Raban was thus imprisoned, as he put it, for almost six weeks while his 18-year-old daughter became the manager of his life, responsible for his home, his finances, his work, and his insurance while preparing to graduate high school and attend Stanford in the fall.

But Julia rose to the job just as her father came to grips with how much he had lost and how little he would be able to do until the day he died.

It’s that dynamic that inspired this book. It’s not a maudlin account; it’s Raban



being Raban, exploring a foreign landscape intriguing to him — in this case, himself — that opens his eyes to life beyond his imagination. As he comes to terms with living in a half-dead body while his daughter prepares for adulthood, he is also confronted by an unresolved past.

He recalls with a new understanding the deathbed of his father and his struggling mother, memories he had filed away decades before. Whatever he has lost, he has acquired a higher language for such moments and, being Raban, digs back into their past and his through his parents’ records and letters to read stories he’d heard a hundred times without seeing what he can now.

There are the difficulties of his parents’ prewar courtship and marriage, followed swiftly both by his own arrival and the outbreak of World War II. His mother is left alone with a chronically ill child while his father, after escaping the fall of Europe at Dunkirk, is sent to North Africa, Italy and the Middle East as an artillery officer. He will first set eyes on his son when he is 3 years old.

Raban spends much of his time in rehab navigating the “double ziggurat of six steps up and six steps down,” and a mockup car interior to practice driving, or at least transferring in and out, and concluding that he has lost more than he knows.

“I didn’t know if I’d be able to drive again,” he writes, already mourning the loss of his stick-shift convertible, to say nothing of his beloved 35-foot ketch. “A paralyzed right arm and a semi-paralyzed right leg and foot were going to turn driving even an automatic into a tricky and maybe dangerous performance . . . I felt like Dr. Johnson’s dog walking on its hind legs, ‘not done well; but you are surprised to see it done at all.’ ”

He concludes, “The more I speculated, the more I convinced myself of the odds against my ever traveling on my own again.”

He had little success traveling over his career with anyone, except Julia.

“Both of us looking ahead through the windshield and not at each other loosened our tongues, whether we were driving to school or Mexico or the Grand Canyon or across England. That slight impersonality, not making eye contact, liberated free association experienced nowhere else except in the car and its

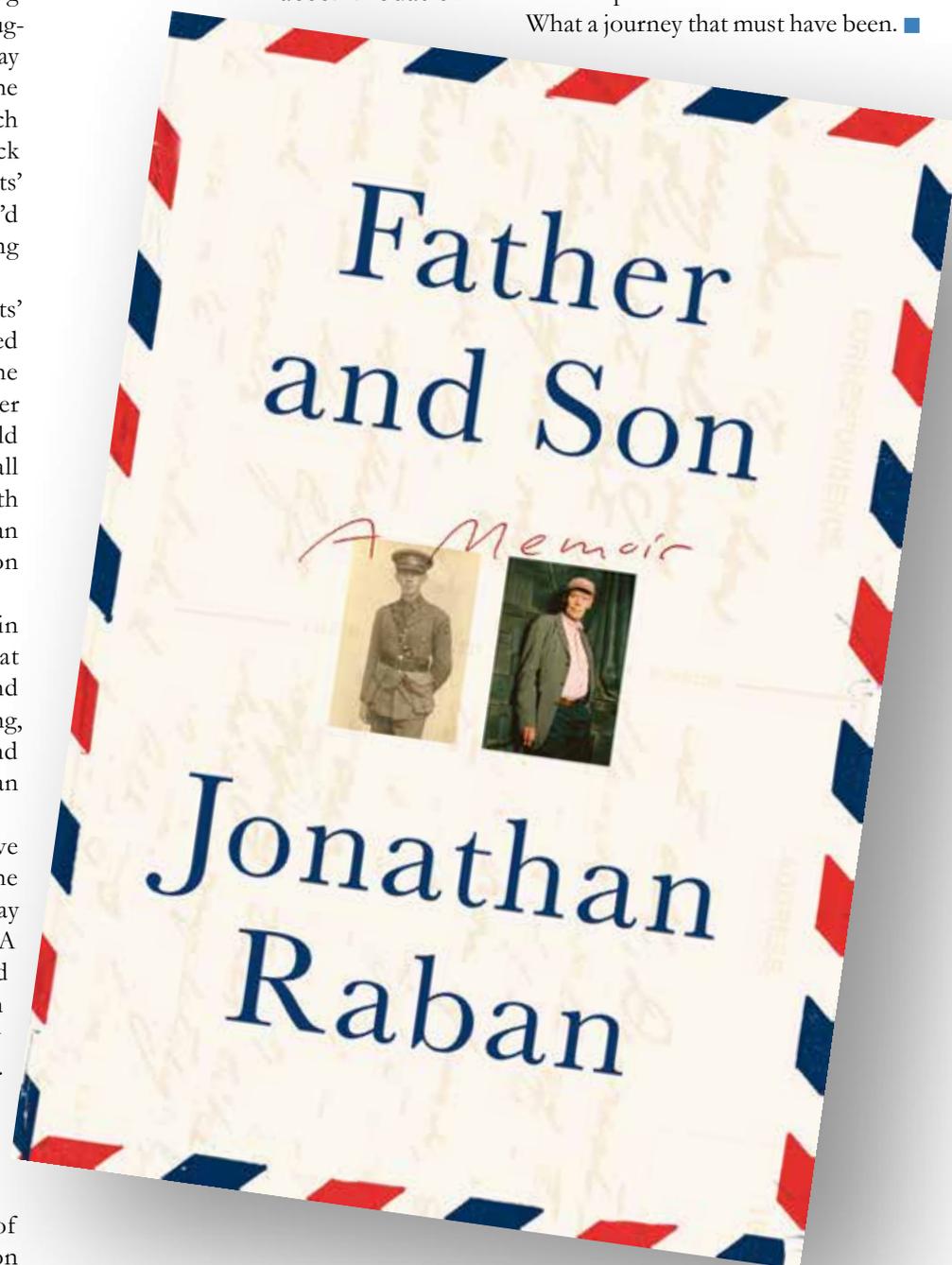
passenger seat. I loved our road trips for the conversations they enabled, and was aghast at the prospect of my stroke killing them.”

Raban’s childhood in England became difficult as his father continued his long journey home from the war. When Raban commits to a life of writing and spends more time traveling than anywhere else, he and his family reach some silent accommodation.

It’s a moving contrast to his relationship with Julia, which is so understated but astute, here at the end of his own travels with a return from a different kind of war.

But the book is unfinished. Raban was trying to write one more chapter when he died, about his son. Older than Julia, unacknowledged for some time, but with whom he was fortunate to find a good relationship before the end.

What a journey that must have been. ■



“Father and Son: A Memoir” by Jonathan Raban (1942-2023), published by Alfred A. Knopf 2023, 336 pages.

Raban wrote nine plays, three novels, six books on writing, and seven travel books, including “Passage to Juneau,” “Bad Land,” and “Driving Home.” He received multiple awards, including the National Book Critics Circle Award, The Royal Society of Literature’s Heinemann Award, the Thomas Cook Travel Book Award, the PEN West Creative Nonfiction Award, the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association Award, and the 1997 Governor’s Award of Washington State.

# Business Owner and KP Advocate Renews Her Lease on Life

The hardworking hometown girl with unbeatable tenacity learned real-life lessons after suffering a heart attack.

LISA BRYAN, KP NEWS

Stephanie Brooks, the owner of Gnosh — the two-toned blue food truck parked most weekdays in downtown Key Center serving lunch — knew something didn't feel right.

It was the week before Christmas and her elderly mother with whom she lives and who she cares for had been hospitalized. Brooks was worried and had been visiting her daily.

She confessed she hadn't been taking good care of herself, "eating crappy, like a bachelor," getting her meals on the run from drive-thru joints.

With her hand on her chest, she said, "There was this horrible pressure. I thought it was indigestion, but it wouldn't go away."

She'd had gallbladder issues last summer and figured maybe she'd eaten too much cheese on that last pizza. The mac and cheese probably didn't help. The next night she ate salmon and broccoli, but the pressure was relentless. "I thought, maybe it was the broccoli?"

On top of typical holiday stress, she was busy prepping for a New Year's Day event. Her mom had been released from the hospital with a new dietary regime and a bunch of different medications to sort and manage.

Exhausted, Brooks plopped herself down on a chair feeling beat. Even her mom's friend commented Brooks wasn't her normal Energizer Bunny self. Still, she had a paid gig to do. She finished loading up her food truck and drove to the party.

On arrival, her friend Kendra, who works on the truck, knew something was wrong and took over the cooking. Brooks was so tired she sat at the window barely able to move five feet. She knew people at the event who encouraged her to come join the party. She told herself, "Just smile and push through it," but after 10 or 15 feet, stopped. She climbed back into the truck and managed to make it home in one piece.

Instead of going to the emergency room, she waited and drove herself to an urgent care the next day.

"They did an EKG, tested all my vitals, and gave me two options, 'Drive yourself to the hospital or we'll get you an ambulance.'"

Brooks phoned her friends Rena Blalock and Michelle Johnson from Food



Stephanie Brooks gets some exercise while enjoying a walk with her beloved dog, Porter. *Tina McKail, KP News*

Backpacks 4 Kids, who met her at Saint Anthony Hospital. Later that day Brooks was transported and admitted to the cardiac unit at Saint Joseph Hospital in Tacoma.

She'd suffered a heart attack.

"Testing, testing, and more testing. I had about five doctors look at me as if I were a unicorn," Brooks said. "They asked me again and again, 'You never passed out? You never fell to the ground?' I told them, nope. The cardiologist told me my numbers were off the chart."

She was also severely anemic and received blood transfusions.

Brooks regularly posts on Facebook. Blalock encouraged her to let people know what was going on since they were beginning to talk anyway. Brooks never considered herself someone who would share health or personal stuff online, "but with what I went through, I didn't care anymore what people might think. I was so blessed and fortunate to be alive, I just gave up humility, I typed it all myself and was like, 'Here goes ...'"

That single post attracted many people who wanted to help. Some knew that Brooks cared for her mother and offered to assist.

Before she left the hospital, Brooks' girlfriends spent hours at her house cleaning the bathrooms and the kitchen, doing laundry, getting her room ready, putting fresh sheets on her bed, and leaving inspirational cards everywhere, like "God never gives you more than you can handle," or "You've got this" and "Your mama loves you" and "Love you, sister."

"They set up a meal train and raised money I needed. I have so much pride, oh that was tough to swallow, but I'm a small business owner and my business wasn't open," she said.

"For me, it was a huge life lesson, that's what got me through, and everyone just kept saying 'You'd do it for us and have.' I cried for like a month straight, at least once a day, out of gratitude. I mean, God, I may not be rich, I may not be beautiful, but I am blessed beyond belief truly, and I'll never think otherwise. I mean, it took 51 years for me to feel worthwhile and that's ridiculous. I have so many friends, some I didn't even know before all this happened. It's been overwhelming in the best way."

Brooks said she struggled on and off over the years, not being as healthy as she

should. It never clicked for her the way it does now. A new special diet wasn't needed, she changed her lifestyle instead. She joined support groups online to help with her mother's challenges and her own meals. She read a lot and said, "Honestly, we all know what we need to eat to be healthy and everything tastes so much better now. Everything in moderation — I'm eating differently and I'm loving it."

She has her share of survivor guilt too after learning that five other former co-workers had heart attacks and not all of them made it. "I guess I've become more religious or faithful, however you want to say it, but I was saved for a reason."

She walks a lot and works out regularly. She joined a water aerobics class at the Easterseals Camp Stand By Me pool, where she feels at home. She says she still gets tired but she's so much better. She dropped 25 pounds and two pant sizes.

Brooks summed up her experience with five things she would tell others: Listen to your body. Love yourself. Find your worth. Surround yourself with good people. And give — because eventually it comes back to you. ■



Tom Bates and his Ukrainian cat, Bob Reznick, whom he rescued from Kharkiv last fall is now living comfortably in Lakebay.  
*Tom Bates*

## Local Animal Rescuer Tom Bates Returns to Ukraine Fourth Time

STAFF REPORT

Tom Bates of Lakebay, 70, is headed back to Ukraine May 14 for three more months of moving food and supplies to people near the front and evacuating injured or abandoned animals. It will be his fourth trip to the war since the Russian full-scale invasion Feb. 24, 2022. He has spent more than 450 days in Ukraine over the last two years.

Bates and his main working partner, Nick Tadd, formed a Ukrainian nonprofit organization, K9 Rescue Ukraine, based in Poltava in 2023 run by former marketing director Luda Khomenko to simplify logistics and interaction with local government. He told KP News he intends to solidify its operation on this trip so that it will be his last.

“I want them to be able to do the work

there while I raise the money here,” he said.

Bates is a volunteer connected to a large network of other volunteers, both domestic and foreign, collecting donations of animal food and medicines and coordinating deliveries across Eastern Ukraine. At the same time, Bates uses a 20-year-old SUV to transport animals out of danger zones to veterinary hospitals and animal sanctuaries or prepare them for adoption out of the country.

“On one of my last trips we had five Dobermans, a few cats, half a dozen chickens, and an owl with one wing in the truck,” he said.

“On this next trip, I want to bring a suitcase full of flea and tick meds.”

For more information, go to [www.facebook.com/tom.bates](http://www.facebook.com/tom.bates) or <https://k9-rescue.org>. ■

## New and Familiar Candidates Join Contest for 26th LD Election

STAFF REPORT

Former state representative Jesse Young (R-Gig Harbor) and newcomer Josh Smith (I-Gig Harbor) announced candidacies to compete in the 26th Legislative District for positions 1 and 2, respectively.

Young entered the race March 16 to reclaim the seat he held from 2014-23 before leaving it to unsuccessfully run against incumbent Sen. Emily Randall. He was endorsed by the 26th Legislative District Republican Party March 19.

Spencer Hutchins (R-Gig Harbor) won Young's House seat in the 2022 election

against Adison Richards (D-Bremerton) by less than 1% of the vote.

Adison was already running for the seat again when Rep. Hutchins announced he would not seek a second term Feb. 7, after which Young entered the race to face him.

Smith is running against incumbent Rep. Michelle Caldier (R-Port Orchard), who was first elected in 2014, for Position 2.

Rep. Caldier remains under investigation by her caucus in the Legislature for alleged unprofessional conduct toward staff, an echo of charges Young faced when he was in office in 2017. His contact with staff was afterward limited by party leadership. ■

## Sex Offender Caught at Peninsula High School Sentenced to Prison

STAFF REPORT

Adam Nicholas Randolph, 36, was sentenced to 50 months in prison and five years of supervision April 11 after pleading guilty to sneaking into a Peninsula High School girls bathroom to take cell phone photos and record videos of girls in September 2023.

A former PHS student, Randolph hid in a bathroom stall during a girls soccer game. He recorded the girls who came in to change.

He was spotted and ran off, but he had been recognized and police quickly tracked him down and found a collection of similar recordings at his Tacoma home, where he lives with his wife.

According to court documents, Randolph apologized during sentencing.

“This is not the life that I want to

live. I mean that. I think I can do a lot better,” he said.

Randolph is a registered sex offender with at least four prior convictions dating from 2006 for voyeurism, third-degree sexual abuse, and recording female athletes over months in bathrooms at the University of Puget Sound. He served two years in prison after a 2017 conviction.

Peninsula School District said it notified families when the incident happened and added extra security to soccer games.

In an email to KP News, PSD Digital Media Communications Coordinator Danielle Chastaine wrote, “We worked closely with our local law enforcement during the investigation and followed their guidance regarding information sharing. Each situation is unique and requires careful planning when an open investigation is underway.” ■

### KP Community Litter Drop-Off Event

Saturday May 4

9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

or until filled to capacity



- Lake Kathryn Village
- 64th St NW & KP Hwy
- Longbranch Improvement Club

This is a free event presented by **Key Pen It Clean Volunteers**. Supported by: Chuck West Construction; Glencove Auto Repair; Key Peninsula Community Council; Longbranch Improvement Club; Pierce County Councilmember Robyn Denson; Pierce County Planning & Public Works; Purdy Cost Less

See **Key Pen It Clean Facebook page**, or click to email: [mmoffett393@gmail.com](mailto:mmoffett393@gmail.com)

# The Rhythm of Rhododendrons and Their Annual Call for Pruning

KAMRYN MINCH

Mid-spring marks the starting line for the crucial race against nature's clock. It's the second installment of the pruning season when spring flowering shrubs become the object of my garden fixations and make late winter's occupation with fruiting wood and shrubberies feel like amateur hour.

As the moment approaches I twitch with anticipation, clippers in hand, and a vision that I've been ruminating on since last year. Pruning any shrub can take me a few seasons to get just right. I will sit and stare at them periodically, looking at the shape and noting where new cuts can be made to improve the structure and exposure to sunlight.

Between the spring blooms fading and the mid-summer bud setting, this is when the bulk of alterations should take place. While the camellia, forsythia and lilac equally vie for my attention, no flowering shrub calls to me like a block of marble to a sculptor more than the rhododendron.

People seem to have a love/hate relationship with the rhododendron. To me, anything but total adoration seems blasphemous since their presence in any Pacific Northwest scene is as given as Mount Rainier or Bigfoot.

It is the state flower, after all. The native Pacific rhododendrons stand out strikingly among great stands of Douglas fir and cedar throughout our national forests. Take a drive on a spring day through the Olympics or Cascades and you will see blushing clouds of flowers floating among the deep greenery.

If it's the flower that some find dreadful, I can see how perhaps the more common colors like shades of box-store purple and parking-lot pink don't quite tickle people's fancy. But surely those can never compare to varieties on the other end of the breeding pool spectrum. The ones that produce fairy-like, maroon speckled lavender funnels, or masses of cheerfully vibrant yellows that fade to peach, reminiscent of a tropical cocktail. Not to mention the seizure-inducing oranges and reds which are truly spectacular and must be seen in person, as a camera will never be able to capture how incredibly vicious they are to the cornea.

Even beyond the allegiance I feel to the rhododendron as a symbol of regional pride, rhodies have provided the structural backdrop, if not the focal



Say hello to your state flower. *Kamryn Minch*



point to all the familial gardens of my childhood. They're specifically a unique part of my life as my great-grandfather was an accomplished rhododendron and azalea hybridizer and a modest selection of 112 out of his thousands of plants now reside in our yard.

Perhaps my partiality to the rhododendron may be more a symptom of Stockholm syndrome, blinding me to the reality of the plant others have been

able to adequately observe; they can be a real pain in the you-know-what.

I've never carved marble before, but I have dusted my eyeball with the rhodie's flaky bark as I pruned away the dead, tangled branches on the interior of a plant that has characteristically outgrown its space. I've also mistaken live wood for dead and created awkward holes in the shape of the shrub, hoping new growth would fill it in without anyone noticing. And who can forget the endless number of gluey pistils that have been tangled in my hair at the end of a long day of yard work?

Despite the list of frustrations that can

be encountered with managing rhododendrons, I have found on my garden journey that they have been the best teachers when it comes to developing my pruning skills and I can't help but indulge in the challenge they present in any garden.

Some sources will say rhodies are difficult to prune if you really need to prune them at all. While that is certainly the case if you want to keep them at a certain size or get them to grow in a particular manner or direction, I have found they have a fairly forgiving nature. Small mistakes can be remedied within a few seasons. Even large rejuvenation projects prove that certain rhododendron varieties just don't want to quit.

The first time I saw a rhodie undergo a hard pruning I was horrified to see nearly all branches had been removed and what remained was a few barren trunks. I thought surely it was a goner. But give or take a few weeks, the dormant bud sites, which look like little green or brown nodes in the bark, about the size of a ballpoint pen, started sprouting new growth. To me, it was miraculous and demonstrated how I can allow myself to be a little more bold in the pruning process.

I do think hard pruning like that should be more of an exception than the rule. While I might make some big cuts here and there, I do generally take my sweet time to decide on exactly what I want to take out, as rhododendrons require some imaginative foresight into how they might end up growing.

Where I'm likely to do the most immediate pruning around the yard this time of year is along the garden edges and pathways. I primarily focus on snipping back protruding branches to a dormant bud where I can imagine new leaves and blooms forming next season. My favorite way to keep a rhodie tidy is one that I learned from my dad who learned from his grandpa, which is to pinch back the bright green stems originating from this season's flower clusters. The same satisfying action can be taken with the spent flower heads.

If by some crazy chance, you don't have a rhododendron in your yard, or you do and would like to explore more of what the species has to offer, a great place to see a wide variety in a formal garden setting is Whitney Gardens in Brinnon on Hood Canal. Or to view them against a more wild backdrop, visit Point Defiance Park in Tacoma. ■

# Children's Home Society/Akin Leaves KP After 30-Plus Years

The newly formed Akin cited problems with funding and labor for closing its Vaughn office while local providers figured out how to better serve the KP.

TED OLINGER, KP NEWS

The Children's Home Society of Washington-Key Peninsula Family Resource Center, now part of Seattle-based Akin, said it will vacate its office at the KP Civic Center April 30 after more than 30 years on the KP and already ending local programs.

"Akin has decided to end its operations on the Key Peninsula and transfer critical services to local organizations by the end of April 2024," wrote Kristen Conte, Akin's director of marketing and communication in an email to KP News. "The decision comes with immense consideration for the Key Peninsula community and its impact."

The statewide nonprofits CHSW and Childhaven announced a merger in January, creating Akin.

"Challenges related to staffing and sustainable funding have prompted a decision for Akin to transition away from Key Peninsula and transfer the resources and services to other local organizations to best serve the residents of the peninsula," Conte wrote.

The KP office has been closed for "about six months," according to civic center volunteers.

"We had people banging on the door for weeks," said one. "Where is everybody? Where did they go? Where's the indoor playtime?"

The CHSW/Family Resource Center provided anyone in need with rent and utility assistance, free child's clothing and diapers, and served families with early learning, family support, and referral services for financial aid, health care and employment. It also ran social and emotional mentoring groups and public speaking classes for local students, classes for parents or others raising children, and hosted an indoor park for toddlers and preschoolers at the civic center, among other things.

A note on the office door said it was closed for maintenance and listed a phone number where callers could leave a message to make an appointment.

CHSW complained to the civic center in mid-2023 about possible black mold and rodent infestation in its office, according to Bruce Macdonald, president of the KP Civic Center Association.

"We jumped through hoops, and they jumped through hoops, and we got a clean bill of health for the office and no polluted air or anything, but those rumors never really dissipated," he said. "They didn't



The local office at the KP Civic Center has already been closed for some time. *Ted Olinger, KP News*

really tell us why they're leaving, but said they were having labor problems."

Pierce County Council Member Robyn Denson (D-7th), who represents the KP, Gig Harbor, Fox Island and part of Tacoma, told KP News she is committed to continued service on the KP.

"The money is still there," she said, explaining that the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department is determining how best to redeploy funds budgeted for CHSW to other local service providers.

Those services were funded, in part, by a grant from TPCHD, about \$40,000 of which is left for 2024, according to Denson. A full year is typically \$60,000. TPCHD did not respond to inquiries from KP News before press time but will reportedly seek a single local provider as a new grantee.

"We all want to be sure services to our families don't fall through the cracks," Denson said.

"I'm not sure there's anybody on the KP that can do everything that Children's Home Society did, but I think there's a lot

of people who can do parts of it," said Susan Paganelli, co-executive director of the nonprofit Key Peninsula Partnership for a Healthy Community.

"It seemed that Children's Home Society started pulling services back immediately after Gina (Cabiddu) left (she resigned as manager in September 2022)," Paganelli said. "So it's been frustrating to watch because we saw the direction they were going and were not able to take action because they kept saying, 'No, no, no, we're going to keep doing these things.'"

The Partnership took over one CHSW program, a class for multi-generational families raising children that had been running since 2017, which now operates out of the KP Lutheran Church in Lakebay.

Cabiddu had been the manager since 2019. She declined to speak to KP News for this article.

"We certainly are sad that they're not functioning anymore," said Colleen Speer, executive director of Communities in Schools of Peninsula. "It was a resource in our

community for a very long time and we did partner with them on many things. Now that there's no staff there, we have nobody to dialogue with, there's nobody local."

CISP works in 10 schools in the Peninsula School District and three in the South Kitsap School District.

"Serving kids with integrated student support is what we do," Speer said. "We focus on attendance, behavior, course performance, and social-emotional learning. Those are the four buckets. Anything outside of that we just can't do both financially and with our organization's guidelines."

"We've been asked by different agencies to think about what else we could do," she said. "We're trying to get a little bit of a plan together of some kind. Everybody's scope of work is different but also the same in terms of just wanting to help the kids and their families."

Zaida Woodworth, executive director of Food Backpacks 4 Kids, said "I have not directly heard from anyone from Akin or Children's Home Society, but I have heard

through community partners that they're willing to share information to make sure things like our Back to School event can continue," referring to the annual end of summer activity at the civic center where students and families can collect school supplies, clothing, and connections to local resources.

FB4K distributes free food to students at 14 PSD schools and runs a food pantry in Key Center that serves more than 100 families a week.

"Our existing nonprofits do a lot of work with families to become stronger and more sustainable and this could be a very amazing opportunity to get families who were previously being served by Children's Home Society to interact with other organizations that can help them more thoroughly," Woodworth said.

Home resident Sandy McFarlane started work at CHSW in its Key Center office in 1992 and helped move it to the civic center a year later when she became the manager.

"I was out in the field working with kids and their families with Norma Iverson from the health department," she said. "We got parenting classes. We put on what I considered to be an incredibly

good summer program. We didn't bring in people from the outside. We made use of talented people in the community to come in and teach kids things in the summertime. They were very, very proud of that program."

One of those community members was Longbranch resident, and founder of The Mustard Seed Project, Edie Morgan, who worked for CHSW from 1997 to 2005, eventually becoming manager.

"I loved doing programs," she said. "Some days I could hardly believe it was my job to hang out with these young people. We did a lot of good work for families."

Jud Morris became the program manager in 2006 until 2018.

"What I enjoyed about the job was the four Cs," he said. "The first C is some sort of calling, spiritual or to a cause. Then there was commitment, and then a sense of caring. The last C was something that came to me when I was working there, and that was a sense of community. People had come to the KP from other places because they wanted to be here."

Tami Miller-Bigelow brought her children to the indoor toddler program in 1996, began volunteering, and was put on the CHSW payroll part-time in 1999.

"I was pretty much a fixture there attending the indoor park, so I began running it," she said. "I started out helping in the summer camp program for a lot of years until I started coordinating that."

Miller-Bigelow was abruptly terminated by CHSW in February 2023, together with another part-time employee. She was told her position was being eliminated that day; the other position was made full-time, which her colleague could not commit to, she said.

She and other former employees had contact with former clients on occasion, she said, and tried to connect them with other local services for help.

"I feel like over the last several years there was a great collaboration of people getting together, coordinating to help," Miller-Bigelow said. "We have all these clients that we're helping, but they need more help than we can give them and who can we connect them to? Even though Children's Home Society is leaving the KP, I feel like we have a good structure in place for continuing services in a lot of areas and a lot of ready partners. This seems like a positive.

"Maybe I'll get involved. I don't know yet," she said. ■

**TEACHER FROM PAGE 1**

Henderson taught at Evergreen for nearly 10 years. He is a volunteer pastor for his family's church group, Wellspring Fellowship, which meets in Lakebay.

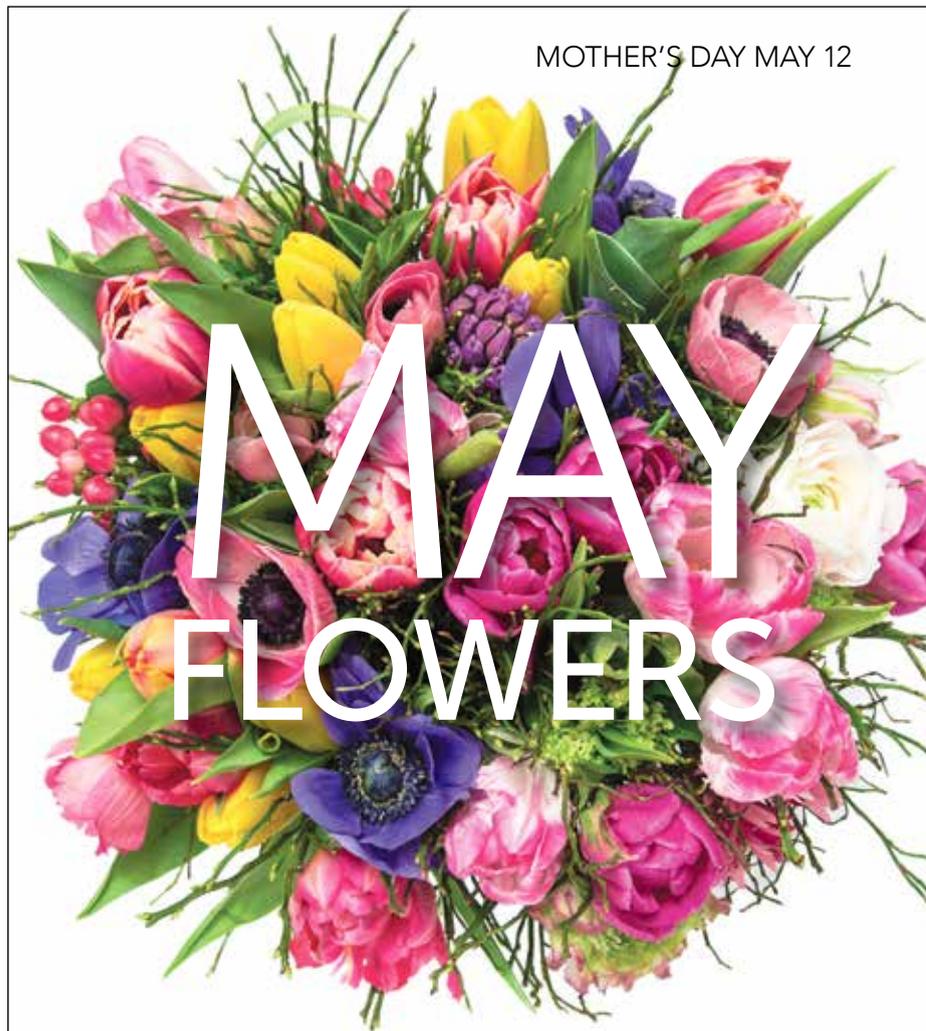
That group, led by his father, Chris Henderson, issued a public statement of support.

"I know Jordan to be of the highest character and quality as a man. ... He and his family have the full confidence and support of our church. Please join us in asking that God reveal the full and complete truth regarding these allegations."

According to PSD, "This news may leave some of us with questions or uncomfortable emotions. To provide support, our staff and students have the opportunity to talk to our school counselors about their concerns or emotions surrounding this event. In addition, your child may want to talk to you about their feelings as well," Bahr said in her statement.

"As this situation continues to evolve, we will update our community as appropriate," she said. "In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 253-530-1002 or Detective Brendon Ossman at the Pierce County Sheriff's Department at 253-798-4876." ■





MOTHER'S DAY MAY 12

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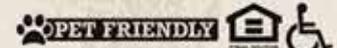


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- **May 14** possible special meeting for interviews (dependent on number of applicants)
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Meetings will now be the **4th Thursday of the month from 6 to 8 pm** at KP Lutheran Church.

If you would like to join or find out more, please contact Lori at: [childcare@kphealthycommunity.org](mailto:childcare@kphealthycommunity.org)

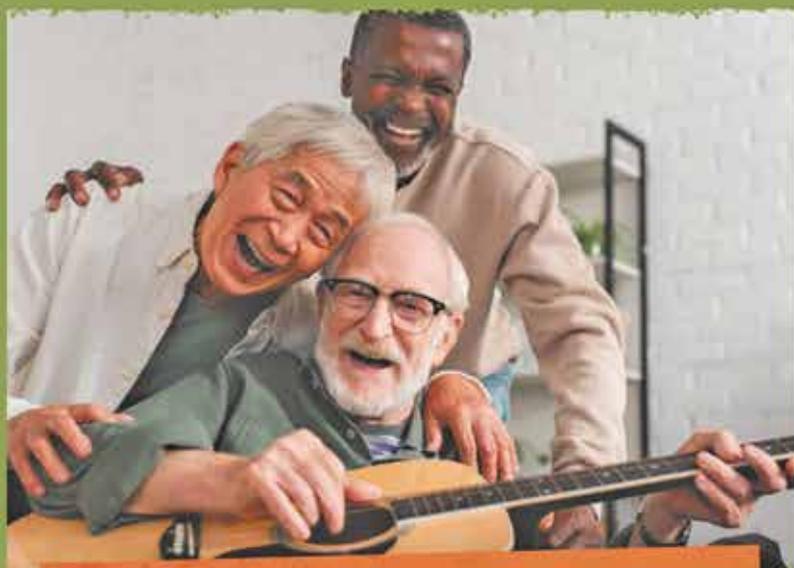
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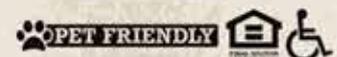


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# Asparagus: Welcome to Spring and Let Us Aspire to Green Glory

SARA THOMPSON, KP NEWS

My appreciation for asparagus took time to develop. I was a child of the 1950s, a time when vegetables were overcooked or canned. Hardly a winning combination for asparagus. Not to mention what asparagus did to the smell of my pee. Yes, we're going there.

A trip to Italy in the 1980s brought me to my senses. My husband was invited to speak at a scientific conference, and I got to tag along. We were in Florence and wandered through museums and churches, and picnicked in parks. The art was magnificent and so was the food. I ordered asparagus Tuscan style for dinner one night. Fat tender spears topped with butter and Parmesan. A glass of wine with crusty bread and my meal was complete. I never thought of asparagus in the same way again.

Joshua McFadden, chef and the author of the book "Six Seasons: A New Way with Vegetables," has useful insights. Size doesn't matter — thickness or thinness doesn't correlate with tenderness. Be sure the asparagus tips are tightly closed and that the stalks aren't dried out or woody. Purple and green varieties taste the same. Prep is easy, but removing the lower fibrous part of the stalk is important. Just bend it and let it snap — it's a foolproof way to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Here are some of my favorite recipes.

## Roasted Asparagus

- 1 pound of asparagus
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- Kosher salt, fresh ground pepper

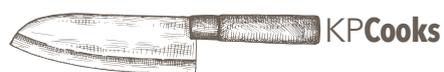
Toss asparagus with olive oil. Place on a baking sheet and roast at 350 or 400 for about 10 minutes, until the stalks are just tender. Serve plain or sprinkle with fresh Parmesan, lemon zest, or the herb of your choice — basil, dill, marjoram, rosemary, try whatever you've got handy.

## Asparagus Potato Salad

- 2 pounds of red potatoes
- 3 large shallots, minced (I often use half a red onion instead)
- ¾ cup parsley — stems removed and coarsely chopped
- 2 tablespoons wine vinegar
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 3 tablespoons capers
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- 1 pound asparagus



You can successfully grow your own asparagus in gardens on this side of the Cascades with a little patient tending. *Shutterstock photo*



Cut potatoes into bite-sized pieces. Place in salted water, bring to a boil, cook until barely tender (about 5 minutes). Drain and cool.

Steam asparagus until crisp-tender, cool, and cut into 1-inch pieces. Sauté if preferred.

Mix the vinegar, mayo and mustard. Season with salt and pepper.

Place potatoes, shallots, asparagus and capers in a large bowl and mix with the dressing. Garnish with parsley and serve.

## Asparagus Risotto

The esteemed Katrina Herringbottom had a great recipe for risotto in the November 2023 edition of the Key Peninsula News. Just cut asparagus into bite-sized pieces, sauté in butter until tender, and add to the risotto before serving. Or here's a variation:

- 5 cups warm chicken stock
- 1 ½ tablespoons butter
- 1 ½ tablespoons olive oil
- ¼ cup diced onion
- 1 cup arborio rice
- ¼ cup dry white wine
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice

The distinctive odor in urine following asparagus ingestion is due to asparagusic acid, a compound named after the vegetable, which breaks down into several sulfur byproducts.

In January 2011, four scientists published an academic article, "Excretion and Perception of a Characteristic Odor in Urine after Asparagus Ingestion: A Psychophysical and Genetic Study" in the journal *Chemical Senses*.

The study concluded that about 8% of 38 subjects studied did not produce the characteristic asparagus odor in sufficient concentration to be detected. About 6% of subjects were unable to detect asparagus odor, although their sense of smell was otherwise normal. The two traits were independent of each other. And the ability to detect asparagus odor was linked to a specific olfactory receptor gene.

- 1 tablespoon grated lemon peel
- 1 pound asparagus, cut into 1-inch pieces

Bring broth to simmer in a large saucepan over medium heat. Cover to keep warm.

Melt butter with oil in a heavy large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and sauté until tender, about 6 minutes. Add rice; stir for 1 minute.

Add wine and stir until evaporated. Add 1 ½ cups hot broth; simmer until absorbed, stirring occasionally to keep rice from sticking.

Add remaining broth ½ cup at a time, allowing broth to be absorbed before adding until rice is creamy and tender, about 35 minutes.

Sauté asparagus in butter and/or olive oil until tender. Stir in cheese, lemon juice and lemon peel. Add asparagus to

risotto. Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve.

## Asparagus Soup

This is adapted from a Julia Child recipe for cream of spinach soup. It works for about any green vegetable.

- 5 cups chicken stock
- 1 pound asparagus, cut into pieces, tips set aside
- 1/3 cup rice
- Nutmeg or other herb/spice as desired
- Salt and pepper to taste

Bring stock to a boil. Add rice and asparagus. Simmer until rice and asparagus are tender. Use an immersion blender to purée desired consistency. Steam or sauté asparagus tips until barely tender and add to soup just before serving. ■



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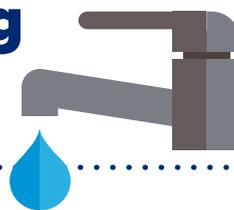


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You will receive your test results by email or mail.

### Check out arsenic and saltwater concerns in your area.

Visit [tpchd.org/drinkingwater](http://tpchd.org/drinkingwater) and click the Water Quality Map button.



*Investing in the South Key Community*

Our new logo represents our ongoing commitment to:

- The growth and development of our community
- The maintenance and preservation of the LIC building and grounds
- Support of the Longbranch Marina
- Grants and scholarships to support education of local youth

Changes to the website coming soon!

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

[thelongbranchfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:thelongbranchfoundation@gmail.com)

In March, grants were awarded to:

KP Middle School \$2,000

KP Civic Center \$3,000

Henderson Bay H. S. \$3,000

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# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

**May 1 KP Readers: An Hour of Coffee and Conversation** 10:30 a.m., Key Center Library. "A Sudden Light" by Garth Stein.

**May 1 Peninsula Community Health Services Mobile Clinic** 1 p.m., Key Peninsula Community Services, 253-884-4440.

**May 2 Senior Crafternoon – Hokusai Wave** 2 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. All supplies provided, call 253-884-9814 to reserve your space. In conjunction with Hands on Art.

**May 3 WorkSource Job Fair** 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., TCC–Gig Harbor Campus. Free and open to the public, veterans are encouraged to attend.

**May 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.

**May 3-4 "Freaky Friday" at PHS** 7 p.m., Peninsula High School Theater. Presented by PHS Drama Department. Tickets available online at purplepass.com.

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

**May 4 Community Litter Drop-Off Event** 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Drop-off locations: Longbranch Improvement Club, 64th Street & KP Highway SW (only location for tires), and Lake Kathryn Village.

**May 4 May the 4th Fun Run** 10 a.m. Gateway Park Trails 360. 5K run/walk with a costume contest, prizes and fun. Adults 13+ are \$25, children are free.

**May 6 Brunch and Bingo** 11:30 a.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Open to the community, \$5 for brunch and suggested donation of \$1 per game for bingo.

**May 7 Maker Fun – Drop in Art and Science for Kids** 3:30 – 5 p.m., Key Center Library. For elementary-aged children and their caretakers.

**May 7 Gig Harbor Literary Society** 6 p.m., Harbor History Museum. "What Comes After" by JoAnne Tompkins.

**May 8 PEP-C Meeting: Dispute Resolution** 6 p.m., Round Table Pizza. Join

the monthly meeting and learn about dispute resolution.

**May 8 All Hazard Personal Preparedness Talk** 6:30 – 8 p.m., Harbor History Museum. Presented by Katie Arthur of the Pierce County Department of Emergency Management.

**May 9 Pierce County Social Services** 11 a.m., Key Peninsula Community Services, 253-884-4440.

**May 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.

**May 10-11 "Freaky Friday" at PHS** 7 p.m., Peninsula High School Theater. Presented by PHS Drama Department. Tickets available online at purplepass.com.

**May 11 Key Peninsula Livable Community Fair** 10 a.m. – 3 p.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center. Come learn about local organizations, small businesses, clubs, and agencies serving the KP.

**May 11 Blooming Spring Dessert Dash** 5 p.m., Key Peninsula Lutheran Church. Desserts, live auction, silent auction, and 50/50 raffle. All proceeds benefit KP nonprofits.

**May 14 Tacoma ProBono Legal Aid** 10 a.m. – 12 p.m., Key Peninsula Community Services. 1 – 3 p.m., The Mustard Seed Project. Free civil legal help.

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

**May 16 - 18 "Freaky Friday" at PHS** 7 p.m., Peninsula High School Theater. Presented by PHS Drama Department. Tickets available online at purplepass.com.

**May 17 TGIF** 5:30 p.m., Longbranch Improvement Club. For members and guests. BYOB.

**May 18 Youth Gardening Workshop** 10:30 a.m., Sehmel Park Demonstration Garden. Children will participate in composting and creating a container garden. Registration required.

**May 18 Family Time Tea** 11 a.m. – 1 p.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center. Hosted by Key Pen Parks, tickets available online at the KP Parks website.

**May 18 Gig Harbor Beer Festival** 12 p.m., Uptown Gig Harbor. Beers, ciders, and live music, tickets available online at eventbrite.com. Must be 21+ to attend.

**May 19 Inclusive Youth Hangout** Kids – 11:30 a.m., Teens – 1 p.m. Inclusive Youth Gig Harbor. Register at inclusiveyouthgh.org for location details.

**May 19 Rainbow Roller Disco** 3 – 6 p.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center. Hosted by Pride Gig Harbor and Moms for Peace, tickets available online at eventbrite.com.

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

**May 23 Key Pen Book Club** 11 a.m., The Mustard Seed Project. "The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to his White Mother" by James McBride.

**May 29 Dog Park Day** 10 a.m., Gateway Dog Park. Bring your dog for some pet-centric fun.

## 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. 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** 4 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 Pickleball and Board Games** 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., Longbranch Improvement Club. Open to the public. Coffee and games in the foyer.

**Tuesday Beginning Tai Chi** 10 a.m., The Mustard Seed Project, 253-884-9814. Drop-ins welcome, \$5 a class.

**Tuesday Women's Bible Study** 12:30 p.m., WayPoint North Church. Precept Bible Study on Daniel every Tuesday through June 11.

**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. Women's free fitness classes.

**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 Society & Museum** 1 – 4 p.m. Open through November. [keypeninsulamuseum.org](http://keypeninsulamuseum.org)

**Wednesday Cards and Games** 9:30 a.m., KP Community Services, 253-884-4440.

**Wednesday No Tears Tech Help** 10 a.m. – 1 p.m., Not available May 1. Key Center Library. Call the library to book an appointment, 253-548-3309.

**Wednesday Open Pickleball** 10:30 a.m. – 2 p.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center. Open to the public. Waiver required to play; donations accepted.

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

**Wednesday Chair Yoga** 1 p.m., The 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** 12:30 p.m., first and third Thursdays. KP Community Services, 253-884-4440.

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

**Friday Movie Screening** 12:30 p.m., second and fourth Fridays, KP Community Services, 253-884-4440.

**Friday Skate Night** 6 – 9 p.m., Key Peninsula Civic Center, kindergarten–eighth grade.

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

**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.

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

**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)

**Key Peninsula Beekeepers** First Thursdays, 7 p.m. Home fire station.

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

**KP Business Association** Business meeting. May 7, Glen Cove Repair. Networking and food 6 - 6:30 p.m., meeting starts at 6:30. [kpbusinessassociation@gmail.com](mailto:kpbusinessassociation@gmail.com)

**KP Community Council** Second Thursdays, 6:30 p.m. Key Center fire station, [keypencouncil@gmail.com](mailto:keypencouncil@gmail.com). Zoom link available on Key Peninsula Council Facebook page.

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

**KP Democrats** Third Mondays, 6:30 p.m., Home fire station. [johnpatkelly@aol.com](mailto:johnpatkelly@aol.com), 253-432-4256.

**KP Emergency Prep** Third Thursdays, 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 and third Thursdays, 4:30 – 7 p.m. (check-in from 4:30 – 5 p.m.). KPC Office in the Key Center Corral.

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

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

**Lakebay Fuchsia Society** First Thursdays, 7 p.m., KP Civic Center - Whitmore Room, 253-549-3015.

**Longbranch Improvement Club** Third Wednesdays, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., Longbranch Improvement Club. 253-200-0308 or [licweb.org](http://licweb.org).

**Medicare Assistance** Second Tuesdays, 12 – 2 p.m. KP Community Services, 253-884-4440.

**Peninsula Emergency Preparedness Coalition** Second Wednesdays, 6 p.m. Check [pep-c.org](http://pep-c.org) for meeting location.

**Peninsula School District Board Meeting** First and fourth Tuesdays in April, 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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Scan for upcoming events & current programs



waypoint-church.org 253-853-7878 office@waypoint-church.org

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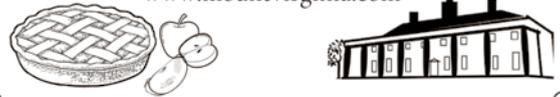
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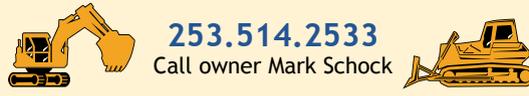
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TOP LEFT: Hendrix and his sister Wynonna enjoyed the KP Civic Center Crab Feed April 6.

TOP RIGHT: Spring sunset at Joemma Beach State Park.

MID LEFT: Bleeding hearts blossom.

MID CENTER: Sunlight peeking through spring showers helped make this female mallard dazzle.

MID RIGHT: Raindrops on an April tulip.

BOTTOM LEFT: KP Little League President Lee Miller, with nearly 25 years in service to the league, was honored at Opening Day ceremonies March 30 and presented with a commemorative bat and framed vintage photo by the Bryant family.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Meet Tender, the Ace Hardware Mascot at Lake Kathryn Village.

*All photos by Tina McKail, KP News*

