

HAPPY MEMORIAL DAY

Debating U.S. two-party political system • p 3
San Francisco ferry #3 comes together • p 8

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LA CONNER WEEKLY NEWS

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We bless this fleet



A NEW FISHING SEASON IS A BLESSING – Following tradition, members of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community walked from the Youth and Community Center to their annual First Salmon ceremony at the Swinomish Channel south of their docks. Four youth carried cedar boughs laden with seafood and berries in boats to the four directions to offer thanks.

– Photo by Madoc Hiller

Swinomish Tribe honors tradition

By Judy Booth

Five-year old Drea Edwards-Gould hugged her Auntie Melinda tight as the Swinomish Fish and Game Enforcement boat pulled out of the docks and propelled in one of the four directions to make an offering to the sea for a safe fishing season – the annual Blessing of the Fleet and First Salmon Ceremony of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community.

Sgt. Shaun Beasley navigated Skagit Bay at 24 knots with the precious cargo of a king salmon dressed in crab, clams, mussels, blackberries and blueberries on a bed of cedar boughs, through Deception Pass – at much slower speed – where the engine was cut, the boat rocked and Beasley,

balancing on the foot-wide platform at the stern, gently tossed the offering into the sea.

Based on tradition, three other boats, skippered by Bruce James Jr., Joe McDonald and Dave Heenan, also sailed off for parts unknown in propitiation for a safe fishing season.

Thus ended a day of feasting, prayers, singing and dancing.

Fishing, along with hunting, has been a staple of Native American life for millennia and particularly here in the Pacific Northwest the bounty of fish and shellfish provided an abundant living. So the original peoples had the time, the tools and creativity to produce the well-known and beloved artwork of totems, boats, hats, beadwork and regalia for which they are known.

At the Youth and Community Center, Senator Barbara James, taleq tale II, the tribal senate treasurer, welcomed over 300 guests to the lavish meal humbly called “lunch,” of salmon – thick, sweet and juicy – clams, mussels, shrimp and crab cooked to perfection. “It’s a pleasure to see the ones who have come to join us as we prepare for the Blessing of the Fleet – such an important work that we do on behalf of our fishermen on the water. We are thankful for the waters that we have [that] provide the nourishment that you will be able to partake in today. You are the ones that pray for our folks that go out on the water.”

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Guitar Festival fills La Conner with music

By Judy Booth

A couple thousand artisans, luthiers, musicians and wood millers from as far away as Italy and Spain, landed here last weekend for the sixth annual La Conner Guitar Festival to see, listen to and play the handcrafted and carefully sourced guitars and mandolins.

Most prices ranged from \$8,000 to \$26,000.

“I make high-end rectangles!” said walnut-wood lover Felly Smith.

His stack of walnut and red cedar, milled to the size of the neck and body shape of a guitar, begged for a luthier.

Before milling wood for guitars, Smith crafted percussion instruments for members of bands such as Los Lobos and the Grateful Dead.

The front face of an acoustic guitar is usually made from Sitka spruce. The back comes from hardwoods such as walnut – from the Willamette Valley, red cedar – from Skagit Valley – myrtle and other hardwoods, Smith said.

He pointed me in the direction of Tyson Soth of Spokane, former woodworker and cabinet maker, now luthier. Smith suggested I see the guitar Soth had made from wood he had purchased from him. It was a beauty.

Building guitars was Soth’s method of coping with his 13-year-old child undergoing extensive cancer treatment. She is well today.

Next to the guitar Soth had made from Smith’s wood, was a poster of



THE SWEETEST SOUND A LUTHIER HEARS – It’s “SOLD,” Musicians Terry Kingen, left, and Bear Davis might have been helping out the luthier whose guitars they played at mini-concert demos at the La Conner Guitar Festival last weekend. More than 1,000 people, primarily men, came to sixth annual show in Maple Hall. At least one bought a guitar.

– Photo by Madoc Hiller

“Light the Way” Children’s Cancer Coalition in Spokane. He is donating the guitar to the coalition for their care of his daughter.

Ben Feldman, apprentice to Rob Goldberg, a luthier from Haines, Alaska, must love working with his hands. He built a 39-foot sailboat and helped Goldberg build his shop in Port Townsend. “Ruined all my hopes of anything academic,” he said. He likes to hang out in lumber yards. “It’s rare

to come across a tree with the music in it.”

Goldberg, tucked behind a table filled with milled slices of Sitka Spruce and redwood, a thin pencil outline of a guitar on some, built his first guitar when he was 17-years old. He apprenticed with William Cumpiano, known for his writing and teaching of the art, including a feature-length

(continued on page 8)

First Street will switch to one-way

By Bill Reynolds

The La Conner Town Council last week chose to forego the path of least resistance when dealing with future downtown traffic flow and parking.

Rather than table action and extend discussion of options for S. First Street, council members voted 4-0 during their May 14 meeting at Maple Hall to convert the historic and narrow route along the town’s popular waterfront to single lane one-way traffic with parking on both sides. Councilor Ivan Carlson was absent.

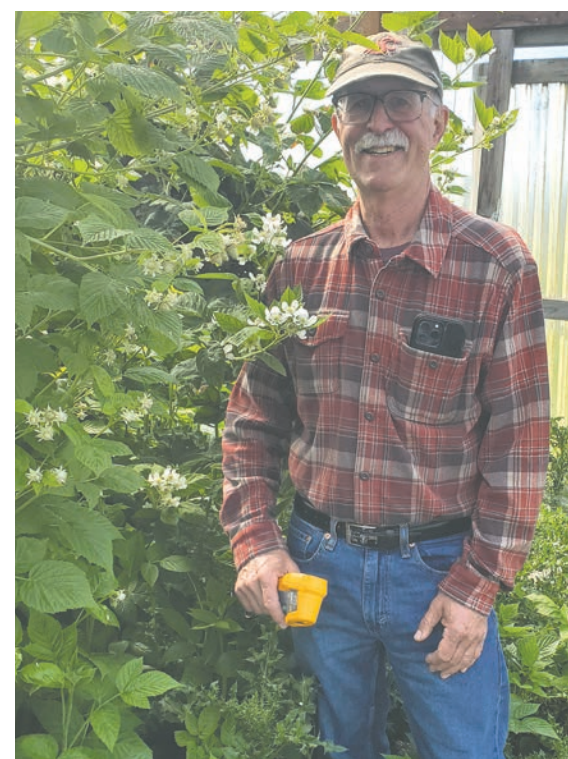
Town Planner Michael Davolio suggested the change go into effect this fall, which would give time to install new directional street signage.

The main factor pushing the new plan was safety, especially to get emergency rigs through tighter space as regular vehicles grow in size.

La Conner Fire Chief Aaron Reinstra had strongly recommended one-way southbound traffic on S. First Street, noting that his department responds on average to two downtown emergency service calls per month. He said neighboring fire departments endorsed the one-way option.

Davolio indicated that the width of S. First Street

(continued on page 6)



OUTSTANDING IN HIS FIELD – Dean Swanson, class of 1975, has been named La Conner’s outstanding alumni for 2024.

– Photo by Bill Reynolds

Berry good: Swanson is outstanding alum

By Bill Reynolds

He was raised and again resides on a diversified century-old farm north of town, but more than any single crop it’s been goodwill that Dean Swanson has spent a lifetime cultivating.

“I’ve been lucky to have grown up in a community that really cares,” Swanson, 67, told the Weekly News. “I had all the support I ever needed. That’s why I’ve always chosen to give back and (my wife) Becky, who’s the rock of our family, is in on that with me.”

Because he mastered the concept of “paying it forward” long before the phrase came into vogue, Swanson, a 1975 La Conner graduate, is this year’s recipient of the school’s outstanding alumnus

(continued on page 6)

Holiday closures

Memorial Day is Monday, May 27. The following offices and services will be closed in observance of the holiday.

- Banks: Closed
- Public transit: No service
- Library: Closed
- Post Office: Closed
- Schools: Closed
- Town Hall: Closed
- County government: Closed
- Trash pick up: Regular service

From the editor —

We're long overdue for a county library system

If there is fault to be had and people to be held accountable for the state auditor's staff finding shortcomings in the oversight of the La Conner Rural Partial County Library District – for that is what the library's official name is – that fault lies with all the Skagit County commissioners for the years and decades of a lack of vision and leadership that has allowed all residents countywide to languish with antiquated, piecemeal and completely underfunded and understaffed independent municipal and partial county library districts.

It is not the director and her board in La Conner that needs to bear the brunt of any criticism for slips in management. It is all the organized and independent entities and organizations that have chosen to not bring Skagit County into even the 20th century by their refusal to advocate and insist on a single Skagit County library district that would provide a uniform and comprehensive system to service every resident from Conway to Alger and from Marblemount to the Deception Pass bridge.

Like so many civic issues – the ways we govern ourselves – libraries are proscribed in state law. Since our county commissioners have not done so “of its own initiative,” then when 100 Skagit County residents petition for a library district, an election will decide the issue (RCW 27.12.030). That is one option.

The lack of a single system creates a financial penalty for the county's municipalities and library districts, forcing local taxes for the support of individual libraries.

The benefits of a centralized system are many. It will offer universal services to all residents. Duplications will disappear, while the savings will be redirected to expand services in the smaller communities. Staff ought to not be cut but employed additional hours and supplemented. Every branch will need a managing librarian if not a director. Staff hours and positions can be expanded, tapping the larger county tax base. Municipal residents and library departments will have tax and programmatic relief.

Critically, all Skagitonians will be eligible for a free library card. Now, live outside municipal boundaries and it can be \$100 for a library card. The complicated guest privileges between library districts will disappear.

The most critical issue small rural districts face: having a certified librarian as director – is solved with the tax base a countywide system provides. That is why the phrase “comprehensive library system” exists.

Our county commissioners know the solution to the struggles of the municipal and partial library districts. Now, in this election year, is the time for them to move beyond lip-service support and actively advocate for a countywide system. Four candidates are running for two commissioner positions. Voters will be helped to hear their pledge of commitment for bringing the issue before them as a legislative body and approving it.

Of course, the current commissioners can put the proposal on the agenda any week for discussion and scheduling a vote. If the commissioners need to deliberate, they can commission a study. They can start with that small investment, allocating initial resources of time and money. The main resource needed is leadership – and will.

After all, a countywide system will bring Skagit County into the 20th century. It is never too late to embrace progress.

What's the value of every child in the county and her parents having free library cards? Priceless.

– Ken Stern

Dave Cram takes the oath as school superintendent

By Ken Stern

In preparation for becoming interim superintendent of the La Conner School District, Dave Cram took the oath of office during the district's board of directors meeting Monday and he did not stop there. The school board methodically and unanimously passed seven resolutions authorizing Cram to sign documents, invest funds, pay bills and designating him as agent and auditing officer and more.

Board President Susie Deyo told Cram, “You are official. On July first, you have all the authority of the school district. Have fun.”

Deyo had first recognized retiring staff members Linda Pierson, 23 years; Linda Sovie, 21 years; Barbara Wolf, 18 years; and Jennifer Moyer, 7 years.

Middle and High school Principal Christine Tripp highlighted the more than 100 volunteers who support students in a wide variety of ways, including in math, science, drama, sports and on field trips. They had their names listed on the board room's front screen.

The board heard a report and passed a resolution for the

state's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction-mandated campus building inventory to assess their conditions. A grant pays the consultants. The information is used as a baseline to allocate state funding to school districts.

A donation of \$1,374 raised through a car wash from the La Conner Booster Club paid for an eighth-grade field trip to a trampoline park and Chick-Fil-A in Marysville.

Beth Clothier, the district's director of teaching and learning, recommended a new high school math textbook to replace the current 1990s schoolbook. Staff had recommended and agreed to the choice. A grant pays 80% of its cost.

Elementary School Principal Heather Fakkema discussed the transitional kindergarten survey that has already brought 10 parental responses. The survey will be promoted through June. The goal is to have 13 to 15 4-year-olds enrolled by Aug. 31. She reported that next year's kindergarten enrollment is at 29 and called it a “great number” this early.

Clothier and Tripp summarized

(continued on page 4)

A citizen's view —

That mist in your valley deserves protection

By Maggie Wilder

Almost 50 years ago I extracted myself from a life and livelihood in our nearest metropolis to follow a dream, a soul mandate, to live in Skagit Valley. A decade earlier, when I was 16 years old, I'd seen it for the first time and its beauty kept calling: those flat vistas, miles of mist and farmland.

As the greening of this place happens once again and we celebrate this season, let me, please, rain a bit on your parade by mentioning something your sense of beauty, indeed none of your senses, will be good at detecting: Glyphosate.

While Monsanto was busy developing Roundup in the 1970s, (after gifting Vietnam and our veterans with Agent Orange), and a little later the GMO (genetically modified organisms) crops that could resist its toxicity, they somehow forgot to modify the flora and fauna in our GI tract, commonly referred to now

as the human microbiome.

The World Health Organization listed glyphosate, the weed-killing agent in Roundup, as a probable carcinogen in 2015. This after 9.4 million pounds of the stuff had been spread around the world. And then the use of Roundup exploded. By now it is estimated that 5 billion pounds of glyphosate has been used worldwide. It is in our soil, our rainwater and it is in you. A well-known research doctor can't find anyone he's examined who isn't urinating the chemical.

Since 2015, we've found out so much more: the very mitochondria of our human cells, it turns out, are not genetically human. Those bits of life that run our metabolism are more likely viruses and also vulnerable to the ravages of glyphosate. Science now understands our bodies to be micro-ecosystems, not monocultures. And the consequences of mass application of pesticides are

implicated more and more in the research of astute scientists in the severe spikes in chronic disease in America: diabetes, infertility, neurodegenerative diseases to name a few.

Back to our valley: That beautiful yellow ochre, the raw sienna of some farm fields? Glyphosate. Not just a weed killer, but now also a desiccant industrial farming can use on grain.

The good news? Ten percent of farming in Skagit Valley has gone organic (though organic farms are still being rained on!) So the next time you're at the local farm stand and find yourself both admiring those organic strawberries and flinching at their price, remember this and thank those farmers! Buy those berries. The wee organisms downstream from your mouth and wallet will rejoice, and you'll be encouraging more farmers to set down the glyphosate.

Maggie Wilder lives in La Conner.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Follow God for the good of all

Well, I don't need to write what is happening in our own country and around the world. Unless one is living under a rock, or is deliberately denying what is before our very eyes each day, we clearly see the U.S. and other countries are in a world of hurt. The only solution, in my

opinion, is: we better turn back to the God of the universe, repent of our sins and let God back into our individual lives, our government, our schools, our business ventures, etc. In other words, recognize He is God and we desperately need Him. He is the answer. We are One Nation Under God but we have foolishly shut Him out.

Nancy Burlison
La Conner

LETTER POLICY

Please write! Letters to the editor of up to 350 words are welcome, as are longer analyses and statements. Write a 500-word guest column. Deadline: 5 p.m. Sunday. Include your name, address and phone number for verification. All letters are edited for civility, clarity and style.

SEND TO:

editor@laconnernews.com

Blessing

■ ■ ■ (from page 1)

Joe McCoy, former minister of the Indian Shaker Church, led the meal's blessing. Back in the 1960s, one dark night, McCoy, just a 19-year old kid, got ticketed for “illegal” fishing on tribal waters, called “common waters” back then. Staff from the Washington state Department of Game (regulating game fish) took his 52 fish, many weighing upwards of 70 pounds.

“They told me to pick up [the net.] They said, ‘if we go to court, you may get your fish back,’” McCoy recalled, laughing at the memory.

He again hauled another 70 king salmon, the Department of Game on his heels, escaping through hole-in-the-jetty into Skagit Bay.

“It was eight feet wide and low tide. Couldn't stop because the boat would have hit bottom. I had to keep going to deep water. I went to Snee-Oosh Beach. Sold all the 70 kings, but lost the first 50 to Fish and Game.

“It was Billy Frank, Jr. who did everything,” McCoy added, honoring Frank who that decade organized a series of “fish-ins” which led to the Boldt Decision.

The procession from the gym to the docks was led by the Edwards family, followed by representatives from several faiths including Father Mel of Saint Mary's/Saint Paul's church, the Catholic Church, Pastor Doug York of the Pentecostal church and Wendy of the Shaker church. They all offered a blessing.

An eagle screeched overhead as J.J. Wilbur led the Wilbur family song. “It came to us from the ancestors after our beloved *kuts-bat-soot* – Claude Wilbur



TRADITIONAL TRIBAL OFFERING — Swinomish Fish and Game Enforcement Sgt. Shaun Beasley carefully offers king salmon dressed in crab, clams, mussels, blackberries and blueberries on a bed of cedar boughs in the waters of Deception Pass.

— Photo courtesy Krista Hamburg

“It came to us from the ancestors after our beloved *kuts-bat-soot* – Claude Wilbur Sr. – passed in 2018. We sing the song in honor of Aunt Lorraine, our long-time salmon warrior and fisheries manager here at Swinomish.”

J.J. Wilbur

Sr. – passed in 2018. We sing the song in honor of Aunt Lorraine, our long-time salmon warrior and fisheries manager here at Swinomish.”

Four dignitaries, Col. Kathryn P. Sanborn, Seattle District Commander, of the Army Core of Engineers; Liz Lovelett, 40th state legislative district; Craig Bill – soon to be elder – twice appointed director of the Governor's Office of Indian

Affairs and Swinomish member; and Larry Wasserman, retired director of the Swinomish Department of Environmental Protection were honored with traditional offerings and blessings.

Brian Porter, *ya qua leouse*, vice-chairman of the Swinomish Senate, Fish & Game Commission, bemoaned the drastic effects on salmon fishing due to environmental impacts. “My 18-year-old son didn't know what a Chum was.”

Here on the shores of the Salish Sea, according to NOAA Fisheries, “Chum salmon may historically have been the most abundant of all Pacific salmonids.”

“In pre-contact times their [indigenous] fisheries took nearly as many salmon as did later industrial fisheries, but indigenous practices resulted in a sustainable resource,” writes Priscilla Long on historylink.org.

As I write this on Friday, May 17, I see that it is Endangered Species Day. How appropriate.

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State biologist named to town emergency panel

By Bill Reynolds

A Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist will look to maintain the chemistry enjoyed by the Town's Emergency Management Commission since its inception in 2023.

Three-year town resident Jonah Keith was confirmed last week by the La Conner Town Council to fill a commission vacancy created by the death of Duane Carpenter, who had been the advisory panel's chief meteorologist.

Keith brings to the board not only his extensive background in science and marine biology, but also the perspective of a young parent, according to commission chair Jerry George.

"One of the reasons I recruited Jonah is that our commission is old," George told council members prior to their May 14 unanimous vote. "We're all old people. We don't know, because we aren't there anymore, how a disaster feels for a family with children and young people."

Keith was appointed to a term that expires Dec. 31, 2027.

Keith handles a wide range of duties for WDFW, including the collection of field data in the Skagit River by boat and aerial surveys in helicopters.

"Jonah probably knows the Skagit River better than everyone," George said.

A father of two children, Keith supervises seven WDFW employees at their La Conner office. In addition to his super-

visory role, Keith analyzes creel data to estimate the sportfishing catch of endangered salmonids in the Skagit, Samish and Nooksack watersheds.

The year-old commission at one point consisted of six members, five with voting privileges. It was pared down to five members only, each empowered to vote, following the retirement of initial chair Bill Stokes, a former town councilor.

Formed in response to severe saltwater flooding in December 2022 that caused nearly \$2 million in local property damage, the commission since then has expanded its role to recommend strategies to protect the La Conner area from a wide array of emergencies and natural disasters, from earthquakes and tsunamis to extreme weather and fires.

Commissioners at present are crafting a Community Emergency Management Plan for La Conner, drawing in part upon material developed by Washington state, Skagit County, the City of Anacortes and other entities.

Members of the commission have also sought input from leadership at Skagit County Fire District 13, the Swinomish Tribal Community and Shelter Bay.



Jonah Keith



ROAD WORK – Through June 6, Skagit County Public Works crews will grind out worn pavement and replace it with new asphalt on Best Road, between McLean and Chilberg roads. During the work, traffic will be reduced to one lane of alternating traffic. Shown here on June 15, the work was focused near Christianson's Nursery.

– Photo by Kurt Batdorf

Court of Appeals may consider Henrie's Shelter Bay board case

By Ken Stern

The 2023 lawsuit brought by then-resident Jan Henrie against the Shelter Bay Community's board of directors executive committee may be considered by the Washington Court of Appeals.

Skagit County Superior Court Judge Laura Riquelme granted the defendants motion to stay the proceedings before May 10 pending the outcome of the defendants' request for a discretionary review by the appeals court.

The judge agreed with the defense that the case involved "a controlling question of law as to

which there is substantial ground for difference of opinion" and found that "immediate review of these orders may materially advance the ultimate termination of the litigation."

The appellate court has to decide to accept the discretionary review.

Riquelme denied the plaintiff's Court Rule 11 sanctions request. Court Rule 11 includes not causing "unnecessary delay."

Judy Kontos is now the plaintiff. Henrie assigned her rights, including judgments awarded, to Kontos March 29. Kontos has assumed all responsibilities under the plaintiff's case.

Henrie's March 2023 suit

alleged malfeasance and failure in these board members' actions and conduct for their passing an "invalid budget in violation of both the Shelter Bay Community bylaws and the Revised Code of Washington."

The defendants have not contested the case's merits. Instead they claim Henrie has no standing to bring the suit. Superior Court Judge Laura Riquelme ruled against them twice.

Defendants Wendy Poulton, Elaine Dixon, Monte Hicks, Joseph Hurley and Louise Kari were board of director executive committee members when Henrie filed her case. Poulton and Hicks are still on the board.

A debate of two-party politics

Come hear what the Mount Vernon High School debate team is thinking about our two party political system tomorrow, Thursday, May 23. The League of Women Voters of Skagit County organized the debate for its 2024 outreach series of voter education, part of their ongoing commitment to community engagement and understanding of key electoral issues.

Guest judges are Claudia Avendano-Iberra, Skagit Valley College human services department chair, and Paul Neilsen, Skagit County District Court judge. They will support the students by offering their opinions about the teams' performances and rationales.

Hear from the next generation of civic leaders as they engage with each other.

This is the second year that the League has partnered with the debate team.

The program starts at 6:30 p.m. at the Mount Vernon High School auditorium, 1075 E. Fulton Street. It is open to all.

Information: wende.sanders@gmail.com.

Source: League of Women Voters of Skagit County

Election results for Shelter Bay board

By Ken Stern

The Shelter Bay Community voted to continue Wendy Poulton, Pat McGarry and Monte Hicks as members of its board of directors at its election and annual meeting Saturday, May 18.

Poulton, with 307 votes, and Hicks, with 273, were reelected. McGarry, with 294, had been appointed in February. All will

serve a three-year term that starts July 1.

Julie Peddy came in fourth, with 170 votes. She fills the position of reserve director.

The board has until July 17 to fill Jan Paul's seat. She resigned in April. That term ends June 30,

2026.

The community approved the 2024-2025 annual budget and four bylaw amendments. Up to 419 of the 841 eligible members voted. Four votes were in person Saturday, 33 were by mail, and the rest were e-votes.

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Interested in TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN?

La Conner School District is currently gathering information on whether there is a need in our community for a transitional kindergarten program. If you have a child who will be four years old on or before August 31, 2024, they may qualify for a place in a transitional kindergarten classroom.

Please complete this survey to help us determine whether or not there is a need for this program in our community.

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Complete the survey using the QR code or <https://tiny.cc/LCTK>

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A BIG DEAL – La Conner Elementary teacher Lisa Hedlund shows students that when it comes to math, having fun is in the cards. Hedlund and other staff and volunteers introduced pupils and their parents to a wide range of games and activities as part of the school's annual Math Night celebration May 1. *—Photo by Bill Reynolds*

Math Night adds up to fun time for students, families

By Bill Reynolds

Math can be serious stuff, but it's also a great vehicle for fun and games.

That was spelled out at La Conner Elementary School during the annual campus Math Night celebration May 1, when parents, students and staff geared up to experience the magic of numbers.

"It's great that people can come in and see how math is fun," said Beth Clothier, La Conner School District's director of teaching and learning.

"It's nice to see so many families here to do math games."

The mood was festive, akin more to a carnival than a classroom arithmetic lesson.

"The great thing about this is that everyone can see the fun side of math, something different than the normal school routine," said paraprofessional Sunee Lagerwey.

First-grade teacher Lisa Hedlund coordinated the event, organizing stations where attendees were posed with puzzles, a numerical mini-basketball hoop shoot, math-related art and assorted card, dice and board games.

"I asked everybody to sign up for an activity," Hedlund said, "In some cases they brought in

the math games that they send home for summer."

The school district is emphasizing math, where a new K-12 curricula was adopted a couple of years ago. The district's primary and secondary levels each have a separate math curriculum designed to promote student mastery, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

In addition, the school board calls upon staff members to report on student progress in math at the panel's monthly meetings.

Reflective of the focus placed upon math, board president Susie Deyo and her husband, Tim, who has an extensive engineering background, served as Math Night volunteers.

Superintendent Will Nelson soaked up the Math Night vibe. He quickly rattled off the key factors contributing to Math Night's winning equation.

"Lots of families, lots of kids, lots of staff and lots of fun," Nelson said of the 90-minute program.

Elementary School Principal Heather Fakkema echoed that sentiment.

"It's been a nice turnout," she said. "We've had a steady flow of people coming in. It's a great event for our students and families."

Braves trio qualify for state 2B/1B golf

By Bill Reynolds

Three of six La Conner High School golfers advanced from Northwest Tri-District 2B competition to state brackets this week in Tumwater.

Seniors Abigail Udlock and Sammy Williams and junior Corran Eisen represented La Conner in state 2B/1B play, a two-day contest that began yesterday (Tuesday) morning at the Tumwater Valley Golf Club south of Olympia.

Udlock teed off on the girls' side of the state tournament at noon on Tuesday. She was grouped with Chloe Anderson-Cleveland of Orcas Island and Tierianna McLean of Tulalip Heritage.

Williams got his first round under way at 10:10 a.m. Tuesday, playing alongside Chase Wall of Cle Elum-Roslyn and Terek Bush of Lake Roos-



THREE FOR THE ROAD – A trio of La Conner High golfers is competing at the state tournament this week. Abigail Udlock, Sammy Williams, and Corran Eisen are representing La Conner at the Tumwater Valley Golf Club. *—Photo courtesy of Emily Udlock*

evelt. Eisen joined Rayshawn Bob of Lummi and Jason Graham of Cle Elum-Roslyn for a

10:20 a.m. May 21 start time. The state trials conclude today.

Baseball, softball shine in league awards

By Bill Reynolds

The La Conner High School baseball and softball teams fell short in their respective league title races this spring, but they were winners nonetheless.

Both programs were recipients of 2024 Team Sportsmanship Awards in recent balloting by their NW2B/1B rivals.

The softball team, coached by Loran James and Taysha James-Sherman, also garnered two individual honors.

Infielder Taylor-Rae Cayou,

who enjoyed a monster day at the plate during La Conner's late season conference double-header sweep of Concrete, was a first unit All-League selection. Pitcher Della Souryavong was a second team All-NW2B/1B choice.

The baseball team earned post-season recognition on four fronts, including the sportsmanship award.

Braves mentor Jeremiah LeSourd was voted the league's Coach of the Year, while senior lefthanded pitcher/first base-

man/centerfielder Logan Burks was a first team All-NW2B/1B pick and infielder/catcher C.J. Edwards was named to the All-NW2B/1B second team lineup.

The teams each finished fifth in league standings.

The boys posted a 9-8 overall mark which could have been better yet had it not been for a string of tough mid-season one-run, extra innings losses. The girls, meanwhile, salvaged a 2-13 slate by winning both ends of the twinbill with Concrete.

Braves junior Lee qualifies for state tennis

By Bill Reynolds

Kendall Lee has brought her A-game – as in Anacortes – to area tennis courts this spring.

The La Conner High School junior has competed in 2024 for Anacortes head coach Jeff Leer and the 2A Seahawks since tennis is no longer offered at La Conner.

The arrangement has paid dividends for Lee, who qualified last week for the Washington State Girls' 2B/1B Tennis

Championships May 24-25 in Yakima.

Playing for Anacortes during the regular campaign kept Lee sharp for 2B/1B post-season action May 17 at the Amy Yee Tennis Center.

The La Conner netter advanced from Friday's Bi-District trials in Seattle, where Lee enjoyed a solid tourney performance that included a hard-fought 6-3, 6-3 setback to eventual title winner Tenley Stuurmans of Coupeville.

State matches are scheduled to get under way this Friday on the outdoor courts at the Yakima Tennis Center. In the event of inclement weather, matches will be moved to the Yakima Tennis Club's indoor courts.

In addition to her tennis prowess, Lee is a key member of the La Conner's girls' soccer program.

Kendall Lee has played tennis this season under the guidance of Anacortes High School tennis coach Jeff Leer.

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Library Happenings

By **Jean Markert**
Library Director

Instead of my regular La Conner Swinomish Library column, Jim Airy, who was board chair during much of the 2020-2022 state audit period and I would like to respond to the recent article about library audit findings in the May 15 La Conner Weekly News. The board and the library recognize the importance of accountability and transparency for the operations of

our library district and are committed to ongoing improvements to our service and to compliance with state laws and regulations and library policies.

Jim Airy's response: The recent state audit identifies areas in which the library failed to comply with state procedures for the administration and management of a public institution. Much of this occurred on my watch as chair of the board of trustees and I take full responsibility for those deficiencies.

During this time, the library

board was managing fundraising, overseeing a complex construction project and dealing with shortages of labor and materials, a delay of a year and a cost increase of more than \$1 million, all resulting from the Covid pandemic. The audit makes clear that the board did not provide sufficient oversight of the administration and management of the library. This is unacceptable. The library director and the board of trustees are already working to address the issues the audit has identified. I want to emphasize that there was no financial malfeasance, no misuse of funds. All the money that our partners and donors generously contributed to

building the new library was used to build the new library, on time and on budget after adjusting for the effects of the pandemic.

Library director response: The La Conner Swinomish Library welcomed our recent audit as a roadmap to help us be the best library we can be. 2022 was a pivotal year for the library; we completed the construction project and moved into our beautiful new building. This was also the year when we began to implement new processes and procedures to increase transparency and to create more accountability within the library.

We have begun the process of updating our policies and proce-

dures and have scheduled board training to ensure we are in compliance with open meeting procedures and protocols. We have also purchased new software to provide improved transparency of library strategies, policies and operations, and we have implemented new financial procedures to improve our accountability.

We value the comprehensive review provided by the state auditor and have responded with plans and a timeline to improve our performance. Our goal is to be the best library for our community and we will strive to represent that goal each and every day. We are thankful for the continued support of our patrons.

La Conner isn't only rural library that struggles to meet state certification

By **Ken Stern**

When the La Conner Swinomish Library Board of Directors named Jean Markert the library's director in 2022, it did so despite Markert's lack of a library science degree and required state certification.

La Conner is not alone in operating a library without a trained librarian.

"Unfortunately, it is not unusual for rural libraries in Washington (and nationwide)

to have library staff or library directors who are not certified librarians. Rural areas are notoriously challenged to recruit and retain certified librarians," Washington Library Association Director Brianna Hoffman wrote in an email.

Markert will complete her library science master's degree this fall. She will get a librarian's certificate from the Washington State Librarian, putting the library district in compliance with a statute requiring full-time staff

to hold a librarian's certificate.

State Librarian Sara Jones was notified when Markert became permanent library director after the library board of trustees terminated Jared Fair in August 2022. Jones told the Weekly News that her department "advised the La Conner Library of the legal requirement."

She echoed Hoffman's assessment in an email: "It is a not uncommon practice in our profession for a person to be selected as a library director without the

degree and then required as a condition of continued employment to complete a master's degree in library and information science."

State law requires librarians to have "a knowledge of information resources and library/information service delivery equivalent to that required for graduation from an accredited library education program."

Hoffman noted that library study programs may offer a management track without

elaborating if that provides an overview in advising governmental boards to include the state's Open Public Meetings Act or financial policy oversight, areas the Washington State Auditor's Office found the library district to be in noncompliance.

Jones wrote that a management course is a requirement with a MLIS degree. Open meeting laws and financial management would be addressed in a cursory way. A separate course on financial management is part of the curriculum.

La Conner native daughter

Anna Tivel releases new music

By **Chloe Peterson**

We're splitting the difference between singles and the album drop for La Conner born and raised musician, Anna Tivel.

I first discovered Tivel while covering the 2023 Christian Lee Hutson/Fenne Lily tour stop in Seattle for The Daily of the University of Washington. From the moment she began to sing, I knew I was in for a treat. There's a great fear of unknown openers in concert going, but Tivel surpassed all expectations with her haunting voice, narrative lyricism and command of the stage.

To my surprise she then uttered a familiar name, "La Conner," declaring it her hometown, though she now resides in Portland, Oregon. My friends and I turned to each other in delight at the smallness of the world. Since then, she's become a household name to my circle of intimates and a staple for car rides, study sessions and craft nights.

Her upcoming album "Living Thing," is a self-described "arcane dive into the existential" that brings joy to discussion of struggle and what it means to be alive, according to her website.

"I wrote feverishly in the strange chaos of that year [2020], suddenly out of work and attempting to understand the shifting human fabric, the depth of desperation and the overwhelming tenacity of spirit," says Tivel.

The album's first two singles reflect that in spades. "Disposable Camera," which came out on Feb. 27, immediately jumps into an up-tempo meditation that plays with the idea of learning how to adapt to change when the people around you refuse to.

The phrase "and nobody tells it like it is" repeats throughout

the song as Tivel spins her lyrics around the theme, building to the moment where she cries out "a blessing and a burden / I swear this will be worth it" and the song swells to meet it.

"Disposable Camera" is made for dancing in your living room with loved ones. In comparison, "Bluebird" is made for laying on said living room floor and staring at the ceiling.

It contends with the same idea of change, this time echoing a refrain of having to go along with the new world.

"Bluebird, we flew right off the edge / for a new world, but we haven't found it yet" echoes the chorus over and over as Tivel evokes a feeling of flying, or falling, along with the birds in the sky with her airy and floaty vocals. It evokes a feeling of nostalgic melancholy, reminding the listener of the days before the new world, unknown.

Both songs hold incredible promise for what the album will be and I, for one, cannot wait to see what the rest of "Living Thing" brings.

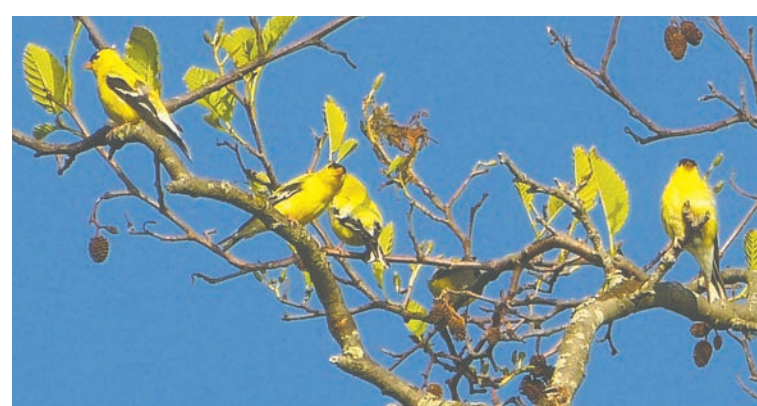
If you're interested in what else Tivel has to offer, her music can be found wherever you listen. "Living Thing" will be released on May 31, 2024.

American Goldfinch

This is the time when the male American Goldfinch looks his best! You can't miss seeing them with their bright yellow feathers and they hope that the females will do the same.

They come to seed feeders with sunflower and thistle seed, or look for seeds on grasses and in deciduous trees and shrubs. It helps them not to mow everything, and even let a thistle plant grow for the fun of seeing them eat those seeds.

During wintertime, their plumage changes and they look



more subdued like the females and juveniles do. Most of them move south to Oregon or California during that time, but some stay in back yards with bird feeders.

The American Goldfinch is

our state bird and also that of Iowa and New Jersey.

Photo and text by Rosi Jansen, Fine Feathered Friends

A&E BRIEFS

Mark your calendars for some upcoming fun activities.

Skagit Community Band free ensemble concert: "Postcards of Gratitude" at 2 p.m. Saturday, May 25, at Maple Hall. This concert features groups that represent all sections of the band, including Fluteus Maximus, Barefoot Jazz Dixieland, Skagit Brass Quintet and more. Expect to hear traditional music, jazz, show tunes and more. As a backdrop to the music, there will be a silent dessert auction with a variety of sweet selections on display.

Maple Hall, 104 Commercial St., La Conner. Info: www.skagitcommunityband.org.

Salish Sea Early Music Festival. This baroque concert features Jeffrey Cohan, Carrie Krause and Jonathan Oddie playing the music of J.S. Bach, C.P.E. Bach, Vivaldi and Aubert. 7 p.m. Tuesday, May 28, at Fir-Conway Lutheran Church. Info: www.salishseafestival.org/skagit.



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POLICE BLOTTER

SKAGIT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sunday, May 12

7:38 a.m.: Hoax or mirage, maybe – Report of multiple cows in the road. A deputy checked the area and did not find any loose cows or issues with the fence. Highway 20 / La Conner-Whitney Road, greater La Conner.

1:32 p.m.: You can't have a hot dog – Dog reported in a vehicle with no water and the interior getting hot. A deputy arrived and found the vehicle to be unlocked. The dog was removed from the car and the door left open to air out the inside. The dog was provided water. The deputy found the owner and was able to discuss the issues and the laws. First and Commercial streets, La Conner.

7:58 p.m.: This might be a trend – Another report of cows getting out at this intersection. The caller stated the cow was out but managed to get itself back into the field by going under the fence. La Conner-Whitney / Young roads, greater La Conner.

Monday, May 13

7:08 a.m.: Loose cows again – Another report of cows getting out at this intersection. A deputy responded but all cows were inside the fence. La Conner-Whitney / Young roads, greater La Conner.

10:30 a.m.: Where are my keys? – Caller said she lost her keys and believes they may have been dropped at or near the La Conner Tavern. No keys have been turned in that match the missing set. First Street, La Conner.

Tuesday, May 14

4:09 p.m.: Who takes this junk? – A caller had questions about junk vehicle inspections and how to get vehicles removed from a property. Caller was

directed to the health department, which handles junk vehicles. Fir Island Road, greater La Conner.

Thursday, May 16

11:34 a.m.: HELP! – Report of a cap-sized boat in Deception Pass with three people now standing on top of the boat. Multiple rescue units responded but later found this to be west of Deception Pass and in Island County. Island County arrived first and was able to pick up all subjects safely. Deception Pass Channel.

Friday, May 17

8:07 p.m.: Who's calling? – A phone was found on Best Road and turned in to the Sheriff's Office. A subject called the phone and stated he was a friend of the owner. The deputy advised how the phone could be recovered and placed it into found property. First Street, La Conner.

Saturday, May 18

11:34 p.m.: Big bang theory – Caller thought someone had fired a gun from across the river and possibly hit a tree on her property. The caller's husband thought it was fireworks from a party. A deputy located the party but didn't find any evidence of firearms or fireworks. Most likely came from this party and they were advised to keep it down and no fireworks. Dike Road, Conway area.

Sunday, May 19

2:08 a.m.: Enough with the racket – Caller wanted an area check for gunshots or fireworks. A deputy located a party down the road, but they denied any involvement. The deputy stayed in the area and did not hear any issues. Produce Lane, greater La Conner.

A 'mating' milestone marks Mavrik ferry #3

By Anne Basye

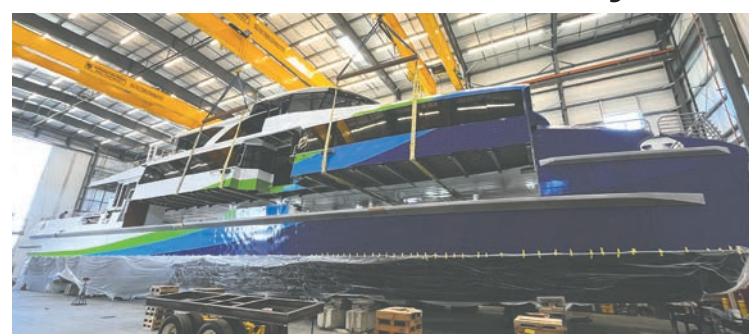
Ferry #3 under construction by Mavrik Marine had a little sunshine on Thursday, May 16, when its superstructure was rolled from one Mavrik building to another.

The hull has been under construction in the taller building while the superstructure has been built in the smaller one. During Thursday's move, the two parts of the vessel were placed side by side and "mated" when the superstructure was lifted onto the hull.

Two high-speed, passenger-only, Mavrik-made ferries are already in service on the San Francisco Bay. The MV Delphinus left La Conner on Feb. 10 and arrived in San Francisco two days later. It was christened in a March ceremony by the Water Emergency Transportation Authority, which operates the ferry fleet. The MV Dorado was delivered in spring 2023.

Like the Dorado and Delphinus, ferries #3 and #4 – soon to be named by San Francisco school children in a contest – carry up to 320 passengers and operate at 32 knots of speed. But instead of twin-engine jet drives, they will be propelled by quad-engine jet drives.

"Quad-engine jet drives are more energy efficient and environmentally friendly," said Bailey Shewchuk, president of Mavrik and chairman of its board



TWO BECOME ONE — A crane lowers the superstructure to mate it to the hull of Mavrik Marine ferry #3 on May 16. It's the third of four passenger ferries the La Conner firm has built to serve San Francisco Bay. — Photo courtesy of Bailey Shewchuk

of directors.

Shewchuk stepped into his role after founder Zachery Battle died last November, shortly after the MV Delphinus was moved into the water.

Each ferry takes a little less time to build. "The processes that we go through become more repeatable," said Shewchuk. "There was a learning curve on MV Dorado, but we refined our processes for MV Delphinus, and will refine them again for the next ferries."

That's good, because the market for efficient, high-speed ferries is growing. Environmental Protection Agency regulations for fuel efficiency mean that WETA and other ferry operators must upgrade their fleets. Several large operators will issue requests for proposals (RFPs) for new ferries this year.

"That's good for Mavrik and other shipyards across the West

Coast," said Shewchuk. "We see potential for another 10 to 12 vessels between 2024 and 2030."

Some RFPs may be for electric-powered ferries. Mavrik will rise to the challenge. Its dual- and quad-engine jet drives already come from a third-party vendor, so a supplier for electric jet drives will be easy to find.

Mavrik's enthusiastic workforce is a big asset in the company's success, says Shewchuk.

"Quality is our top priority," he said. "At the end of every day what people have accomplished is standing right in front of them. That sense of accomplishment and pride in the quality of the product is infectious."

"We want to be a part of La Conner," he said. "We don't want to be the Starbucks, we want to be the little coffee place on the corner. We are quite happy being a small shipyard in La Conner, producing outstanding boats."

Guitar festival

■ ■ ■ (from page 1)

documentary on the cuatro, a stringed instrument.

Goldberg doesn't use any models. "Every instrument I make is unique. An American singer-songwriter approached me saying playing the guitar felt like wearing a bad bra." The guitar he made for her was made for a woman's body, with a slight bevel on the side. He then encircled the rosette with inlaid abalone and copper for her red hair. It took 300 hours to create.

Choojit (Tuk) Kongsawat and

Paul Ubl, husband-and-wife, make mandocellos, a plucked stringed baritone mandolin. Tuk made her first guitar in 2015, "bit by bit." She was moved by how a dead tree could become a beautiful instrument. "It had two lives – first as a living tree and then as a musical instrument."

In college, Ubl liked to use his hands and was fascinated by the specs in guitar building. He built his first guitar from a book – Irving Sloane's classic "How to Make Guitars." It is their third year in La Conner.

Jamie Findlay's (he's from La Conner) Sunday workshop was well-attended with pickers asking

pointed questions about major, minor and diminished chords, chord melodies for diatonic and locrian chords (a B diminished chord with the notes B, D and F)

A WhatsApp phone call from Timbuktu in the Sahara Desert from Ahmad Ag Radouane, a Malian musician, put him in touch with Findlay's workshop.

Tim Lerch, a member of Pearl Django, joined Findlay for an improvisational jazz/blues tune. "What a way to spend a Sunday morning!" said Findlay.

Tracy Spring, shared her music at Santo Coyote. She has been compared to Sarah McLachlan and Tracy Chapman.

Overheard in the hallway: "My wife started this," said Brent McElroy of his late wife, Shirley Makela, who created the festival in 2017.

After retirement they moved to La Conner. Thus began the La Conner Guitar Festival, with luthiers, vendors and people coming from around the world.

In 2020 and 2021 the festival was canceled, due to the coronavirus pandemic and the untimely death of Makela.

Workshops at both Maple Hall and the Civic Garden Club offered everything from tricks, riffs and body percussion to smoother fingerpicking.

Santo Coyote and the Waterfront Café hosted several performers. Andre Feriante performed at Cassera Gallery and Raven's Cup Coffee and Gallery.

In Maple Hall, that kitchen crew provided snacks and lunch to hundreds. "If the kitchen and core crew, members of his late wife Shirley's family, didn't come every year and help me, I wouldn't be able to do this," said McElroy.

After three days' immersion into the world of luthiers, it did feel like a family. A family that loved trees, milled wood, finely crafted instruments, patience, practice and music that lifted one's spirits.

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