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Snow geese numbers are increasing



GROWING IN NUMBERS— Snow geese overwhelmed a field on Polson Road on Fir Island recently, attracting a handful of photographers and amply illustrating why their migration here are becoming a problem for farmers in Skagit Valley.

—Photo by Nancy Crowell

Snow geese population a problem for Skagit farmers

By Lauren Gallup
NWPB, NWNews

In late autumn on the cusp of cool winter days, snow comes early to Washington when thousands of aloft avians, snow geese, land here in a flurry of white feathers.

“We call it a snow storm, they just will move as one,” said birder Julie Hagen. “It’s just this chaotic whirlwind of birds, they move like a cloud and then they just lift up in the air.”

In late October, as the snow geese began landing in the Skagit Valley, Hagen went out to enjoy the sight that many Western Washington birders look forward to each year. Lucky and patient observers might get to see the spectacle Hagen calls a snow storm, when the birds take off in a group. The individual birds become indistinguishable from each other within all those white feathers.

“The sight and the sound they make, the sound is incredible,” Hagen said. “It’s just a real, multi-sensory experience, I think, and I think that’s what a lot of birders love to experience about the snow geese.”

Beloved for their look and sound, the distinct white birds, with black tips on their wings, are lesser snow geese who overwinter here, coming from their summer home of Wrangel Island, a World Heritage site in Russia.

The thing is, there’s a lot more of these birds landing and spending their winters here, lately. That’s bringing about questions of how species interact with, impact and are impacted by the build environment.

Finding a feast

In the northwest corner of Washington in the Skagit Valley, Port Susan Bay Preserve is a great place to catch sight of the geese; it’s within a National Audubon Important Bird Area and within a part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network.

The estuary is settled next to agricultural lands, a paradise for the birds who are seeking food resources, said Amber Parmenter, Puget Sound stewardship manager for the Nature Conservancy, who manages this site. Growing abundantly is bulrush and the geese like to yank out the plant’s roots from the marshy landscape for a meal. But it’s not just these roots that the geese like to feast on. Foods found on our dinner table – potatoes, winter wheat and corn – are crops these birds enjoy too.

“Agriculture is why we have, in large part, the waterfowl populations in North Puget Sound that we have,” said Rob Wingard, private lands biologist for the Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. “We have, over winter, large numbers of ducks and geese because of the mix of

estuary habitat and prime agricultural ground.”

The numbers of snow geese here have been increasing – the population on Wrangel Island has gone from around 50,000 in the 1970s to over 300,000 now.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife does their regional population surveys of the geese later in the winter. For the March 2023 survey flight, the department counted 91,608 birds from southern British Columbia and down south to northern King County. Adding the season’s hunting count, the department estimated 102,390 snow geese overwintered in the area.

The department added that this is high, but trending down from the peak increase seen in recent years.

Why the overall increase? A combination of conservation efforts, including better hunting management and a recent string of strong hatching seasons in the Arctic have led to population increases – and snow geese have a long lifespan, more than 15 years. “So they’re doing well, but maybe they’re doing too well,” Parmenter said.

The geese can damage estuary habitat, ripping out the bulrush roots and preventing sediment from building up, which is crucial for shoring up the

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Talmon project design still not in alignment

By Bill Reynolds

After just one meeting, Town staff and representatives of KSA Investments are agreed on 80 per cent of the design revisions La Conner’s planning department requires for a proposed three-story apartment/condo project at 306 Center Street.

But reaching consensus on the remaining 20 per cent could literally be a tall order.

At issue is a planned elevator shaft that planning staff finds exceeds height restrictions. The developer, according to Planning Director Michael Davolio and Assistant Planner Ajah Eills, has countered that state building codes do not consider an elevator shaft to be part of a structure.

“The IBC (International Building Code) says an elevator shaft is not part of a building,” Eills acknowledged. “But we believe it’s part of a building.”

Davolio echoed that sentiment.

“We enforce the Town code, not the state code,” Davolio said during the Nov. 21 La Conner Planning Commission meeting at Maple Hall.

Considering the firefighting and public safety equipment available to the fire department, a 30-foot height restriction is imposed on new construction.

Davolio told commissioners that KSA, whose principals are Kate and Brandon Atkinson, has indicated it will explore its legal options on the matter.

However, Davolio noted that the deadline for appellate action has passed regarding a project that has already gone before Town Hearing Examiner David Lowell twice for review. Lowell issued a conditional use permit to construct the multi-family residential building on commercial lots behind the old Chevron/Exxon fuel station where several retail ventures now exist, including The Slider Café.

“They have options,” Davolio said. “They have an approved site plan for moving forward so long as they address the elevator shaft issue.”

Atkinson has said he is building a residential building on the commercial site to help alleviate the town’s housing crunch.

Residents of the adjoining neighborhood, though, have voiced objections to the size and scale of the Talmon Project and lodged an unsuccessful appeal of Lowell’s initial CUP approval.

(continued on page 6)

Final 2023 election results

By Ken Sterns

Skagit County election office staff certified all local elections Tuesday, Nov. 28. John Agen is the new La Conner Schools director for District 2. He defeated Janie Beasley with 53%, 791 votes to 686 votes, 46.5%

Marna Hanneman is La Conner’s mayor-elect, with 281 votes. Annie Taylor is elected to Council Position 1. Mary Wohleb is elected to Position 2.

John Doyle and J.J. Wilbur were elected as Fire District 13 commissioners. Loren Bogart was re-elected commissioner for Sewer District Position 1. None of these elections were contested.

The state will certify all results by Dec. 7, 2023..

Waterfront Café Thanksgiving meal has record turnout, donations

By Bill Reynolds

A few hours after completing the La Conner Turkey Trot, Jaime Stroebel-Reinstra was keeping a brisk pace as a volunteer server at the Waterfront Café’s community Thanksgiving Day meal.

She and others – including her own family members – who pitched in to help with the annual fundraiser for local charities were kept busy throughout a three-hour early afternoon shift last Thursday.

“We had more reservations and more people this year than ever before,” Waterfront Café co-owner Marla Vallee told the Weekly News.

Vallee said 154 people were served and dinner donations stood at \$2,375 at the end of the day. The total is expected to rise.

“We often get a few more donations after Thanksgiving,” noted Vallee, who said proceeds this year benefit

the La Conner Sunrise Food Bank and Northwest Organization for Animal Help (NOAH) in Stanwood.

On Thanksgiving the Waterfront Café serves a free holiday meal with all the fixings, giving diners the option of donating to selected local worthy causes.

The sit-down format is ideal for those with no family in the area, are unable to prepare their own Thanksgiving dinner, or who simply want to enjoy the company of friends, neighbors and the Waterfront Café staff and event volunteers – like Stroebel-Reinstra.

“It was an amazing day,” Stroebel-Reinstra said. “Marla and Guy (Vallee) are so kind and generous. We’re thankful we’re able to give back.”

She and her husband, La Conner Fire Chief/Code Enforcement Officer Aaron Reinstra, know first-hand the positive impact of the Waterfront Café’s Thanksgiving. Nearly a decade

ago it generated funds to help defray medical costs in support of their daughter, Ashlyn, who was then amid a successful battle with a serious health condition.

“It’s been nine years,” Stroebel-Reinstra said, “since they donated to Ashlyn on Thanksgiving.”

While First Street was unusually quiet with most parking spaces empty, there was a festive vibe inside. The kitchen bustled as a steady stream of diners, including Mayor-elect Marna Hanneman, found their way to tables as soon as they were made ready.

“She’s a regular,” Vallee said. “We love Marna.”

Vallee said their Café, like those who seek local elective or appointed office, is committed to public service. “We are blessed,” she said, “to be part of this community.”

The proof is in the checks that will be sent to the food bank and animal shelter.



GIVING THANKSGIVING—Chef Dagmar Chislandi and Grant Lucas prepare Thanksgiving meal with smiles.

—Photo by Bill Reynolds

Skagit home prices high, with supply limited

By Ken Stern

At the end of October, the only four homes for sale within La Conner town limits were two Landed Gentry residences on Maple Avenue and the two BYK Construction properties on High Street, near Whatcom and Douglas streets. The other 11 homes are in Shelter Bay or near it.

Two pending La Conner properties closed in November, a resale of a Landed Gentry home for \$725,000 and an 1890 mansion on Benton Street bought for \$1.25 million, On Snee Oosh Road south of Kukutali Preserve a home sold for \$1.8 million. Four properties in or near Shelter Bay were pending at the end of October; 11 of 15 active listings were in or near Shelter Bay.

The 101 homes that sold and closed in Skagit County in October had a median sales price of \$550,000, led again by the Anacortes market, with \$785,000 the median price of its 21 sold homes.

Sold home prices in Burlington and Sedro Woolley were above the median, at \$612,000 and \$578,000 respectively. More homes, 32, were sold in Mount Vernon, but at a median price of \$527,500.

The seven sold homes in the La Conner area were in Shelter Bay for prices between \$210,000 and \$933,300, with \$460,900 the average price. Larger homes on



MILLION DOLLAR VIEW – Two new homes are for sale on the rock called Snapdragon Hill by locals. This one priced at \$1.375 million has been staged for sale.

–Photo by Nancy Crowell

larger lots brought the highest prices.

Fewer homes sold countywide; the 101 closed sales was down 17% from September and 40% from October 2022.

Inventory is increasing. The supply of homes for sale is 71 days countywide, about the same in the La Conner market and 100 days in Anacortes, highest of any municipalities.

The NWMLS analysis was that “increases in interest rates continue to influence the expected seasonal slow-down during fall and winter months:” At October’s end the median

price of homes sold declined in 11 out of the region’s 26 counties and increased in 14 the regional listing service reported.

Data are from the Kirkland-based Northwest Multiple Listing Service and Don Elliott, managing broker, Coldwell Banker Bain Real Estate. The NWMLS is a member-owned real estate broker organization.

The La Conner area is roughly the La Conner School District’s boundaries.

The median sales price is the point where half of the home sales are above it and half are below it.

If I ran the zoo

By MEL DAMSKI



If you are heading towards Whatcom County or Canada and you are not in a hurry, Chuckanut Drive is a wonderful alternative route.

Chuckanut is a winding road that goes along the Pacific coast and features beautiful forestry and spectacular views of the ocean and islands because at some points, it’s right at the edge of the continent. The southern part of the 20-mile drive features beautiful views of Mt. Baker in the distance and Blanchard Mountain nearby. You are surrounded by beautiful farmland and have the pleasure of seeing many fenced in farm animals and enormous flocks of birds.

As you get closer to the coastline, the road becomes much narrower because the mountains and foothills to the east slope right down to the road you are on. When Chuckanut was first created in October 1915, dynamite was used to break through the rocky slope of the foothills. You can witness how difficult this must have been when you drive alongside the rocky wall on your right.

In 1910 construction began using convicts from the Walla Walla Penitentiary who were put to work on the road while being monitored by armed guards. The convicts were not skilled at road

construction and the road was hard to build as it required heavy rock work. Parts of the roadbed had to be blasted out of the cliffs overlooking the water. Still the convicts were able to complete more than five miles of roadway along its southern end in Skagit County.

A ceremony was held Oct. 23, 1915 to celebrate completion and in 1921 Chuckanut was designated a State Scenic Byway.

Chuckanut Drive is the site for many moving events, involving groups of bicyclers, motorcyclers, and joggers. Because it is surrounded on many parts by very big trees, there are sometimes slowdowns after large tree branches fall down and block the road. This time of year there are many traffic halts until crews arrive to pick up timber.

If you are in a hurry to get to Whatcom or Canada, you are better off taking the I-5 freeway. But if time is on your side, sit back and enjoy a beautiful ride up Chuckanut Drive. And if you just want a peaceful getaway, head up to Larrabee State Park where you can launch your boat or your kayak or spend the night in your RV or just sit at the edge of the continent and watch the tide roll in as you look out at the islands in the bay.

Staff are also ‘no’ on in-house short-term rentals

By Bill Reynolds

Mingling pays off in La Conner. The proof is in the long-term results from an October forum on short-term rentals.

Residential input on short-term rentals at the Civic Garden Club building – referred as “a mingle,” by Town officials – produced much-anticipated planning department recommendations.

The staff report was well received at the Nov. 21 Town Planning Commission hybrid session at Maple Hall by community members concerned that the green light for inclusion in town neighborhoods could be given.

That possibility appears highly unlikely now, based on staff analysis by Planning Director Michael Davolio and Assistant Planner Ajah Eills.

“After fully considering the

arguments on all sides of this issue,” Davolio and Eills said in a memorandum issued prior to the planning meeting, “we recommend that little change be made in our current regulations. This means that short-term rentals would continue to be prohibited in the Town’s residential zone, with the continuing exception for bed-and-breakfasts.

“Short-term rentals,” they added, “would continue to be permitted – with better definition – in the commercial zone.”

Davolio and Eills noted that current legally initiated short-term rentals in residential areas would be deemed as grand-

fathered uses and allowed to continue.

“Based on what we heard from the mingle, we looked at the issue and heard what the public had to say and what you (commissioners) had to say,” Davolio told commissioners, explaining the staff’s decision to maintain the status quo in principle.

The mingling, said Mayor-elect Marna Hanneman, provided added perspectives to the year-long debate over short-term rentals.

“We might just do it with our larger issues,” she said, “to make sure we’re listening to the community.”

Staff will continue to review definitions governing short-term rentals to ensure consistency with any code revisions proposed in the future.

“We’ll be looking at definitions and other sections (of the municipal code) and bring back something more substantive,” Davolio said.

He and Eills have endeavored on the short-term rentals matter to equally weigh neighborhood integrity and economic interests, he said.

“Throughout the discussion of this topic,” the memo stated, “the staff has encouraged a balance between protecting the quality of

life in residential neighborhoods and enabling the stability of local businesses in La Conner’s tourism-based economy.”

“It’s a moral issue,” Center Street resident William Smith has frequently stressed.

His view, shared by others, is reflected in the planning staff’s recommendations.

“Short-term rentals are prohibited in the residential zone,” Davolio assured. “We’re not proposing to change that. What we want to do is change some language for clarity on short-term rentals allowed in the commercial zone.

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Leadership Skagit class takes notes during annual Swinomish conference

By Bill Reynolds

True leaders are found at the bottom rather than top of the totem pole.

That lesson, steeped in the ethic of servant leadership, was repeatedly stressed during a nine-hour conference for the 2023 Leadership Skagit hosted by the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community Nov. 17.

The group made its annual visit to Swinomish Reservation, where they were greeted by past and present tribal leaders, a series of heritage speakers, the tribe's canoe family and Swinomish Archives Department staff.

"I always look forward to this conference," noted Skagit County Assessor Danny Hagen, a 2018 Leadership Skagit graduate and former Shelter Bay resident.

Hagen and fellow Leadership Skagit alumnus Janie Beasley of Swinomish facilitated the busy agenda. Included were tours of the Swinomish Smokehouse and cedar hat pavilions at Swedebs Park and a traditional salmon luncheon prepared by Cathi Bassford, Gail Cayou, Eric Day and Lenee Schuyler.

The program began with remarks by former Swinomish Tribal Senate Chair Brian Cladoosby, present Chair Steve Edwards and Swinomish tribal member Hillary Edwards, an attorney with the Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde in Oregon.

Cladoosby, who served two terms as lead officer of the National Congress of American Indians – during which he forged an alliance and friendship with President Barack Obama – introduced the time-honored merits of servant leadership.

"I was told by our elders that the most important figure on a totem pole is the one at the

bottom," Cladoosby said. "That's because the figures at the bottom are the ones that hold everyone else up."

Cladoosby shared with the class the often painful histories of Native American tribes, including Swinomish, which in 1855 ceded the bulk of its lands to the federal government in exchange for the reservation here as well as guarantees that traditional ways of life would be protected.

The Grant administration enforced what Cladoosby termed an illegal executive order that removed March Point from Swinomish Reservation in 1873, just 18 years after regional tribal leaders signed the treaty at Mukilteo with Washington territorial officials.

Cladoosby also lamented the period of residential boarding schools, when tribal children were forcibly removed from their homes, further worsening a sense of generational trauma.

Cladoosby said he vowed to be forward thinking as a leader, however, opting for pursuit of health, educational and economic development policies designed to purge historic trauma and improve the standard of living at Swinomish. That approach has allowed Swinomish to grow from a handful of paid staff in the 1960s to more than 1,000 employees today.

"We're a great contributor to the Skagit County economy," he noted.

In the '60s, said Cladoosby, it was rare for Swinomish youth to attend college. Now, he said, scholarship programs have been developed that make undergraduate studies and graduate school well within reach for Swinomish students.

Hillary Edwards, daughter of chairman Edwards, provided the class a prime example.

After graduating from La Conner High School, she earned a bachelor's degree in business from Seattle University and completed law school at Arizona State University.

"I want to help inspire our tribal youth to do what their hearts desire," she said. "I grew up not knowing a Native American attorney. Now we have a female tribal general manager."

Soft-spoken and modest, Edwards recounted how she became goal-oriented at a young age.

"I decided," she recalled, "that I didn't want to be at the table. I wanted to bring something to the table."

Her chosen path wasn't easy.

"Law school was hard," she conceded. "There were many times when I missed my community and its cultural events and being with my family."

Her father has served on the tribal senate since 2004. He alluded to his collaborative leadership style to address current issues related to public health, education, environmental protection and the economy.

"I sit down with other governments, as Brian did, to figure out how to go ahead," he said.

Edwards said he was taught early in his tribal service to take a long view and "look out for seven generations."

Both he and Cladoosby advised the group to trust those who are in their charge.

"You want the right people for the right jobs and then trust their work," Edwards said.

"My philosophy as a leader," added Cladoosby, "is to surround myself with people smarter than myself. Everybody has their own area of expertise and there's always more than enough credit to go around."

School board in thankful mood at November meeting

By Bill Reynolds

The holiday has passed, but La Conner Schools officials still had much to be thankful for Monday night.

Several awards presentations marked the 90-minute school district's board meeting, including recognition of middle school teacher Madison Huscher, the 2023-2024 Northwest Educational Services District Teacher of the Year; high school volleyball players and coaches for their league and bi-district championships; music teacher McKenzie Clark and students Hayden Bill and Sammy Williams on their San Juan Music Educators Association Honor Band participation; and board members themselves for their selection as the 2023 Washington State School Directors Association School Board of the Year.

The board announced the district has received generous donations from the La Conner Arts and Rick Epting foundations for purchases of music and pottery equipment.

The foundations combined to make possible the acquisition of three ukulele storage racks, two alto xylophones and a soprano xylophone valued at just under \$2,000.

The Epting Foundation has contributed an additional \$1,000 toward a pottery wheel for the high school arts program. It will be formally received in December.

Huscher was tabbed for the elite regional honor earlier this year based in large measure on her ability to effectively present Mastery-Based Learning material in the classroom and taking on a wide range of extra-curricular assignments, including coaching high school soccer and middle school rock climbing.

The embrace of Mastery-Based Learning, which drew a visit this fall by State Sen. Lisa Zellman, one of Olympia's leading advocates of public education, was among key factors in the choice of the La Conner district's governing panel as the state's school board of the year for small school systems.

Larry Francois, superintendent of the Northwest Educational Services District, lauded the five board members and presented Huscher with an engraved memento marking her selection.

"It's unusual," Francois said, "for a teacher as young as Maddie to rise to the level of regional teacher of the year."

"She's the type of teacher I wish I would've had," he added. "She's the type of teacher I'd want my children to have. And she's the type of teacher I'd want my grandchildren to have."

Francois read testimonials from parents and Huscher's faculty colleagues citing her willingness to collaborate with peers, ability to develop innovative, inclusive and engaging lessons and penchant for positive communication.

Moments later, Clark introduced and praised Williams, a trumpeter and Bill, who plays tenor saxophone. They joined top music students in the four-county (Skagit, Whatcom, San Juan and Island) region to rehearse and perform as part of the elite honor band.

First-year high school volleyball coach Pam Keller, assistant coach Kamea Luna and players were saluted for playing in the state tournament.

"Congratulations to you on your first year of coaching," President Susie Deyo said to Keller, "and you're doing a wonderful job. When we go to our

(continued on page 6)

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Time to celebrate holidays with lights, music, boats and Santa

By Ken Stern

Santa is coming to town early this long holiday shopping season. He makes his first appearance today, Wednesday, Nov. 29, at the **La Conner Swinomish Library** to read stories to children from 4:30-5:30 p.m.

On Saturday, Dec. 2 he is at the **La Conner Rotary Club's Pancake Breakfast** at Maple Hall, 8-11 a.m. After a breakfast that includes scrambled eggs and sausage, Santa is waiting on stage for dog friendly photo taking. Cost: \$10, adults, \$5 kids; free, under five.

Your wallet will be needed as you browse and buy from your neighbors selling their wares at the **La Conner Kiwanis and La Conner United sponsored Craft Fair**, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. on the first and second floors of Maple Hall.

Santa returns at the other end of First Street, probably on a 1941 white fire truck, for the annual **Christmas tree lighting in Gilkey Square**. Folks will gather at 5 p.m. Santa shows around 5:30 p.m. Poof! He makes the tree's lights come on and then stays and takes kids on his lap to make sure he has their wish list right.

There are tiny Christmas trees Friday, Dec. 1 at the **La Conner Swinomish Library's annual Tiny Tree Auction**, 6:30-8:30 p.m. View them now and come back to bid, mingle and munch on refreshments and then buy and take one home.

Lights, action, music

"Elf the Musical" opens Thursday, Nov. 30 and plays at the **Anacortes Community Theater** through Dec. 16. This family friendly show has a cast of over 20 to tell the story of Buddy, a young orphan who mistakenly crawls into Santa's bag of gifts and is transported to the North Pole. The would-be elf is raised, unaware that he is actually a human until his enormous size and poor toy-making

abilities cause him to face the truth. Tickets and times: actheatre.com.

"**Seussical the Musical**" opens Dec. 1 at the **Lincoln Theatre** in Mount Vernon. It is a whimsical romp through some of the classic Dr. Seuss stories from our youth. With heart, joy and a little bit of holiday cheer, this delightful musical features a cast of over 40. Based on the works of Dr. Seuss, it is fun for the whole family.. Shows are weekends through Dec. 16 with Dec. 14 a "Pay What You Want" performance. This is a NITE production. Schedule and tickets: lincolnthreatre.org.

The **Shelter Bay Chorus' annual holiday concerts** are Dec. 8, 7 p.m. and 2 p.m. Dec. 9 in the Shelter Bay community clubhouse, 1000 Shoshone Drive. The program offers "Joy to the World," "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," "Let It Snow," and sacred songs, including "There is Faint Music." Admission is by donation.

The **Skagit Valley Chorale's "Heralding Christmas"** concerts are Dec. 16-17 at McIntyre Hall in Mount Vernon. Special guests include the Madison Elementary School, Mount Vernon's children's choir. Come and sing along. Tickets and times: skagitvalleychorale.org.

Return to Gilkey Square and spread out up and down the Swinomish Channel boardwalk early on Saturday, Dec. 9 for the 6 p.m. **La Conner Lighted Boat Parade**, sponsored by the Swinomish Yacht Club and featuring, as they write, "stunning, hand-decorated yachts and boats illuminating the Salish Sea waters of the Swinomish Channel for a waterborne parade that travels from the La Conner Marina along the La Conner boardwalk and under the Rainbow Bridge to Shelter Bay." Information: swinomishyachtclub.org.



THE HOLIDAYS ARE HERE – Thanksgiving came early this year, but lights started appearing on houses and in yards throughout La Conner weeks ago. The Slider Cafe brightened up Morris Street significantly, turning their multiple Christmas lights and displays on Friday evening after turkey day.

– Photo by Nancy Crowell

Skagit County Historical Museum's holiday fundraiser is this Saturday

By Adam Sowards

Head up the hill in La Conner to the Skagit County Historical Museum on South Fourth Street Saturday, Dec. 2, to celebrate the holidays. The museum is The combined holiday party and annual appeal kickoff is 6-8 p.m.

The museum is decorated for the holidays with trees and lights. Even some of the displays are spruced up for the festivities. A dessert buffet and interactive activities are part of the evening, which is open to the public.

"It's just a time to celebrate and let people see what we're doing at the museum," said Executive Director Jo Wolfe. She looks forward to a fun evening.

The annual appeal is a critical part of the museum's funding. Unrestricted giving goes to the operation budget. "It's the most important part," said Wolfe, "because without that, we can't operate." The highest priority, Wolfe said, is to maintain the staff.

The funds raised pay for the services the public expects, including research appoint-

ments, collection care, exhibits and staff salaries. There is maintenance on six buildings. Keeping the lights on and insurance paid are fundamental needs that the annual appeal helps fund.

Donations can be mailed in, too.

Wolfe looks forward to a "fun evening" no matter how many people show up, although the more is merrier.

There is no need to RSVP. Just head to the Skagit County Historical Museum on South Fourth Street Saturday night.

ONLINE GO TO:
www.laconnerweeklynews.com

Shelter Bay Chorus holiday concert

The Shelter Bay Chorus' annual holiday concerts are Dec. 8, 7 p.m. and 2 p.m. Dec. 9 in the Shelter Bay community clubhouse, 1000 Shoshone Drive. Admission is by donation.

The program offers "Joy to the World," "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," "Let It Snow," and sacred songs, including "There is Faint Music."

Lyle Forde directs. Sally Riggers is the pianist/accompanist.

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Holiday Craft Fair 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
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Maple Hall, 103 Commercial, La Conner, WA
\$10 Adults \$5 Children & under 5 is free
Bring your camera for family photos with Santa!

HERALDING CHRISTMAS 2023

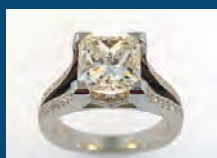
Saturday, December 16th - 7:30 PM
Sunday, December 17th - 2:00 PM

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Winter Traditions Musical Snow Globes by Reed & Barton



Waterford Crystal Whiskey/Scotch Glasses and Decanter

When you give these gifts they will be treasured for generations.



Open till 9pm on Friday, Dec. 1 for the Holiday Art Walk featuring the paintings of local artist Linda Henley. Classical and Holiday favorites live guitar music by Richard Rorex

Hours 10:30am - 5:00pm, Monday - Saturday till Christmas

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106 S 1st St., La Conner
Open at 7 am daily!

POLICE BLOTTER

SKAGIT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sunday, November 19

2:23 p.m. What a drag—A sailboat had dragged anchor and was not on the rocks off Skagit Island. Nobody was in danger and a tow vessel was headed out to assist. No action by sheriff's office. Greater La Conner.

5:58 p.m. Cold dog— Caller had found a shepherd type dog that seemed to be lost and cold. The caller just wanted dispatch to be aware in case anyone called in and needed her information. Caller was keeping the dog until an owner could be found. Morris St., La Conner.

Monday, November 20

2:59 p.m. Hissy fit —Report of an aggressive cat but no detail on how it was aggressive. The call was sent to the town of La Conner for animal control follow-up. State St., La Conner.

Tuesday, November 21

2:19 p.m. Move it—Hotel had a vehicle parked in a way that was partially blocking a hotel parking area. The owner of the car was

located at a local business, and she moved her car right away. First St., La Conner.

Friday, November 24

10:27 a.m. Hunter hunted— Subjects who had been hunting returned to find their vehicle had been prowled. The window had been broken out and a coat was taken from inside. Unknown suspect info. Fir Island Rd., Mount Vernon.

15:17 p.m. Mystery car—Suspicious vehicle parked in the lot of the nursery. A deputy responded and found the vehicle but could not locate anyone around. The vehicle lights were on with keys in the ignition, but nobody was in the area. A deputy walked the area and called out with no response. Vehicle did not return stolen. Best Rd., La Conner.

Saturday, November 25

10:27 a.m. Found wallet—A wallet was found with ID inside. The wallet was collected for safe keeping by the sheriff's office. First St., La Conner.

Grace Hubbard helped birth a sister city



LINKING HANDS ACROSS THE WATERS – In this 1984 town picture of La Conner residents, they have gathered on the west side of the Swinomish Channel dressed in their representative work clothes to share a view of themselves and their community with their unofficial Soviet sister town of O'lga, Kamchatka.

– Photo courtesy of Joan Cross

By Joan Cross

Grace Hubbard's 100th birthday celebrated last week in the Weekly News reminded me of the sister cities project we worked on together in the early 1980s. Grace has an excellent memory, which helped to jog mine. So I'm adding to her story.

I had returned from Peace Corps in the Fiji Islands a decade previously and birthed my first baby. Ronald Reagan was

president, which worried some of us as to the saber rattling with the Soviets. I went to a Peace Corps reunion that was electric with creative ideas, enthusiasm and engagement for common citizens to help shape a more peaceful world. One idea that came out of the gathering was to promote a sister city program between similar cities in USA and USSR. Seattle paired with Tashkent and La Conner paired with O'lga in the far east

Kamchatka Peninsula. It was a fishing village and had an indigenous population of similar size to us.

Grace Hubbard immediately tuned into this people to people approach and together with other likeminded friends we organized a photo album of La Conner, a petition favoring peaceful relations, a song composed by Holly Graham, "Song to a Russian Mother" and letters of welcome and peace from our mayor, Mary Lam, and many La Conner families individually.

Grace was instrumental in this organizing effort because she had organized projects before and I was fortunate enough as a neophyte to learn at her elbow. We sent off the package of photos, letters and petitions hoping but not expecting it would get through the censors.

Even so, we thought, the censors might also be interested. Seven years later we got a response from a teacher and his family! Several subsequent letters and photos were exchanged and we still think of O'lga as our sister city. One never knows whatever efforts are thrown into the Universe, which ones will land.

Longtime La Conner resident Joan Cross started Balance Point, served on town council and continues to support her community.

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