



Greg Whiting an energetic entrepreneur • p 5
Brad Bradford has biked 5,000 miles • p 8

Your Independent Hometown Award-winning Newspaper

LA CONNER WEEKLY NEWS

VOL. 16 • NO. 44

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024

www.laconnerweeklynews.com

\$1.25

More Maple Avenue housing



CONSTRUCTION HAS STARTED - SummitX Contractors brought its equipment to the Snapdragon Flats apartment site at Park Street and Maple Avenue early last week. Their staff predict two months of infrastructure work, putting in sewer, curbs and sidewalks. Building construction is a separate project. Developer C.J. Ebert plans two three-unit apartment buildings built into the north and south sides of the bluff at the north end of Park Street called by many "The Rock." — Photo by Ken Stern

Skagit Ag Summit explores issues, resources and stories for farmers

By Adam Sowards

At the eighth annual Skagit Ag Summit, on Friday, Feb. 9, about 75 people working or interested in agriculture spent the day learning and sharing critical developments in local agriculture topics at the event hosted by WSU Skagit County Extension.

During a panel discussion about economic viability, farmer Jason VanderKooy, co-owner of Harmony Dairy, answered a question about succession planning. It is one of the most difficult things in family farming, said VanderKooy. He recommended hiring experts to help the process. Finally, he said it was essential that everyone understands the plan.

Make VanderKooy's specific advice more general and it captures much of the day's conversations: farming and planning for the future is hard, resources are available to help farmers and making sure the public knows what farmers do is necessary.

The agriculture sector faces many challenges. For example, VanderKooy explained how he does not know the price paid for his farm's milk until 45 days after it is hauled away. In a world market, there is no way to control the prices. Others also noted high costs of labor and living in Western Washington along with concerns about regulatory pressures from Olympia.

Threats to future farming include the

pressure to develop farmland. Sarah Stoner, coordinator of the county's Farmland Legacy Program, outlined those concerns. She spoke about how the program has protected almost 15,000 acres of farmland using conservation easements.

Economic and development pressures are challenging enough, but two panels tackled the ongoing uncertainty about weather and water.

The panel dealing with weather variability shared an unclear outlook. Future climate scenarios anticipate Skagit Valley having many more warm summer nights with an unclear water outlook. There are programs and efforts to develop resiliency, improve irrigation efficiency and build soil health to strengthen farmers' ability to withstand this uncertainty.

Nathan Sakuma of Sakuma Brothers Farms described several challenges the weather presents, including having to protect workers from smoke during the increasingly common bad wildfire seasons. The berries Sakuma Brothers grow struggle with winter weather temperatures that rise too high and then drop, affecting the berries' dormancy. While planning to experiment with new cultivars, they are now managing short-term "triage," said Sakuma.

Water availability and rights hung over many of the discussions, not just the panel devoted to it. Farmers need

to know if they will have sufficient water, but those who have junior water rights face great uncertainty when they are planning what to plant during years like 2024 with its low snowpack.

But farmers are not alone in facing the challenges that come with farming.

Programs discussed during Friday included everything from leadership development and suicide prevention to noxious weed removal to voluntary stewardship. Representatives from county, state and federal offices described opportunities for grant funding or other assistance. Faculty from WSU Extension also shared results of research designed to build more agricultural success.

If farmers do not take advantage of some of these programs, they may close. Using these voluntary, non-regulatory programs is a way to gain benefits on farms and forestall possible increased regulations, according to several speakers.

Creating opportunities for this sharing of information was a key component of the meeting.

We live in a "transformative time," said Owen Peth, a fifth-generation farmer who operates a ranch near Bow. Skagit County is a "desirable place to live and farm," said Peth. It is also a good place to develop commercially. Farmers keenly feel that pressure.

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La Conner High School football future in doubt

By Bill Reynolds

Community members and La Conner Schools officials met Thursday to kick around ideas on how to structure the high school football program given fallen enrollment.

Unless 25 La Conner High students firmly commit by mid-March to playing football this fall, only three viable options remain for the upcoming season – eliminate football, play an eight-man schedule with no post-season opportunity, or combine with the 2A state championship 11-man Anacortes High School program – La Conner secondary principal and director of athletics Christine Tripp said.

"We want a decision made in a month or so," Tripp said at a 90-minute Feb. 8 public forum at the La Conner Middle School Library. "(Football) schedules are being crafted as we're speaking now."

"We've been struggling with numbers in football for several years," Tripp noted. "We're a small 2B school with a football program having small numbers."

In fact, said Tripp, the school is the state's smallest 2B school in terms of student enrollment. Even so, it offers football and boys' soccer in the fall.

Last year, 23 boys turned out for soccer. The football team had 18 players on its roster, with as few as 13 available for some games due to injury or illness.

"The last couple years," said Tripp, "we've had to opt out of a couple games for lack of players."

"In a perfect world," she said, "you want at least 'two times plus' the number of players on the field for a football roster."

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Black Press, owner of Everett Herald, files for bankruptcy

By Ken Stern

Black Press Ltd., owner of the Everett Herald's parent company, Sound Publishing, is seeking a sale to new ownership as part of a corporate restructuring transaction, Black Press announced Jan. 15 and reported in the Lynnwood Times. That day Black Press obtained an Initial Order from the Supreme Court of British Columbia in Vancouver.

The ownership group would include Canadian institutional investors Canso Investment Counsel, Deans Knight Capital Management and Carpenter Media Group, the Times reports.

Carpenter has operations in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia and Kentucky.

Black Press is filing Chapter 15 of Title 11 of the United States Code in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware, it stated in its press release.

Black Press publishes 150 daily and weekly newspapers, magazines and websites in Canada and the United States. Sound Publishing has more than 30 titles and associated websites in the Puget Sound region.

The Everett Herald is Black Press Media's largest Washington state publication with a circulation between 21,000 to 24,000.

James, John win seats in Swinomish Tribal Senate election

By Bill Reynolds

After having survived last month's primary by a single vote, Bruce James, Jr. emerged from the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community general election on Saturday with a comfortable victory for a five-year Senate term outpolling Myrtle Rivas 167-124.

Rivas had led a three-candidate field with 97 votes in a low turnout bad weather day Jan. 20 primary election. James followed with 84. Three-term incumbent Brian Wilbur, had 83 votes and was eliminated by a lone ballot.

Prior to the primary, James told the Swinomish Qyuuqs publica-

tion that his "main goals are to work hard to represent the voices of our members, update our current enrollment policies and look for funding to provide additional help for our children and elders." James has served on Swinomish committees addressing fisheries, housing and gaming.

In the other race, Rodney John unseated incumbent Eric Day by a 175-111 margin.

Those numbers reflected the trend set in the primary, during which John garnered 103 votes to 88 for Day. Third place candidate James Bobb received 69 votes.

John, who had narrowly missed advancing to the 2020 general

election, ran on a robust campaign platform highlighting economic development, elder service, support for single parents and workforce opportunities.

"We have a great foundation," John told Qyuuqs, "and need to continue to grow and improve what we have for a better quality of life for our community."

The 11 member Senate is the governing body of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community. The senators will be sworn in March 5.

Chairman Steve Edwards thanked all Tribal members who showed up to cast their vote. "We had a voter turnout of 42%," Edwards said in a Tribe press

release. He thanked "each of the candidates for their interest in serving and their hard work campaigning." Edwards thanked outgoing Senators Brian Wilbur and Eric Day for their service to the Tribe.

The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community is a federally recognized Indian Tribe with more than 1,000 members. Swinomish is a legal successor to aboriginal bands that signed the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott. Its reservation is located 65 miles North of Seattle, Washington on Fidalgo Island.

Seats held by Alana Quintasket and Sophie Bailey are up for election in 2025.

Holiday Closures

Presidents' Day, Monday, Feb. 19

Banks: Closed

Buses: Regular service

Library: Closed

Post Office: Closed

Schools: Closed

Town Hall: Closed

County, state, federal government: Closed

Trash Pick Up: Yes

Honoring our highest hopes

From the editor—

You got mail. Or, maybe not

This modern world. It works against us humans, as individuals, families and communities and in people's efforts to get along together and build a common place. The norms of living, of doing business, are you aware of how often they work against you?

The Weekly News is handicapped in publishing and distributing each issue to you by this modern world.

As subscribers, you are customers. The Weekly News' responsibility is to deliver excellent customer service. Probably the most frequent call to the office is, "Where is my paper? Why wasn't it delivered on time – or at all?"

This year a handful of subscribers have made that call. Two, the same week, were at addresses near each other, on Pleasant Ridge. I gave my usual answer: If your issue had your mailing label and gets to the La Conner post office, it is the post office's responsibility to bring it to you.

Turns out, the Seattle post office is in the equation. Mail not delivered by La Conner postal staff goes to Seattle then Mount Vernon or Anacortes or each local post office, then to your home. In the old days local mail stayed local. In the name of efficiencies, critical mass aggregation and cost savings, La Conner first-class mail now first goes to Seattle.

But what saves the post office money is not good for the local community, the Weekly News or democracy when a Wednesday paper is delivered the following Wednesday, seven days later. Old news is old news. Promoted events, including paid ads, are not effective. Merchants are more upset than readers when their Presidents Day promotion is seen after the sale is over.

The nation's – the culture's – priorities have changed, run over by the relentless drive to make more money faster. The biggest corporations, elbowing their way to first in line, pressure politicians to rig the game in their favor. For decades federal communications regulations have tilted toward mega corporations.

Not so when President George Washington passed the Postal Act of 1792 establishing the Postal Service. "The act ensured newspapers could be sent at low mail rates, which facilitated a free press across the new states," it states on the National Constitution Center's website.

Congress created second-class postage to favor newspapers so common people – even if they were predominantly white men – could more readily obtain news of the day.

The white postal trucks you see on the road Sundays? They are contracted by Amazon, delivering its packages to customers. That is an agreement reached by rule makers, just as raising periodical rates the last 50 years is a conscious decision by powerful people.

Now, in an age of instantaneous information, having the delivery of the local newspaper slowed down because of benign neglect by a government system atrophied and absent of a purpose of creating an informed citizenry is to hear more nails hammered into coffins carrying the death of small, vibrant communities.

Keep local news local. But news not delivered in a timely fashion, is not very valuable. A newspaper's readers rightly seek fresh news, a commodity that quickly goes stale. Newspapers arriving days after the edition date may over time not be read. Subscriptions may not be renewed. Advertisers may take their business elsewhere, for the promise of a fair exchange, of getting ads in front of the community, is broken.

Democracy is about making decisions. It is about people gathering information to make informed choices – and not only about candidates on election day. Democracy is not about convenience, about Sunday delivery in a postal truck. If people desire and are satisfied with that, with your tax dollars at work so more stuff can be acquired more quickly, then our ever more commodified society will tilt toward what we can afford. And a newspaper arriving days late in the mail is a very disposable item.

And that freedom of the press, government watchdog, eyes of the people, the people's mouthpiece? Maybe newspapers are a quaint, old, 18th century artifact, like powdered wigs, breeches and knee-high stockings, all out of fashion.

Two good questions: Who is your government serving? Who is it delivering for?

– Ken Stern

Correction

Read Mel Damski's entire Feb. 7 column on the La Conner Weekly News website, www.laconnerweeklynews.com. The editor regrets that all the zookeeper's words were not in last week's issue.

Early training of health-care pros

Too many of us lie awake worrying about what will happen if someone in our family gets seriously ill. Will I be able to find affordable health care? Do we have enough nurses and doctors in our rural, community hospitals?

That's why, as your legislator and vice chair of the House Education Committee, I'm committed to tackling our health care workforce on the front end – with our students.

This legislative session, I introduced House Bill 2236 which expands and strengthens career and technical education in our high schools by creating the Core Plus Allied Health Care program.

Today's Core Plus programs provide hands-on learning and transferrable skills that lead to careers in aerospace, construction and maritime. Just last year, I attended a Core Plus event that celebrated more than 1,000 high school graduates hired for Boeing manufacturing positions.

With House Bill 2236, now is the time to expand this program to our health care industry. Now is the time to encourage a new generation of young adults excited to serve in critical health care roles. Now is the time to develop a robust health care workforce that supports our rural commu-



nities.

Core Plus Allied Health Care is a huge leap towards preparing our students for high-demand, meaningful jobs that serve our community. The strength of this program is the partnership with employers and school districts that focus on work-based learning and industry-validated curriculum.

With passage of this bill, the Core Plus Allied Health Care program will initially focus on long-term care, medical assistance/certified nursing assistance and physical therapy/sports medicine.

The need for trained professionals in these fields is real. According to the Washington Health Workforce Council, nursing assistants, physical therapists and home care aides are among the most needed positions in assisted living, skilled nursing facilities. Our state does not have enough workers to care for our oldest res-

idents. Addressing this problem through the Core Plus program makes a lot of sense.

As of writing this, House Bill 2236 is awaiting a vote in the House of Representatives. I expect this to happen in the next few days – and I am proud to have sponsored this bill.

With Core Plus Allied Health Care, I'm making sure that you have the peace of mind that comes from knowing that your family has access to quality health care.

Thank you for the opportunity to continue my life-long dedication to public service. As a veteran having attended the U.S. Naval Academy, graduated from Naval Nuclear Power School, trained at a naval nuclear reactor plant and served in the Middle East and Southeast Asia as a public affairs officer, I am honored to serve you here in the Washington State Legislature.

LETTERS

Where is our storm sewer?

When we bought our home in La Conner in January of 2019, we were told that our block, the only block on Washington Street where there is no storm sewer, was in "Phase 2" of the project to provide storm drainage throughout the town. Shortly after we moved in, members of the town council told us that there was no money at present for such improvements. We were asked to be patient.

Our lot periodically floods and such phenomena as atmospheric rivers leave behind a pond of 6-8 inches in depth, which can remain flooded for several weeks and which occasionally requires our public works department to install "ROAD FLOODED" signage. When this happens, I don my calf-high muck boots and install a sign that reads, "Lake La Conner, No Swimming or Fishing." My neighbors understand this to be a joke.

Last year, while the sign was up, the mayor assured me that money for the storm sewer on our block was in the 2023 town budget and that work installing

it should take place during the summer months. This work did not happen.

For five full years now we have paid a monthly sum of \$27.05 for "Storm Drain Services" that do not exist. Imagine my frustration when reading in the La Conner Weekly News that last year's \$971,884 budget surplus was largely "due to profits in the water, storm drainage, sewer and compost programs."

I think it only fair at this point for the Town of La Conner to redistribute parts of its budget surplus to residents who do not receive the services for which they have been charged. If I'm doing the math right, at this point I should expect a check for \$1,623. Alternately, I'd be satisfied if they'd complete Phase 2 of the storm sewer system, as promised.

John S. Farnsworth
La Conner

Muzzall is wrong on progressivism

As he stated last week in his legislative column, Sen Ron Muzzall (R-Oak Harbor) has a problem with progressivism. It appears he does not understand

what progressivism is about and attempts to use it as a whipping boy for our state's (and the nation's) horrific problem with "behavioral health and substance abuse."

That reasoning is as flawed as the Republican Party's suggestion that the Jan. 6 insurrection riot was instigated by the left with the cooperation of "the Feds."

Progressivism is the attempt to level the playing field which is presently geared to reward the wealthy at the cost of the middle class and those further down the economic ladder.

I would suggest to the senator that "behavioral health and substance abuse," homelessness and related issues are more likely caused by a sense of hopelessness and despair due to an economic situation that is stacked against them. Tax breaks for corporations and the wealthy, the trickle down economic mentality since the Reagan administration and the disempowerment of the unions to represent workers have economically and psychologically harmed the majority of Americans and tarnished the American dream.

Jai Boreen
La Conner

Infrastructure need not be brutish: Let a thousand solar panels bloom

By Greg Whiting



One of the least publicized but nevertheless significant obstacles to the new infrastructure required to support development of new energy resources is that this infrastructure can be unsightly.

A few years ago, I was working on a consulting assignment at a well-known university. Management had a strong interest in developing on-campus renewable resources. Funding was easy to acquire. The biggest obstacle to progress was that a politically powerful, well-funded neighborhood association nearby includ-

ed homes that overlooked the campus. Any proposed project that had any possibility of being aesthetically displeasing could be held up for years, or dropped entirely, as a result of legal challenges from just a few neighbors.

In looking into how to address such "viewshed" objections, it became obvious that the problem

isn't that energy infrastructure has to exist. It is that people think energy infrastructure looks "too industrial."

Application of artistic creativity can change even the most brutalist infrastructure from something that people want to hide, to something people want to display. The City of Seattle has long invited local artists to paint murals on downtown transformer boxes, upgrading them from bland green sidewalk bricks to works of public art. Seattle City Light also built its downtown Denny Substation to enclose and conceal what would normally

be exposed transformers and wires. The Denny Substation is a landmark and a destination, not an eyesore. It incorporates public-purpose features like open space, various art displays, a dog walking area and even an energy educational center.

A few years ago, an Icelandic architectural firm created a conceptual design for transmission line towers called the "Land of Giants." The concept drawings are easy to find on the Internet. This work shows how to turn even mundane high-voltage line support structures into art – in this case, metal sculptures of gi-

ant people holding the transmission lines. It doesn't take much to imagine that Skagit County could use the same general idea and build future transmission towers in the valley in the shape of a tulip. Up towards the mountains, they could be built to resemble sasquatch or leaping salmon.

Solar panels don't have to be installed in boring flat row after flat row. Solar panel support structures can be built as "solar trees." In a solar tree, structural supports and solar panels work

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La Conner Weekly News

An adjudicated Skagit County Newspaper. Published every Wednesday in La Conner, WA

Subscriptions

- Skagit County Print & Online: \$60
- Out of County Print & Online: \$75
- Online only: \$60



Member of Washington Newspaper Publishers Association
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Continuing the tradition of weekly publishing in La Conner since 1878

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119 N. Third St., La Conner, WA 98257
USPS 363-550

360-466-3315 • Fax: 360-466-1195

www.laconnerweeklynews.com

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Send change of address to:
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LETTER POLICY

Please write! Letters up to 350 words are welcome as are longer analyses and statements. Write a 450 word guest column. Deadline: 5 p.m. Sunday for next issue. Include your name, address and phone number for verification. Letters are edited for civility clarity and style. Send to: editor@laconnernews.com

OBITUARIES



Carmen Spofford

On Nov. 2, 2023, after a short but fierce battle with cancer, Carmen Spofford died in Anacortes at the age of 79. Carmen was born on June 7, 1944, in the village of Seeshaupt, Germany, to Margarete Horney. Carmen's father was a French POW who disappeared before she was born.

Margarete was an actress and Carmen was raised by her grandparents until the age of 5, when she and her mother moved to the U.S. in search of a better life. They settled in Plattsburgh, New York, where Margarete met and married Leslie Spofford, a piano tuner and record store owner.

Carmen graduated from high school in Plattsburgh and went on to earn a degree in interior design from the Rochester Institute of Technology, launching her career. She helped continually redesign the department store Filene's in Boston for many years, and eventually did the same at the Bon Marché in Seattle.

In 1972, while visiting a friend in La Conner, Carmen met Bruce Wick, a commercial fisherman. Ten years later they began a bi-coastal romance, and 10 years after that they married. In her direct manner she asked him, "When are you going to make an honest girl out of me?" And so he did.

Among Carmen's many passions were modern visual art, music (ranging from opera to jazz), and theater (ranging from Shakespeare to Pinter). Once she moved to Anacortes, she spent time in Seattle every week to take in the many cultural offerings there, but also engaged in the arts in Skagit County. She served as president of the board of directors of the Skagit Symphony for several years.

She was also a gourmet cook, and she and Bruce traveled frequently to Europe, always stopping in Germany to visit her relatives there. She remembered her many friends' birthdays, and called them often, not only to share news but to hear their voices.

Carmen is survived by her loving husband Bruce and several cousins. A celebration of her life will be held this spring. Donations in her memory may be made to the Skagit Symphony or the Museum of Northwest Art.

For every joy that passes, something beautiful remains.

Shirley A. (Schneider) Steinman
Sept. 18, 1948 - Nov. 6, 2023



Shirley Steinman passed away peacefully surrounded by family and friends at her home in Trout Creek, Montana, on Nov. 6, 2023.

Shirley grew up in Stanwood and was a graduate of Stanwood High School. Some of the other places Shirley called home were La Conner, Mount Vernon and Trout Creek, Montana. Before retiring and moving to Montana, Shirley worked for many years as the Office Manager at Northrup King Seed Co. in Skagit County and as Manager of the Mount Vernon RV Park.

Shirley loved to fish, hunt, cook and garden but socializing was her favorite. Shirley loved all the friends she made throughout her life. She also cherished and loved her family. Shirley was the youngest and had three siblings, a sister and two brothers. She was a wife, mother, stepmother, mother

in-law, grandmother, great grandmother, sister, sister-in-law, daughter-in-law, aunt and a really loved friend to many.

Shirley is missed immensely by her family, friends and favorite four-legged kid, Josie. You can be sure Shirley and Larry are together again! Make sure you smile each day while thinking of your memories with Shirley.

A Celebration of Life will be held early summer in Trout Creek, Montana.

Memorial donations can be made to the Cancer Society or your favorite animal shelter.

Ingeborg Siller

Ingeborg Siller: Born Oct 15, 1931, made her transition to the afterlife Jan. 9, 2024. What a full life this 92-year-old woman had!

She survived World War II as a refugee and as a Near Death Experiencer (NDEer) when she died at the hands of a U.S. soldier, crossed over to the other side, and came back to live the rest of her life as an immigrant to the U.S., mom to two girls and their mates, Oma to three grandkids and their partners, and three great-grandchildren.

She was a chemist in Germany, ran a deli, managed health food stores, volunteered for a local conservation district, Padilla Bay Reserve, La Conner Library, Skagit County Historical Museum, La Conner Senior Center.

Near the end of her long life, her world got a bit smaller, but she still enjoyed nature from her window: fed the birds daily, and



tended to her porch garden. The day before her transition, she squeezed my hand every time I mentioned her loved ones, and adventures from her lifetime.

Now Inge is beaming her love from across the veil. Auf Wiedersehen, Inge! which literally translates to "until our reunion; that we may see each other again."

I will celebrate her life by dancing at the Summer La Conner Live concerts. It was our Sunday daughter and mom date. With love, Elke Macartney

Edward Jones

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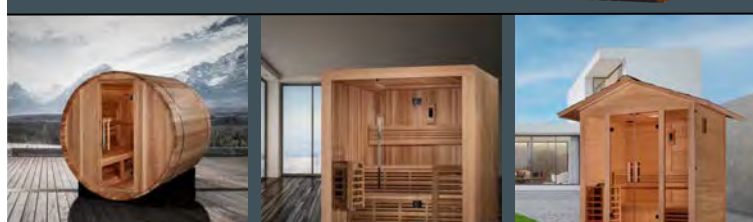
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Town sets forum Feb. 20 to discuss First St. parking

By Bill Reynolds

While it's been a hot topic in La Conner for decades, the last word on parking likely won't be spoken here anytime soon.

And the always lively local conversation continues 6 p.m. Feb. 20 at the Civic Garden Club on South Second Street.

The second in a series of in-person "community mingles" will address all angles of downtown parking, from traffic safety and pedestrian access to signage and revenue opportunities.

"We're wanting to solicit input on what if any changes and improvements the public wants to see regarding parking," Assistant Planner Ajah Eills told the Weekly News. "We need a lot of different viewpoints to understand all aspects of the topic."

The planning staff have crafted a format that encourages what she terms "conversations between neighbors."

"Everything will be on the table," Davolio assured planning commissioners last month. "We take these discussions very seriously."

Eills said the format will be similar to the October forum on short-term rentals policy with residents grouped at tables.

"This worked before," noted Eills. "The idea is, with the small tables, that it can be more conversational."

Downtown parking is just one component part of a potential long-range re-design of First

Street. One option is to open First Street to traffic south to Caledonia Street. That would require using the public right-of-way which the former Moore-Clark warehouse extends onto.

Some have called for converting South First Street to one-way traffic and limiting parking to just one side.

Eills said there are concerns over emergency vehicles having to shoehorn their way between vehicles parked on both sides of the street.

"The fire department responds to two calls per month on South First Street," she said. "That's 24 calls per year."

Using golf carts to shuttle people between downtown and parking lots below Town Hall and at the Port of Skagit's La Conner Marina has been raised. Updating parking-related signage is also an issue.

Eills noted that there are now more than three dozen parking signs posted in town.

Paid parking on First Street has also garnered attention with town council hearing from representative of a mobile parking payment app company.

Longtime resident Linda Talman, once a planning commissioner, is not convinced parking is the town's most pressing issue. She has pressed for greater pedestrian and non-motorized transportation opportunities instead.

Eills anticipates proposals shared at the forum will reflect the town's character.

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"Since 1913"

Braves rout Friday Harbor boys, 73-57

By Bill Reynolds

Call them the Comeback Kids. The La Conner Braves mounted two furious second half rallies in NW2B/1B boy's hoops action last week, the second bringing a convincing 73-57 win at Friday Harbor Feb. 9 that secured top seeding at the Bi-District Tournament.

La Conner opened bi-district play at home Monday night opposite Northwest Christian of Lacey. They're at Coupeville tonight (Wednesday) opposite either the host Wolves or Auburn Adventist.

The four-team, double elimination Bi-District format will send two teams to the state 2B tournament.

La Conner (14-6) significantly improved its odds of advancing to the state bracket with its Friday comeback at Friday Harbor. A loss there by the Braves would have given Coupeville the NW-2B/1B title outright and with it

the bi-district's top seed.

Instead, La Conner and Coupeville will share the NW-2B/1B crown with identical 7-1 conference marks and a split in their two-game season series. The Braves, by virtue of a previously agreed upon tiebreaker formula, were awarded the top seed and a first round home date.

Everything hinged on the second half at Friday Harbor, where La Conner trailed by double digits (37-26) at the break.

After falling behind 39-26 early in the third quarter, the Braves turned the game around with a suffocating full-court press that rattled a Friday Harbor team that had dominated the first half with pinpoint passing and clutch perimeter shooting.

La Conner's 47-20 second half run began with a bucket by Brayden Pedroza off a feed from Tyler Cicotte. Ivory Damien fol-

(continued on page 6)

La Conner girls earn top bi-district seed

By Bill Reynolds

A pair of double-digit wins over league rivals last week clinched a No. 1 bi-district tournament seed for the La Conner High School girls' basketball team.

La Conner (14-7 overall; 7-1 in league) closed out the regular season, defeating Coupeville 46-30 Feb. 6 at Landy James Gym and winning 41-29 at Friday Harbor on Saturday.

With the wins, the Lady Braves secured the top seed to the bi-district tournament, which opened last night at home opposite Northwest Christian of Lacey.

La Conner moves on to the second round Thursday in Coupeville against either Auburn Adventist or Friday Harbor.

The winners of Tuesday's

La Conner-NWC and Auburn Adventist-Friday Harbor matchups tip off Feb. 15 at 7 p.m. Tuesday night's losers meet at 5:15 p.m.

The four teams are vying for two berths to the regional round of the state tourney.

La Conner coach Joe Harper anticipated facing Friday Harbor in Coupeville.

"Chances are pretty good that we'll see Friday Harbor again on Thursday," Harper told the Weekly News. "Beating a team three times in a year is very tough and they will be ready."

Should the teams be paired, La Conner fans can hope for a replay of last Friday's game when the Lady Braves applied full-court pressure throughout that forced multiple turnovers and led to repeated scores in transition.

La Conner guards Shaniquah

Casey and Maeve McCormick were prime beneficiaries of Friday Harbor miscues.

Casey led all scorers with a game-high 17 points. McCormick finished with 15 for the victors.

Casey and McCormick combined for the first 10 points as the visitors jumped out to a 12-3 first quarter lead and never looked back.

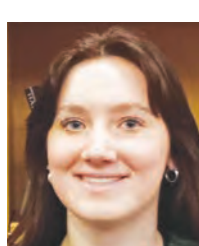
Casey recorded the contest's first basket with a nifty floater in the paint. McCormick made it 4-0 on a drive to the iron.

After Friday Harbor's Vera Schoultz answered with a short jumper, McCormick scored in transition and with a perimeter trey and Casey meshed a free throw for a quick 10-2 La Conner advantage.

(continued on page 6)

Kiwanis Club names January students of the month

Addison Wiga is January's high school student for the Kiwanis Club of La Conner. Her parents are Todd and Katie Wigal. Addison is a junior at La Conner High School. She



Addison Wiga

was on the school volleyball team and looks forward to playing each year. She is attending the Northwest Career and Technical Academy, taking applied medical science. Outside of school she enjoys doing things with family and friends. After graduation, Addison would like to attend college and pursue a career in the medical field.

Shawntay Perry is the middle

school student of the month.

Her parent is Autumn Rose Taylor. Shawntay is in eighth grade. She played on the soccer team. Her

favorite subjects are math, social studies and science. Outside of school she likes reading, hiking and cooking, as well as hanging out with friends. Shawntay volunteers to help with tribal dinners when she can. After graduation she would like a career in real estate.

Kao

Nguyen is the January elementary school student. Kao's parent is Lori Nguyen. He is in fifth grade. Kao enjoys school, especially music, since he gets to play instruments. Outside of school he is taking Tae Kwon Do and has achieved his black belt. He would like a future in gaming or animation.

Source: Kiwanis Club of La Conner



Shawntay Perry



Kao Nguyen

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Energetic entrepreneur Greg Whiting

By Bill Reynolds

Greg Whiting has rarely – if ever – lacked for energy. Consider that in a robust and wide-ranging professional life Whiting has variously researched, analyzed, helped develop and written about energy systems designed to both improve quality of life and protect the environment. And now, with his partner Jenelle Whitton as co-proprietor of Raven's Cup Coffee and Art Gallery on First Street, he markets beverages that, while served in a laid-back Pacific Northwest setting, are the fuel that keeps folks going through their day. On the art side, the walls at Raven's Cup project a vibrancy of their own – adorned with bright, colorful gift items from throughout the region and around the world. Native American-themed art is much in evidence, given tribal lore that it was the raven who brought the sun. "And after the raven brings the sun," Whiting notes with his trademark wry grin, "mankind asks where's the coffee?" Whiting's cup nearly always runneth over. Born in Kimberley, B.C., where his American parents were working – his mom was a teacher and his dad a college professor also engaged in the mining industry – Whiting has lived all over the U.S. and Canada, primarily while employed in the energy and utility sectors. He graduated high school in Golden, Colorado and studied as an undergraduate

at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, where he was a columnist for the campus newspaper, a role he has since reprised with the Weekly News. He then attended graduate school at the University of Tennessee and while working on his degree scored an internship at the famed Oak Ridge National Laboratory. That led to his return to Edmonton for a position with a mining company subsidiary. Whiting was involved in several key projects, including development of the rechargeable lithium-ion battery. His unique skill set would also land him positions with major utility providers Florida P&L and TXU Energy. His resume includes a stop at Seattle City Light, where Whiting wrote detailed white papers and worked on strategies encouraging customers to embrace new technologies to mo re efficiently use energy and reduce consumption during peak periods. Various assignments delved into solar power and electric transportation, clean energy options of great interest to La Conner Schools and the Town of La Conner. Whiting subsequently switched gears and in a move that would prove beneficial to his eventual launch of Raven's Cup enrolled at the University of Denver for another advanced degree, this time in marketing. Stints followed at Stanley Tools in Dallas and in advanced energy systems technology development in Hawaii, then posts at City Light and the Port of Seattle.

At the port, Whiting served as Sea-Tac International Airport's utility manager. "The airport," said Whiting, who was responsible for everything utility-related, including cable television, "is its own little city." The airport's cable component required much attention. "People there," Whiting quipped, "can live without water longer than they can live without the Seahawks." On a more serious note, Whiting said "the port commission had a robust interest in the decarbonization of the airport." Weary of traffic congestion and other drawbacks of urban life, Whiting and Whitton looked to escape the city and in time started the energy consulting company that is the parent firm of Raven's Cup. They decided upon La Conner as their new home after scouting numerous locales around Puget Sound, Port Townsend among them. That choice seemed pre-ordained. The Skagit Valley Clean Energy Cooperative is here, after all. It wasn't long after his arrival that Whiting was contacted by SVCEC co-founder Terry Nelson, long an advocate of solar power. Today Whiting shares his expertise through SVCEC, in his Weekly News column and with customers over coffee at Raven's Cup, where he has created his own art through computer technology. "I'm interested in the concept of using electronic tools to create art," said Whiting. He transforms sketch work and black-and-white photography



COFFEE ONLY STARTS AN ENERGETIC DAY – Greg Whiting and Jenelle Whitton opened Raven's Cup Coffee and Art Gallery about a year ago. They open again next week with a remodeled kitchen – and more – that will increase their offerings to customers. — Photo by Bill Reynolds

into colorful abstract images. "We're not trying to compete with serious artists," Whiting said. "We just want to create something people can enjoy." He creates famous historical figures drinking coffee with a raven. Customer favorites feature likenesses of Vincent Van Gogh and, appropriately enough, writer Edgar Allan Poe, best known for his poem "The Raven." Raven's Cup has temporarily closed while undergoing interior remodeling. Whitton has created a balsawood model showing the shop's revamped kitchen. They anticipate reopening ahead of the Daffodil Festival. In the meantime, Whiting and Whitton have put their energies into a new menu item – a registered and trademarked Canadian latte flavored with maple syrup. Whiting knows first-hand, after all, that it's innovation that recharges one's batteries.

iDIOM Theatre satire a romp

"The Knight of the Burning Pestle" at Bellingham's Idiom Theater is a "17th century satire full of equal parts chivalry and whimsy in a disorderly, theatrical romp," promotions claim. written by Francis Beaumont and adapted for the iDIOM stage by director, Glenn Hergen-

hahn-Zhao. Summing up: "This rarely performed comedy written in 1607 by a friend of Shakespeare's is a joyride of a play and a love letter to theatrical invention. Perfect for all audiences." It plays Thursdays-Sundays through March 2. Tickets and times: idiomtheater.org.

Poetry reading in Anacortes Feb. 24

The Madrona Poetry Series brings Claudia Castro Luna and J.I. Kleinberg to read Feb.24 at 7 p.m. at Pelican Bay Books in Anacortes, 520 Commercial Avenue. The Erik Christensen Band will play.

Blood drive Feb 23 at high school

Join a community blood drive 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Friday, Feb. 23 at the La Conner High School gym, 404 North Sixth Street. It is a collaboration between local volunteers and Bloodworks Northwest. The blood drive is organized by high school students and the La Conner Kiwanis Club. Donors must be older than

16. Minors must bring parental consent to donate. Snacks and water are included. Questions: Dorothy Downes, dorothydownes8@gmail.com, or Lori Buher, lbuher@lc.k12.wa.us. For information on the benefits of blood donation: massgeneral.org/blood-donor/faq

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By Patricia Aqimuk Paul, Esq., Food Editor

Jeannie's Salad Dressing

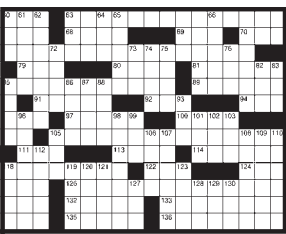
I recently enjoyed Jean Wedin's company over lunch. She began describing her meals. I was all ears as she described this salad dressing. I guesstimated the amount of each ingredient and adjusted for taste. I also made just enough for a small salad for two.

Ingredients

- White balsamic vinegar, 2 teaspoons
- Extra virgin olive oil, 2 teaspoons
- Honey, 2 teaspoons

Preparation

Add all ingredients in a small bowl. Whisk or stir around. Drizzle over a mixed green salad.



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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Complete Events Calendar on laconnerweeklynews.com

NOT TO BE MISSED

Feb. 23: 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
 Community blood drive in the La Conner High School Gymnasium, 404 N. Sixth St., La Conner. Coordinated by Bloodworks Northwest and local volunteers.

Feb. 25, noon. Edison Chicken Parade. Downtown Edison.

Feb. 28: 5-6 p.m.
Free Virtual trip to Italy
 La Conner Swinomish Library, 520 Morris St., La Conner.

Donations requested: Skagit County Historical Museum is seeking donations of vintage, holiday wares, craft supplies, collectibles and unique items for their annual Sale at the School in April. Please contact jlwofe@co.skagit.wa.us or call 360-466-3365 for more details.

LIBRARIES

La Conner Swinomish Library. 520 Morris St., La Conner. 360-466-3352. www.lclib.lib.wa.us. Open 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday.
 • Storytime for Children. 11 a.m. every Friday.
 • Book Club. Meets at 2 p.m. every fourth Wednesday. Info: Richard Wisniewski at wisniew10@gmail.com

Mount Vernon Public Library. 315 Snoqualmie St., Mount

Vernon. 360-336-6209, mountvernonwa.gov.
 • Virtual Reality. Every Saturday, 1-3 p.m. Must be 12 or older.

Anacortes Public Library. 1220 10th St., Anacortes. 360-299-8067, CityofAnacortes.org.

Burlington Public Library. 820 E. Washington Ave., Burlington. 360-755-0760, burlingtonwa.gov/library.
 • Knitting Club. All ages, Wednesdays at 6 p.m.

MUSEUMS

Pacific Northwest Quilt & Fiber Arts Museum. 703 S. Second St., La Conner. 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. qfamuseum.org. 360-466-4288.
 • Current Exhibit: "Birds of a Feather" through March 24.

Skagit County Historical Museum. 360-466-3365 or skagitcounty.net/museum. Hours 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Thursday-Sunday.
 • Exhibit: "More than just a little off the top: barbershop historians."

Museum of Northwest Art. Now through May 12:

- Silva Cascadia: Under the Spell of the Forest At the Seam: The Museum of Northwest Art's Permanent Collection.

FOURTH-ESTATE FANTASY

• My Roots: Honoring the Cultural Identity of Skagit Valley's Under-Resourced Children. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, noon-5 p.m. Sunday and Monday. monamuseum.org, 360-466-4446.

MUSIC

Ukelele Fun & Song Circle. Meets 1-2 p.m. Wednesdays, Burlington Senior Center. For info, email yogaheartspace0@gmail.com.

Shelter Bay Chorus. Meets 4:30-6:30 p.m. every Thursday. Shelter Bay Clubhouse. No auditions required. Questions, call Joan at 360-941-7507.

MEETINGS

La Conner Swinomish Regional Library. Library board of trustees meets at 5 p.m. the third Tuesday of the month in the library, 520 Morris St.

Skagit Cemetery District 1. Regular meetings at 5 p.m. every second Thursday, at Lori Buher's home, 17604 Valentine Road, Mount Vernon.

Skagit Conservation District. 2021 E. College Way No. 203, Mount Vernon. 360-428-4313. Zoom info at skagitcd.org. Board meetings 7:30-9 a.m. every fourth Wednesday.

Rotary Club of La Conner. laconnerrotary.org. Meetings 6-7 p.m. every Monday at Shawn O'Donnell's restaurant. Optional

dinner, 5:30 p.m.

Little Mountain Gamblers. Gamblers Anonymous meets at 6:30 p.m. every Tuesday at Mount Vernon Senior Center, 1401 Cleveland Ave.

Town of La Conner. 204 Douglas St., La Conner. 360-466-3125. Zoom info @Townoflaconner.org/calendar.

SERVICE & VOLUNTEER

Pacific Northwest Quilt & Fiber Arts Museum is looking for volunteers as a museum host or in our gift shop. Six hours per month. Fill out a volunteer application online www.qfamuseum.org or stop by the museum. Open 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday, 703 Second St., or call Jacque Chase at 360-466-4288 ext. 101.

La Conner Sunrise Food Bank. Food distribution from 2:30-5 p.m. every Monday, 602 S. Third St. 360-488-3878. laconnerfoodbank.com.

Swinomish Helping Hands Food Bank. Food distribution from 2-5 p.m. every Thursday. **Non-essentials every first** Thursday. 17444 Sneeh Oosh Road, La Conner. 360-856-2211. helpinghandsfoodbank.org.

Skagit Valley Humane Society. 18841 Kelleher Road, Burlington. 360-757-0445. Find volunteer and donation opportunities online at skagithumane.org.

Super Crossword

- | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|--|--|
| ACROSS | 52 Minecraft and StarCraft, e.g. | 100 Impulsive desire | 9 Lure for insect extermination | 42 — Moines choreography | 77 Higher ground? |
| 1 Not quite first-rate | 55 Riddle, part 3 | 101 Illusionist Geller | 10 The earth as a goddess | 44 Bob of Tahitian skirts | 78 "You wish!" |
| 7 "Patience — virtue" | 60 Brief promos | 102 Like planted seeds | 11 Cut — (dance) | 49 Tahitian skirts | 79 Condé — |
| 10 Car tankful | 61 Triceps' place | 104 Riddle's answer | 12 Pago Pago people | 50 Package delivery co. | 80 User-edited website |
| 13 Collie of TV | 62 Pop's Celine | 113 Enter very quickly | 13 "Meteor" actor Martin | 51 Carpentry material for some cabinets | 81 Rescue squad VIP |
| 19 Cattle farm of the West | 63 See 58-Down | 114 Novelist Caldwell | 14 1972 Billy Wilder comedy film | 52 Chi follower | 82 "— di-dah!" |
| 20 Trumpet blast | 66 Bullfighter | 115 Common gauge for toy trains | 15 Long, involved story | 53 Spicy Spanish pork sausage | 83 False story |
| 22 Singer and actor Frankie | 67 Riddle, part 4 | 116 "Despite that ..." | 16 Shut loudly | 54 Taxonomic subdivisions | 88 Projecting curves on saddles |
| 23 When it's 12:00 p.m. | 70 Put a new front on, as a building | 117 Gets smaller | 17 Actress Skye of "Stranded" | 56 Become lively | 89 By the day |
| 24 Element #3 | 72 Unbroken | 118 "Happy Days" actress Ross | 18 Grammy winner Brian | 57 Cheer yell | 90 Huffington of HuffPost |
| 25 Japanese city that hosted the 1998 Olympics | 73 Recognized | 119 Bunks on ships | 21 "— the breaks!" | 58 With 63-Across, for the time being | 91 So to speak |
| 26 Start of a riddle | 75 With 59-Down, brand of frozen potatoes | 120 Mil. ranker | 27 Former Egypt-Syr. alliance | 59 See 75-Across | 93 Wise-acting |
| 29 Japanese buckwheat noodle | 77 Riddle, part 5 | 121 Gym pad | 28 Texter's "Holy smokes!" | 63 Oven used to bake naan | 94 Thick-skinned critters |
| 30 Dr. Seuss' Sam- — | 81 Oval shape | 122 Hole to receive a lace | 32 "Let me!" | 64 Spiny ant eater | 95 Day, in Chile |
| 31 Amo, — | 84 Dejected | DOWN | 33 Bases-loaded situation | 65 Most unkind | 96 Study guys |
| 32 "Addams Family" cousin | 85 "Who am — judge?" | 1 Bird's crop | 34 Lightweight kitchen utensils | 67 Conservation org. with a panda logo | 97 Abbr. on a bad check |
| 35 Riddle, part 2 | 86 Secret writing | 2 Trellis strip | 36 Peak body | 68 Pooch's yap | 98 End a vacation |
| 43 Faint smell | 87 Postal pieces | 3 "Noelle" star Kendrick | 37 Chicago daily, in brief | 69 Big blue body | 103 Mother-of-pearl |
| 45 Foldout bed | 88 Detectives like TV's | 4 Glasgow natives | 38 Global: Abbr. | 71 Genre of many sitcoms | 104 Surfing need |
| 46 Co-workers of MDs | 89 Karachi's nation: Abbr. | 5 Grandstander | 39 Mark for life | 74 Wide shoe spec | 105 Cake finisher |
| 47 Stalactite site | 91 Very long time periods | 6 Chimpanzee variety | 40 Easter meat | 76 Mining shaft | 106 Holy Week's time |
| 48 Florence's river | 92 End of the riddle | 7 "— have to wait" | 41 Adam's mate | | 107 Eldest of the Brady boys |
| 49 Total amount | 99 Disloyal type | 8 Got married | | | 108 Helper: Abbr. |
| 51 "Scram!" | | | | | 109 For fear that |

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FIND CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU ANSWERS ON PAGE 6

Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ◆

◆ Moderate ◆◆ Challenging
 ◆◆◆ HOO BOY!

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POLICE BLOTTER

SKAGIT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Monday, Feb. 5

1:42 p.m. Crime prevention lesson – Owner of the business had questions on the trespassing laws and how to handle situations in the future. Specific problems with juvenile trespassers. Questions answered and laws explained to the caller. S. Second St., La Conner.

3:02 p.m. How money grows – Caller reported that she had written a check a couple years ago for \$50 that had just resurfaced and was cashed for \$500. She is not sure who had found and forged the new amount, but the bank was aware and had reimbursed her money. The bank did not wish to pursue or be a victim in this case. McLean Road, greater La Conner.



Friday, Feb. 9

3:19 p.m. Left to rust – Caller called in for a junk vehicle form to have an abandoned vehicle removed. They were directed to the La Conner code enforcement for parking and abandoned issues in the town. Center St., La Conner.

7:47 p.m. Not following that car – Report of a vehicle driving at slow speeds and weaving in the lane of travel. Vehicle had hazards on and continued to Channel Drive. Caller stopped following and no other complaints came in. McLean / La Conner Whitney Rds., greater La Conner.

Saturday, Feb. 10

3:55 p.m. Winter visitors in the Skagit – Report of several cars parked on the side of the road to photograph geese. A deputy checked the area and found they were all off the road and not causing a traffic issue. Morris St. / La Conner Whitney Rd., La Conner.

District 13 firefighters in training for 69-floor cancer research fundraiser

By Bill Reynolds

Local firefighters are taking a step in the right direction when it comes to winning the fight against cancer.

Make that many steps. Six members of Skagit County Fire District 13, including Chief Wood Weiss, will take part in the 33rd annual Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Firefighter Stair Climb in Seattle on March 10.

The event, whose mission is to raise much needed funding toward finding a cure for those battling blood cancer, is billed as the largest on-air stair climb competition in the world.

Standing 788 feet tall, the Columbia Center is the loftiest building in Seattle and the second tallest west of the Mississippi River. Firefighters participating in the stair climb will ascend 69 floors and 1,356 steps to reach the building's ac-

claimed sky view observatory.

This is the 12th Columbia Center stair climb for Weiss. He and the District 13 team will be among an anticipated 2,000 firefighters from across the nation and around the world registered to compete.

The real winners, of course, will be those for whom the event is designed to benefit.

"Completing the climb is a physical triumph in itself," said an LLS spokesperson. "But it is also symbolic of, yet pales in comparison to, the strenuous journey that blood cancer patients endure. As firefighters race to the top, they keep in mind that every step forward is representative of moving toward finding a cure for all those battling this terrible disease."

Weiss told the Weekly News that the District 13 target goal is \$2,500.

"We still need to raise about \$400," he said on Friday, "so

those wishing to help can do so by sending donations to Skagit County Fire District 13 on the LLS website or they can drop it by at the Sneeh Oosh Road Station."

Funds raised by participating firefighters will go toward blood cancer research and patient services.

Weiss said the fire district crew stepped up to the challenge with a Jan. 27 training session at the Swinomish Casino & Lodge. District firefighters received donations then from casino patrons while working out on a stair climber machine set up in the food court area.

Over \$20 million has been raised since the inception of the firefighter's stair climb, which now can be undertaken on site or virtually. All funds raised directly benefit LLS, the largest nonprofit dedicated to creating a world without blood cancers.

Conway gas spill update

By Ken Stern

Some 50 area residents attended the Conway School community meeting Feb. 6 to gain more information about the Dec. 10 Olympic Pipeline gasoline spill near Conway and the ongoing cleanup, local media reported.

Billed as an open house, residents could speak with the 25 experts from state and federal agencies and bp, the company managing the pipeline, answered their questions. A presentation was made at a Zoom online webinar Feb. 7. Questions and answers followed.

Operational update

Last week a sheet pile wall was constructed to build a cofferdam, which creates a barrier between the water of Hill Ditch and the bank so the affected soils next to the ditch may be removed without impacting the water.

A dewatering system to ensure excavation stability and to maintain a safe working environment will be installed to remove water from the soil inside the cofferdam by the end of this week.

Fish exclusion nets are in place to keep fish out of the cofferdam construction area.

Press reported that the emergency work phase might end in April.

The Unified Command is staff from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Washington Department of Ecology, the Skagit County Department of Emergency Management the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community and bp.

Department of Ecology updates: ecology.wa.gov/OlympicPipelineSpill.



THE COUNT MOVES TOWARD 6,000 – This photo was taken Jan. 29, when Brad Bradford, one of the original Tillinghast bike riders, celebrated when his 5-year-old, three wheeled tricycle's odometer hit the 5,000-mile mark. That is a lot of miles. Brad and many others bicycle around La Conner almost every morning at 10 a.m., as long as it is not raining or snowing.

– Photo and text courtesy of Ollie Iversen

Ag Summit

■ ■ ■ (from page 1)

There also is a large gap in understanding between producers and consumers.

"Our story must be told," said Peth. Farmers can share that they work with "foresight and care." That will help keep Skagit a place where neighbors can work together to solve problems.

"This county is truly special," said Danny Hagen, Skagit

County Assessor, almost certainly capturing the sentiments of most of the audience.

Although uncertainty looms, the group that gathered demonstrated their commitment to a thriving agricultural future. The sizable number of younger people in attendance indicates a readiness to forge ahead.

The Summit was again at the Sakuma Auditorium at the Northwestern Washington Research and Extension Center on Memorial Highway.

Sweethearts dinner

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