



Fire departments purposely burn down a house • p 6

Salish Sea rock garden will grow, produce clams • p 10

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Hats off to our high school seniors



THEIR CAPS CAME OFF AND WENT UP IN THE AIR – It is not every day that kids graduate from high school, but 47 seniors did from La Conner High School June 8. Done with one adventure. Now, on to others, hopefully bigger, better, scarier, more challenging. – Photo by Sarah Walls

Class of '23 graduates in sun-splashed ceremony

By Bill Reynolds

A class that weathered a slew of obstacles, in particular the COVID-19 pandemic, was blessed with warm, sunny conditions and a clear view of snow-capped Mount Baker for La Conner High School's 129th annual commencement exercises Thursday evening at Whittaker Field.

That scenario of emerging from clouds of uncertainty into the bright sunshine of hope and optimism was emphasized in remarks by Class of 2023 Valedictorian Hadley Shears, among a handful of graduating seniors speaking at the well-attended ceremony.

"Our class," Shears forecast at one point, "is destined for great things."

Shears and the other class speakers expressed gratitude for the support received from family, friends, community members and school staff.

Recipient of two perpetual display honors, the Megan Lisser Service to School and Varsity in Volunteerism awards, Shears specifically thanked retiring school counselor Lori Buher for her guidance and counsel.

Shears, one of 10 National Honor Society members in the class, closed by quoting former first lady Michelle Obama and the "immortal" film

character Ferris Bueller.

Bueller, reminded Shears, ended the movie that made him an 80s cult hero with his famous and enduring advice that "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it."

Salutatorian Josie Harper, another NHS member, directed much of her address to younger brother, Roman, a La Conner elementary student. She expressed envy at his stage of life but urged him not to fear growing up and taking on new and added responsibilities.

"Getting older isn't that bad," she told Roman. "I'm not trying to scare you away."

In her own case, Harper said she has created lasting memories around school activities, athletics and public service.

"Growing up is inevitable," she said, "but how you grow up is up to you."

A poignant moment occurred when senior Jamie Damien-Sams offered a special remembrance honoring deceased classmate Kerriah Paul. When Damien-Sams, the class president, was overcome with emotion, staff member Theresa James read the remainder of her message.

Like Shears, Damien-Sams was

acknowledged as a perpetual display award recipient, the JoAnne Self Determination and Loyalty Award.

Andrew Villard (Vince Sellen Community Service), Madoc Hiller (Kiwanis-Chuck Hedlund Community Service) and Finn Hakenson (Jack Whittaker Achievement) were the other perpetual display award choices.

Hakenson joined Shears, Harper, Raymond Bailey, Jr., Eleanor Drews, Isaias Gonzales-Rojas, Rachel Haley, Ellie Marble, Cole Medeiros and Kennedy Miller in receiving National Honor Society recognition from La

(continued on page 7)

Holiday Closures

Juneteenth

Monday, June 19

Bank: Closed

Buses: No service

Library: Closed

Post Office: Closed

Schools: Closed

Town Hall: Closed

County government offices:

Closed

Trash pick up: Regular service

Getting to freedom takes a long time.

MoNA 31st annual auction a night of shared magic

By Ken Stern

There was sharing aplenty at the Museum of Northwest Art Saturday night as MoNA raised \$370,000 through purchases and donations at its 31st annual auction. The First Street museum was humming as people gathered for the second year in a row, with nary an N95 mask in sight. The theme, "Share the Magic of Northwest Art," was visible throughout, with over 300 pieces of art hung and displayed on every gallery wall on the first and second floor, with sculpture and jewelry displayed on stands and tables. Most of the art was donated by local and regional artists and collectors. There were 30 live auction items and 275 items in the silent auction. Staff and volunteers Monday were working to finalize totals.

Supporters were especially generous for the Fund the Future campaign, which raised some \$122,000 Saturday, starting with a \$25,000 challenge match by Rebecca Beneroya and ending with \$25,000 from the estate of Margaret Bickel. Allison Kramer and Sandy McDade offered the first \$10,000. Auctioneer Ian Lindsay pressed people to be generous and brave, prompting for "Anyone who doesn't want to give \$5,000 but will do it anyway." The 100% cell phone fueled donating system seemed to have a glitch, with numbers totaling slowly at first but then pouring in. At the \$81,000 level, another \$10,000 match was offered by "a group of MoNA magicians" (continued on page 7)



THIS GRADUATE GRADUATES OTHERS – Dr. Will Makoyisaaminaa (Nelson) and Dr. Gerry Ebalaroza-Tunnell, doctoral committee member, pose after Saturday's graduation ceremonies at Western Washington University. Nelson earned his doctorate in educational leadership from the university's Woodring College. – Photo courtesy of Will Nelson

Inslee visits Puget Sound Food Hub Cooperative while in Skagit County

By Bill Reynolds

Gov. Jay Inslee enjoyed a taste of Skagit Valley on several levels when he toured the Puget Sound Food Hub Cooperative near La Conner last Tuesday.

The state's three-term chief executive, who recently announced he would not seek re-election, nonetheless modeled all the ingredients of a campaigner as he spoke with and listened to area farmers and food hub General Manager Andrew Yokom.

Inslee repeatedly praised the cleanliness and efficiency of the warehouse site, a former potato shed located next to Christianson's Nursery on the southwest corner of Best and McLean roads.

"You have a beautiful warehouse here," Inslee told Yokom. "It looks like somebody knows what they're doing."

The proof is in the numbers.

Eighty percent of \$25 million in food hub sales have been returned to producers, a co-op of some 70 Skagit Valley farmers, Yokom said.

Amy Frye of Boldy Grown Farm of Bow told Inslee that co-op membership is a win-win situation,

"This is as far as we have to go," Frye, a past president of the co-op board said of the near La

Conner location. "The trucks take it from here to Seattle and elsewhere."

Yokom noted the level of support the food hub has received from state officials. The Washington state Department of Agriculture last year provided \$500,000 to purchase delivery trucks and expand cooler space.

"I think one of the reasons the governor is coming here," Yokom told the Weekly News beforehand, "is because as a farmer-owned co-op we've also been the beneficiaries of state funding."

The food hub delivers to restaurants, schools and other markets – including hunger relief organizations – between the U.S.-Canadian border and Olympia.

"The produce," Frye stressed, "goes out to the people who need it."

Inslee, his staff and State Rep. Dave Paul (D-Oak Harbor) were given a first-hand look at how the food hub works, highlighted by the opportunity to sample favorite delicacies grown by co-op members.

"The food hub," said Yokom, "started out of a need – by the farmers, for the farmers."

Paul came away impressed.

"I was excited to see this," Paul said, "because we're always looking for ways to support and

(continued on page 7)



RECOGNIZING THE SKAGIT'S AGRICULTURAL BOUNTY – Gov. Jay Inslee wrapped up a day in Skagit County at the Puget Sound Food Hub Cooperative on Best Road. Farmer member-owners gave him a tour and discussed the co-op's purpose, growth and success.

– Photo by Marissa Conklin

From the editor —

Smoke, fire, heat and hot air

The secondary heading for this editorial is "our ossified leadership." The political state — and status — of our country is our society-wide failure, whether you read many newspapers or none and whether you discuss vigorously, halfheartedly or not at all with your neighbors, families and friends.

About the ossified leadership: Our accepting presidential candidates on either side of 80-years-old is a failure on Joe Biden and Donald Trump's parts, the leadership of the Democratic and Republican parties — and financiers — politically involved citizens and all the rest of us. Every one of us needs to both let go of the 20th century and demand 21st century vision and leadership from much younger people. Biden and Trump were avoiding the Vietnam War 60 years ago when gas was eighteen cents a gallon.

Alas, there is little that the common people can influence here.

Most of us love our country dearly, embrace patriotism and will not miss the Fourth of July parade, but facts and analysis will show that way too many of us are civically lazy and woefully ignorant of American history and the duties and responsibility of citizenship. A faction of us are worried about the wokeness of others. The truth is, on the road to voting and civic participation, many of us have not gotten off the couch, much less sat behind the wheel or gotten out of the driveway on the road to the Constitution and involvement in governance.

Our political parties have devolved into tribes, with committed base factions demanding loyalty from each party's leadership. The candid facts of Jan. 6, 2021 and the last two years reveal a portion of the citizenry do not believe in or trust democracy. A large portion of us only believe in the rule of law when our leader rules.

Given that, U.S. Justice Department special prosecutor Jack Smith can say, as he did and believes, that Trump is innocent until proven guilty, that the purpose of a trial is to present the evidence, argue the case on its merits and have a jury decide.

The accused, Trump, can, and does, call it a witch hunt and warn of a deep state that is out to get him, but he is arguing in the court of public opinion. What if he is a wolf in sheep's clothing bleating for all the sheep to follow him into his den?

Compare, as Trump did, the cases of Biden and former vice president Mike Pence having classified documents. Group together the similarities and separate the differences of all three histories. That is each of our obligations, to sort the wheat from the chaff, the facts from fiction, what is rhetoric and what is reality — and what is important.

Trump's trial will determine if he broke the law; the jury will not rule on his character. Republican voters, first, then perhaps all voters, will decide who their candidate and choice for president is in 2024. For now the choices are all in the camp of our Republican sisters and brothers.

For either party, are Trump and Biden the best their nominating processes can offer the American people?

Benjamin Franklin famously answered "A republic, if you can keep it" at the dawn of the Constitution being approved.

A citizenship working toward keeping the United States united would be more critical of its leadership, both elected and aspiring.

— Ken Stern

LETTER

Great town, bookstore

I've lived in La Conner and the surrounding area for 38 years and continue to be thrilled by all the wonderful organizations here that support gardening, farming, land conservation, the Sunrise Food Bank, Kiwanis, Rotary and Soroptimists, to name a few. And the businesses here are unique and charming. We have a feast of restaurants here to satisfy so many tastes, fish from the sea, burgers, tacos, fine dining, ice cream, breakfasts and sliders. And coffee, the best anywhere.

My favorite place in La Conner is Seaport Books. Janna and company have been providing a beautiful space to wander the aisles, sit in a comfy chair, talk authors and series' with the knowledgeable staff, walk out the door with a gem of a book recommended by Marion, for seven years.

I remind you; we are very lucky to have a bookstore in our small, sweet town.

It's so easy, I know, to log on to Amazon and shop away for books. Voila! Delivered.

But think about it. You live in town, you live in Shelter Bay, you live on the Rez.

A short walk or drive to a magical spot on Earth. A real Bookstore. A great conversation awaits you, a new author is ready to surprise you. And, ok, parking is not the greatest in La Conner, so, call and order that book. 360-399-1800. Pick it up on a Monday, avoid traffic.

I'll see you there, I hope.
Georgia Johnson
Greater La Conner

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

A citizen's view —

Memorial Day born out of Civil War

By Rick Shorten

Thank you for your spot-on Musings (June 7 Weekly News) in regard to Memorial Day, especially the service at Pleasant Ridge Cemetery on May 29. As always, it was a moving service, conducted quite ably by Rev. Don Robinson.

As I listened to and observed the folding of the flag protocol and recounting of the military conflicts that our flag has symbolized, whether noble or otherwise, I, too, was struck by the omission of the Civil War. This was no careless omission.

The Civil War was the most pivotal point in the history of the United States. It was Jan. 6, 2021 on steroids. It was the point at which we resolved whether we would remain a slave-holding nation, again asserting that we stood for the idea that all men were created equal as set forth in the Declaration Independence.

I pondered, as I stood there, what the flag would look like if the Confederacy had prevailed in that conflict. Would it be a flag minus four stripes representing the founding colonies who fought to leave the Union? It had 34 stars at the beginning of the Civil War. How many would be represented today? Or would we be honoring the stars and bars of the flag of the Confederacy? Many people fly the Confederate flag and display bumper stickers today. I always wonder if they are advocating a reinstatement of slavery.

As the musings noted, Memorial Day was instituted by Maj. Gen. Joshua Logan in 1868, but remembrances for the war dead began before the war ended, notably in Boalsburg, PA. In Charleston, SC, in May, 1865, a march of Black former slaves led by 3,000 school children holding roses marched, commemorating dead Union soldiers buried at a mass grave nearby. In 1866, women in Columbus, GA, put flowers on graves of both Confederate and Union soldiers. It is written that this gesture of reverence for the losses on both sides of the conflict so moved Gen. Logan that he spurred the effort to make Memorial Day a national holiday.

The U.S. flag is important only as a symbol of the actual sacrifice made by all citizens who have taken time out of their lives to serve the nation, and most importantly, those who have paid with their lives.

Rick Shorten lives on Pleasant Ridge and served in the U.S. Air Force during the Vietnam War era.

LETTERS

Political parties and fraud

I recently received an invitation from the Skagit County Republican Party to its annual Lincoln-Reagan gala. I've never voted for a Republican, but I do recall long political discussions with my father, a lifelong Republican. We often disagreed on policy, but never about basic facts.

So, out of curiosity, I explored the website of the Skagit County Republicans and was immediately swept down the proverbial rabbit hole. In one blog post (April 27) county chairman Bill Bruch refers to "the Marxists who are currently running our country", meaning (I guess) the centrist administration of Joe Biden. On April 23, he claimed that "WA State Radical Socialist Democrats continue implementing totalitarian laws and expanding draconian Marxist government powers". Marxists? Really?

Heated rhetoric, no facts. The website includes a podcast (February 23) accusing Arizona governor Katie Hobbs of being "linked to drug cartel money to steal elections". Hobbs beat Republican election denier Kari Lake in 2022, an election which Lake is still contesting.

These are just a few examples of literally hundreds of blog

posts and podcasts on the site accusing Democrats of committing fraud to steal elections, including the 2020 presidential election. Trump and his allies have lost (to date) over fifty court cases challenging the results of that election. Not one — not one — backed up claims of fraud. On the evidence then, the Skagit Republican party and its leader exist on the lunatic fringe of our political system. That's not a good thing — there are no such things as "alternative facts," only lies and misinformation.

Lastly, a post (January 5) on the party's website featured a petition headed "Don't Seat Serial Liar Clyde Shavers in the State House." Democrat Shavers was elected to a District 10 seat in 2022.

Ironically an article about Bruch's own candidacy for state representative in this newspaper (Oct. 21, 2020) pointed out that in 1998 Bruch was convicted in civil court of defrauding elderly investors out of around \$1,750,000. So perhaps local Republicans should clean their own house of its liars and cheats before baselessly accusing others of fraud.

Just saying.
Tony Harrah
Greater La Conner

Reducing home electrical use reduces costs



By Greg Whiting

An earlier column emphasized understanding the numbers on your electric bill. Understanding what the bill means, however, doesn't help much in understanding why you've used that much energy, nor does it help you reduce your energy costs. For that, you need to understand how much each of your electric devices contributes to the meter reading.

Electric devices have wattage ratings. Multiply the wattage by the amount of time the device is used to determine how much energy that device is using. For instance, turning a 60 watt incandescent lamp on for ten hours a day uses 600 (60 times 10) watt-hours, or 0.6 kilowatt-hours (kWh).

Most electrical devices don't operate continuously. A refrigerator may use about 1,200 watts to keep food cool, but it doesn't use 1,200 watts 24 hours a day. It only uses energy when the compressor

is on — that is during a third of the day. So, a 1,200 watt refrigerator would use about 1,200 times 8, or 9,600 watt-hours, or 9.6 kWh, per day. A hand-held circular saw might require 1,200 watts, but most woodworking hobbyists aren't likely to have a power saw on for more than an hour a day.

The 1,200 watt saw would use 1,200 watt-hours (1.2 kWh) in a day. The 1,200 watt refrigerator, running intermittently but more often, uses 9.6 kWh. The 60 watt light, running continuously for a long time, uses 0.6 kWh. Because it operates so intermittently, the saw uses one-eighth the amount of energy as the refrigerator, even though they use the same amount of energy when they're actually running. The saw only uses twice the energy of the light over the whole day, even though it uses 20 times the energy during the period of time it is actually on.

Replacing the 60 watt light with a 9 watt LED light reduces the energy the light uses from 600 watt-hours/day to 90 watt-hours/day. Over a 30-day month, this saves 510 watt-hours a day, or 15,300 watt-hours (15.3 kWh). At \$0.12/kWh, the new light bulb will take \$1.84/month off your electric bill (\$0.12 times 15.3).

Replacing the 1,200 watt refrigerator with a modern 600 watt refrigerator will reduce the energy the fridge uses from 9.6 kWh/day to 4.8 kWh/day. Total 30-day energy savings is 144 kWh; total 30-day dollar savings will be \$17.28.

If you don't want to estimate run times or look for wattage labels, get a personal meter like a Kill-a-watt (that is its real name) and plug each of your devices into it for a while. Personal meters will show you how much energy each device is using.

Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) account for half to two-thirds of a typical electric bill. New technologies help you save money and energy while maintaining comfort. Using an energy-efficient heat pump reduces the energy used by the system. Using a programmable thermostat — actually programming it, not just installing it — enables you to let the house run to less comfortable temperatures during the hours you aren't home. Your furniture doesn't care if it's 60 degrees inside from 7:30 am to 3:30 pm and you can program the system to return to 70 degrees by the time you get home.

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OBITUARY



Elizabeth Grace Gordon "Betty"

Elizabeth "Betty" Grace Gordon died on Monday, May 22, 2023 at the age of 97. She passed in the home where she had spent most of her life, looking out the windows, the rays of her final golden hour reflected in her eyes.

Betty was born to Samuel and Tiena (Drost) Mesman on May 19, 1926, in Rocky Point, Washington. Growing up in the 1930s and 40s, she would share stories of her life on the beaches of the island picking wild strawberries, looking for agates, and finding lady slipper orchids blooming in the nearby forests in the springtime. She often reminisced about the simpler times of her rural island life.

When her family moved to a farm outside of La Conner, Betty found herself happy in her new community; it was one full of engagement and involvement. She attended school in Oak Harbor and La Conner, where she graduated with the class of 1943 from La Conner High School.

Betty met her husband, Eddie George Gordon, while ice skating a frozen pond. No words or introductions were shared, but within six months they were married and had settled on a beautiful farm on McLean Road in Mount Vernon, Washington. Their wedding date was October 22, 1956.

Betty was a mother, a wife, a Girl Scout Troop Leader, a farm owner, and a bookkeeper. Her interests were widespread. She loved baseball, hockey games, crocheting, baking, reading murder mysteries, and solving puzzles. Betty volunteered her time serving shifts in WWII watchtowers, keeping an eye out for suspicious aircraft. Her children remember that she loved eating ice cream, taking long car rides with Eddie, her homemade lemon meringue pie, and her sweet voice as she sang to her grandchild. She loved bright colors and she loved to laugh; her children note how loving and open-minded she was. There was always food on the table, time to spend together on family vacations, and heart-shaped peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to help melt away the trials of a hard day.

Betty is survived by her sons, Todd (Christine) Gordon, Eddie Gordon, and special son, Arne Svendsen; grandson, Cole Gordon; and sister, Darlene of Idaho.

She is preceded in death by her parents; her dearest friend, Harriet; and her husband of 53 years, Eddie George Gordon.

Please consider a memorial donation to the McLean Fire Department, 15452 Beaver Marsh Rd., Mount Vernon, WA 98273.

Betty was laid to rest next to her husband Eddie George Gordon at Pleasant Ridge Cemetery.

Funeral arrangements are under the care of Kern Funeral Home. You may share memories and offer your condolences to Betty's family online at www.kernfuneralhome.com.



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"Since 1913"

Center Street project, flood issues heard by planning commission

By Bill Reynolds

With the completion of an on-site soil analysis, applicants Kate and Brandon Atkinson stand on firm enough ground to seek county building permits for their proposed condo project on Center Street, Town of La Conner Planning Commissioners were told last week.

"The applicants have expressed a desire to apply for building permits before the end of June," Planning Director Michael Davolio said as part of a regular status report on the 306 Center Street proposal during a one-hour June 7 hybrid session at Maple Hall.

Davolio said two soil boring tests on the southwest portion of the property, which had previously been part of a full-service fuel station and storage business, revealed contaminants requiring removal. The analysis indicated those contaminants had not spread to the northeast, he said.

Davolio cited two of the safeguards in place regarding the project, which sparked pushback when proposed last year from those concerned about potential fire protection issues and traffic, parking and noise impacts on the nearby residential neighborhood.

"They will have to have a pre-construction meeting before digging," said Davolio, adding that an engineer at the worksite is required.

The state Department of Ecology is also in the loop, he said. "They know about the project and have been monitoring the site."

In response to a question posed by Center Street resident Debbie Aldrich, Davolio said he wasn't certain if DOE will have staff on site during construction.

Atkinson, who maintains a dental practice in La Conner, has said the local housing crunch makes residential units more suitable than commercial development on the property, which is located behind The Slider Café.

While not on the commission's formal agenda, flood mitigation was discussed at length.

Center Street resident William Smith said that flood threats "are not something we can walk away from." He suggested limiting construction in flood-prone areas.

Jerry George, also a Center Street resident and a member of the new Emergency Management Commission formed in response to December's severe saltwater flooding, said he and his colleagues are exploring both short-term and long-range strategies.

"At this point," said George, "the commission is pretty sure we'll meet the Dec. 27 flood level (of 14 feet). It ain't cheap. It's complicated because of where the barriers have to be.

"William is absolutely correct," George added. "We have to address the threat of floods in our code."

George noted that commissioner Duane Carpenter, a retired National Weather Service meteorologist, has said the local flooding was a rare event, the result of numerous simultaneous conditions – seasonal king tides, extremely low barometric pressure, strong westerly winds and melt off from a prior winter storm.

"But the risk of this event being on the horizon is absolute," George stressed.

Commissioners also continued a long-standing discussion on short-term rentals, a topic Davolio said has generated a broad range of opinions.

"Some people say 'no' to any short-term rentals," he said. "Others say not to dictate how to use their property."

Smith cautioned that widespread use of short-term rentals reduces available housing stock and threatens the fabric of communities.

"If you want a community that serves families and supports the education of its children," said Smith, "you don't want short-term rentals."

Commissioner Marna Hanneman, who will become mayor in December, said the local housing situation is one that is foremost on the minds of many.

"People are trying to get creative," she said, "to figure out ways that people who work here can live here."

As to the fate of short-term rentals, Hanneman said "it's a topic that won't be decided overnight."

Davolio agreed. "We want to keep this discussion going," he said.

Busy summer wildfire season anticipated statewide

By Bill Reynolds

Summer vacation likely will be an oxymoron for area firefighters.

Forecasts place Washington state at the epicenter of regional wildfires from July to September.

"The outlook for Washington state is not all that great," Skagit County Fire District 13 Assistant Chief Jamie Jurdi conceded last Thursday. "Washington is in the red throughout the whole wildfire season. Not just eastern Washington, but also western Washington."

Fire District 13, serving Swinomish Reservation and the rural La Conner area, regularly mobilizes personnel and equipment to summer hotspots along the Pacific Coast and interior.

The district commissioners' monthly hybrid meeting at its Sneec-Oosh Road station coincided with U.S. Senate hearings focused on wildfire preparedness and response.

"I think America is waking up, at least on the East Coast, to this problem," Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-WA., said during a meeting of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. "And we certainly have known all about it on the West Coast for some time now. And I think that it is time and opportunity for us to really break down the barriers that are prohibiting us from having a faster response and working quickly on the faster response."

In its June 1 assessment, the National Interagency Fire Center forecast "above normal" wildfire risk for July through September for nearly the entire state of Washington.

That level or risk is not typically seen statewide, particularly in historically cooler and wetter western Washington.

During the senate hearing, Cantwell pressed Jaelith Hall-Rivera, deputy chief of state, private and tribal forestry with the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, on the need to improve coordination between the various agencies fighting wildfires to ensure faster fire response.

"We absolutely need to break down barriers with all of our partners, states, tribes, counties, even between the federal agencies," Hall-Rivera said.

Cantwell suggested increased collaboration with Canada, given that recent East Coast smoke originated in Quebec and some of the worst smoke events in Washington state were due to raging fires in British Columbia.

"I think it's really time to engage with the Canadians," Cantwell said. "We can't just be sitting here, thinking that we have solved this problem, because our continent knows no U.S.-Canadian barrier."

In a release her office issued Thursday, she listed billions of dollars she secured to support wildfire response and recovery in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, including \$3.4 billion for Hazardous Fuels Reduction programs and \$500 million for Burned Area Rehabilitation Programs. She helped garner an additional \$1.8 billion for the U.S. Forest Service Hazardous Fuels Reduction Program in the Inflation Reduction Act.

Cantwell also called on U.S. Forest Service Chief Randy Moore to hire more firefighters ahead of the 2023 wildfire season in April.

District Emergency Management Coordinator Ted Taylor, fondly dubbed "Capt. Catastrophe," reminded commissioners of the Great ShakeOut earthquake preparedness event set for mid-October.

"Like I always say," said Taylor, "it's not a matter of if, but when, the Big One happens. We need to be prepared and not have to ask, 'What do we do now?'" It could be five to seven days before any significant help can get in after a major disaster."

Also announced was an open house ceremony at the Sneec-Oosh station's new residential unit named for former commission chair Larry Kibbee. The event is tentatively scheduled for July 8, 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

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Local scholarship foundation kicks off major six-month fundraising drive

By Bill Reynolds

A good idea never goes out of style.

Thirty-four years after its inception, the concept of an inclusive scholarship program supporting La Conner High School graduates still remains a perfect fit for a community that values education.

The La Conner Community Scholarship Foundation, which evolved from a 1989 Dollars for Scholars campaign launched by then-school administrators Ken Winkes and Norm Hoffman, the local Parent-Teacher-Student Association and civic leaders, including Gail Thulen, Maureen Harlan, John Hastings, Maude Misner and Melphine Schmittou, continues its mission to provide scholarship aid.

And it does so throughout the various ebbs and flows of the business cycle.

But present economic conditions have led the foundation to return to its roots – a six-month fundraising drive akin to when in the late 1980s Dollars for Scholars volunteers took their cause door-to-door seeking monetary support for graduating seniors.

The foundation's goal is to raise \$100,000 by Nov. 30.

A downturn in bond yields has had a negative impact on the foundation's investment income, necessitating the fund drive to bolster its portfolio.

Thus, Winkes was approached recently by foundation and school board member John Agen to recount how Dollar for Scholars secured its early momentum.

Now retired and living in Conway, Winkes met with Agen and the Weekly News on a Sunday morning at Stompin' Grounds Coffee.

Winkes recounted how he and Misner had attended a Dollars for Scholars reception at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma

where a keynote speaker talked about how students could be encouraged to pursue higher education through creation of community scholarship foundations.

Winkes shared what he and Misner heard during a subsequent PTSA meeting.

"I told them," he recalled, "that it had to be a community effort. It wasn't something that the school could do."

Winkes, also a columnist for the old Channel Town Press newspaper, used his lively writing style to promote the community scholarship concept.

In an April 1989 column, Winkes wrote that he couldn't think of a community project potentially more rewarding than Dollars for Scholars.

He acknowledged, however, that some heavy lifting would be involved.

"In a nation whose founding and still vital myth, is that all possibilities are open to everyone," he wrote, "it is easy to forget how circumstantial most of our lives really are. Did we grow up with parents who communicated love and respect for us and to one another. With parents who valued learning, self-discipline and high standards? With parents of any sort at all?"

"The who we are," Winkes insisted, "depends so much on where we are and where we have been."

Winkes, who grew up in Arlington and graduated from Stanford University, contended that the fragile nature of human destiny underscores the community scholarship format.

"Such a program," he stressed, "would fulfill the promise that a high school education implies. Through it, our community could influence our children's dreams, expand their sense of possibilities and provide a source of control over our own lives that many do not,

in fact, possess."

The community scholarship program dream Winkes championed received a huge boost in 2009 when the late Lea McMillan Diacos, a La Conner and Western Washington State College alum, bequeathed \$1.6 million to the foundation.

Today the organization receives contributions from community members while working alongside groups such as the La Conner Alumni Association, La Conner Soroptimists, La Conner Kiwanis and the La Conner Rotary Club, among others, that regularly award scholarships to La Conner graduates.

Meanwhile, the prose Winkes composed more than three decades ago rings as true today. Citing its many possibilities, Winkes conceded that a community scholarship program would not be a panacea for all society's problems.

"I see it instead," he opined, "as a powerful way to bring a community that already supports its schools to buoy and direct its children more personally and with even more effect."

"As I told the PTA," Winkes added, "(it is) a way for La Conner to further define and celebrate its commitment to youth and their dreams into new and more open channels. It's a wonderful thing we can all do together."

Nelson graduates with highest honors

Gwyneth Nelson graduated with highest honors, from Montana State University May 12. The greater La Conner resident earned a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.7.

Source: Montana State University



IT IS BUTTERFLY SEASON – Look around, say on Myrtle Street, and probably throughout town and you may find the western tiger swallowtail butterfly. There is an eastern species, but it does not get over the Rockies. The western is not as large, but it is beautiful enough.

– Photo courtesy of Don Coyote

History museum re-opens Native American exhibit

By Bill Reynolds

Jo Wolfe knew it would take a lot of energy to reorganize the extensive Native American Collection at the Skagit County Historical Museum.

Fortunately, there was someone perfect for the job.

Intern Maggie Telford, a 2022 University of Washington graduate in anthropology, used her technology skills and love of history to inventory, identify, document and care for the 804 Native American items at the La Conner museum over the course of an eight-month assignment.

She shared her mission Thursday evening with an engaging presentation before a standing room only audience in the museum's east wing.

"It was wonderful to learn about this thriving culture," said Telford, who plans to attend graduate school in the fall. "I'll definitely hold on to this knowledge."

Wolfe, the museum's director, opened the program introducing Swinomish tribal member Kevin Paul. Paul drummed and offered

a song of blessing with tribal members Tony Cladoosby and Dean Dan at his side.

Telford then discussed the collection's wide array of items – from stone tools to bone implements to wooden canoe replicas.

Telford said she didn't want to immediately pursue a master's degree after earning her undergrad degree. Instead, she wanted to gain some practical experience. "I wanted a job where I could apply all the hard work I had put in," she said.

Hiring on at a museum, Telford decided, would do just that. She was thrilled to learn of an internship just 40 miles from her home in Everett.

Made possible by a Diversity in Local History Grant provided by the Washington State Historical Society, the opportunity allowed Telford to exercise her eye for detail and fulfill an eagerness to broaden the scope of her studies of societies and cultures.

"Doing inventory," she said after Thursday's program, "was a huge part of the job, especially during the first five months."

Telford, collaborating with local tribal communities, became especially enamored with the collection's basketry, most notably items donated by the Peter Campbell family for safekeeping until the Upper Skagit Tribe opens its own cultural center.

She and Wolfe agreed that digitalizing the North American collection makes it more accessible than previously possible, since public display is limited to protect each item's longevity.

"We don't want to put any of the items at risk," Telford said. (continued on page 7)

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A SUNNY DAY ON THE WATER – It might as well be summer for Kelly Harper and Jen Jen McFarland paddleboarding under the Rainbow Bridge last week. Washington State University meteorologists are predicting highs in the 60s and 70s. Some days might be breezy. *– Photo by Nancy Crowell*

Cascadian Farm now owned by Rodale Institute Pacific Northwest Organic Center

SKAGIT VALLEY — The Rodale Institute Pacific Northwest Organic Center at Cascadian Farm, the historic property formerly known as Cascadian Home Farm, has opened its fields to the public for u-pick strawberries. A beloved destination for tourists and local residents traveling along Highway 20, the idyllic 90 acre farm is nestled between the Cascade Mountains and the Skagit River. Founded in 1972, the site is the birthplace of the Cascadian Farm brand of grocery products. While the Cascadian Farm brand quickly outgrew the Home Farm, it remained a working organic farm and hosted visitors at its farm stand for over 50 years. General Mills was the steward of the Home Farm from 2000 until 2022 when it donated the property to Rodale Institute, a global agriculture research and education nonprofit.

“We are grateful to General Mills for the generous donation of the historic Cascadian Farm Home Farm,” said Jeff Tkach, CEO at Rodale Institute. “We are excited to bring Rodale Institute’s renown research, education and consulting capabilities to the Pacific Northwest via the Home Farm and create a beacon in the region for all farmers, producers and consumers. We look forward to welcoming people to the Rodale Institute Pacific Northwest Organic Center at Cascadian Farm for u-pick this season.”

U-pick strawberry, raspberry and blueberry fields are open Friday-Sunday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m. mid-June-August, dependent on crop availability.

Farm tours will be offered every Friday June-August, 10 am-11:30 am. Tours will focus on the history of the farm, Rodale

Institute and regenerative organic farming practices.

Beyond u-pick, the Rodale Institute Pacific Northwest Organic Center will serve as a regional resource for farmers interested in utilizing regenerative organic farming practices.

Pacific Northwest farmers face many challenges related to unpredictable climate: extreme heat, wildfire, smoke, drought and flooding – impacting both the health and financial wellbeing of farmers, farm workers and farm economies. The region’s organic farmers are in need of guidance on research-based practices that allow them to adapt to extreme weather events while improving soil health and successfully managing pests and diseases. The Center will help farmers navigate these challenges by conducting regionally focused research, providing training and direct farmer consulting services and serving as a demonstration and education hub.

The Center’s website notes the state “has a large and growing organic industry with over 900 certified organic farms and over 145,000 acres of certified organic production, representing \$795 million dollars in farmgate sales. The region has been identified as an organic hotspot—counties in the U.S. that have a high level of organic agricultural activity. Organic hotspots have been proven to increase economic viability.”

The Center’s goals include:

- Regionally focused research on organic practices for spotted wing drosophila, mummy berry, soil health and native pollinators in blueberry production.
- Conduct research trials focused on practices that help farmers adapt to a changing

climate with increased heat, drought and flooding and weed and pest pressure.

- Support farmers through training and consulting aimed at improving yields, profitability and soil health using organic and regenerative organic practices.

- Serve as a demonstration and education hub for farmers, agricultural professionals and the public interested in organic and regenerative organic methods.

Information: rodaleinstitute.org/PNW and rodaleinstitute.org/u-pick/.

Source: The Rodale Institute

State parks free Sunday

Celebrate Juneteenth with a free visit to a state park June 19. Visitors will not need a Discover Pass for day-use visits to a Washington state park or on lands managed by the Washington Department of Natural Resources or Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Source: State Parks

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La Conner Art Circle show at Beaver Tales Coffee



THEIR FIRST COLLECTIVE ART SHOW – At Saturday’s opening at Beaver Tales Coffee were Annabelle Vergne, Roberta Gregory, Jan Vevoda-Aguero, Lisa VerSteegh, Simme Bobrosky and Pam DeVries, from left. Their work is at the Morris and Sixth streets coffeehouse this month. *– Photo by Ken Stern*

By Ken Stern

The enthusiasm of the Art Circle artists holding their first exhibit at Beaver Tales Coffee and Tea this June is fueled by more than an intimate showing space, good coffee, a great hostess in co-owner Michelle Calvin and support of Margaret Hillard, La Conner Senior Center coordinator and group champion in her own right.

The artists: Pam DeVries, Simme Bobrosky, Lisa VerSteegh, Annabelle Vergne, Roberta Gregory, Jan Vevoda-Aguero and Kaye Stephens, create in a variety of media, including acrylic, oil, watercolor and pen and ink.

DeVries willed the group

into existence with a notice on Facebook last August. She wrote that Calvin opened “her heart and her shop to us, as she continues to make this place about community, not just coffee” in the artists’ statement.

Hillard saw the group’s social media. She invited them to the Senior Center’s Maple Hall space as the weather turned in the fall. “They have a room upstairs with a view of the channel,” Hillard said, and others are invited to join.

DeVries’ statement ends “I’m thankful for each and every person that decided to join me.”

The show runs through June at the Morris and Sixth streets location.

Intuitive Arts Fair June 24-25

The Intuitive Arts Fair is a must-attend event for anyone interested in exploring their intuition and spiritual side. Taking place on Saturday and Sunday, June 24-25, from 11 a.m.-7 p.m. at Maple Hall.

The event will feature a talented lineup of intuitive artists including psychics, tarot readers, energy healing sessions, spiritual counseling and a flash mob by Witches of Skagit. There will be a variety of classes and workshops on the second floor of Maple Hall. Attendees will also browse and shop from a range of specialty vendors offering crystals, jewelry,

essential oils and other spiritual merchandise.

To see our Speaker Forum schedule, visit IntuitiveArtsFair.com and follow us on social media. Tickets can be purchased in advance online or at the door. The \$5 admission includes a day-long pass to all classes and workshops and a chance to win a free tarot reading in our Tarot Lottery!

The Intuitive Arts Fair promises to be an exciting and informative event for those seeking to deepen their spiritual practice or curiosity about the intuitive arts.

Source: Intuitive Arts Fair

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Local fire departments burn house down on purpose

By Ken Stern

Burning the Hedlund house to the ground Saturday was only the last straw and the least important fire of the day for the La Conner and Fire Districts 2, 13 and 17 fire departments. By the time the last of the piles of wood pallets were brought into the house and the last of the interior fires were started with a propane tank and torch at 1:15 p.m., the various firefighting crews had spent hours in every room of the two-story structure, examining, fighting, putting out and being tested on a variety of room, wall, floor and ceiling fire scenarios.

The June 11 training was the third day of controlled burns at the house, donated by the Hedlund family. Patriarch Chuck Hedlund was a long time Fire District 13 commissioner until his death in 2019.

By Saturday some rooms had been repeatedly prepped, charred and burned for and from the earlier trainings. This day staffs from the four departments, as independent teams and integrated groups, finished the job. Throughout the morning the practices increased in scope, with pallets to be burned brought into individual rooms.

Windows had been removed and the openings covered with plywood modified with hinges and handles. Manipulating these shutters adjusted air flow, a critical factor in fire intensity.

Each room had three to five burn events, said La Conner Fire Chief Aaron Reinstra. "The first one was pretty exciting then we dialed it down." Several of his firefighters, and those from other departments, were getting their first exposure in this live fire training. "Live fire training is always one of the hardest things to get," he noted.

FD 13 Fire Chief Wood Weiss stressed the importance of the day "so the first time you get to see a live fire it is not a large fire. Getting to practice on a real house is beneficial." He called it "a real special moment."

Fittingly, it was FD 13 staff

who spent months preparing for the day. La Conner Fire Chief Aaron Reinstra praised his colleagues: "Fire District 13 has been amazing to get everyone together for this event."

Weiss recognized his staff: Live fire training officer Duane Dent for planning and executing a well-run, safe and informative burn; training officer Captain Olbu for running water supply; Battalion Chief Jurdi for saving the trees right next to the house with a dedicated hose stream; and for all our instructors who worked so hard to make this house burn a total success.

John Tanaka, a retired captain formerly with the City of Everett Fire Protection and a former FD 13 assistant fire chief, was the technical advisor.

Thirty people from four departments participated: 12 from FD 13; La Conner, seven; Fire District 2, McLean Road, 10; and the Guemes Island fire chief, FD 17.

The support crew, which managed the food tent, was led by Chris Weiss cooking hot dogs and dishing out baked beans.

Reinstra, Weiss and Stephanie Banaszak, a La Conner Firefighter Association member chronicling the day, emphasized the cross-department work and communications aspects, Banaszak noting the interesting social dynamics, that between exercises intra-department groups formed.

Reinstra explained, "The nice thing about these trainings is we integrate with each other. We use the same terminology. You can plug anyone into with each other and it goes just the same."

Throughout the morning small groups went in and out of the house and worked various hose lines connected to tender trucks. There was a 3,000 gallon portable pool filled with water. Firefighters with air tanks on their backs were rocking and swaying slightly to minimize the chirping and tweets from sensors detecting people not in motion.

When the house was set on fire at 1:15 p.m., the training was done. The departments took



PROUD OF THEIR WORK WELL DONE – Firefighters from Fire District 13, in black, Fire District 2, in brown, La Conner Fire Department, in brown, and the chief of Fire District 17, are in high spirits – and maybe feeling a little warm – after spending a day putting out fires they had set inside the Hedlund family house, behind them. They are not the least bit worried that now it is burning down. They set that fire. Do not try this at home.

– Photos by Ken Stern



group photos and spent the next hour walking around. The grass, trees, outbuildings and fencing to the west were continuously hosed down against the heat and so were department vehicles on Dodge Valley Road. By 2 p.m. the heat was noticeable to those standing on the road.

Banaszc reported the fire took over five hours to die down. She posted "By the day's end, all house beams fell in anticipated directions, and as if for posterity, one (of two) chimneys remained

Smoke Ready Week is now through June 16

upright resembling a totem pole."

OLYMPIA – As our climate changes, the threat of wildfires looms larger. The Washington state Department of Health is urging the public to prepare for smoke that can make air unhealthy to breathe. Smoke Ready Week, June 12-16, is an opportunity to take proactive steps to protect yourself and your family.

"We are expecting to have above normal fire activity in Washington by July," said Kaitlyn Kelly, MPH, air quality policy specialist, DOH. "We have an outlook for below normal precipitation and that's going to last into fall, so conditions are trending to a long fire season."

Reduce exposure to smoke by staying up to date on the forecast and air quality index, limiting time outside and keeping indoor air as clean as possible. After several days smoke can enter homes and buildings through leaky gaps in windows and doors. Filtering indoor air will benefit your health.

Prepare by buying supplies in

advance.

Filter indoor air by using a:

- HVAC system with MERV 13 filter.
- HEPA portable air cleaner.
- DIY box fan filter.

Smoke from wildfires contains fine particles and gases including carbon monoxide. Exposure to smoke can cause a number of health problems ranging from minor to severe. Those with pre-existing conditions, infants and children, pregnant individuals, adults 65 and older and people with heart and lung disease can be most sensitive to wildfire smoke. Minor symptoms include headaches, stinging eyes, runny nose and trouble breathing.

The WA Smoke Blog has updates on wildfires, air quality, the forecast and health information. The DOH's Smoke from Fires webpage has information for protection from wildfire smoke: doh.wa.gov/community-and-environment/air-quality

Source: WA DOH

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Renew Town business licenses

The deadline for businesses to renew their Town of La Conner licenses is June 30. The state of Washington requires processing licenses through the Washington Department of Revenue's website. Get licenses at the DOR website: dor.wa.gov. Click on "Get or renew a license" and log in or create an account. Follow the steps to completion. General business license renewals are through June 30, 2024. The annual fee starts at \$25 for

home occupation licenses and booth/desk fees. There are three general license fees, from \$108 to \$238 based on annual gross earnings. Electronic payment can be made through checking accounts or credit cards. The license are printed from the website and must be displayed "in a visible location." To renew or apply: dor.wa.gov. Follow directions, clicking through several screens.

Best Road construction finishes

The Skagit County Public Works phase-one construction on Best Road from McLean Road to the Fir Island/Moore intersection will finish Thursday, June 15. Phase-two, the upcoming chip seal program in July and August

does not yet have a start date. Everyone will need to expect delays during this time of construction. Source: Skagit County Public Works

Inslee

protect agriculture in Skagit County." Maura Vasquez of Silva Family Farm drew chuckles, including from the governor, when she reflected on the hectic nature of farm life this time of year. "My whole family was going to come," she told Inslee, "but they're very busy today." Inslee, meanwhile, stayed busy comparing notes with co-op farmers and food hub staff while keeping a tight schedule that cut short this stop by 30 minutes. He had previously visited Mount

Vernon High School to attend a performance by its mariachi and folklorico ensemble and toured the Mount Vernon Library Commons construction site, the Lincoln Theatre and the Martha's Place permanent supportive housing complex.

Still, he had enough time at the food hub to pledge continued support.

"You've got everything here," he said. "We'll continue to urge our legislators."

Despite the tight time window, Inslee told his staff he had one pressing need before getting back on the road.

"I'm not getting out of here," he insisted, "without a carrot."

Exhibit

"With digitalization, hopefully, the public can get to see things it ordinarily wouldn't get to see." Wolfe said Telford was an ideal choice for the multi-tiered internship, which has included re-designing and updating the museum's permanent exhibit spaces.

"She was the perfect person for the job," Wolfe told the Weekly News. "She was a tremendous team player who was always willing to help even if it was outside of her area. She was such a good fit for us."

And judging from the applause Telford received at the end of her museum presentation, Wolfe's appraisal was quite fitting.

Ceremony

Conner Middle and High School Principal Christine Tripp. Superintendent Will Nelson formally presented the class and Buher called class members forward to receive their diplomas. Each graduate enjoyed his or her personal cheer section, perhaps none louder than that enjoyed by student musician Ian McCormick. "Rock and roll, Ian!" a voice yelled out as McCormick was handed his diploma. Afterward, the Swinomish Canoe Family treated the class to an honor song, for which the audience stood. "We're so honored to be invited to share our song with all the graduates of the Class of '23," Swinomish Tribal Senator and Cultural Events Director Aurelia Bailey said prior to the presentation. "We pray the next steps on their walk will be blessed and successful. "We have prayers for everybody and those family members who couldn't be here," Bailey added, then noted the

unique circumstances the class and staff overcame during the pandemic.

"Their lives have been something no one could've imagined," she said. "We thank this staff for its dedication and for taking care of these students."

Haley, the student body president, elaborated upon the singularity of the class's sojourn.

"This class is unique," she stressed. "Life has thrown us some curveballs with the pandemic and tragedies. But we've also had great triumphs. We've made our mark on this school."

The La Conner High volleyball team's run of state

MoNA

and, poof, the total quickly grew above \$100,000.

The live auction started with Diana Klein having the winning Golden Ticket, one of 100 sold at \$100 each. She chose Paul Havas' untitled northwest landscape, a 12" x 40" oil on canvas painted in 2012 with an estimated value of \$3,800, donated by Margaret Miller.

The evening's big ticket item was Guy Anderson's "Floating Figure," mixed media on board, 61" x 61" painted in 1976. Valued at \$38,000, the bidding started at \$15,000, rose above \$20,000 and sold at \$25,000. It was donated by the estate of Dr. Saul Spiro.

Auctioneer Lindsay reprised his role of horserace announcer, again selling works in sets of three. It did not matter if bidders were in the main gallery or online. All used the online cell phone app. Lindsay hyped, prodded and encouraged bidders in what he termed two minute segments but went longer as he patiently worked to increase final offers by prolonging the time, saying once "I am going to count down in more real time, starting with five seconds to go. Only three second so go. A very long three seconds." Then, finally, "sold." Another time he insisted "You have one very long second. You have less than one second."

Bidding started online June 2 and ended at 8 p.m. June 11 for the silent auction. The show opened for previewing May 26.

Before the live auction started, a video tribute recognized longtime museum director Susan Parke, who died in March. Parke was executive director from 1990 to 2007, beginning her tenure while the museum was still in Gaches Mansion.

Videos through the evening recognized programs and people. The 31st Art Auction Honorees Patricia Christine Aqimuk Paul, Esq. and Candice Wilson, Quatz'tenaut, co-curators of last year's exhibit, "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

Town Hall closed Monday

La Conner Town Hall will be closed Monday, June 19 in observance of the Juneteenth holiday.

titles, a string that began in 2018 and was interrupted only by cancellation of the 2020 state tournament due to COVID-19 is an example she cited.

"Now," said Haley, "we're ready to kick-start our next phase of life."

But not before reflecting nostalgically on the past four years.

"I couldn't have asked for a better class," Haley insisted, "to have grown up with."



THIS WAS ONE OF 30 ITEMS SOLD THROUGH LIVE BIDDING AT THE 31ST ANNUAL MONA AUCTION – Saturday night, art handler Lucy Mae VanZanden held up the "Frog Bowl," bronze, no date, created by sculptor Ann Morris, before the bidding for it started. Mary Rytand bought it for \$2,000. – Photo by Ken Stern

and Girls: Honoring Our Stolen Sisters." In introducing Wilson, Executive Director Stefano Catalani called the exhibit "an incredible experience for the museum to collaborate with these two talented curators." In the program notes he called it one of the most important highlights of the past year. Wilson spoke to the group live.

Also highlighted were the educational programs and the museum's docents.

The evening was scaled back from the pre-COVID-19 years, which kicked-off with a Friday night preview and had the auction start with a sit-down dinner in a huge tent set up in the parking lot on Second Street. The last two years it has been billed as "pre-dinner," starting at 4 p.m. with hors d'oeuvres, wine and the noted oyster bar, finishing

up with desserts anchored by chocolate covered strawberries.

Monday evening the museum posted social media of the total and photos.

Catalani echoed those remarks, in an email: "It was truly a magical night for MoNA! I want to personally thank everyone who attended in person and those who joined us from around the world. Kudos to the Board of Trustees and the indefatigable staff for delivering such an amazing performance!"

He noted the amount raised bested 2022's \$320,000, making 2023 perhaps the second largest auction result of the past 15 years.

Tickets to attend were \$100 or \$250 for patrons funding artists attending.

Skagit River Poetry annual auction

The Skagit River Poetry Foundation is hosting their third annual auction, "A Midsummer Night's Dream" June 24 at Hillcrest Lodge in Mount Vernon. Doors open at 5 p.m. Tickets are \$70 per person or \$125 per couple. Buy your tickets at skagitriverpoetry.org. Source: Skagit River Poetry



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POLICE BLOTTER

SKAGIT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Sunday, June 4

8:07 p.m.: Utility pole crash – One vehicle non-injury collision. The driver lost control of her vehicle and crashed into a utility pole. Fir Island Rd., Greater La Conner.

Wednesday, June 7

3:41 a.m.: Suspicious flashing car – Report of a dark colored sport utility vehicle driving around the area of the La Conner Marina with its flasher on. Law enforcement checked the area, and the vehicle already left. Pearle Jensen Way, La Conner.

6:48 a.m.: Candy thief – A male entered the Pioneer Market and took a candy bar without paying for it. The suspect was described as a white male, approximately in his 50's with a scraggly beard. He came to

the store on a bicycle with a trailer behind it. The male left the store and the area before being identified. Morris St., La Conner.

10:54 a.m.: Concerning voice-mails – A citizen reported receiving strange messages from an unknown source on her voicemail. The messages were not threatening but concerning. They blocked the number to prevent it from occurring in the future. McLean Rd., Greater La Conner.

Thursday, June 8

8:19 p.m.: Saving an animal – The driver of a vehicle traveling northbound swerved to miss an animal in the roadway and collided with a guardrail. The driver was not injured. Bay View Edison Rd., Greater La Conner.

MARINA MOORINGS

Port of Skagit

The docks are super busy this week with crab boats. There is a commercial opener going on and the activity is frenetic on the commercial pier. The buyers have six people on hand and a forklift to keep up with deliveries. We only have a few of these days per year, but they are so busy they really leave an impression.

The marina used to have a lot more commercial fishing vessels than it does now, but time has changed the industry and our moorage customer base has changed as well. We have two purse seiners who call the marina home, but only the two. We still have over 35 other fishing boats, most of which are out crabbing this week, but which also go out for halibut, salmon, geoducks, shrimp, prawns, urchins – whatever fish are available. Even though the boats have changed, these fishermen remain a link to the history of La Conner, and they are part of the fisheries management system that will hopefully see them working out of this marina forever.

Safety Reminder: We had an incident this week with a tenant's electricity. All was fine until the boater put a load on the connection by running the microwave and a hair dryer at the same time. It turns out that he had a loose connection that wasn't readily apparent. The plug looked all right from the outside, but the increased load produced enough of an internal arc that the plug and receptacle both had, shall we say, a melting moment together. He reacted quickly and turned off everything immediately, preventing any further damage. One new cord and a rebuilt receptacle, and all is now well thankfully. The moral of the story is to check your electrical connections often and make sure they are solid. Also, replace your boat's electrical cord every few years. It's a small investment in safety that can keep you alive.

Finally, I have received some really nice compliments about the marina staff this week, and I have to say ... keep them coming! Thanks to everyone who had something nice to say about our fantastic summer crew. I think they're fabulous, too.

See you on the Channel!

— Chris Omdal, *harbormaster*

Clam garden work day Monday part of Salish Summit at Swinomish

By Bill Reynolds

Moving several tons of rocks and boulders by hand and dolly at Kukutali Preserve on Swinomish Reservation last week inched the local tribal community ever closer to a significant milestone.

A large work party did the heavy lifting to extend rock walls that create terraces in tidal flats to optimize clam production and increase species diversity at the site of the nation's first developing modern clam garden.

The assembly line was comprised of Swinomish members and staff plus representatives of nearly three dozen Pacific region tribes here to attend the multi-day Salish Summit.

Participants also spent time exploring area waters, learning about other stewardship efforts led by neighboring tribes and organizations and enjoying traditional meals prepared by Swinomish cooks.

The June 5 gathering in warm, sunny conditions at Kukutali – privately owned for eight decades before a landmark 2010 agreement allowed Swinomish and the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission to co-own and co-manage the pristine 84 acres for public use – was the summit's highlight.

Sought at various times as location of a commercial summer resort or nuclear power plant, Kukutali enjoys revered status with the Swinomish.

Generations ago, seasonal villages were established there to harvest plants and food. Clams were a key item on the natural menu, noted Joe Williams, a former Swinomish Tribal Senator now serving as the community's shellfish liaison through the tribe's fisheries department.

"This project goes back to the original stories of how these clam gardens work," he said. "It's important that we have to be good stewards here. To be in this place today, I feel full. I feel awesome."

Williams paid tribute to the late Lorraine Loomis, of Swinomish, who chaired the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission prior to her death



BUILDING A ROCK GARDEN ONE STONE AT A TIME – When hundreds gather together, best to plan a work party. That is what the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community did June 5 at Kukutali Preserve. Hours were spent together, fire brigade fashion, moving rocks from Kukutali beach to the shoreline.

– Photo by Bill Reynolds

in 2021. Williams credited Loomis with envisioning the rebirth of a clam garden at Kukutali.

"She lived for this," Williams said. "She wanted to make sure the next seven generations would be able to carry on our way of life."

"If you saw her in her free time," he added, "she was at the beach. It was her way of life. Lorraine didn't get to witness the start of our garden here, but we know she's with us in spirit."

Williams praised the foresight of former Swinomish Senate Chair Brian Cladoosby and his leadership team for partnering with the state to return Kukutali to public access. When the park was dedicated in 2010 the honored dignitaries included then-Gov. Christine Gregoire.

Swinomish Tribal Senate Vice-Chair Alana Quintasket likewise stressed the importance of tribal and public access at Kukutali.

"Welcome to our beautiful homelands," Quintasket said in remarks to Salish Summit participants. "I'm obsessed with them."

"But," she added, "I didn't get to come here until I was 18-years-old. We weren't allowed to come here because it was owned privately. I'm so uplifted, so happy to be able to come back to this place."

Quintasket offered a bilingual

invocation in Lushootseed and English before dismissing the work party to the beach.

The Salish Summit was a key gathering of the Cross-Pacific Indigenous Aquaculture Collaborative, a project co-developed by Swinomish, Washington Sea Grant and other tribes, nations and organizations in Washington, British Columbia, Alaska, Hawaii, Palau and Guam.

"The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community is excited to bring together indigenous communities across the Pacific and Coast Salish waters and celebrate indigenous marine management," Swinomish Environmental Policy Director Amy Trainer said in a release issued prior to the Summit.

She said the gathering was designed to share teachings about caretaking tidelands and the relationships that are central to indigenous aquaculture and food sovereignty.

Quintasket focused on the camaraderie evident as the assembly line formed and volunteers began tilling the clam garden's bed.

"These are my favorite kinds of days," she said, "where we can all work together."

SUMMER CRAFT FAIR



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