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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Wine, gardens, mermaids and more can be found at the Westport Winery. See page 10.

COASTAL *Currents* MAGAZINE

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Cover: Kim Roberts, owner of the Westport Winery Garden Resort. Photo by Rick Moyer.

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Inside summer issue

Grays Harbor poets, musicians, actors, artists keep creating

After more than a year of being closed-in and cloistered, the warmer summer weather and opportunity for outdoor entertainment and activities leaves us with optimism that our world is slowly getting back to normal in the wake of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

As you can imagine, publishing a magazine celebrating art, music, theater and food in Grays Harbor has certainly been a challenge this last year when quarantine rules necessitated the shutdown of plays, concerts, art shows, museums and many restaurants, as well as the cancellation of much-anticipated festivals and celebrations.

Still, reporting on creative people gave us a leg up. Not even a world-wide pandemic can stop artists from producing art, musicians from making music, writers from writing and actors from honing their art. And it certainly can't stop art lovers from appreciating creativity!

For some artists, their creativity genius turned to exploring new ways and mediums through which the audiences could experience the creations – virtual concerts, drive-in celebrations, outdoor performances, online Q and A's about the creative process and more. For other creatives, the year served as a sort of sabbatical to nurture their own creative process, take a break, delve into new genres, or just create, create, create and simply wait to share their passion with others once it was easier to do so!

Mermaid Museum

Photo by Marguerite Garth



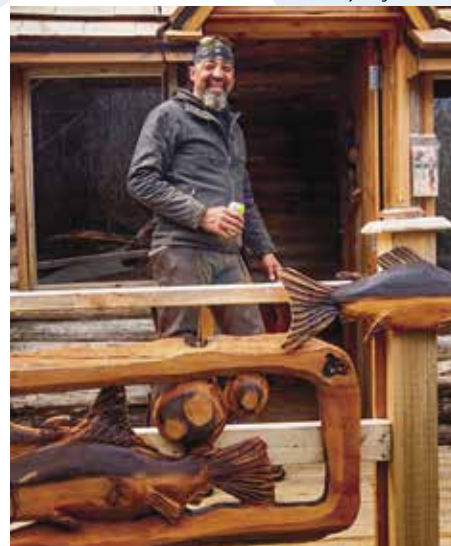
Not even a world-wide pandemic can stop artists from producing art, musicians from making music, writers from writing and actors from honing their art. And it certainly can't stop art lovers from appreciating creativity!

And while many restaurants, galleries, museums, theaters and concert halls took a financial hit during this time, we predict a great resurgence in their popularity after people realize, after a near starvation diet, how much the arts inspire and feed their souls.

(So, before we go forward, we want to look back and thank all of our advertisers for allowing us to continue

Tony Robinson, chainsaw carver.

Photo by Marguerite Garth



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The good news is that things really are opening back up again!

At press time for this summer issue, however, some uncertainty still exists about whether society will close down tighter again for a season. Thankfully, we've selected stories about people and places that should be accessible regardless of quarantine concerns.

Let's start with our cover story on the Westport Winery Garden Resort. If you travel on Highway 105, you can't miss the oasis that Kim and Blain Roberts have built halfway between Westport and Aberdeen. There's even a lighthouse to show you the way! Either before or after a meal, a bakery treat or a glass of wine, take time to stroll the well-designed gardens filled with both whimsical and reflective sculptures. Or, play one of the many outdoor games available for adults and children. You may want to also explore the recently opened mermaid museum!

(Continued on page 9)

Photo by Rick Moyer





NORTH COVE

BAR and GRILL

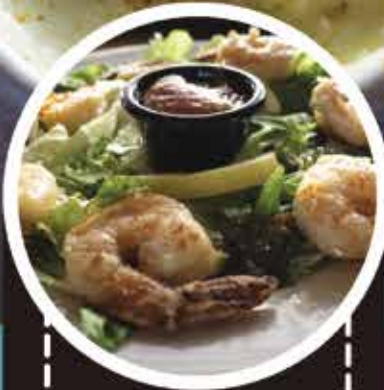


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Summer (Continued)



This issue of *Coastal Currents* also features the personalities and lore of area chainsaw artists. Read about Tony Robinson and the close-knit community of area chainsaw carvers.

Rex Valentine is a well-known name on the Harbor, especially in East County. Learn more about this musician and internationally acclaimed poet. His books are available via his website or can be checked out through the Timberland Library.

Music and faith are the lifeblood of

pianist Bill Brown, who not only follows a centuries-old tradition of using his talent within the church, but also enjoys playing for local theater as well as training up the next generation of musicians.

This issue of *Coastal Currents* also introduces you to the area's craft breweries. A cool glass on a warm day is appreciated by many – and we were aware that many of these breweries offered outside seating, both pleasant in the summer and helpful during pandemics!

We've also carefully gathered the information for upcoming events into our *Coastal Currents* events calendar, which begins on page 43. However nowadays especially, it goes without saying – but we will anyway – please check websites, including ours at www.coastal-currents.com, for up-to-date schedule information.

Photo by Rick Moyer



Bill Brown

Speaking of which, do you have information about an upcoming festival, play, concert, art show, or food-related event? Please submit it to *Coastal Currents* for consideration to be included in our online calendar and/or fall issue. Just e-mail all the particulars to eventmanager@coastal-currents.com.



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AWARD-WINNING Westport Winery CONTINUES SPECTACULAR GROWTH

Photo by Marguerite Garth

BY MARGUERITE GARTH

With more than 500 medals for their wine, a “Top Five Winery Restaurants” awarded twice by USA Today for their restaurant, rave reviews for their lovely gardens replete with art, an extensive gift shop and a new distillery, the Westport Winery Garden Resort has become a “place to go to” not just for Grays Harbor residents, but also for people throughout Washington State.

And if that isn’t enough to entice you to visit the winery, perhaps you’d be interesting in visiting the latest addition: a unique mermaid museum that opened this spring.

Kim and Blain Roberts, along with their daughter Carrie, have turned 20 acres of unwanted and undeveloped land halfway between Westport and Aberdeen along State Route 105 into a top-tier American destination.

A force to be reckoned with, Kim Roberts describes herself as “an architect, developer and seat-of-the-pants entrepreneur.” Each new creative addition to the Westport Winery Resort has brought accolades and financial success for her and her family, but her life has not always been so sweet.

Photos (left & above) by Rick Meyer



Owner Kim Roberts





When Kim moved to Westport as a 17-year-old, she tried unsuccessfully to hire on as a deckhand. She was admonished that “girls don’t work on boats.” Undeterred, she found a captain who would try her out for no pay. She worked as a maid and lived in a trailer when the boat docked until she proved herself to be indispensable and was hired as a fulltime deckhand. With what she earned, Kim was able to put herself through college, where she earned dual degrees in architectural science and architecture.

“Although there were few women working on boats in those days, for those of us who gave it a try, we were able to prove ourselves and find tremendous opportunities as a result,” she says. “Those were the best days of my life and they changed the course of my life. I will forever be grateful.”

It was in Westport that Kim met Blain Roberts in 1988. He owned a diving business in Maui and convinced her to marry him and move to the island, but she “made him promise” that they would someday return to her beloved Harbor. Seventeen years and many successful ventures later, the Roberts purchased the land in 2005 and the rest, as they say, is history.

“We harvest grapes from our favorite vineyards in Eastern Washington, drive them over the mountains, crush, press, ferment, filter and bottle all of them here.”

– Kim Roberts

The Wines

When the Roberts acquired the Arbor Road property, their original plan was to grow blueberries or Christmas trees. Fortuitously, they consulted with former WSU Master Gardener Don Tapio before advancing. He deemed that a small farm such as theirs could only survive if they sold directly to the consumer. He told them, “Plant a vineyard and build a winery. It will be historic.”

Since neither Kim nor Blain really drank, they were skeptical, but Tapio was convinced the couple had the tools needed to be successful and the wine-making was something that could be learned. Many mentors have played a hand in forming the extensive wine list now available at the winery and from the onset a wine consultant has been on retainer. Currently 42 different wines are available for purchase.

And, while the vineyards they originally planted have now been replaced with extensive gardens, all the wine is made on the property.

“We harvest grapes from our favorite vineyards in Eastern Washington, drive them over the mountains, crush, press, ferment, filter and bottle all of them here,” Kim explains.

Connoisseurs may want to look into joining the winery’s wine club. Membership is free and comes with complimentary tasting of five pours in the tasting room for a member and four guests, as well as discounts on wine and gift shop items. Members receive two bottles of wine per quarter based on the club they sign up for, but exchanges are allowed.

Not only are the award-winning wines sumptuous but the labels are also striking. Blain’s surfing partner, Darryl Easter from California, contributed numerous labels that are beautifully



Photo by Rick Moyer

water colored. Other labels are created from artwork from local artists including Wally Mann, Dr. Brian McGregor and Barbara Sampson. Kim also created the artwork for several of the labels herself.

The Sea Glass Grill

Westport Winery Garden Resort draws even those who don't enjoy wine. Many come just to experience a relaxed meal at the inviting restaurant or pick up dessert to enjoy during a picnic on the beach.

"We named the restaurant the Sea Glass Grill, not because it is seafood, but because we love the treasures of the sea," says Kim of the lovely dining room overlooking the gardens.

The award-winning restaurant includes some seafood entrees but also homemade breads and tempting desserts. Brunch is served all day.

Ocean's Daughter Distillery

Just before Covid-19 hit, the Roberts opened a distillery at the resort. Kim and daughter Carrie had traveled around the country researching different

distilleries and came away feeling inspired. Kim approached this challenge with the same creativity and "seat-of-the-pants" entrepreneurship that is her hallmark and the distillery has taken off.

The majority of the ingredients used in the spirits are locally sourced. In addition, fruits and botanicals from the winery's own gardens are used to infuse the spirits.

"We learned early that our guests enjoy variety," says Blain. And variety they do indeed have with nine different imaginatively infused vodkas, a variety of liqueurs, and an assortment of whiskies, gins and rums.

Guests can enjoy inventive cocktails as they dine that are created from the infused spirits and other interesting ingredients such as the "Lavender Drop,"

crafted from the Purple Reign lavender lemon gin, lavender infusion, lemonade, and lavender seeds. Another option is ordering a martini tasting flight.

Kim designed the glass-walled distillery tasting addition in a "goldfish bowl" shape, which is adjacent to the restaurant.

The room shimmers as the light reflects off the colored glass bottles and the gorgeous labels all created from her artwork. Each spirit is distinctively named from a mermaid or seafaring legends of yore.

The Gardens

Designed to resemble a Coast Guard station, the winery features a 40-foot lighthouse nestled in 15 acres of bucolic gardens. The gardens feature more than 60 original sculptures by local artists commemorating each of the winery's labels as well as different garden themes.

"We learned early that our guests enjoy variety."

– Blain Roberts

Owner Blain Roberts serves wine in the tasting room.

Photos by Rick Moyer: left column and top two in middle column.

Sculpture by Jeffro Uitto and Yoseph Adams.





For example, the world famous grunge rock band, Nirvana has a wine label that is commemorated by a large driftwood replica of Kurt Cobain's guitar created by Tokeland artist Jeffro Uitto.

In addition to Uitto, other artists whose sculptures are displayed in the sprawling gardens include Yoseph Adams, Sherryl Jackson, Frank Ratte, Kim Malakoff, Nicole Demment, Mark Simbe, Mike Peterson, Peggy Kala Hubacker, Lora Malakoff, Carrie Larson, Abe Singer, Lisa Humbyrd Murphy, Beau Finley, Warren Heathers, Ernest Kunz, Kimmi Kerns, Tyler Hansen, Travis Highlander, Johnny and Darlene Camp, and David Thompson.

In the gardens, as well as enjoying all the flowers, plants and sculptures, guests can navigate a labyrinth, toss some horseshoes, play a game of wizard chess, take on nine holes in the free orchard golf course or play the unique disc golf course, which includes "holes" that create musical tones when hit. There is something for everyone to enjoy – even pets. Leashed dogs can roam the dog garden and children love to play on the musical fence.

The Mermaid Museum

As if there weren't enough to see and do already at Westport Winery Garden Resort, in April the International Mermaid Museum was added.

The museum explores the mythological creatures that have appeared in folklore around the world for thousands of years. Some stories include these beautiful beings luring men to their death while others tell of mermaids rescuing shipwrecked men.

As a longtime diver, Kim has felt a bond

with mermaids. She says, "I even swim with the mermaid kick when I dive." Growing up she says, "I either wanted to be a lighthouse keeper or be a mermaid," and she has come close to achieving both goals.


The International Mermaid Museum's mission is "to teaching ocean ecology from seashore to sea floor immersed in mermaid mythology unifying oceanic cultures."

"We're pairing mermaid mythology with ocean ecology," with the goal of making the museum more "approachable for kids and informative for adults." Kim says. "I thought that we've had this wonderful life working on the ocean and in the ocean, and a lot of people don't have the opportunity to do that. We wanted to share that underwater experience."

The museum includes informative displays interspersed with mermaid mannequins floating overhead. Check the website for scheduled live mermaid performances.

As the museum's founder, Kim says she heard the siren's call to create the museum after undergoing cancer treatment. "Four years ago, it started to matter to me what I was leaving," she says. "We didn't know if I would still be here today. This is my legacy."

With enthusiasm and creativity still radiating from her and a winery, distillery, gift shop, restaurant, extensive gardens and now a museum successfully underway, one can't help but wonder what new creative endeavor Kim and Blain might think up next!

For more information about Westport Winery Garden Resort, explore the website at www.westportwinery.com or call (360) 648-2224. Open 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. 

Update: Fire destroys distillery
The distillery at Westport Winery Garden Resort was destroyed by fire May 15. Initial reports indicated that no one was hurt, no cause was known, and that the Roberts plan to rebuild the facility. The resort remains open for daily business.



Sculpture by Yoseph Adams.

Photo by Marguerite Garth



Live mermaid at museum grand opening.

Photo by Marguerite Garth



Photo by Rick Moyer

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Rex Valentine:

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Storyteller, poet, musician and Harbor historian

STORY & PHOTOS
BY JULIANA WALLACE

Rex Valentine wrote his first poem, an ode to SPAM, 83 years ago. Now 87 years old, the Elma resident continues writing poetry and composing music.

"I'm just trying to keep everything going," he added with a chuckle, "At my age, it doesn't go like I planned, but I've sure had fun along the way."

A gifted storyteller, poet and musician, Valentine grew up in the Wynoochee Valley on a primitive dairy farm. His father taught him the value of hard work, and his mother saw to his education, teaching him to read at the age of three. Both parents instilled in their children a lifelong love of music.

*"... I've sure had
fun along the way."*

– Rex Valentine

Days began early on the farm, with Rex and his brother Randy milking cows to the beat of the songs they sang while they worked. Those early rhythms spilled into hundreds of poems through the years, as Rex turned his

(Continued on page 16)

Rex Valentine *(Continued)*

experiences into verse. His poetry captures the stories of his childhood for his grandchildren and preserves a rich history of Western Washington in the first half of the twentieth century.

Valentine credits his Montesano High School English teacher, John Terry, with cementing his interest in writing poetry. However, other concerns soon intervened, and poetry fell to the back burner.



Preserve Beauty

The little pansy poked its pretty face up through the concrete crevice on the walk. It's singleness of purpose filled the space, a tiny crack made for one spindly stalk. Now why would nature send its beauty queen to grace a graying path of cement stone, where careless feet its royalty dethrone?

The Lord of beauty, love, and elegance, is not particular where sows his seeds. A drab and dingy place he might enhance with lovely flowers 'mid the grisly weeds.

So little purple pansy hold your ground. May beauty be a beacon to your place, that all who pass go carefully around and see the smile upon your pretty face.

– Rex Valentine

Valentine married young, eventually raising a blended family of 11 children. He built several successful careers through the years, including real estate and dairy farming. Along the way, he grew proficient at dowsing, the practice of using divining rods to locate water for digging wells.



Above: In addition to writing several volumes of poetry, Valentine is also a gifted vocalist and composer.

Right: Over the decades, Valentine has built a reputation as a proficient dowser, with a 95 percent success rate at finding water for wells.

Music accompanied Valentine throughout his adult life. In addition to composing, he has sung for audiences across the Pacific Northwest. In fact, he sang baritone in a barbershop quartet that won a national championship in 1963, and also sang the national anthem at local sports events for 45 years.

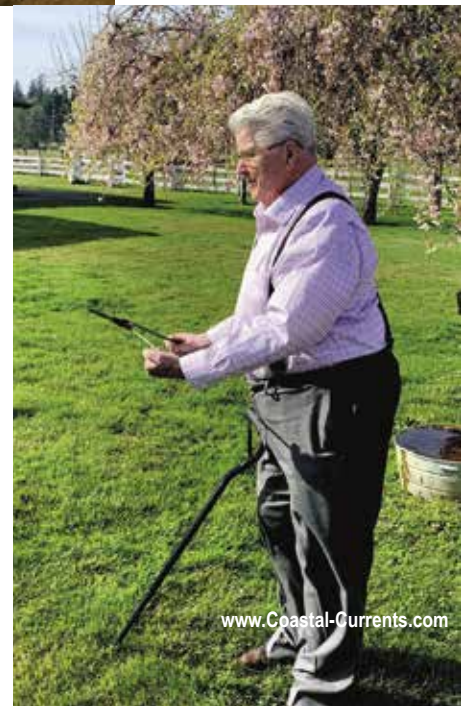
Then, in 2002, Valentine's mother passed away, and he discovered that

“In a poem, you can say as much in one line as you can say in a whole page of a story.”

– Rex Valentine

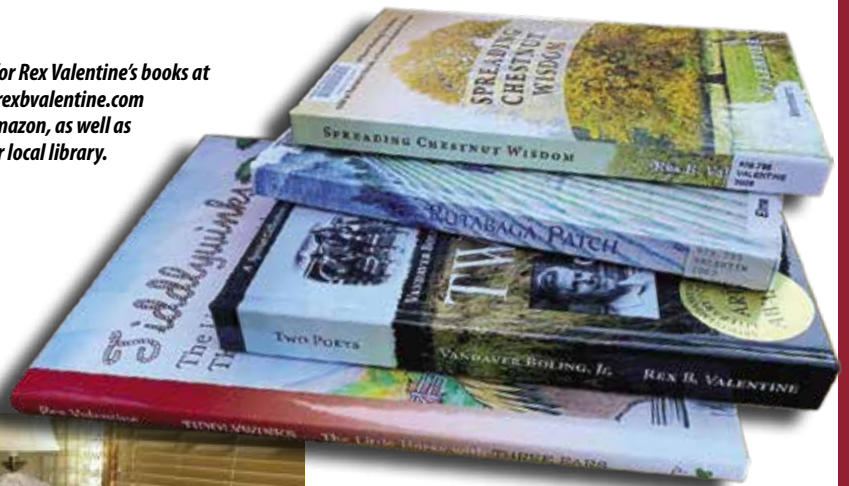
she had carefully saved his early poems. He began writing again, entering poetry contests and eventually publishing six books of poetry and stories. Intent on honing his craft, he enrolled in a college poetry writing class in his sixties. The additional polish did the trick, and he started winning national and international contests.

By 2004, Valentine earned induction into the World Congress of Poets, an international organization dedicated to promoting world brotherhood and peace through poetry.





Look for Rex Valentine's books at www.rexvalentine.com and Amazon, as well as at your local library.



Wildflowers and Love (Sonnet #24)

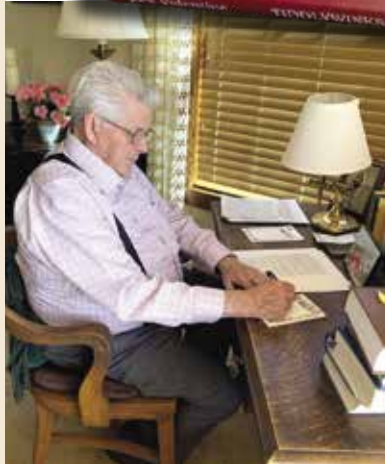
A prairie harbors treasures found in spring.
Its see-through grassy dress will come alive
with Nature's own corsage; a lovely thing,
whose brill'ant colors suddenly arrive.

The yellow Johnny jump-ups set the pace.
The violets and bluebells follow suit.
Wild strawberry's white blossoms fill the space
where later, one can pick its sweet red fruit.

Nostalgically, my grandmother I see,
she's stooping down, her apron spreading wide
enveloping the flowers picked for me.
Her sparkling eyes meet mine with love and pride.

Oh prairie, take me back to long lost joy,
To Grandma's love, and flowers for this boy.

– Rex Valentine



Valentine has written several volumes of award-winning poetry, a children's book, a book on dowsing and numerous songs.

in one line as you can say in a whole page of a story."

And those verses do spin wonderful tales, from dragsaw days to weeding the rutabaga patch, trapping skunks and resurrecting an old Model T Ford. Along the way, the reader meets a delightful cast of characters, falling into the rhythm of a life lived to its fullest.

(Continued on page 18)

He still serves on the board of the organization and was featured as the guest poet of the 2014 conference in Osaka, Japan.

As a poet, Valentine writes a broad range of poetic forms, from long narrative poems to sonnets, villanelles and hsinku verses (a Chinese form similar to haiku).

His folksy, often humorous, style draws the audience in, enchanting listeners of all ages. While many of his poems recount stories, he explains that he chose poetry over prose because "poetry is much more to the point, more refined. In a poem, you can say as much

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Rex Valentine (Continued)

From Belt to Suspenders

(Sonnet #9)


My belt size is increasing
as I am growing older.
I'm really not obesing,
just narrowing my shoulders.

But now my pants are dragging;
my belt is at a tilt.
So I have stopped all bragging
about how well I'm built.

I think I'll wear suspenders;
they'll give me peace of mind,
and when I'm doing benders
you won't see my behind.

Does it really matter
if I keep getting fatter?

— Rex Valentine

To discover Valentine's work, check out his website at www.rexbvalentine.com. In addition to several books of poetry and a volume on dowsing, he has also written an acclaimed children's story, "Tiddlywinks, the Little Horse with Three Ears." 

Do you have information about an upcoming festival, play, concert, art show, or food-related event?

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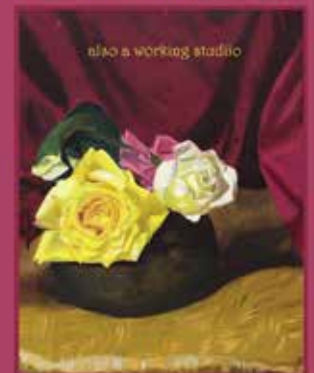
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Explore Harbor craft breweries this summer

STORY & PHOTOS BY MARGUERITE GARTH

Drawn by the attractive real estate prices and affordable rents, six great craft breweries operate now in Grays Harbor and Pacific counties. Breweries need quite a lot of space to operate, space that would be prohibitive in pricier parts of Washington, especially for a small start-up operation.

One common thread for the local brewery owners is a passion for their craft. Some of the owners work full-time jobs in other fields to afford to maintain

Windows look into the brewery equipment room from the interior of the pub at Mount Olympus Brewing.



the brewery. Another thread is that several started as home brewers who developed a fan base and decided to show their skills on a more public stage. Third, most of the breweries give back to the community by holding events and fundraisers and by buying local.

If you haven't had a chance to visit yet, here are our local craft breweries:

Orlando Maldonado of Mount Olympus Brewing in front of the fermenter and a beer tank.



Mount Olympus Brewing est. 2018
105 W. Heron Street, Aberdeen
 Open 2-7:30 Monday - Thursday, 2 -10 Friday, noon to 10 Saturday, 11 to 6:30 Sunday.

Orlando Maldonado, head brewer and part owner, started as a home brewer in 2012. He says, "I enjoy cooking, so it's like cooking for eight hours" ... and then waiting for four weeks "before you can even try it."

The home brewing became an obsession that he wanted to turn into a career. Along with partner James Lundgren, Maldonado sought out investors who have turned into an "all-star team who believe in the product and the brand," and the brewery became a reality.

There are innovative beers and ales on tap with most of the flavors and ingredients coming from local sources, such as malts from Skagit Valley barley and coffee from Ocean Beach Roasters for a coffee-infused beer. No food is available as of yet but plans are in the works to make the back-parking lot a restaurant venue with a fire pit and music. Maldonado says, "My hope is

(Continued on page 22)

Breweries *(Continued)*

that the hard work and dedication to this endeavor shows in every smell and sip of Mount Olympus Brewing beer.”

Steam Donkey Brewing Co. est. 2017
101 E. Wishkah Street, Aberdeen
Open 3-8 Monday - Thursday; 3-9 Friday;
2-9 Saturday and 10-5 Sunday.

The owners of the brewery, John and Stephanie Bennett, are both Aberdeen High School graduates. Their mission says: “Steam Donkey focuses on brewing relaxed and inquisitive beer in a friendly environment. The bar is open to share our passion for beer and welcome curious spectators.”

John was working for another brewery when an opportunity arose for the storefront on Wishkah Street. The community pitched in to help with the project and the brewery opened its doors four years ago.

The location is too small for a kitchen so the Bennetts creatively solved that problem by parking a food truck on the side street next to the brewery, which has proved to be very popular. Patrons

Hoquiam Brewing Co. taps.

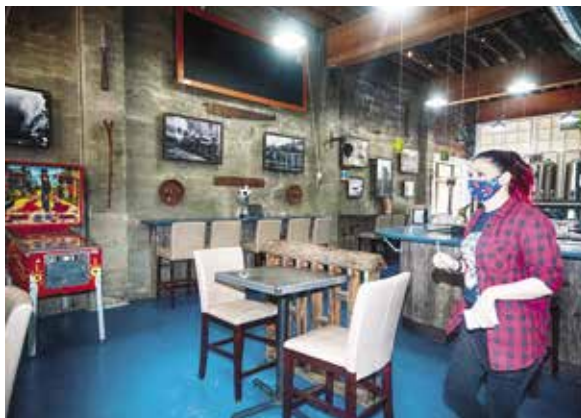
are welcome to bring their food inside to enjoy with their beer.

The on-tap selection is an impressive mix of British-type ales, house-brewed German lagers, along with some unusual blends, such as the Lavaduala Saison, which is a farmhouse ale brewed with a “touch of lavender.” The food truck is known for its sliders and tater tots.

Hoquiam Brewing Co. est. 2017
526 8th Street, Hoquiam
Open 11-8 Monday - Thursday, and 11-9 Friday and Saturday. Closed on Sunday.

Rob Paylor and Patrick Durney met while working at the Galway Bay Irish Pub in Ocean Shores. They formed a bond over their mutual love of beer. In 2013, they opened Mill 109 Restaurant & Pub at Seabrook. But what they both really wanted to do was to brew their own beer.

Hoquiam Brewing Co.'s 'industrial chic' renovated interior.



The men found an equipment manufacturer in Portland and a 1929 building in Hoquiam with “great bones” (formerly a grocery store and a senior center). And, in 2017, after a total rehab, they opened the brewery. They credit head brewer, Drew Granneman, with being a “wizard” and their first three beers, Hoquiam IPA, Boots & Shorts Blonde and Captain 12 Milk Stout have become “flagships.” There are other beers on tap to try as well as a couple of hand-crafted ciders. Pizza and sandwiches are served, and a kitchen and menu expansion is on the horizon.

John & Stephanie Bennett, owners of Steam Donkey Brewing Co. in Aberdeen.



Willapa Brewing Co. doors.

Wild Man Brewing est. 2019
 203 Duryea Street, Raymond,
 Open 4 - 8 Tuesday –Thursday, 4 - 9
 Friday, 11-9 Saturday and 11-7 Sunday.
 Closed Monday.

Wild Man Brewing is named for John Tornow “the Wild Man of the Wynoochee” an infamous historical outlaw from these parts. The brewery is located in Raymond and was founded by Ryan Porter and Cristian Dumitrescu, who met working at Ocean Spray and connected over their love of home brewing.

Porter is responsible for brewing the beer and Dumitrescu brews mead. Mead is brewed from honey and, if you have not tried it, it is very refreshing and delicious. Dumitrescu, who is originally from Romania, states “It’s a Romanian tradition to brew your own brews.” Wild Man meads are shipped all over the United States.

There are 16 handcrafted beers on tap, six meads, and a very extensive and popular menu of appetizers, burgers, “dawgs,” salads and sandwiches on offer. A variety of pizzas are served every

Willapa Brewing Co. tap list.



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Willapa Brewing Co. est. 2016
 405 Minnesota Avenue, South Bend
 Open daily from noon to 8 p.m.

Willapa Brewing Co. in South Bend and was founded by Cathy and Kevin McMurry in part to create local jobs and attract more tourism to the area. Kevin had been a home brewer for more than 20 years and says, “Friends

Wild Man Brewing beer and mead tanks.



pushed me into opening the brewery so they could buy my beer!” They opened a storefront in 2019 to serve food and attract families. Originally their menu consisted of eight pizzas but now 14 hand-crafted artisan pizzas are served, along with appetizers and desserts.

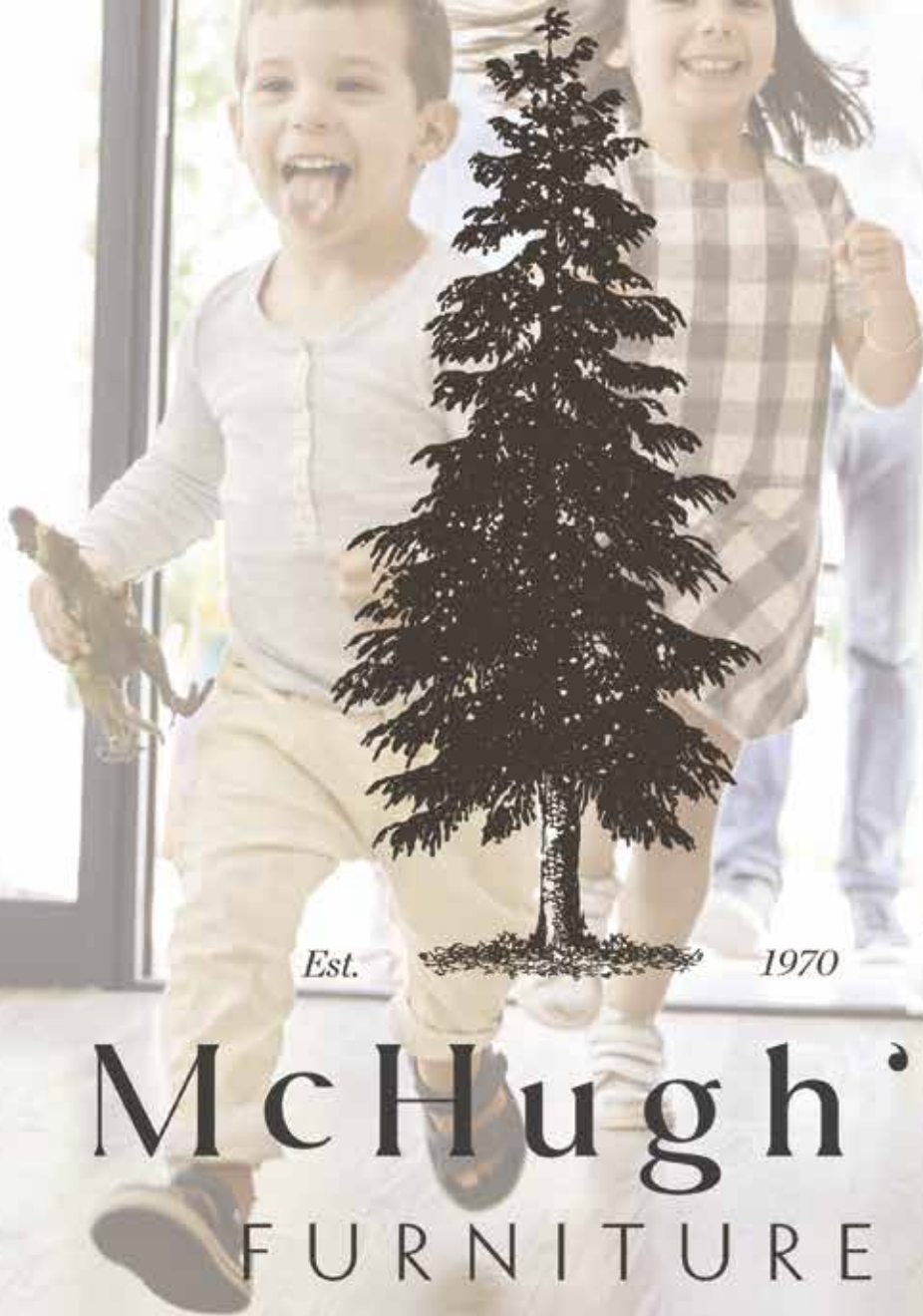
Thirteen handcrafted beers are on tap available in 4-ounce tasters, 10-ounce schooners, pints, growlers, and crowlers. A large outside patio is the perfect spot to enjoy the outdoors while sipping a great beer and eating pizza.

In addition to those listed above, check out a craft brewery on the South Beach:

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Chainsaw Artists



Chainsaw artists carve out a piece of Grays Harbor history

STORY CHRISTINE VINCENT
PHOTOS BY MARGUERITE GARTH

The fantastic creations of chainsaw carver Anthony Robinson easily catch the eye of passersby as they spy his Native Beach Art just off State Route 109 at Copalis Crossing.

Tony carves everything imaginable, from the customary bears, eagles, Sasquatches and horses to forest and sea creatures and mythical beings. His 15-foot Poseidon statue can be admired at the Seabreeze Gallery at Hogan's Corner.

Raised on a farm in Ohio, Tony built luxury homes for a living. However, when his marriage failed in 2011, he ended up in Westport, depressed and penniless. He began fashioning jewelry from beachcombed stones and sea glass.

One day, when he came across a large piece of driftwood, he felt the urge to carve it into a wolf.

"I bought a chainsaw and made a mess of it," he remembers. Having found his vocation, he has been chainsaw carving prolifically ever since, with growing skill and infectious enthusiasm.

In 2015, Tony opened his current shop in Copalis Crossing, where he has access to low-cost logs; something that is important, considering his penchant for large pieces.

One of his recent projects is a gigantic bar waterfall, carved from a hollow cedar "gun barrel" log. Loggers cannot use hollow trees but Tony's inventive mind has found a purpose for them. He has carved the outside, inserted water hoses all the way to the

*I bought a chainsaw
and made a mess of it.*

– Tony Robinson

top to create a waterfall and drilled holes into natural shelves to hold water plants. "The sound of the water falling in the cedar hollow is beautiful," he says.

In spite of Covid-19, Tony's Native Beach Art is doing well, with orders backed up, including a 13-foot Bigfoot waterfall.

Not only does Tony enjoy creating art himself, he plans to give back to the art community by providing rent-free

spaces on his property. He's already constructed one 8-foot-by-12-foot prototype cabin to house an artist.

Grays Harbor has rich carver history

Chainsaw carving art has a rich history in Grays Harbor. In fact, inside the Sooz Rusty Nail antique store in Ocean City is the home of the Judy McVay Museum of Chainsaw Carving.

Sooz Rusty Nail owners Sue Darcy and McNall Mason, tell the surprising story of a pioneering woman chainsaw artist, Judy McVay. McVay is the nearly forgotten creator of familiar North Beach landmarks such as the "Welcome to Ocean Shores" sign and the iconic Lake Quinault Lodge rain gauge. In addition, she collaborated with her brother Mike McVay on the Humptulips Cemetery sign. The small museum opened this year.

(Continued on page 28)



Anthony Robinson (pictured on facing page) is planning to house artists on his property in cabins like this prototype.

Chainsaw *(Continued)*

It was while “picking” antiques for the store a while back that Sue and McNall came across a beautiful discarded Copalis Beach Automotive sign, bearing the carver’s signature, Judy McVay.

“We discovered that Judy’s amazing carvings were everywhere, but that nobody remembered her,” says Sue. Judy is a great-grandmother today and is retired outside of Grays Harbor.

So, Sue and McNall have made it their mission to restore the memory of this amazing chainsaw carving pioneer. Sooz Rusty Nail displays two large murals carved by Judy. More items are to follow. The last surviving totem pole carved by the artist is soon to be installed in the store. In addition, the two folk historians have created a beautiful brochure with a self-guided tour of Judy’s work, and a kiosk in a corner of the store. Their eloquently written and well-researched history of Judy McVay and her chainsaw-carving clan is a labor of love, published on two websites: soozrustynail.com and carveorstarve.org.



Anthony Robinson with a smaller carving he created in collaboration with Carol Frances Senecal-Delu of Ocean Shores, an artist who does wood burning.

of the time. Judy soon was able to support her family by carving signs.

She created thousands of beautiful folk art signs, many of which can still be found on the coast today. Sooz Rusty Nail houses a magnificent, 19-foot mural from the former Neil’s Clover Patch restaurant in Langley, depicting foods set out on a long table.

“Judy was a painter before she began carving,”

explains Sue of the unique carving style. “She was also fascinated with stained glass. In this mural, she has recreated the look of stained glass.”

In addition to supporting her family with her art, Judy McVay made history as the first female chainsaw carver in Washington State. She baffled her male fellow carvers by routinely placing ahead of them in competitions.

“The guys at the Puyallup Fair used to dread her arrival, hoping she would not come,” says Sue. “She used to show up in her truck at the last minute.”

Judy’s daughter, Lynn, continued the tradition of female chainsaw artists and later even helped teach Tony Robinson to carve. And Judy’s sons, Steve and Boaz Backus, also followed the family tradition.

We discovered that Judy’s amazing carvings were everywhere ... Judy is a great-grandmother today and is retired outside of Grays Harbor.

– Sue Darcy

In 1969, Judy McVay and her itinerant logger husband Dick Backus divorced, leaving her stranded in Humptulips with three young children, Steve, Lynn and Boaz. In 1970, Judy’s chainsaw-artist brother Mike taught her how to carve with the heavy gas-powered saws

Anthony Robinson likes to finish his chain saw carvings with this selection of power tools.



A 'family' of carvers

Recently Tony Robinson was among the area chainsaw carvers to attend a fundraiser for Judy's son, Boaz Backus, a carver who was recovering from a heart attack.

Hosted by Ivan and Maria Haas, owners of the Ocean City Market Place, many carvers came to the aid of their fellow artist.



Judy McVay's Lake Quinault Lodge rain gauge is one of area's the most photographed landmarks.

Right: Judy McVay carved this eagle for the American Legion Post 141 where she served as women's auxiliary president. Below right: This stain glass-inspired mural by Judy McVay used to hang in Neil's Clover Park restaurant in Langley.

Among the roar of five or six running saws and a fragrant cloud of sawdust, Steve Backus could be seen using a propane burner to add black accents to the surface of an eagle sculpture. He created the eagle especially for the auction to benefit his brother. His display also includes older pieces, such as an animated elephant relief. A small sailboat on a curly sea, beautiful in its simplicity, shows that Steve, like his mother, has taken chainsaw carving from craft to the level of art.

At the fundraiser for his brother, Steve Backus shared some of his encyclopedic knowledge of chainsaw art history.

(Continued on page 31)



Photo courtesy of Judy McVay



Photo by Christine Vincent



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Chainsaw *(Continued)*

He talked about the arrival of the commercial chainsaw in the 1950s and about his uncle Mike McVay carving an Easter Island head at Eel Lake, Oregon, in 1956, which may have been the very first chainsaw carving.

The art of chainsaw carving may actually have been born right here in the Pacific Northwest. In his research, Steve has not been able to find any early chainsaw artists on the East Coast. The McVay-Backus family has certainly played a major role in the practice and promotion of the art of chainsaw carving.

Recuperating after his heart attack, Boaz's greatest worry is that he might not be able to carve anymore.

His brother Steve explains. "Carving is only part of the job. It's like a construction job, moving heavy pieces

Photos by Christine Vincent



The elephant is one of Steve Backus' favorite pieces.



This sailboat represents the characteristic folk style of Steve Backus.

and loading them onto trucks."

Thankfully, Boaz is also a gifted auctioneer. "He is the benchmark auctioneers measure themselves against," says Steve. "Boaz has raised

about \$650,000 (over the years). He has helped so many others, now we are helping him."

(Continued on page 32)



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There are two great opportunities to view and shop for chainsaw art this summer.

The Ocean Shores Sand and Sawdust Festival takes place June 25 to 27. There, 30 carvers will be creating a hundred sculptures. For more information, go to www.tourismoceanshores.com/sand-and-sawdust-2021.

Tokeland Wood & Arts Fest is scheduled for August 14 and 15 at the Tokeland Hotel. There will be chainsaw carving, wood artists, food vendors, and live music. For more information go to www.tokelandnorthcove.com



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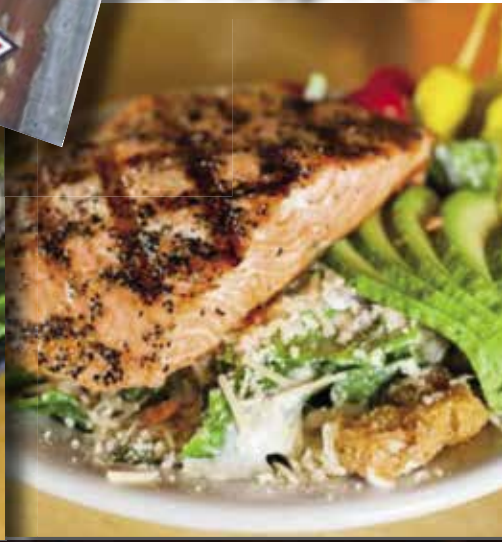
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Bill Brown, Pianist about Town

BY GREGORY E. ZSCHOMLER

You may have recently seen Bill Brown lending his piano chops to the Toons concert streamed by Grays Harbor College's Bishop Center for the Performing Arts. Or you may know him as the worship leader at Immanuel Baptist Church in Hoquiam. Perhaps you know him in another capacity—pastor, friend, teacher or family man. But if you know him at all, surely you know that the 41-year-old is a pianist extraordinaire.

"Bill is one of the most talented musicians I've ever played with, and yet still so humble," says singer/songwriter Ericka Corban. "He is fun to work with and has a genuine heart and love for people."

Bill grew up in Grays Harbor, attending Aberdeen schools, then moved away and returned. His story begins at a crossroad where church and music intersect, as they often do. He grew up hearing and playing hymns and classical music. The only secular music he says he really listened to was The Beatles.

Photo courtesy of Bill Brown



Bill performing on stage.

Photo by Rick Meyer

"Bill is one of the most talented musicians I've ever played with, and yet still so humble."
 —singer/songwriter Ericka Corban

It was in second grade, while attending Immanuel, that his mother signed him up for piano lessons with Judy Reynvaan who has taught, shaped and inspired a generation of Harbor pianists (including Bill's uncle Lew, who played about town, and musical theater pianist Alex Eddy).

Heart and Soul

In 1998, after high school, Bill attended the University of Southern California where he studied, not music, but international relations. It was there he discovered he didn't like politics.

"I was in a class about foreign relations with China during the year of the Al Gore versus George W. Bush presidential race," Bill says. Watching his classmates engage in an animated discussion. "It was then that I knew that I didn't care."

However, during his senior year at USC, he studied abroad in Hong Kong. There he discovered someone he was passionate about: Jesus.

"I had a real option to grow in my faith," he says. "God seemed to ask, 'Is your life about you or me?'"

(Continued on page 36)



Bill Brown, his wife Jacy and their two boys Emmett and Isaiah at the YMCA in Hoquiam.

Bill Brown *(Continued)*

After teaching Spanish for a year at Hoquiam High School, Bill decided to attend Western Seminary in Portland. There, “when passionate discussions happened in my theology class I did care.”

He earned his master’s in theology and lived in Oregon from 2003 to 2015. It was there that he met Jacy, now his wife of 13 years. They have two boys, Emmett and Isaiah.

In 2015 Bill returned to the Harbor when the church of his youth called him to be their associate pastor to lead worship. While he wears a lot of different hats at Immanuel, worship leading is the most visible one.

Play me a song, I’m the piano man

With 11 years of lessons under his belt, Bill still practices piano two hours nearly every day. And it shows.

“Bill’s skill level is straight out of heaven and his ability to just sit in and play

is priceless,” says Wil Russoul, local musician and downtown leader. “I can recall a performance at the Bishop Center where another act was late and I asked Bill to go out on stage and wow them. He did!”

“He’s a blessing to our community and his teaching piano to countless others no doubt will have a large beautiful impact to our Grays Harbor music world,” Wil says.

“Music brings joy,
and I like that.”
—Bill Brown



Photo courtesy of Bill Brown

Bill Brown

Bill notes that he almost quit piano in middle school. He says his mom outsmarted him though. She cited the years of lessons invested in him and told him he had to continue until his senior year in high school, then, if he still wanted, he could quit. As if his mom could see the future, around his junior year he fell in love with tickling the ivories.

By then music – especially church music – had become a deeply entrenched part of him. Since then he not only plays for Immanuel, but has played piano bars in the Olympia area, a local coffeehouse gig in Aberdeen, other local events and has even lent his talents to playing in the pit for the 7th Street Kids production of “Matilda” – something he would love to do again.

Bill now splits his time between Immanuel Baptist in Hoquiam and teaching at his Grays Harbor Piano Academy, 228 W. Market St., in Aberdeen, which he founded in September of 2019.

“Every single day I go into my studio I love it!” In the beginning he says, “I took a couple of students, now I have 50!”

“I don’t want to see parents in the position (my parents were in), fighting their kids over practice. I’m not just trying to teach kids music – I want to help kids love music.”

“The conversation is the same. It’s like scripted. I hear it over and over. People

(Continued on page 39)

Bill and fellow worship musicians play for a live-stream broadcast from Immanuel Baptist Church, in Hoquiam.



Photo by Carolyn Greer

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Bill Brown *(Continued)*

tell me, 'I used to play.' And I say, 'Oh, what happened?' And they say, 'Well, in junior high ...' And I ask, 'Did you ever pick it up again?' And they say, 'No, and it's the biggest mistake of my life.'"

Don't Shoot Me, I'm (not) Only the Piano Player

"I'm a pretty big nerd at heart," says Bill. "I collect film scores and soundtracks and trading cards."

Movie Music: John Williams is, hands down, Bill's favorite composer. He says, "I relive movies I've enjoyed through the soundtrack. I am always amazed at how the music alone can recreate the film in my mind." His first movie memory is from when he was four years old watching "Return of the Jedi" with his dad. He's loved Star Wars ever since.

Disney: A child of the 80s, he grew up watching the Disney Channel, visiting Disneyland several times with his family, and loving Disney's animated features of the 90s (including "Beauty and the Beast," "The Little Mermaid," "The Lion King," and "Aladdin").

"During my days at USC you could get an annual Disney park pass for \$200

Photo courtesy of Bill Brown



Bill teaches in his Aberdeen studio on Market Street.

without blackout dates." He says that for him and his classmates, "it was possibly an unhealthy escape from the pressures of life. We called it going to 'the goodness.'"

Gospel: At USC Bill got into urban/black gospel music. He joined the school's gospel choir and he says, "an entire other universe was opened up to me. My playing was very affected by that – how I play modern music, even hymns."

While urban/black gospel is a style all its own, it has developed over time from blues and jazz influences – the true American music – with its roots in island cultures and the spirituals of African-Americans. It has not only affected pop music but also the music of the Church.

Bill's eclectic influences and interests are reflected in his playful yet masterful music. His journeys and life experiences have taught him three things, he says.

One, "I'm so glad to be back here in Grays Harbor. It's just the greatest blessing."

Two, "Jesus is very real."

And, three, "Music brings joy, and I like that."

Bill Brown can be reached at Grays Harbor Piano Academy, 228 W. Market St. in Aberdeen, at bill@harborpiano.com or through his website: www.harborpiano.com 

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Some Harbor theaters scheduling summer and fall plays

BY GAIL GREENWOOD AYRES

It's awfully hard to perform live theater without a live audience, but the days of shuttered playhouse doors seems to be drawing to a close. Some area theaters have live performances scheduled for this summer or fall.

7th Street Kids

The 7th Street Kids program will present two different plays this summer by separate groups of kids.

The three-week workshop will present "Winnie-the Pooh KIDS," directed by Karin Noble. Performances are set for 7:30 p.m. Friday, July 16, and 2 p.m. Saturday, July 17, at the 7th St. Theatre in Hoquiam. Admission is \$10 per person, \$5 for those 12 years and younger.

The six-week workshop will present "Frozen Jr.," directed by Kendall Cavin.

"Performing theater without the audience reaction is really different for the actors."

– Terry Rogers
Driftwood president

Performances are set for 7:30 p.m. Thursday – Saturday, July 29-31, and 2 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 1. Admission is \$5 for those 12 years and younger, \$10 for students and seniors, and \$15 for adults.

For more information, visit their website at 7thstreetkids.org.

Driftwood Players

The Driftwood Players wasn't able to

perform its last five shows in a typical way. However, three of them were available to patrons via the internet.

"Performing theater without the audience reaction is really different for the actors," said Terry Rogers, Driftwood president. "The audiences participate whether they realize it or not by their reactions. Not getting the laughs and the responses is hard, but so far the actors have just done a wonderful job," she said.

Driftwood is optimistic about having a live audience in September for "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time." The play by Simon Stephens is based on a bestselling novel by Mark Haddon. It was originally scheduled for the spring of 2020.

"How it will look just depends on what the governor says and what is going on with Covid-19 and how many people will be allowed to have in the theater itself," Rogers said.

Bishop Center for Performing Arts

As for the Grays Harbor College Bishop Center, administrator Arlene Torgerson said nothing has been programmed for the summer, adding that the college will continue its virtual entertainment in the fall and hopes to offer live performances in 2022.

"Decisions need to be made months in advance for scheduling and booking artists or activities," Torgerson explained. "We can only make decisions based on current guidelines which limit the amount of patrons we can have at a performance. This limits the amount of ticket sales we have to help cover the cost of performances," she said, adding that sponsors and donors have made it possible to offer virtual programming during the pandemic at no cost.

Stage West Community Theatre

Stage West Community Theatre of Ocean Shores has discovered a new way to perform before live audience. It

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is presenting a variety of radio theater shows at 7 p.m. each Sunday on KOSW, 91.3 FM, out of Ocean Shores. The shows include suspense, drama, comedy and mystery presentations. For more information about these plays from the golden age of radio, go to Stagewestcommunitytheatre.org.

Plank Island Theatre

At the new Plank Island Theatre group, co-founder Julayne Fleury said "Writing Wrongs," a series of original monologues, will be performed virtually in June.

To learn more, visit plankislandtheatre.com.

Aberdeen Shakespearean Theatre

According to the Aberdeen Shakespearean Theatre's Facebook page, "there will definitely be a Shakespeare show this summer." Check the group's Facebook page for up-to-date scheduling information. 



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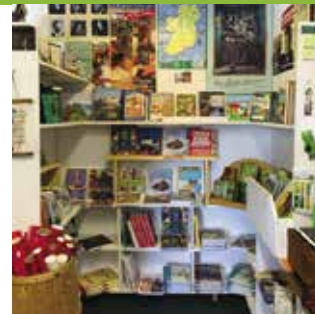
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Schedules are subject to change - check ahead!

JUNE

JUNE 4 . First Friday Art Walk . Aberdeen Art Center . 5pm and 8pm . Live music, artist demonstrations, free arts and craft class, snacks

JUNE 4, 5, 6 . Festival of Colors . Ocean Shores . Kite flying fun for all on the beaches of Ocean Shores

JUNE 6, 13, 20, 27 . Aberdeen Sunday Market . Aberdeen . 10am - 3pm . Produce, arts, vendors, live music & more

JUNE 12 . Ride the Harbor: Tour de Wellness . Scenic, fun, charity bicycle ride through beautiful Grays Harbor . summitpacificmedicalcenter.org

JULY 17 . Historic Montesano Car Show

JUNE 19, 20 . Urban Unglued . Ocean Shores Convention Center . Exotic Gear Vendor Show

JUNE 25, 26, 27 . Five Star Dealerships Sand & Sawdust Festival . Ocean Shores . Chainsaw art, food, crafts at the Convention Center. Sand castle building, music and more on the beach.



JUNE 25-26-27, Elma City Wide Garage Sale

JUNE 25-26-27 Rusty Scupper's Pirate Daze . Westport . Pirates gather for a weekend of fun, food and frivolity. Dress up like a Pirate

JUNE 25 . Seabrook Summer Concert Series . Every Friday through September 3 . 6pm Sunset Amphitheater Park

JUNE 26 . Seabrook Saturday Markets . Every Saturday from June 26 - September 4 . Vendors

JULY

JULY 2 . First Friday Art Walk . Aberdeen Art Center . 5pm and 8pm . Live music, artist demonstrations, free arts and craft class, snacks

JULY 2 . Big Top Outdoor Expo . Ocean Shores Convention Center

JULY 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 . Seabrook Summer Concert Series . Every Friday through September 3 . 6pm Sunset Amphitheater Park

JULY 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 . Seabrook Saturday Markets . Vendors

JULY 4, 11, 18, 25 . Aberdeen Sunday Market . Aberdeen . 10am - 3pm . Produce, arts, vendors, live music & more

JULY 9-10-11 . Windrider's Kite Festival . Grayland . Fun fly only, no competition

JULY 10, 17, 24, 31 . Montesano Saturday Morning Market . 9am - 1pm Fleet Park

JULY 16, 17 . 7th Street Kids perform "Winnie the Pooh" . Hoquiam . 7th Street Theatre . For more info see 7thstreetkids.org

JULY 17 . Eastside Street Rods Show & Shine . Westport . Vintage cars at the marina

JULY 23, 24, 25 . Hog Wild Ocean Shores . motorcycle rally with vendors and entertainment

(Continued on page 44)

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JULY 24 . Aberdeen Rain Glow Festival . Aberdeen . Find Glow Worlds in 7 downtown alley ways . Vendors, food trucks, patio seating & music at the brew pubs on Broadway . aberdeenartcenter.com

JULY 29, 30, 31 . 7th Street Kids perform "Frozen Jr." . Hoquiam . 7th Street Theatre . 7thstreetkids.org for more info see 7thstreetkids.org

JULY 30-31 Elma Heat on the Street . car show

JULY 30, 31 . Super Hero Music Fest . Charity Event at Ocean Shores Convention Center

AUGUST

AUGUST 1 . Super Hero Music Fest . Charity Event at Ocean Shores Convention Center

AUGUST 1 . 7th Street Kids perform "Frozen Jr." . Hoquiam . 7th Street Theatre . 7thstreetkids.org

AUGUST 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 . Aberdeen Sunday Market . Aberdeen . 10am - 3pm . Produce, arts, vendors, live music & more

AUGUST 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 . Grays Harbor County Fair . Elma . Check for up to date scheduling: www.ghcfairgrounds.com

AUGUST 4 . Riley Green . Grays Harbor County Fair . Elma . 8pm, Pepsi Stage
Check for up to date scheduling: www.ghcfairgrounds.com

AUGUST 5 . Shenandoah . Grays Harbor County Fair . Elma . 8pm, Pepsi Stage
Check for up to date

scheduling: www.ghcfairgrounds.com

AUGUST 6 . First Friday Art Walk . Aberdeen Art Center . 5pm and 8pm . Live music, artist demonstrations, free arts and craft class, snacks

AUGUST 6, 13, 20, 27 . Seabrook Summer Concert Series . Every Friday through September 3 . 6pm Sunset Amphitheater Park

AUGUST 7, 14, 21, 28 . Seabrook Saturday Markets . Vendors, Saturdays through Sept. 4

AUGUST 7, 14, 21, 28 . Montesano Saturday Morning Market . 9am - 1pm Fleet Park

(Continued on page 46)

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AUGUST 14, 15 . Tokeland Wood & Art Fest . Tokeland . Tokeland Hotel . Chainsaw carving, wood artists, food vendors, and live music

AUGUST 20, 21, 22 . Hawk Daze . Ocean Shores Convention Center . Seahawks fan event . GO HAWKS!

AUGUST 21, 22 . Westport Art Festival . Juried show of fine arts and crafts

AUGUST 28, 29 . Ocean Shores Body & Soul Festival . Ocean Shores Convention Center

AUGUST 28, 29 . Driftwood Show & Glass Float Hunt . Vendors, Music, Food, Driftwood Exhibits

SEPTEMBER 3, 4, 5 . AAOS Arts & Crafts Festival . Ocean Shores Convention Center, www.associatedarts.org

SEPTEMBER 4 . Seafood Festival & Craft Show . Westport . Feast on fresh fish, oysters and more. Live music and local crafts

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Meet the *Coastal Currents* summer 2021 contributors



Gail Greenwood Ayres was bitten by the writing bug starting with the Room 3 News in second grade. A Pacific Lutheran University journalism graduate, she worked for years as a daily newspaper journalist, then as a communications specialist for the City of Tacoma. In the 1990s she created a Russian/American newspaper, "New Life." Now, she enjoys freelance writing, editing and marketing on a wide variety of projects from her home in Brady, which she shares with her husband and two daughters.



Marguerite Garth is an artist, writer and photographer living by the ocean in North Cove. Her work has been exhibited worldwide and her photography has earned awards in more than 30 international contests. Her most recent series "Dune Grass" was selected by the Seattle Office of Arts and Culture for their permanent collection. She says, "I feel lucky to live in such a beautiful area."



Rick Moyer is a local radio personality with Alpha Media Grays Harbor on KIX 95.3 and 104.7 KDUX. He started Moyer Multi Media 10 years ago. Rick is a photographer and has been capturing images since he was a teenager. He and his wife, Amy, can be seen at many public events doing video, photo booths, portraits and more. Rick is fascinated with media work. He loves the Pacific Northwest where he was born and raised.



Juliana Wallace brings an eclectic history of professional writing to her work. A former technical writer, blogger and biographer, she currently divides her time between marketing writing and local journalism. Having traveled and lived throughout the United States, Juliana has fallen in love with the Pacific Northwest. Whether running along rainforest trails, hiking in the backcountry or discovering art in unexpected places, she loves to experience and share the aha moments that feed the soul.



Christine Vincent was born and raised in Germany. She received her master's degree in English Language and Literature from the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands. She has worked as a freelance writer and translator for more than 30 years. In 1993, she came to the Harbor with her husband Mark and their first two children, six more were born in Hoquiam. Christine has been writing about the Harbor and its people online at "Grays Harbor Talk" since 2015, specializing in the arts and local history.



Gregory E. Zschomler hails from SW Washington and studied music, theater and media at Clark College and Washington State University-Vancouver. The Aberdeen resident holds bachelor degrees in the Humanities and Digital Technologies and Culture. He is a writer, author, editor and publisher at work on his fourteenth book. He and his wife were founders of Harbor Books, now under new ownership in Hoquiam. They're also the owner-operators of Harbor House Writers LLC and eyrie press.



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