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Currents

MAGAZINE

Spring 2024

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Casa Mia, Hoquiam icon

Photographer of the stars

Harbor's live music scene



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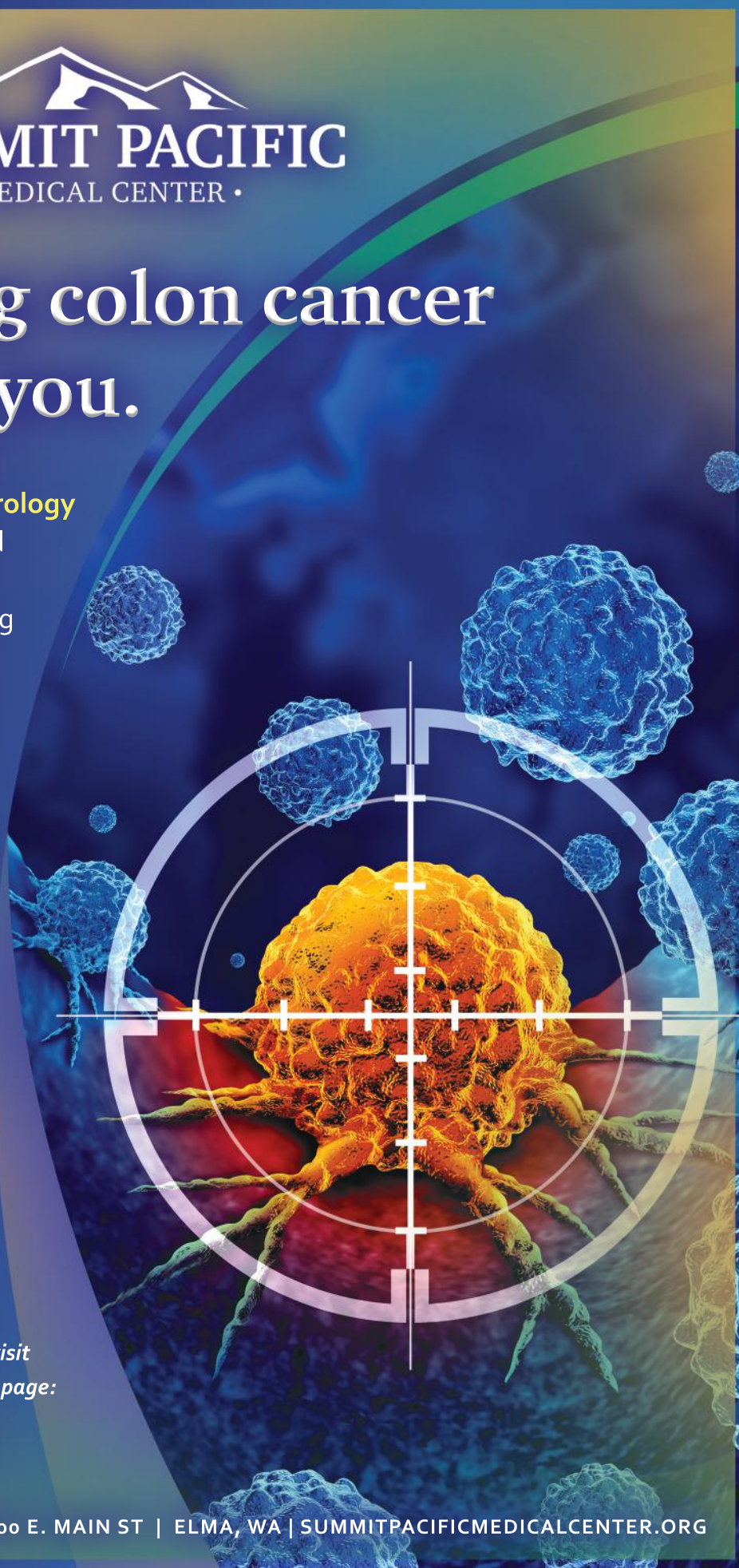
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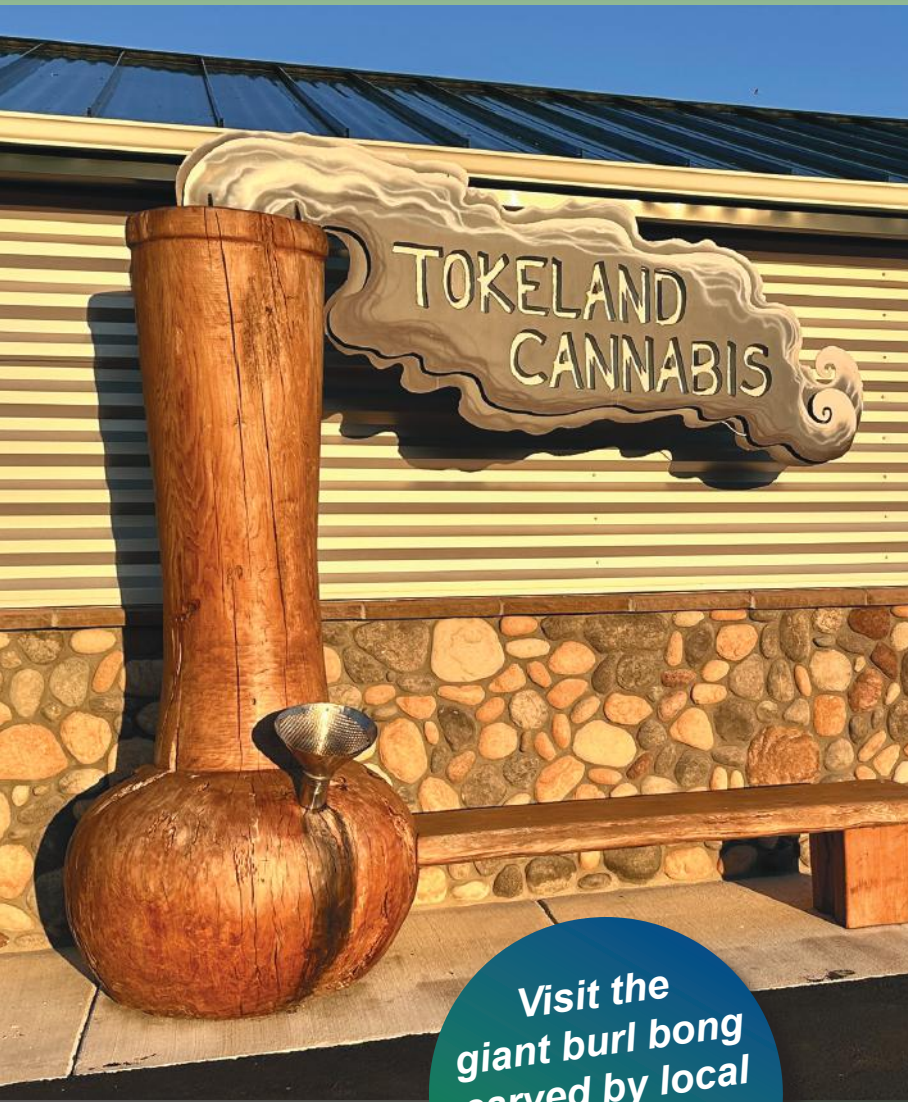
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Photo by Rick Moyer

Aaron Crawford performs at the Grays Harbor County Fairgrounds, one of the Harbor's many live music venues. (See story page 18.)

COASTAL Currents MAGAZINE

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This issue's front cover features Keith Peinado pulling a piping hot Casa Mia pizza out of the oven. Photo by Rick Moyer.

COASTAL Currents

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Oklahoma!

ABERDEEN

performs at the Bishop Center for the first time

STORY & PHOTOS BY STEPHANIE MORTON

Catching a glimpse of the behind-scenes machinations of the Bishop Center for Performing Arts' production of "Oklahoma!" is like seeing how the rabbit comes out of the magician's top hat.

The secrets that create stage magic are revealed. You're seeing the lights and props and costumes that will somehow come together and transport us — the audience — to the Oklahoma Territory in 1906. You're seeing ordinary people from the Grays Harbor community transform into ranchers and farmers and other territory folk.

Andrew Gaines, head of the theater department at Grays Harbor College, is the director of the show. Saebre Winn-Lark, who possesses an uncanny

ability to be everywhere at once, is the assistant director and stage manager. Between Gaines and Winn-Lark, this is not their first rodeo.

However, it is the first time that "Oklahoma!" will be presented at the Bishop Center.

Gaines said the previous music director infamously and vehemently opposed doing "Oklahoma!" It may be, said Winn-Lark, because the man was made to present it eight times at his previous gig.

But, now there are many good reasons to perform "Oklahoma!" said Gaines, including a personal artistic goal to learn the classics and to perhaps knock out criticism of his more esoteric choices with a big, splashy, well-known and well-loved show requiring a large cast.

"Let's do the most famous musical in musical theater history!" said Gaines.

The 1943 Broadway production of "Oklahoma!" was a surprising smash hit. The first musical written by the legendary Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, it was based on a book entitled "Green Grow the Lilacs," said Winn-Lark.

Some of the more famous songs include "Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'," "The Surrey With the Fringe on Top," and "People Will Say We're in Love."

(continued on page 6)

"Let's do the most famous musical in musical theater history!"
— Andrew Gaines

During an "Oklahoma!" rehearsal, director Andrew Gaines directs the cast.



Oklahoma!

(Continued)

"Oklahoma!" was groundbreaking and changed the face of American musical theater with music and song advancing the plot of the story in what is termed an integrated musical, said Winn-Lark. "'Showboat' did it first, but 'Oklahoma!' was the commercial success."

Winn-Lark continuously updates the meticulously planned schedule, which has been created to maximize the actors' time. Gaines watches the actors and provides notes. They confab. They adjust. They reconvene. They move on to the next item on the schedule.

The smallest of details are considered by this directorial dynamic duo. Cornstalks as tall as an elephant's eye are crafted out of PVC pipe and masking tape. They talk with a member of the ensemble who sports turquoise and purple hair. She will wear the red prairie dress, rather than the green one, as it's too short, especially with a petticoat underneath. A scale model helps them plot out scenes.

The ensemble practices a dance number during rehearsal.

Spoons, pots and pans and beer steins are prepped for the box social and shivaree scenes. Props are stacked and more stage pieces are built. Lighting and other effects are contemplated. The moon, stars and clouds are plotted out with the lighting designer. Fog is discussed. The timing of the gunshots is mapped out. (Warning: there will be several firearm discharges during the performance!)

And there is rehearsal! Rehearsal for dialogue. Rehearsal for dance. Rehearsal for song. The show will have six total performances. Is all this effort worth six performances?

"I conceive the whole thing as a big gift," said Gaines. "Everyone is here building this gift. We're all building this massive sandcastle. ... No one builds a sandcastle and then protests that it's only going to get

"What's really cool about this production, is that we are using actors, and they are just learning ballet. They are just going for it."

— Maija Nordin, choreographer

Choreographer Maija Nordin teaches the ensemble a dance number.





Smoke lingers in the air after Aunt Eller (Kathe Rowe) fires off a round.

washed away. It's this human effort that's ephemeral. And that's what's beautiful about it. We're lovingly preparing this presentation for your pleasure."

"It is a gift of love, absolutely," concluded Gaines.

For choreographer Maija Nordin, the dream ballet sequence has been a dream come true.

"I have been waiting for this. That was my favorite part of the movie. I was so confused by the plot, but it was such beautiful dancing that it didn't really matter," said Nordin. In the movie, the actors playing the lead roles were exchanged for dancers during the ballet scene.

"What's really cool about this production is that we are using actors, and they are just learning ballet. They are just going for it," said Nordin. She emphasized that it is no easy task to learn ballet. "To see them learn that much technique in such a short period of time ... it's been really fun to work with everyone."

When it comes to choreography, it's not just learning the steps. Nordin must be

aware of where each person stands, how they move in this particular scene, the direction they may move and if they will collide with someone else, the music, the cues and even how the sound of the dance steps may impact the orchestra or the actors singing. So many moving parts.

Dancing doesn't come so easily to everyone in the cast. John Howley plays Ali Hakim, a traveling salesman of sorts. Howley said he is much more of an actor than a dancer with this production only his second performance in a musical. To prepare, he has been listening to the "Oklahoma!" soundtrack exclusively.

"My strategy to the dancing is to become really familiar with the music," said Howley. "So, that's my focus."

Perhaps a little more comfortable with the dancing is Jake Conrad who plays cowhand Will Parker. At 21, he is a seasoned musical theater performer. He can act. He can sing. He can dance. But can he rope?

(continued on page 8)

The Plot

Cowboy Curly McClaine (Gordon Shaw) has come to the farmhouse of Aunt Eller (Kathe Rowe) to ask Laurel Williams (Aliss Barré) to the box social. All hell breaks loose when Laurel tells her childhood friend that no, she won't ride with him. She's going with Jud Fry (Elliot Loudenback), the bad boy farmhand.

Meanwhile, Will Parker (Jake Conrad), another cowman, has recently returned from Kansas City and hopes to claim his bride, the boy crazy Ado Annie (Natalee Beavers). Ado Annie has blossomed since Will left and has caught the eye of many a beau including a traveling salesman named Ali Hakim (John Howley). Farmer Andrew Carnes (Mario Winkleman) just wants his daughter Annie to be married to someone other than Will Parker.

Along with the two love triangles, there is another subplot concerning the tensions between the ranchers and the farmers as the territory nears statehood.

"Oklahoma!" performances:

March 1, 2 Friday, Saturday 7:30 p.m.

March 8, 9 Friday, Saturday 7:30 p.m.

March 3, 10 Sundays, 2 p.m.

Tickets are \$25 for adults,

\$15 for students, and

\$10 for children 12 and under.

*"I conceive the whole thing as a big gift. Everyone is here, building this gift."
— Andrew Gaines, director*



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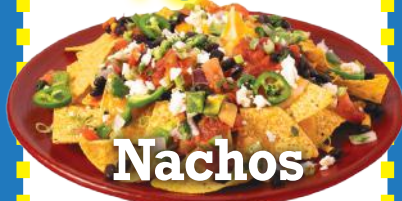
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Jake Conrad, who plays cowboy Will Parker, practices his dance moves at rehearsal.


Oklahoma!

(continued)

Conrad knew at age 11 that he wanted to play Will Parker. The character stuck with him. Will was true to himself and his love for his girl never wavered. When auditions for "Oklahoma!" came around, he promised director Gaines that he would learn how to tap dance and he would learn how to rope. Gaines is making Conrad live up to his promises with three roping tricks.

"He wants me to do a flat loop, where it is parallel to the floor. Then, there's a vertical loop, parallel to your body. If you get those big enough, then you can do something called a Texas Skip, where, if you time it right, you jump through the loop," said Conrad. "That's what he wants. We'll see if it's doable."

Conrad said he has been learning roping from the "University of Google" and by watching YouTube videos. For tap lessons, he has been attending classes taught by fellow castmate, Aliss Barré.

The Bishop Center's production of "Oklahoma!" promises to be an exciting, lively show and not just because of Conrad's newly acquired skills. The long hours, dedication and passion of the cast and crew will have you singing like "Oh, what a beautiful mornin'! Oh, what a beautiful day! I've got a beautiful feelin'. Everything's going my waaaaaay!" 

Upcoming Harbor Drama Productions

The Driftwood Theater

120 E. 3rd St., Aberdeen

"Hand to God" by Robert Askins
 Directed by Brad W. Duffy, and Casey Bronson, director in training
 Performances are at 7:30 p.m. on **April 27** and **May 3, 4, 10, 11, 17, 18;** and 1:30 p.m. **May 19.**

After his father dies, Jason finds an outlet for his anxiety at the Christian Puppet Ministry, in the small town of Cypress, Texas. Jason's complicated relationships with the town pastor, the school bully, the girl next door, and—most especially—his mother, are thrown into upheaval when Jason's puppet, Tyrone, takes on a shockingly irreverent personality. This comedy explores the fragile nature of faith, morality and innocence.

Stage West Community Theatre

at the Ocean Shores Lions Club,
 832 Ocean Shores Blvd. NW

"Don Quixote de la Center"

by David Bareford
 Directed by Lorraine Hardin
 7 p.m. **March 1** and **2;**
 and 2 p.m. **March 3.**
 The show is set in an adult care home and wrestles with aging and dementia.

"Suite Surrender"

The show runs **May 3-12.**
 This fast-paced farce takes place in 1940s Florida at the best hotel in town. When two divas who hate each other perform in a fundraiser gala, they are somehow assigned the same suite!

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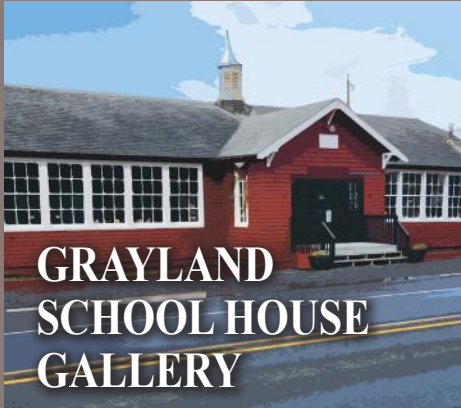
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HOQUIAM

CASA MIA: HOQUIAM ICON BALANCES RICH HISTORY, FRESH FARE

**STORY BY RICK ANDERSON
PHOTOS BY RICK MOYER**

In operation for more than 70 years and entering its 50th year of ownership by the Jump family, Casa Mia restaurant could be classified as a Hoquiam institution.

But it is also an institution that has adjusted to changing times.

"We want to have a good balance between tradition and current," said co-owner Matt Jump. "In 2023, we started a new (menu) board that allowed us to offer new food items and be creative with new flavors. But our core flavors and seasonings and our original recipes will continue to be the same."

A willingness to adapt enabled Casa Mia to survive the unexpected death of its owner in 2009 and also helped the current owners make a successful, if difficult, pivot from the devastating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic more than a decade later.

The restaurant owes its longevity, in part, to a labor dispute at a long-shuttered paper mill.

(Continued on page 12)

Chris Parsons tosses pizza dough as it has been done for decades at Casa Mia.

COASTAL *Currents* MAGAZINE

CASA MIA

(continued)

Casa Mia (Italian for “my house”) was founded in 1952 by Phil Bellafatto, who grew up living above a pizzeria in an Italian-American neighborhood in New York City. Opening the restaurant in Aberdeen, he eventually moved it to its current location on 29th Street and Simpson Avenue in Hoquiam.

“HE HAD SEVEN MOUTHS TO FEED. HE DECIDED TO ROLL THE DICE AND BORROWED \$10,000 FROM A RELATIVE TO GET STARTED.”

– Theresa Jump

His homemade recipes for pizza and pasta quickly proved popular among customers. But by the mid-1970s, Bellafatto was looking to sell the restaurant.

Ember Ray Gittens enjoys a plate of Casa Mia spaghetti.



Roger Jump, a millwright at the Grays Harbor Paper mill and Hoquiam city council member, who later was elected Hoquiam’s mayor, seemed an unlikely buyer. Jump’s restaurant experience was limited to working at a Dairy Queen while in high school. Far from independently wealthy at the time, he and his wife Yvonne were raising seven children.

But, with Grays Harbor Paper in the midst of a strike, in 1975 Jump decided to take the plunge.

“He loved his job at the mill (but) unemployment wasn’t available



because they were on strike,” his daughter, Theresa Jump, remembered. “He had seven mouths to feed. He decided to roll the dice and borrowed \$10,000 from a relative to get started.”

After spending another \$500 to purchase Bellafatto’s recipes, Jump threw all his energy and his considerable skill at carpentry into improving the building.

“He basically remodeled the business,” Matt Jump recalled. “He wanted to utilize the space a little better.”

“He worked and slept at the restaurant for at least a year,” Theresa Jump added. “Ownership changed immediately with very little training.”

Business proved good enough that Jump and his subsequent business partner, former Hoquiam Parks & Recreation director Bob Knudson, wound up franchising the restaurant to several locations in the South Puget Sound area and Eastern Washington. Seven such restaurants remain open.

When Roger Jump died unexpectedly in 2009, his son Matt and daughter Theresa took over the operation of the Hoquiam restaurant. Theresa eventually transitioned into the real estate business, but Matt’s fiancée



Andrea Murdaugh now assists with management.

The restaurant industry, along with virtually all other businesses, was rocked by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

Unlike many of their counterparts, who immediately shifted to takeout and drive-thru services, Casa Mia's owners shut down the restaurant entirely for a couple of months. State regulations on social distancing made it all but impossible for the relatively compact restaurant (which currently has three booths and 11 other tables) to continue offering in-house dining.

"There were safety issues and the state kept changing the rules on spacing," Matt Jump said.

After briefly considering altering a window to offer drive-thru service, the Jumps experimented for several months with a curbside operation four or five days per week.

Matt Jump



Customers would call in an order and describe their vehicle. After receiving a pick-up time, their order would be

"OUR DOUGH IS MADE AND ROLLED EVERYDAY. OUR PIZZA SAUCE IS MADE FROM SCRATCH AND OUR CHEESE IS GRATED EVERY DAY."

– Matt Jump

delivered by servers, or "runners." The arrangement was efficient enough that some customers predicted it could continue indefinitely. But Matt Jump said curbside service was never a sustainable business option.

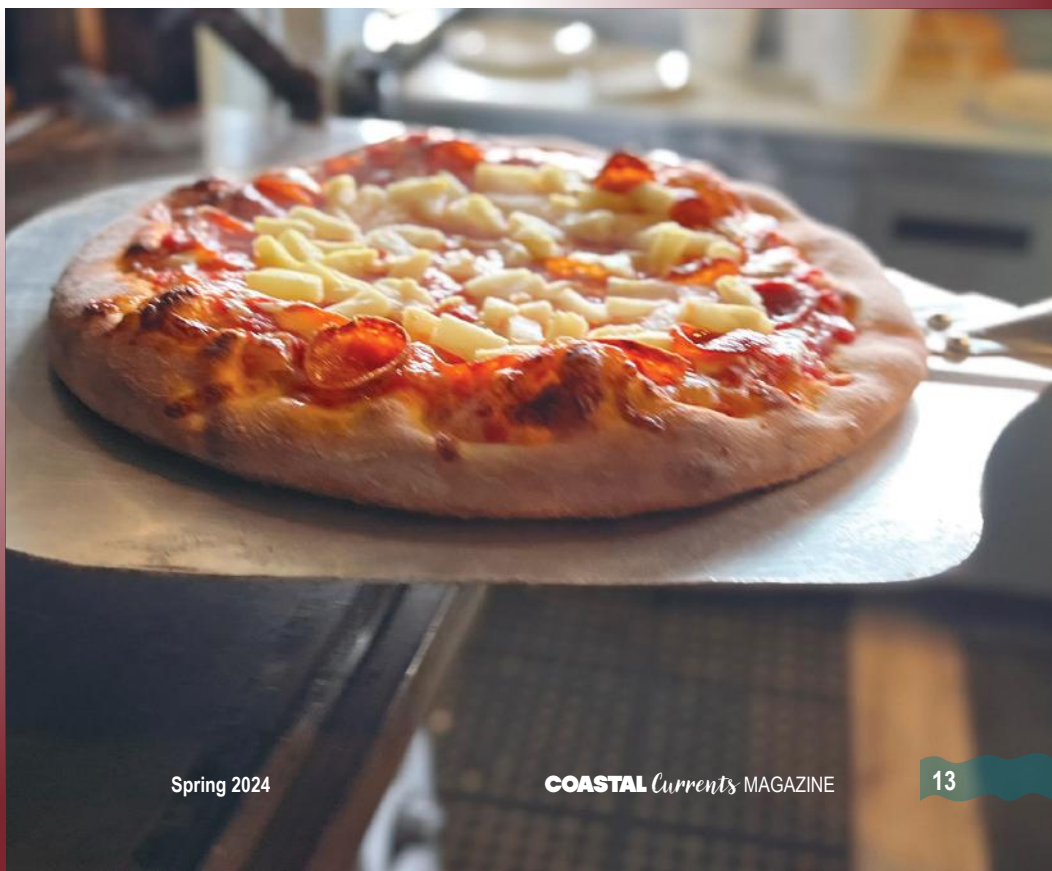
"The phone would be ringing off the hook. It was non-stop," he said, noting that customers driving similar makes of cars further complicated the situation. "We were still struggling to cover the cost of operation. We were lucky in that our family owned the building and we didn't have to pay rent." Permanent closure, however, was off the table.

"We will never close," Andrea Murdaugh emphasized.

As state guidelines eased, Casa Mia owners executed what might be termed a soft re-opening to in-house dining. Beginning with dinner-only service five days per week, the restaurant eventually returned to lunch and dinner hours seven days a week. The restaurant's staff, which had dwindled from 25 to seven during the pandemic, has since increased to 23.

Jump used the temporary closure to remodel the building's interior. New cabinets were built and existing structures were resurfaced. Plants and

(Continued on page 15)





March 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10

Friday, Saturday 7:30pm, Sunday 2:00pm

Rodgers and Hammerstein's adaption of Lynn Riggs' play *Green Grow the Lilacs* into *Oklahoma!* Set on the Western frontier in the early 1900s, the story follows the loves and tragedies of a group of cowboys and farmers. Directed by Dr. Andrew Gaines. Adults \$25, Students \$15, 12 & under \$10

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CASA MIA

(continued)

new artwork were added. Expansion of the building has been considered, according to Jump, but is not imminent.

One thing that has changed very little is Casa Mia's menu. The restaurant continues to offer a wide variety of pizza and pasta items, with salads and a handful of sandwiches also available.

Perhaps it's signature item, the Casa Mia Special pizza starts with hand-tossed dough, which is then generously arrayed with pepperoni, mushroom, salami and sausage nestled atop homemade tomato sauce and smothered with mozzarella cheese. The Classic Salad, in which iceberg lettuce is liberally topped with shredded mozzarella and black olives, is also popular with customers.

Many patrons believe Casa Mia pizzas have a distinct flavor — thanks in part to the rich tomato sauce and



maintaining Bellafatto's original recipe.

"I think the difference in our pizzas are the ingredients," Matt Jump offered. "Our dough is made and rolled every day. Our pizza sauce is made from scratch and our cheese is grated every day."

Most of the restaurant's food, in fact, is made from scratch — a process that usually consumes several hours.

The menu has expanded a bit in recent years to include more pizza options

(including flat-bread pizzas) and sandwiches. Such items as caprese salad (tomato and pesto with mozzarella and balsamic glaze) and tomato basil soup have been added.

"We wanted to get original and put new things on the menu for people to try," Andrea Murdaugh explained.

"What I hope for in the future is that we can be creative and adapt to people's

(continued on page 16)

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CASA MIA

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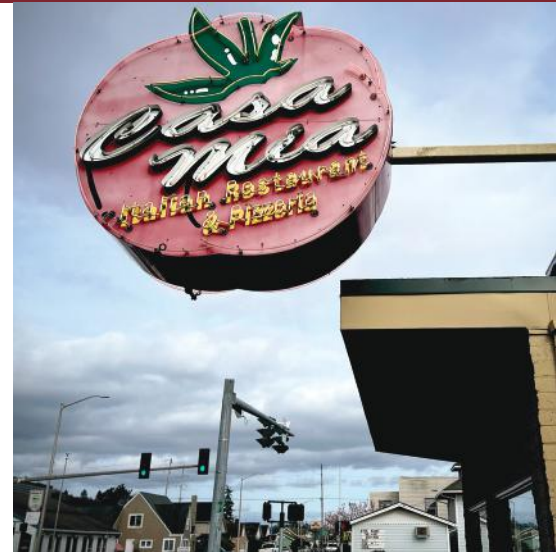
changing eating habits," Matt Jump added.

But while open to change, the Casa Mia owners also celebrate the restaurant's tradition.

"We will never change our recipes," Andrea Murdaugh said. "Things do change, but we try our darndest to keep things exactly the same. People come in and know that their parents and grandparents ate here. It's like home."

"It comes down to great food, great service and a fun atmosphere," Matt Jump added. "And I think it's good value, too."

The Casa Mia staff also has traditionally been a mixture of youth and experience. Long involved as a sponsor of youth activities, the restaurant has often hired teens and young adults to fill positions.



"IT COMES DOWN TO GREAT FOOD, GREAT SERVICE AND A FUN ATMOSPHERE. AND I THINK IT'S GOOD VALUE, TOO."

– Matt Jump

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“One reason for our success — and I learned this from my dad — is that we give back to the community,” Matt Jump said. “(People) look at us as a restaurant, but I look at it as mentorship to kids.”

Nevertheless, some Casa Mia employees have exhibited a longevity that’s rare in the restaurant business.

Doug Cleverly retired last year after 47 years at the restaurant — more than 30 years in a managerial capacity. Shelbie Dickson, currently Aberdeen High School’s culinary arts teacher, also assumed managerial duties for many years and still works one night per week at Casa Mia.

Jump recognizes that Casa Mia’s loyalty to its clientele is a two-way street.

“The (biggest key to our success) is definitely the customers,” he concluded. “As much as we do our best to support the community, the community supports us back.” 





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Spirited LIVE MUSIC scene blossoms across the Harbor



Phil Luce with the band Electric Eye entertains at Ashley's Pub Haus in Hoquiam.

**"Here we are now,
entertain us"**

– Nirvana, from
"Smells Like Teen Spirit"

STORY BY ANGELO BRUSCAS
PHOTOS BY RICK MOYER

A stormy Monday without a single lunch customer provides the best downtime for Jessica Knutson to take stock of the percolating Grays Harbor live music and entertainment scene. That's when the stage isn't rocking at her eclectic Messy Jessy's Bar and Grill in downtown Aberdeen.

Tuesday is open-mic night and performers could be stopping in from Seattle to Quinault, Hoquiam to Shelton,

or maybe even from another country, another continent. There's a Thursday night "Anti-Valentines Paint Party," and on Friday night, it's karaoke.

The weekend is packed with a Saturday joint event featuring five bands splitting time between the nearby Loading Dock (an all-ages first show) and Messy Jessy's later at its upstairs stage and bar that gets cooking about 6 p.m.

"It has grown significantly," Jessica said about the number of performers wanting to book a date in the Aberdeen music venues. "We have so much talent here."

Randy Beerbower has been actively chronicling the history of the local music scene for decades and provides the most comprehensive social media site with listings for all the live music events and venues in the area – The Grays Harbor Music Facebook page. He credits Justin Kautzman, of the Black Shepherd band, and Larry Cowles, of

The Loading Dock, for helping fuel the new energy.

"A little over a year ago they moved into the ground floor of the Becker building. The venue serves as a practice space for their bands, but they also have music events there on select Fridays and Saturdays," Beerbower said of the Loading Dock. "These shows are geared for all ages and it has been an amazing place for local talent to play in front of a live audience. They depend solely on

Jessica Knutson is owner of Messy Jessy's in Aberdeen.

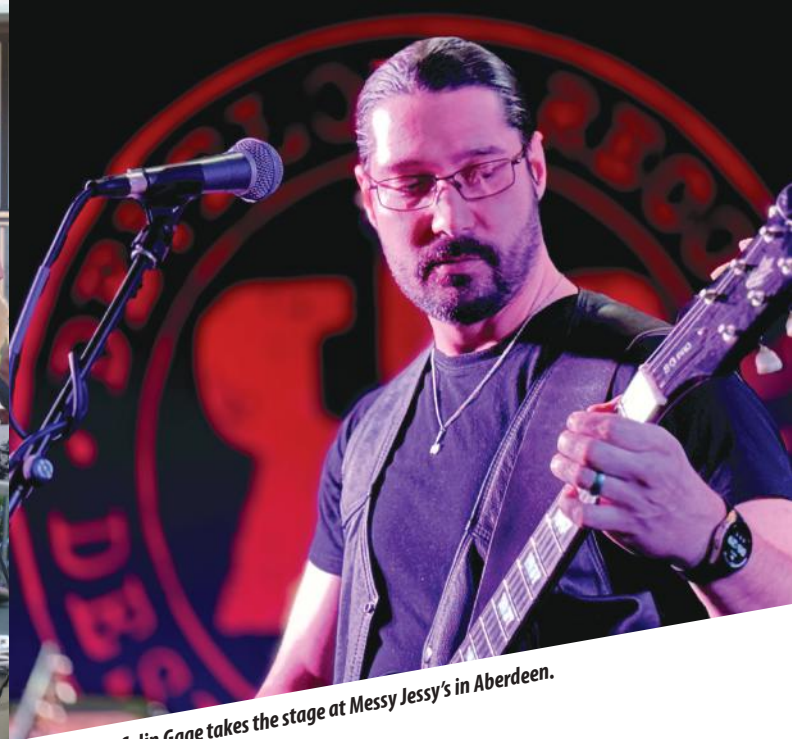


Photo by Angelo Bruscas



Tiffany Maki Band performs live at Oyhut Bay in Ocean Shores.

Photo by Angelo Bruscas



Colin Gage takes the stage at Messy Jessy's in Aberdeen.

volunteers to stay open, including many local musicians."

Kautzman also brought live music to Ashley's Pub Haus on J Street in Hoquiam, a popular spot for local bands to play in the post-pandemic era.

"We were looking for places to play, not wanting to do five-hour shows all the time. We started reaching out to friends, and that has morphed into an opportunity to add venues," Kautzman explained. "It really has just been working with people I know, and then people they know, and building the community out of that. Now we have spaces where we can put those talents that people have to good use."

"We have so much talent here."

– Jessica Knutson

The energy that Kurt Cobain and Nirvana once channeled from "the muddy banks of the Wishkah" has returned to ignite the spirited live music scene blossoming from East County to the beaches.

"Part of it is Nirvana, but a big part is just the music in general," Jessica Knutson believes. She and husband Dustin bought the upstairs business on South I Street in August 2022, replacing what had been a struggling sports bar and grill.

"I went in with the idea to find out what wasn't working," she said. "And I started thinking outside of the box – a venue that could do all sorts of stuff, from comedy, paint-and-sips, live music, whatever I could get on stage."

It also didn't hurt that her brother is connected to the independent record company, and that Aberdeen has deep roots in Northwest music lore.

"It's bringing in tourism and money into the town," Jessica said. The second show

"I feel like folks are more appreciative and hungry for shows."

– Colin Gage



The Loading Dock in Aberdeen is a live music venue on the ground floor of the Becker Building, 114 South I St.

The first performance was on Earth Day April 22, 2023, with a lineup that included several bands from the Seattle-Tacoma area recording with Redact Records.

"I was able to actually bring more talent from farther away to help business down in Aberdeen," she said.

at Messy Jessy's showcased all local singer-songwriters.

"Since then, every single show we have put on, we always bring in one performer from out of town, and then one or two local artists."

(continued on page 20)

Live Music

(continued)

Wil Russoul quite literally has been instrumental in the rebirth of the Harbor live music scene, taking his inspirational songwriting, voice and guitar to the streets, coffee shops, even city halls. Most recently, he started the movement to make Aberdeen part of the National Alliance for World Music Day.

“Covid had an effect on live performances, which our area felt due to closed venues,” Russoul said. “But it also gave time for many musicians to create other avenues – writing new material, setting up livestreams, and sending recordings to other musicians to add tracks. I know for me, Covid expanded my contacts and ideas, such as creating World Music Day.”

Venues before and after the pandemic are starting to balance out, Russoul said.

“While some are not yet doing live music, others have stepped out. I see more cross booking and sharing between venues. A great example are The Loading Dock and Messy Jessy’s in Aberdeen.”

Other locations to host live performers in Aberdeen include Mount Olympus Brewing on Heron Street, Nirvana Coffee Co. on South I Street, the Elks Club on Boone Street, and occasionally at the Tinderbox Roaster on East Wishkah.

“While most performers here love a good turnout, especially with plenty of familiar faces, we also enjoy new

places, even non-traditional places,” Russoul said. “It lets us connect with new people.”

Here are some other venues that host live music in Grays Harbor. (For events and performances, check Grays Harbor Music or the Grays Harbor Events Facebook pages.)

“(The pandemic) gave time for many musicians to create other avenues – writing new material ...”

– Wil Russoul

• **Ocean Shores:** Both the Porthole Pub (special events and karaoke every Saturday) and Galway Bay Irish Restaurant & Pub have live music throughout the year on Point Brown Avenue. Oyhut Bay Grill also features live music inside in the Loft area on Saturdays and outside in the plaza throughout the summer. Ocean Pours Taproom and the Ocean Shores Convention Center often have live music in the spring and summer. Also, a new group known as Blues at the Harbor will present Stevie and the Blue Flames on Saturday May 18 at the Ocean Shores Lions Club for the first of what is being planned as a local live music series.

• **East County:** ShuJack’s Bar & Grill on West Main Street in Elma hosts band night on Saturdays as well as Monday night line dancing and karaoke events. Gepetto’s Italian Restaurant & Sports Bar, on Pioneer Avenue in Montesano, features live music from full bands to singer-songwriters with an open mic on Wednesdays. The Grays Harbor County Fairgrounds in Elma also hosts concerts and performances.

• **Westport:** Pine Tree Bar and Grill on Ocean Avenue often has live music on weekends, and the Knotty Pine on East Dock Street has had live music in the past. Farther south, the Raymond Theatre often has live music performances.

• **Hoquiam:** Ashley’s Pub Haus on J Street was opened by Shane and Ashley Eck in 2019, featuring live music on the weekends and karaoke nights. The 8th Street Ale House features live music and special events such as the Celtic Music Festival and ABC3 Festival in conjunction with Galway Bay. And, the 7th Street Theatre also hosts live music performances, most recently the Olson Brothers Band.

In the summer, there’s the Seabrook Summer concert series that starts in June, live music at the Grays Harbor County Fair, area farmers markets, and street dances in Aberdeen.

Luke and Kaylee entertain at the Ocean Shores Arts Festival.



Oyhut Bay also is completing a new events facility. And, in January, Sunset Plaza in Ocean Shores showcased Tiffany Maki and the Dukes of Swing at the former Ace Hardware building with a new stage constructed inside for future live performances.

One of the popular North Beach-based bands, Deerswerver, will be playing across the Harbor this spring and summer. Band leader Brian Bachman has nothing but appreciation for the expanding live performing opportunities.

"Rooms that rarely hosted live bands in the past, now do so regularly. And the list of places in the Harbor that I haven't had a chance to play at yet seems to keep growing," Bachman said.

"My favorite venues would be any festival date in Ocean Shores, or Oyhut Bay Grill. We'll be at Messy Jessy's on April 20th for their anniversary. They have a nice-sized room, sound system and lots of space for dancing."

"The Porthole Pub (in Ocean Shores) is another favorite," Bachman said. "The crowd is great and the owners haven't kicked Kevin (guitar player) out for dancing on the tables yet, so there's that. The Grays Harbor community at large

and all the venues have my undying thanks for supporting live music."

Deerswerver joins classic rocker Johnny the Capo and the Bad Boys to kick off Rock and Blues Flea Market Festival May 25 at the Ocean Shores Convention Center, and both bands are popular across the North Beach.

"The crowd is great and the owners haven't kicked Kevin (guitar player) out for dancing on the tables yet, so there's that."

– Brian Bachman

Veteran guitarist Jon Nygaard of the SR 109 Band (as well as Ms. Maki & Co., and previously of the Blues Remedy band) has seen some changes in the music scene, with more opportunities for open-mic performances. He was asked

to list the favorite venues he's played in the past year:

Ashley's in Hoquiam: "Good staging area for the bands to set up. Currently they have a great sound guy who takes care of the sound. Fun crowd that wants to party unless the weather is bad. For most gigs at other places, the crowd stays through set two and then thins out, but at Ashley's sometimes it's just the opposite, it just keeps getting better," Nygaard said.

Oyhut Bay Bistro Patio: "Good crowd, great food. On a nice summer day, it can be fantastic weather outside in the afternoon."

Ocean Shores Convention Center: "Last year I played some fun gigs there with SR 109 and also Ms. Maki & Co. The Clam Festival, Hog Wild, and there was an end-of-summer event there with a great stage and professional sound company. It's looking like we (SR 109) are going to be back there for those events again this year," Nygaard said.

(continued on page 23)

A Redact Records performance wows the crowd at Messy Jessy's in Aberdeen.



Amanda Ransom performs at the Mount Olympus Brewery in Aberdeen.



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This Way Out performs at The Loading Dock in Aberdeen.



Deerswerver playing at Ocean Pours Tap Room in Ocean Shores.

Photo courtesy of Deerswerver

Live Music

(continued)

Singer/songwriter Colin Gage has built a steady audience since he started performing post-pandemic.

"I didn't have much experience in the music scene before the shutdowns," Gage said. "But it seems that many people saw just how meaningful live performances are to them during that time, so now I feel like folks are more appreciative and hungry for shows."

His original songs and voice were highlighted by several others

interviewed for this article.

"We have a thriving and talented musical community throughout the county," Gage said. "It can be hard to see what's going on at a glance, but a lot of us are supporting things like World Music Day 98520 (Make Music Aberdeen) and The Loading Dock to get more folks involved and get more eyes on it. Look around, connect up with groups and artists on social media. There is so much that we have going on right here and it is only getting better."

At Messy Jessy's, Jessica Knutson is likely to take the stage on any karaoke night and she enjoys being a part of a music-making community.

"Bringing in all that music is so important and so needed," she said. "I want to work together to make a big scene, because Aberdeen needs it and Aberdeen can do it. It really is feasible. We have a great amount of people who are wanting that music and that art, and wanting something to do. I grew up with music in my family . . . that's all we know." *CC*

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Grays Harbor offers diverse spring festivals



Photos courtesy of the festivals

Celebrating the great outdoors is the common denominator for many festivals scheduled this spring in Grays Harbor. Yet, the gatherings are still remarkably diverse.

Here are a few of them. (As events grow nearer, check websites and Facebook pages for any changes.)

March 15-17 – The 16th Annual Ocean Shores Razor Clam Festival & Seafood Extravaganza is scheduled at the Ocean Shores Convention Center.

This three-day free festival not only celebrates everything about razor clams, but also Dungeness crab, oysters and more. Festivalgoers should bring a sense of curiosity as well as an appetite!

Anyone can enter the clam gun decorating contest for free. Either a clam tube or clam shovel can be decorated. (It doesn't have to be functional, but all decorations must be attached.)

Home cooks can enter the clam chowder contest, which is judged by local experts, but anyone can judge various restaurants' clam chowder recipes by purchasing a tasting passport and voting for the best.

Event highlights include Dungeness crab dinners, featuring either a half or whole cooked crab, with herbed potatoes and coleslaw. The dinners are offered each evening, but tickets must be purchased in advance. On Sunday, a special Crab Benedict breakfast is featured from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The \$25

meal must also be purchased in advance.

For more information, visit the Facebook page: Ocean Shores Razor Clam and Seafood Festival.

April 6-14 – The 2024 Mermaid Festival is at the International Mermaid Museum at the Westport Winery.

During the nine-day festival, it is free to attend the museum from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and the festival from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Educational exhibits about the ocean will be interspersed with mermaids and other mythical creatures throughout the museum and gardens.

Una the Mermaid will perform underwater in her tank daily at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. Olive the Alchemist will preside on the mermaid throne in the museum from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. And, Vertical Axis will perform music and dance while suspended from a 20-foot tower each day at 12:30 p.m., 1:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.

Rachel the Sailing Siren and Fawn Destiny will dance at 1 p.m., 2 p.m. and 3 p.m. each day. The Captain's Daughter, a Celtic music duo, will perform daily from 1 to 3 p.m.

The festival atmosphere includes food booths, face painting, balloon animals and arts and crafts tents, including opportunities to do fish printing (gyotaku), and sand dollar decorating. Each day, children can take part in a pirate's

treasure hunt in the museum with prizes for those who complete the puzzle and find the treasure.

Festivalgoers are invited to wear their finest fishy costumes. For more information and a detailed schedule, go to www.MermaidMuseum.org.

April 20 – The World Class Crab Races, Crab Feed & Crab Derby

The Crab Derby features hundreds of Dungeness crab released into the Westport Boat Basin for crabbers to coax into their pots. Catching a valuable Dungeness crab is exciting in itself, but some of these crabs, donated by local crab fishermen, will be worth some extra cash. In addition, drawings for various prizes will occur throughout the day at the derby booth.

A derby ticket and a valid Washington State fishing license are needed to participate. The derby ticket comes with crab bait. Crab pots can be rented or purchased in Westport. The derby is from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

For those not interested in participating in the derby, there's still plenty to watch and do including cheering on a favorite crustacean at the crab races and filling up at the iconic crab feed from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

May 3 - 5 – Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival is at the Grays Harbor National Wildlife Refuge near Bowerman Basin in Hoquiam.

Hundreds of thousands of shorebirds – dowitchers, plovers, turnstones, sandpipers, dunlin, red knots and others – stop to rest and feed each spring on the Washington Coast and in the Grays Harbor estuary during migration. The 29th Annual Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival celebrates this largest concentration of shorebirds on the West Coast. In addition to viewing and photographing the birds at Hoquiam’s Bowerman Basin, educational talks are part of the festival.


Rebecca Heisman, author of “Flight Paths: How a Passionate and Quirky Group of Pioneering Scientists Solve the Mystery of Bird Migration,” will speak at 7:30 p.m. Friday, May 3, at the Hoquiam High School Little Theater. A dessert reception begins at 6:45 p.m. Tickets may be purchased in advance or at the door. Heisman will tell some surprising stories from the history of bird migration research and discuss why



Photo courtesy of Tom Rowley

understanding migration is so crucial for bird conservation.

Then on Saturday, May 4, zoologist and author Dennis Paulson will talk about the diversity and abundance of shorebirds in Grays Harbor in a photo-illustrated lecture. The evening at the Elks Lodge in Hoquiam begins at 5:30 p.m. with a social hour, followed by dinner and fundraiser. Paulson is slated to speak at 7:30 p.m.

For more information, visit www.shorebirdfestival.com. 

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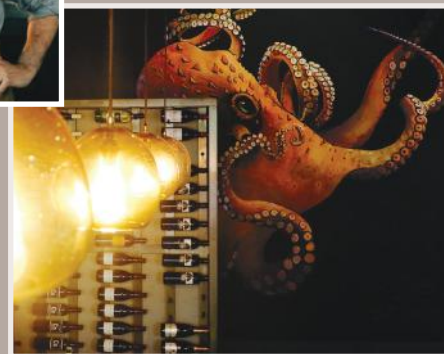
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SNAP, CLICK, FLASH

Montesano's Westmoreland loves to shoot the stars

Photo by Katie McGregor



STORY BY KATIE MCGREGOR
PHOTOS BY DARRELL WESTMORELAND

He's ridden in limos with Joan Jett, enjoyed Thanksgiving dinner with Kenny G, gone bowling with Tiffany, eaten ribs with Sting, and has been on a first-name basis with the likes of Van Halen, Paul McCartney and many others.

With more than 50 years of photography experience, Montesano resident Darrell Westmoreland's engaging personality and stunning photographs have gained him notoriety with both Harborites and the stars of rock and roll.

Born in Aberdeen and reared in Montesano, Westmoreland first picked up a Yashica twin lens camera in 1969. Like many young photographers, he started out shooting for his high school yearbook and a local newspaper, The Vidette.

"I started as a journalist more than anything else," Westmoreland explained. "After I graduated from high school, I continued to shoot projects for them. The Daily World would give me a few assignments too."

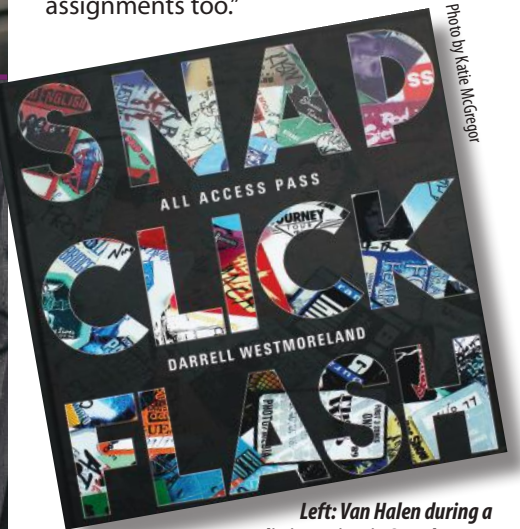
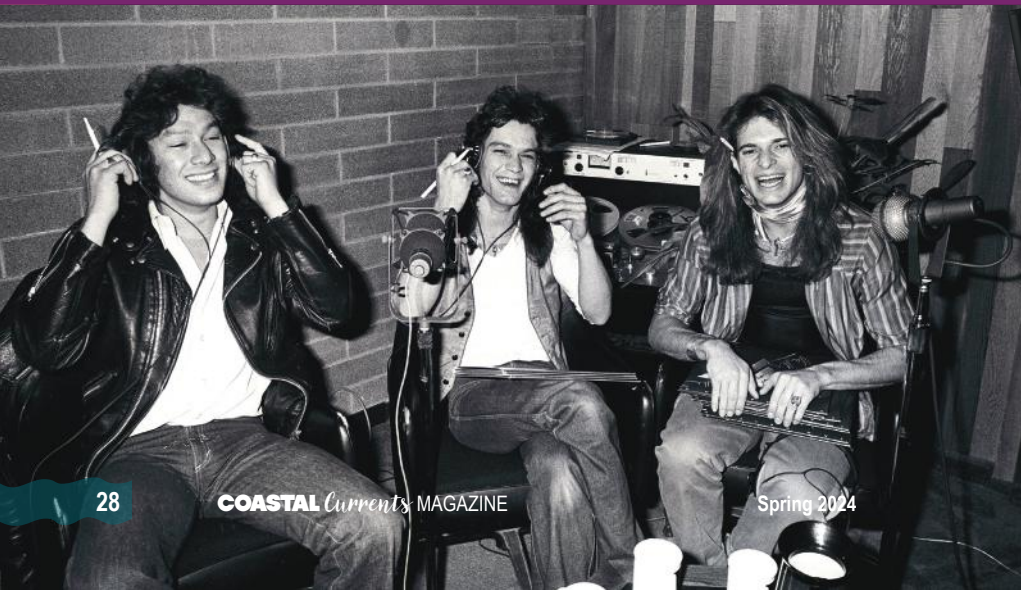


Photo by Katie McGregor

Left: Van Halen during a radio interview in Seattle, 1979.

www.Coastal-Currents.com

In 1971 Westmoreland was introduced to the music industry when Bill O'Neill hired him to document the Satsop River Fair rock festival. O'Neill was one of the producers of the historic event.

Westmoreland photographed Tina Turner in 1997 at the Gorge Amphitheater in George, Wash.

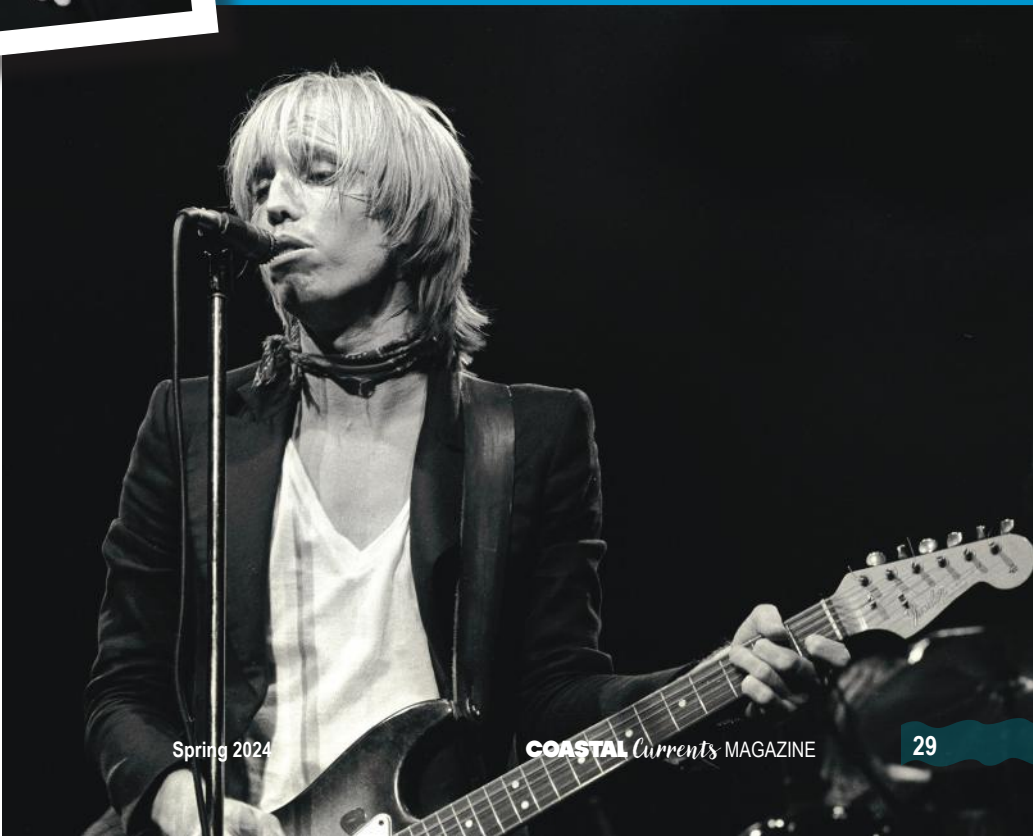
For just \$18 per ticket, more than 60,000 festival-goers spent the first weekend of September 1971 at the Reality Farm on East Satsop Road to see performances by the likes of Wishbone Ash, Spencer Davis, the Youngbloods and Steve Miller. It was the first "legal" outdoor rock festival in Washington, and Westmoreland was there to document it all.

In 1973 Westmoreland left Grays Harbor and lived in Tacoma where he completed a photography degree in just nine months and worked at a

(continued on page 30)



Top: Westmoreland with Eddie Van Halen, 1992 and Cyndi Lauper, 1983. **Right:** Tom Petty performed at the Paramount Theater in Seattle, 1979.



Westmoreland

(continued)

camera store in Lakewood. He recalls this setup being beneficial for acquiring more camera equipment, and he ended up staying in that area for 10 years before returning to the Harbor.

“The whole music thing was a dream. I was part of the entourage no matter what.”

– Darrell Westmoreland

For a while as he attended school, Westmoreland was also shooting for the Associated Press (AP), and the United Press International (UPI). Through these news services, he worked with multiple United States presidents and first ladies, as well as members of Congress.

But it wasn't until he connected with Stan Foreman, the general manager and program director for KGHO Radio in Aberdeen and later an executive at Capitol Records, that he was provided an opportunity to consistently photograph musicians.

Westmoreland photographed Destiny's Child in 2000 during a radio interview for a concert at the Gorge Amphitheater, George, Wash. From left, Kelly Rowland, Beyoncé Knowles and Michelle Williams.



Cher and Westmoreland, 1994.



Westmoreland and Boy George, 2017.

“Within a year and a half, I was shooting for 50 to 60 groups in the Northwest market,” Westmoreland said. He spent the next four decades dealing with record companies and building up clients in the Portland and Seattle radio markets.

By 1976 he had acquired so many clients in the music industry that he stopped shooting for the AP and UPI.

Westmoreland spent so much time shooting shows at the Tacoma Dome in the 80s that he was asked to be the house photographer for the venue and spent the next 36 years packing 25 pounds of camera gear up and down the stands as he shot concerts.

“The whole music thing was a dream. I was part of the entourage no matter what,” Westmoreland said. The experience would often entail limo rides to bring artists to radio stations where Westmoreland would take meet-and-greet photos.

Westmoreland has a collection of photos that is impressive because of his good eye and skill at capturing moments that draw the viewer in, but it's all the more fascinating because of the content itself.

Many music photographers are given a press-pass via the venue or a manager, which means they get access to the pit between the stage and the audience for exactly three songs during the concert. After that, no photos are allowed, with the exception of photographers touring with the musicians.

Westmoreland not only has a plethora of concert photos in his collection, but he is also perhaps best known for the photos he's taken behind the scenes of the moments that nobody else gets to witness. His work makes the subject look good, and it brings a humanizing perspective to big names in rock and roll.

Stan Foreman, who died in 2021, was also known as the leader of the popular



Grays Harbor band, The Beachcombers, which played throughout the Northwest. He is quoted in "SNAP, CLICK, FLASH: All Access Pass," the book of photos that Westmoreland released in 2018. "Many artists just don't like doing photos after a show but Darrell had a way of putting them at ease."

"I have an archived collection that probably rivals anything anybody's ever seen. I've shot so much stuff that's unique ..."

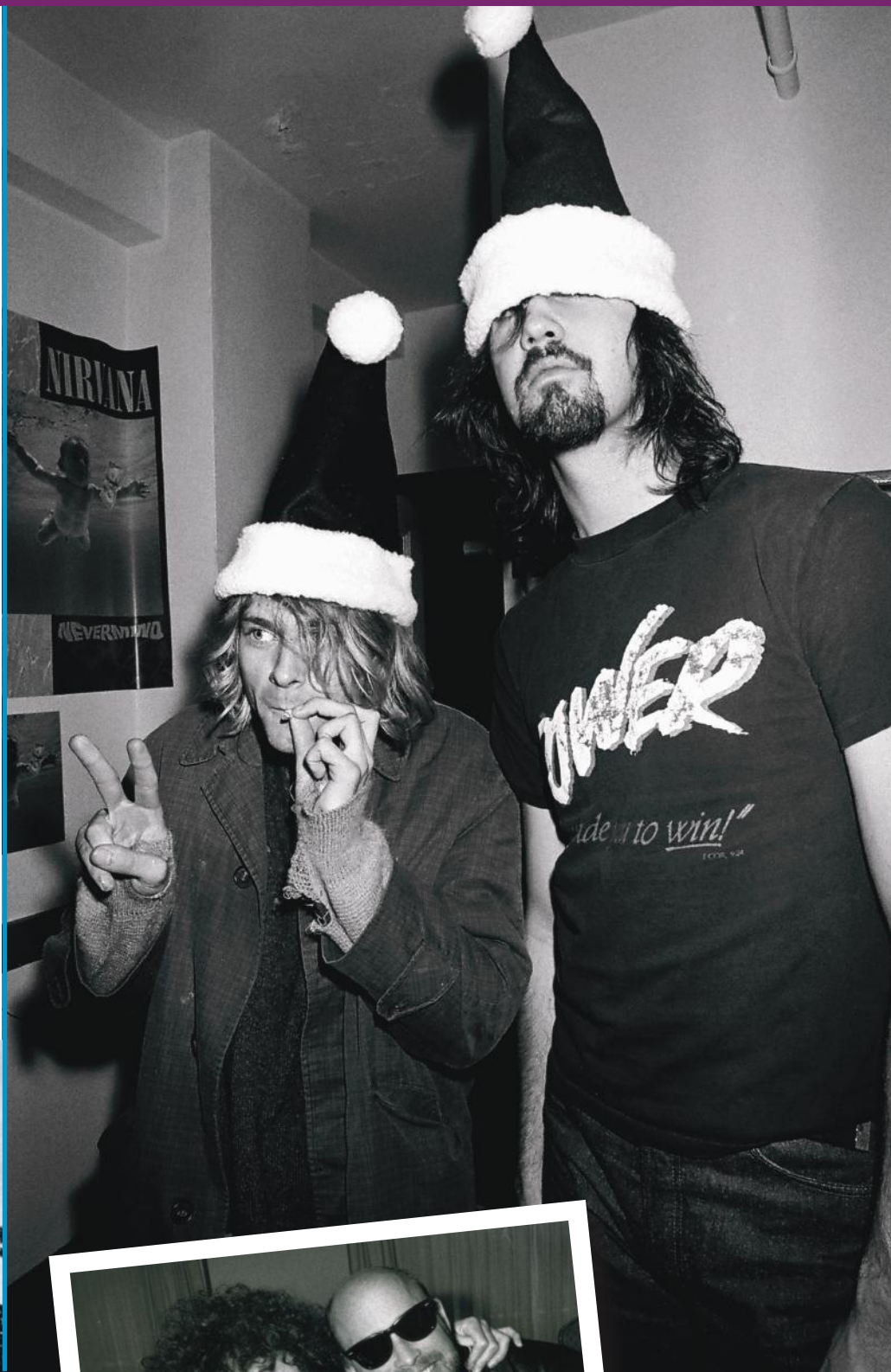
– Darrell Westmoreland

This ease is evident in Westmoreland's portfolio of black-and-white photos depicting the likes of Kurt Cobain and Krist Novoselic clowning around backstage in a dressing room in 1991 and Billy Joel celebrating his 43rd birthday backstage in Portland in 1983.

Some of this impressively extensive and star-studded portfolio can be viewed

(continued on page 33)

Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder stands atop speakers at the Seattle Center Coliseum, 1991.



Top: Westmoreland photographed Kurt Cobain and Krist Novoselic of Nirvana, 1991, in Seattle. "It looks like he is smoking a joint but it's fake, it's a cigarette Kurt pre-rolled," Westmoreland said. Left: Bryan May of Queen with Westmoreland, 1993.

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Westmoreland

(continued)

in "SNAP, CLICK, FLASH." After years of being told that he should make a book, Westmoreland learned how to put one together and even designed the cover. He intentionally designed the book to be 12 x 12 inches as an homage to the size and shape of a record album and compiled more than 150 black-and-white photos, and the stories to go with them, from throughout his career.

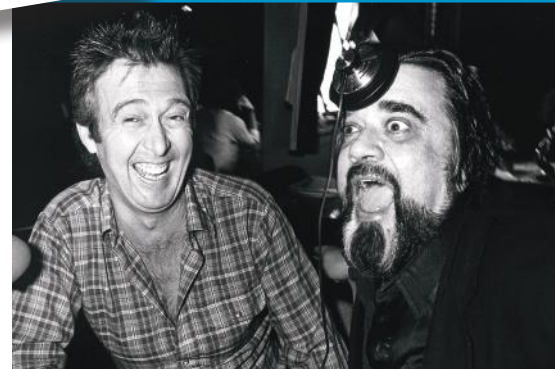
Though Westmoreland can often be seen at public events in Grays Harbor and spent many years taking photos for dances at the local high schools, he still works as the house photographer for all concerts and meet-and-greets at the Washington State Fair in Puyallup and works with smaller clients on the side.


"I'm kind of winding down," said Westmoreland, 73. "My biggest client right now is the Washington State Fair. I handle all of the music artists and deal with the directors, so I'm in a different type of position."

Nowadays Westmoreland licenses photos out to artists and said that he has barely scratched the surface of his own collection. His passion for music and photography is evident and he still refers to many of the artists and

industry connections he's worked with throughout the years as friends.

"I have an archived collection that probably rivals anything anybody's ever seen. I've shot so much stuff that's unique in terms of it all being backstage and dealing with artists behind the scenes. I don't even remember what I have."



Westmoreland's work can be viewed and purchased locally at Nirvana Coffee Co. and in the windows of the D & R Theater Event Center in Aberdeen. His book can be purchased for \$50 at Nirvana Coffee or on his website darrellwestmoreland.com. He is also active on Facebook under his own name and "DMW Images." 

Clockwise from above left: Westmoreland with Dolly Parton, 1987. Gwen Stefani, 2002 in Tacoma. Spencer Davis and Wolfman Jack, 1987.



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Prolific local author Sheila Roberts uses Ocean Shores as inspiration

BY CYNTHIA STEARNS

Effervescent Sheila Roberts is a prolific writer who is always on the prowl for ideas and characters wherever she is, including in Ocean Shores where she and her husband, Gerhardt, have a home.

Sheila has written more than 50 books, several which have become movies, including "Christmas on Candy Cane Lane," which debuted this past holiday season on the Great American Family Channel. That story is part of her series based on Leavenworth. Roberts also has a whole series of books that are inspired by Ocean Shores and many of the people in it.

"I really love Ocean Shores and thought it would be fun to set something there," Roberts said.

With the distinctive feel of Ocean Shores, the Moonlight Harbor series was born. She took the Ocean Shores Resort as a model for the small motel which became the Driftwood Inn in the series. And "the candy lady" is based off of Melanie Rice, the former owner of Buddy & Howie's Old Fashioned Sweet Shoppe. Sheila checks in with her now at her new place, Flying Cats. Sharky, the beloved statue mascot in Ocean Shores, is easy to spot in the books, and more beachy flare makes the series feel close to home.

The Roberts first started visiting the ocean beaches with their kids in the 80s and 90s. Then the couple, who also has a residence in Kitsap County, bought a condo in Ocean Shores in 2008, later upgrading to a home on Ocean Shores' Lake Minard. Split with their other residence in Kitsap County and traveling to promote her latest book or



Sheila Roberts

Photo courtesy of Sheila Roberts

to a movie set with her book adapted to film, Sheila is a positive, literary force of nature.

"I really love Ocean Shores and thought it would be fun to set something there,"

— Sheila Roberts

This Pacific Northwest native began writing as a child, making books in her Seattle grade school.

Her working career is varied, including owning a singing telegram company. After playing in a band, with a stint in Nashville as a songwriter, she got an idea for a book. So, in the middle of her career life, she reinvented herself, got an agent, wrote the book and she's "been airborne ever since."

Her first novels are Regency Romance titles. She's also written Christian devotionals and personal development books.

Her writing process starts with an idea or after a certain character comes to mind. "Getting into the original idea in escape land. Some things just drop into your head, or they do into mine," Roberts said, laughing.

First, she "gets a fire going" then "you have to start polishing the book ... you have to dig for the gold" while completing the novel, she said.

"It's both easy and hard. It's harder than it looks" to write these novels she said. "I do a lot of writing at the beach. The more fun (I have), the more I have to schedule in my writing. I could play all day."

Trying to be part of the community, Sheila and her husband fully immerse themselves in life in Grays Harbor. They take in line dancing, beach walks and tennis in Ocean Shores. They love trying different restaurants and are exploring more in Grays Harbor. The car show in Elma is a favorite. Westport Winery including the Mermaid Museum, is another spot they enjoy.

It was a funny conversation with her husband (who may have been showing a lack of enthusiasm for decorating or shopping at Christmas and discussed going on strike) that planted a seed for a novel. That idea germinated into the book, "On Strike for Christmas," which jumped from the pages to be adapted to a film on Lifetime.

"Be careful what you tell a writer, you may end up in my book," she warned playfully.



Sheila Roberts chatting with Ivy Donaldson (Andrea Barber) on the set of "Christmas on Candy Cane Lane."


In expanding her horizons a bit, Roberts has begun online conversations. She can be found live on her Sheila Roberts Facebook page or YouTube channel many Sundays at 4 p.m. She provides a brief comment including Friday updates. The livestream may include another author or just a chat with her readers.

"I love to talk," Sheila said, "and it's a way to keep up with everybody."

Her upcoming book "The Best Life Book Club" releases May 7, 2024. It can be pre-ordered online at sheilaroberts@sheilasplace.com. Members of book clubs are encouraged to find out about the book on her website. Opportunities exist for a phone, Zoom, or online connection for discussion. Even an in-person discussion may be arranged with the author.

In the meantime, Roberts said, she is keeping her "fingers crossed," that something from her Moonlight Harbor series will become her next film adaptation.

"Shout out to the beach! It's definitely my happy place," she said.

Her advice for budding writers with any talent? "Don't give up! I've crashed and burned a couple of times," Sheila said, adding, "I kinda got my happy ending." 

Sheila Roberts of Ocean Shores is a USA Today and Publisher's Weekly best-selling author who has written some 50 books including women's fiction novels, inspirational books, romance novels and even non-fiction books. A sample of her work includes:

Upcoming and Latest Releases

- "The Best Life Book Club" (coming May 7, 2024)
- "The Twelve Months of Christmas" October 2023

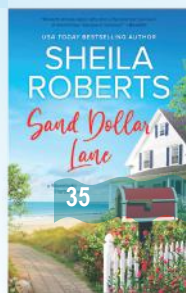
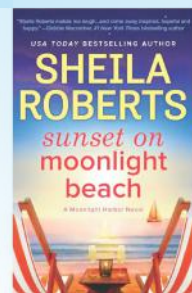
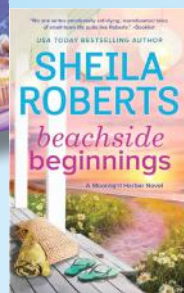
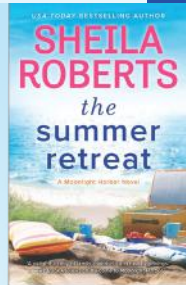
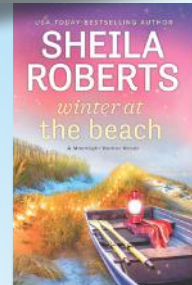
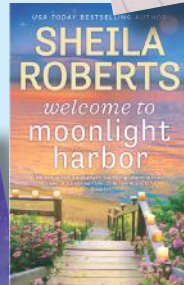
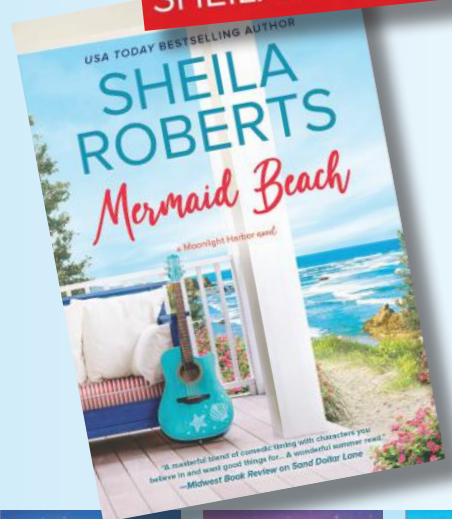
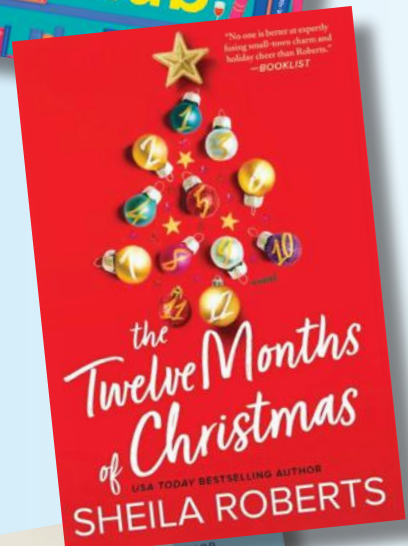
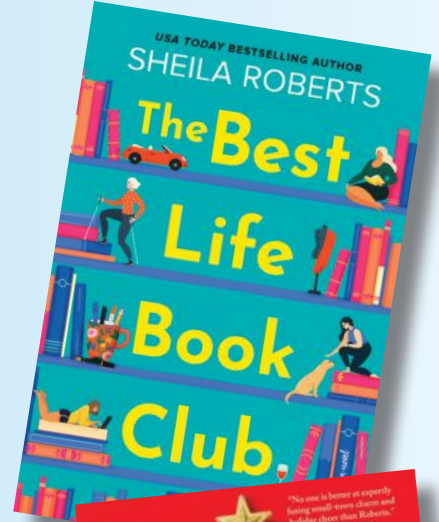
Books into Movies

- "On Strike for Christmas" 2010, Drama/Comedy (Lifetime)
- "The Nine Lives of Christmas" 2014, Romance/Drama (Hallmark)
- "The Nine Kittens of Christmas" 2021, Romance (Hallmark)
- "Christmas on Candy Cane Lane" 2022, (Great American Family)

Moonlight Harbor series

- (set on the Washington Coast and inspired by Ocean Shores)
- "Welcome to Moonlight Harbor"
- "Winter at the Beach"
- "The Summer Retreat"
- "Beachside Beginnings"
- "Sunset on Moonlight Beach"
- "Sand Dollar Lane"
- "Mermaid Beach"

In all, she has more than 30 novels in the **Heart Lake**, **Life in Icicle Falls**, (inspired by Leavenworth) and the **Moonlight Harbor** series. In addition, under the name Sheila Rabe, she has penned many contemporary and historical romance novels.



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High School students' art sought for show


High school students throughout Grays Harbor have the opportunity to participate this spring in a juried art show just for them at the Grays Harbor Art Gallery inside the library of Grays Harbor College. The public then has the opportunity to attend the art show later this spring.



Submissions, organized through the high school art teachers, are due by March 22 and include the following categories: photography, 3-dimensional, 2-dimensional black and white, 2-dimensional color, and mixed media.

The public can view the high school students' work at the GHC library from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays, and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Fridays, April 8 through May 9.

Last year, students from Aberdeen, Hoquiam, Montesano and Ocosta high schools submitted more than 190 pieces of art.

Haley Adair, a Grays Harbor College library professional, and Susan Schreiner, an associate dean at the college, manage the show. For more information, call (360)538-4052. 

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Coast Trio inspires, educates through beautiful music



On a rainy winter evening, the strains of a Corelli concerto fill the Aberdeen First Presbyterian Church. With a sound at once intimate and yet somehow larger than the three instruments they play, the Coast Trio transports the audience away from the rain and the darkness on a river of intertwining melodies and harmonies.

"I refer to it as an avenue of beauty," mused Leslie O'Brien, who plays viola and violin in the trio. "Music allows

you to be immersed in something really beautiful that has to be remembered, has to be nurtured."

The musicians that comprise the Coast Trio, which also includes Leslie's husband, John O'Brien, and Debra Akerlund, have made it their mission to share this avenue of beauty widely, playing at venues from school gyms to the Bishop Center, the McCleary Museum, and even on board the Lady Washington.

School outreach programs carry a special significance for the trio. For the past three years they have performed in schools throughout Grays Harbor and Pacific counties. Thanks to a grant from the Grays Harbor Foundation, these concerts cost the schools nothing. This spring, the outreach program has the working title "From Bach to Rock."

"We always play some classical music, but we try to build programs that will interest kids," explained Debra Akerlund, violinist. "We play Disney tunes, too, and rock music. Picture 300 kids stomping on the bleachers when we start playing Queen's 'We Will Rock You.'"

Growing up, both Debra and cellist John O'Brien played in the strings programs in Aberdeen schools. Leslie also discovered strings while in elementary school in the San Francisco Bay area.

All three emphasize the importance of sponsoring music programs in schools and introducing children to music at an early age.

For instance, John moved to Aberdeen from Manhattan at the age of 10 and experienced quite a culture shock. A city boy, he had never learned how to play football and baseball, and other kids picked on him mercilessly for his accent. A neighbor girl mentioned that Gordon Edlund was running a strings

Photo courtesy of Debra Akerlund



The Coast Trio plays at the Satsop School in spring of 2023 as part of a school outreach program.

program at Stevens Elementary and suggested they join.

"I picked up a full-sized cello as a 10-year-old and carried it on the school bus," remembered John. "I stuck with it, and I'm so grateful.

I think it was a gift from God to keep my sanity when I was a kid."

John continued studying music, first at Western Washington University and then in San Francisco, where he met and married

Leslie. After moving back to Aberdeen, the two joined the Grays Harbor Symphony in 1984. Forty years later, they continue to play in the symphony, Leslie as concertmaster and John as principal cellist.

For Debra, elementary school music

in Aberdeen led to a lifelong musical career, from studying at the renowned Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York, to playing in professional symphonies and chamber orchestras all over the United States and in British Columbia.

Whether youth music programs lead to successful music careers or simply a rich and fulfilling appreciation for music, the Coast Trio members maintain that early experiences playing and listening to music prove critical.

Music teaches youth everything from responsibility to teamwork and discipline as well as giving kids a creative outlet, something to take pride in, Leslie said. Further, many studies and anecdotal evidence also suggest a significant connection between music education and success in advanced science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) studies.

Consequently, the trend to remove music programs from schools has Coast Trio members, and many others, worried. Currently, Aberdeen School District offers the only elementary strings program in the area.

"We would love to see a revival of school music programs so that they can be a feeder to the rest of the community," John said.

The Coast Trio's school outreach program aims to inspire that revival, but parents and other community members play a critical role, as well.

(continued on page 40)

Coast Trio performing with the Grays Harbor Symphony in November 2023.

Photo by Keith Krueger



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Coast Trio *(continued)*

"There has to be huge support from the parents," emphasized Debra. "Growing up, we played music all over the place, and it's because the parents really pushed for it. They realized the value of music, and they wanted it in the schools."

Private lessons offer another avenue for musical development for both youth and adults. Debra and John currently teach students of all ages, and they maintain that all ages and all communities benefit from the beauty that music brings.

"You're never too young or too old to play a string instrument. It's something you can do your whole life," said Debra. "In fact, I have students from age 6 through 74."






Coast Trio members: Debra Akerlund (violin), Leslie O'Brien (viola/violin), John O'Brien (cello).

"You're never too young or too old to play a string instrument ... I have students from age 6 through 74."

- Debra Akerlund


Adults returning to music after years away may feel rusty, unsure about how to engage with music again. John suggests jumping right in the deep end. Join the Grays Harbor Symphony or another music group, for example. Most churches in the area also offer plentiful opportunities for playing music. And, of course, private teachers provide both motivation and coaching.

For those who want to experience classical music as an audience member, the Harbor offers numerous options. The Bishop Center at Grays Harbor College hosts concerts throughout the year. The McCleary Museum, area churches, and other locations do as well. And groups like the Coast Trio are available to play at a variety of venues and events.


To learn more about Coast Trio performance opportunities, including the school outreach program and availability for private events, contact Debra Akerlund at (360) 581-7720 or sparkyda@msn.com. 

Leslie, John, and Debra hope to inspire others to help keep classical music alive in the Harbor.

Photo by Keith Kraeger

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Patriotic celebrations slated for April on Harbor

To honor the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, Patriot Week will be celebrated April 22-28 through a variety of events throughout Grays Harbor. The activities coincide with the annual convention of the Washington State Sons of the American Revolution in Ocean Shores.

The Washington State Society Sons of the American Revolution is a non-profit, non-partisan organization for promoting patriotism, preserving American history and educating future generations, said Gregory Lucas, president.

On Tuesday, April 23, John Hughes, Washington State historian, will present a lecture, "The Bill of Obligations," at the Ocean Shores Cinema, 641 Point Brown Ave. N.W. Time to be announced.

Also on April 23, the public is invited to a "patriot chest" presentation at 5 p.m. in the Hoquiam Timberland Library's



meeting room. The patriot chests are educational tools packed with clothing, toys, household items, currency and documents from the Revolutionary War and Colonial period. Another patriot chest presentation will be at 12:30 p.m. April 24 at the Ocean Shores Library.

At 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 24, Vern Frykholm, will present "An Evening with George Washington" at the 7th Street Theatre in Hoquiam. Frykholm will entertain, educate and inspire with his rendition of the life of the father of our country.

Tickets, which are \$8 for adults and \$3 for students, will be available at the door.

Then at 3:30 p.m. Thursday, April 25, Frykholm will present "An Afternoon with George Washington" at the Ocean Shores Library.

Throughout the week, members of the Washington State Genealogical Society, as well as volunteers from the Sons of the American Revolution and Daughters of the American Revolution will provide free genealogical service to the public by appointment to help people find patriot ancestors.

The workshops are from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day April 22-25 at the Ocean Shores Library and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday, April 23, at the Hoquiam Timberland Library. To make an appointment, call Carrie at (206) 276-7889.

For more information including times of events, visit www.washingtonsar.org.

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MARCH

MARCH 1 . First Friday Art Walk . Aberdeen Art Center . 5-8pm. Enjoy live music on stage, artist demonstrations, snacks, and new art on display.

MARCH 1-2 . That Irish Guy . Ocean Shores . Galway Bay Irish Pub. 6pm.

MARCH 1-3 . Beachcombers & Glass Float Expo . Ocean Shores Convention Center . 10am - 4pm. Celebration of beachcombing, glass float collecting and our marine environment.

MARCH 2 . Miss Grays Harbor Scholarship Program . 7th Street Theatre . Hoquiam . Saturday, 6pm.

MARCH 1, 2, 3 . "Don Quixote de la Center" . Stage West Community Theatre . Ocean Shores . Friday, Saturday 7pm, Sunday 2pm Wrestles with aging and dementia in an adult care home. Directed by Lorraine Hardin.

MARCH 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10 . Oklahoma! . Bishop Center . Aberdeen . Grays Harbor College. Fridays, Saturdays 7:30pm, Sundays 2pm. By Rodgers and Hammerstein's. Directed by Dr. Andrew Gaines.

MARCH 3 . Talla Rouge Viola Duo . Raymond Theatre . Performing music at the intersection of Jazz, Folk, Pop, Middle-Eastern, and Western Classical traditions, 2pm.

MARCH 6 . First Wednesday Arts Night . Montesano . Lemon Hill Bookstore and Cafe. Featuring local painters in March.

MARCH 9 . All-You-Can-Eat Crab Feed . Ocosta Recreation Hall . Benefits Ocosta Booster Club

Scholarship Program.
12pm - 6pm.

MARCH 9, 10 . 'Guess Who's Coming to Dinner' . 7th Street Theatre . Hoquiam . Saturday 7:30pm, Sunday 2pm. Movie from 1967.

MARCH 10 . Sons of Serendip . Raymond Theatre . Beautiful music with harp, piano, cello and voice, 2pm.

MARCH 14 . GHC Jazz Concert . Bishop Center . Aberdeen . Grays Harbor College . Thurs., 7pm.

MARCH 15, 16 . 'Galaxy Quest' . 7th Street Theatre . Hoquiam . Friday, Saturday 7:30pm. Movie from 1999.

MARCH 15-17 . Razor Clam Festival and Seafood Extravaganza . Ocean Shores Convention Center . Celebrates everything about razor clams. (Story on page 24.)

MARCH 16 . Shamrock 5k Fun Run & Finisher's Festival . Seabrook . Stay for live music, green beer, yard games, and delicious food.

MARCH 16 . Harvey's Pop-Up All Star Comedy . Aberdeen . Driftwood Theatre. 8pm.

MARCH 22 . Dogger . Aberdeen . Buster's Boone

St. Bar & Grill.

MARCH 22-24 . Grays Harbor Mounted Posse Indoor Pro Rodeo . Elma . GH County Fairgrounds.

MARCH 26 . Lunch with the Mayors, GGH . Aberdeen . Rotary Log Pavilion, 11:30am.

MARCH 29 . Grit City Band . Ocean Shores . Quinalt Beach Resort & Casino. Country, 8pm.

MARCH 30 . The Beat Goes On, Cher Tribute Concert . Ocean Shores . Quinalt Beach Resort, Featuring Lisa McClowry as Cher, 8pm.

MARCH 30 . Spring Spectacular Artisans Market . Pacific Beach. Local artists & goods 14 Main Street. 10am-4pm.

(continued on page 44)

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APRIL

APRIL 5 . First Friday Art Walk . Aberdeen Art Center . 5 - 8pm. Enjoy live music on the Alder Grove Gallery stage, artist demonstrations, snacks, and new art in both galleries.

APRIL 6 . Here Comes the Sun . Bishop Center . Aberdeen . Grays Harbor College. A celebration of the Beatles. Saturday, 7:30pm.

APRIL 6 . Harbor Havoc - April Anarchy . Ocean Shores . Convention Center. 6pm. Rogue Wrestling Attractions.

APRIL 6, 7 . 'Meet Me in St. Louis' . 7th Street Theatre . Hoquiam . Saturday 7:30pm, Sunday 2pm. Movie from 1944 with Judy Garland.

APRIL 6-7 . Hairy Horse Show . Elma . Grays Harbor County Fairgrounds.

APRIL 6-14 . International Mermaid Museum's Mermaid Festival . Westport Winery. Free festival & museum admission. Una the Mermaid performs underwater in her tank daily. Entertainment, music, food, crafts. (See story on page 24.)

APRIL 7 . Here Comes the Sun . Raymond Theater . Sunday Afternoon Live Series. A celebration of the Beatles. Sunday, 2pm.

APRIL 8 - MAY 9 . High School Art Show . Aberdeen . Grays Harbor College, Spellman Library. (See information on page 37.)

APRIL 12, 13 . That Irish Guy . Ocean Shores . Galway Bay Irish Pub. 6pm.

APRIL 12 . Mel Dalton . Aberdeen . Mount Olympus Brewing. Mel is a country/Americana musician playing in the Inland Northwest. 6pm.

APRIL 20 . World Class Crab Races, Crab Feed & Derby . Westport . A unique family fun experience at the marina. (See story on page 24.)

APRIL 20 . Coast Clean-up . Join Washington CoastSavers by participating in the Washington Coast Cleanup in honor of Earth Day.

APRIL 20 . Earth Day Fair & Activities . Ocean Shores . Coastal Interpretive Center.

APRIL 23 . "The Bill of Obligations" . Ocean Shores Cinema . John Hughes, Washington State historian, will present a lecture. Time TBA.

APRIL 24 . "An Evening with George Washington" . Hoquiam . 7th Street Theatre. Vern Frykholm, entertains, educates and inspires with his rendition of the father of our country. 7pm.

APRIL 25 . "An Afternoon with George Washington" . Ocean Shores Library . 3:30pm. Description above.

APRIL 26-27 . High Rollin' Hot Rods Car Show . Ocean Shores . Quinault Beach Resort & Casino.

APRIL 27 . 'Hand to God' . Aberdeen .

Driftwood Players. Saturday 7:30pm. After the death of his father, meek Jason finds the Christian Puppet Ministry. Comedy/Drama. Directed by Brad W. Duffy, Director in Training Casey Bronson.

APRIL 27 . Katie Jane Band . Ocean Shores . Galway Bay Irish Pub. A high-energy Celtic fiddle

band from Portland, Ore. 3-7pm.

APRIL 27-28 . GH Gem & Geology Rock & Gem Show . Elma . GH County Fairgrounds.

APRIL 27-28 . TICA Cat Show . Elma . Grays Harbor County Fairgrounds.

(continued on page 46)

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MAY

MAY TBA . Tokeland & North Cove Art Studio Tour . 10am-4pm. Artists selling their art and demonstrating the artistic process. Two weekends.

MAY 3 . First Friday Art Walk . Aberdeen Art Center . 5-8pm. Enjoy live music on stage, artist demonstrations, snacks, and new art on display.

MAY 3 . The Peculiar Pretzelmens . Aberdeen
The Loading Dock, 8pm. Los Angeles' voodoo priests of swampy blues stomp and dirty jazz freakout.

MAY 3-5 . Grays Harbor Shorebird Festival . Hoquiam . Celebrate the shorebird migration with bird viewing and educational talks. (Story on page 24.)

MAY 3-5 . Olympia Dog Fanciers Dog Show . Elma . Grays Harbor County Fairgrounds.

MAY 3-12 . "Suite Surrender" . Stage West Community Theatre . Ocean Shores . Friday,

Saturday 7pm, Sunday 2pm.

MAY 3, 4, 10, 11, 17, 18, 19 . 'Hand to God' . Aberdeen . Driftwood Players. Saturday 7:30pm. Comedy/Drama. Directed by Brad W. Duffy.

MAY 4 . Annual Oyster Feed . Ocosta Recreation Hall . All you can eat, 3-7pm.

MAY 4, 5, 10, 11, 12 . Little Mermaid . Aberdeen High School . Musical performance. Friday, Saturday 7pm, Sunday Noon.

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MAY 9-12 . Celebrate Summer Jam . Ocean Shores Convention Center . Music & more!

MAY 10, 11 . That Irish Guy . Ocean Shores . Galway Bay Irish Pub, 6pm.

MAY 11-12 . Hairy Horse Show . Elma . Grays Harbor County Fairgrounds.

MAY 18 . Savor Seabrook Seafood & Wine Festival . Seabrook . 12pm -5pm. More than 20 wineries, gourmet seafood, live music and more.

MAY 18 . Stevie and the Blue Flames . Ocean Shores Lions Club . Blues at the Harbor.

MAY 18-19 . Master Gardeners of Grays Harbor & Pacific County Home & Garden Show . Elma . Grays Harbor County Fairgrounds.

MAY 23 . GHC Drama Department . Bishop Center . Aberdeen . Grays Harbor College, 7pm.

MAY 25-26 . Rock & Blues Flea Market Festival . Ocean Shores Convention Center . Deerswerver joins classic rocker Johnny the Capo and the Bad Boys to kick off the event.

MAY 26 . Day of Remembrance . Westport . Remember those lost at sea, bless the fleet for a safe and bountiful harvest. 1pm, Fishermen's Memorial.

MAY 27 . Celebration Of Glass . Westport . 10am - 4pm. Maritime Museum, McCausland Hall. Learn about beachcombing for treasures.

MAY 27 . VFW Memorial Ceremony . Westport . Veteran's Memorial Park (Street of Flags), 11am.

MAY 29 . MHS Band Concert . Montesano High School . 7:30pm.


MAY 30 . AHS Band Spring Concert . Aberdeen High School . 7pm.

MAY 31 - JUNE 1 . Grays Harbor Festival of Colors . Ocean Shores . Novice to professional, fly a kite or enjoy the antics of colorful kites filling the skies. Lighted Kite Flying on Friday Night.

JUNE

JUNE 1 . Seabrook Relay . Seabrook . The course is a 60.2 mile run, 40.4 mile walk. See Hood To Coast website for more info.

JUNE 1 . Wearable Art Show . Ocean Shores . Convention Center, 6:30pm. Theme: *Beyond Wild!*

JUNE 2 . Grays Harbor Symphony . Bishop Center . Aberdeen . Grays Harbor College. Sunday, 7pm. 

More events soon! Summer issue arrives June 1st!

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The Coastal Currents Team

Rick Anderson – Aberdeen

Rick has spent more than 50 years in daily journalism, working at The Daily World in Aberdeen as a sports writer, editor and occasional film critic. His book of classic movie reviews, "Rewind," was published in 2023. A graduate of the University of Washington, where he received degrees in communications and history, he enjoys outdoor activities and following sports and movies.



Gail Greenwood Ayres – Brady

Journalism has proven to be an ideal career for Gail, who loves an interesting conversation, a great story and the excuse to learn about all sorts of things. She has worked at The Wenatchee World, The Tacoma News Tribune, and The Daily World and published articles in a



myriad of magazines. Gail has enjoyed working with a great team at Coastal Currents, putting together a magazine that celebrates the cultural richness in Grays Harbor. She and her husband, Dan, have two grown daughters.

Angelo Bruscas – Ocean Shores

Angelo moved to Ocean Shores 15 years ago, after 25 years as an editor/reporter and sportswriter for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer. He had also worked at The Daily World in Aberdeen, the Yakima Herald, the Skagit Valley Herald, and the Las Vegas Review-Journal, with his last stint as the editor of the North Coast News. In addition, his articles have appeared in numerous publications, including Sports Illustrated, ESPN, and Seattle magazines. A beachcomber, guitar player and songwriter, Angelo has two grown children and two grandchildren.



Stephanie Morton – Ocean Shores

Stephanie Morton moved to Ocean Shores in the spring of 2015 from northern Nevada, and she is still getting used to the weather. She is the editor of The Ocean Observer and previously worked as a general assignment reporter at The Vidette. She received her degree in journalism from the University of Memphis in 2007. Stephanie and her dog, Jack, love experiencing all that the Harbor has to offer and enjoy beach walks, bonfires, berry picking, Burning Bear and body boarding. And those are just the ones that start with B!



Rick Moyer – Aberdeen

Rick is a local radio personality with Alpha Media Grays Harbor on KIX 95.3 and 104.7 KDUX. He and his wife Amy started Moyer Multi Media in 2009. Rick has been capturing



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images since he was a teenager. His photo studio, Side One Studios, recently relocated to 202 South K in downtown Aberdeen. Rick frequently attends community events shooting video, running a photo booth or just enjoying his community. He loves the Pacific Northwest where he was born and raised.

Katie McGregor – Aberdeen

Katie, a photographer and writer, graduated from Pacific Lutheran University where she studied media communication and studio art. Now she runs a freelance photography business and takes photos for businesses, publications, and individuals around Western Washington. The rest of her time is spent outdoors, hiking and taking photos throughout the Pacific Northwest.



Amy Ostwald – Satsop Valley

Amy is passionate about the arts and promoting them through the pages of this magazine.



Amy is Coastal Currents' graphic designer and earned her degree from University of Cincinnati. With little delay she moved to Grays Harbor – the known center of the universe.

She has served a variety of Grays Harbor businesses for more than three decades through her business, Ostwald Graphic Design. She and her husband, Mark, have two grown kids. In her free time, Amy enjoys gardening, all sorts of outdoor adventures and traveling to sites near or far.

Cynthia Stearns – Ocean Shores

After receiving her journalism degree from Kansas State University, Cynthia worked at daily, weekly and monthly newspapers as well as at various advertising agencies, including developing events with the Seattle

Mariners and Tacoma Stars. In addition, she has produced events for more than 20 years, with her most recent events being The Artisan Faire in Ocean Shores and the Washington State Chili Cookoff. Cynthia has been writing as long as she can remember, even helping with the church newsletter when she was in elementary school.

Juliana Wallace – Montesano


Through nearly a decade of living in Montesano, Juliana has fallen in love with the Pacific Northwest. Whether running the trails at Lake Sylvia, backpacking in the Olympics and the Cascades, or discovering art in unexpected places, she loves to experience and share the “aha” moments that feed the soul. A freelance writer and graduate of Utah State University, Juliana honed her craft as a corporate writer, biographer and blogger. She counts herself lucky to discover and write the stories of phenomenal artists and musicians throughout Grays Harbor.



Stan Woody – Grayland

Stan is a member of a Washington pioneer family, and born in Aberdeen. He was raised by lifelong newspaper parents. His mother's first job was with The Washingtonian of Hoquiam, and his father started his advertising sales career at The Daily World. His publishing career includes publisher of 16 newspapers, and six magazines,



including the founding of Grays Harbor Coastal Currents, he says, “I’ve finally found what I want to do in life! Thank you, Grays Harbor, for making it possible.” 



Christine Vincent


It is with sadness that we share that Christine Vincent, 63, a writer for Coastal Currents magazine, died unexpectedly Sunday, Jan. 21.

Born and reared in Gluckstadt, Germany, Christine received her master's degree in English language and literature from the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands. It was there she met Mark Vincent, an American. The couple married in 1987 and moved to Rainier, Ore., in 1988. Then in 1993, they moved to Hoquiam, where they reared and homeschooled their eight children.

A woman of faith, Christine was a cherished member of St. George Byzantine Catholic Church in Olympia.

A linguist, she taught and tutored in German and English and did translation work in those languages as well as Dutch. Christine worked at the Hoquiam Timberland Library from 2010 to 2022. She also enjoyed working as a freelance writer, writing for Grays Harbor Talk since 2015 and for Coastal Currents beginning in 2019.

In the winter issue of Coastal Currents, Christine wrote about Rediviva restaurant and artist and poet Brian McGregor. Some of her other stories for Coastal Currents include features on the Harbor Haylofters, artists Eric Faramus and Jade Black, actress Kathy Rowe, singer Amanda Ransom, St. Sophia's Eastern Orthodox Mission Church in Aberdeen, the Wynoochee River Winery and the Lake Quinault Lodge.

“Christine was a smart, hardworking writer, who was a dream to work with,” said Gail Ayres, editor of Coastal Currents. “We at the magazine miss her already and extend our sympathies to her friends and family.” 

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