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JEFFRO UITTO

DRIFTWOOD ARTIST

PAGE 8

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Photo Courtesy of Douglas Orr

GRAYS HARBOR

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Winter festivals grace Grays Harbor

BY GAIL GREENWOOD AYRES

In the dark days of winter, Grays Harbor celebrates the holidays with festivals that help keep things merry and bright. Specialty foods, art and music are part of both celebrations – Winterfest in Aberdeen during the first weekend of December and the Festival of Lights in Montesano a week later.



Aberdeen's Winterfest December 7 and 8

Started in 2016, Winterfest brightens up Aberdeen during the first whole weekend in December. Event organizers, Bobbi McCracken and Bette Worth of the Downtown Aberdeen Association, have planned a better-than-ever celebration for Saturday and Sunday, Dec. 7 and 8.

The events kick off with photos and **breakfast with Santa from 9 to 11 a.m.** at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 400 East First St. The breakfast is free for children 12 and under and available on a donation basis for older children and adults. Photos with Santa are available for purchase. The Robert Gray Elementary School Glee Club will perform seasonal music.

Then from **10 a.m. to 3 p.m.** shoppers can attend the **Holiday Market** at the former Goldberg's building, 117 W. Wishkah. Dozens of vendors will offer food, handcrafted items and other gift items. Free cookies and hot cider will keep shoppers in the holiday spirit.

During the same time, **gingerbread houses** of all kinds will be on display across the street at the former Salvation Army thrift store, which will be all decked out to look like a gingerbread house itself! Come see which individuals and businesses have put together winning entries!

A free **holiday trolley** will make loops throughout the day to take festival-goers to the various venues. In addition, the **Salmonberry Ukulele** group will perform.



Then at **7 p.m.** the movie "Elf" will be showing at the D&R Theatre – free to the public. Concessions will be available.

On Sunday at **2 p.m.** Grays Harbor's Bishop Center for Performing Arts will present "**Holiday Music**" by **Canadian musician Andrew Allen**. The light-hearted holiday show is \$15. However, children 12 and younger are free.



Montesano's Festival of Lights, December 13 – 15

"Whoo-ville" is the theme for Montesano's 33rd annual Festival of Lights, which is Grays Harbor County's biggest winter holiday festival, packing multiple activities, events and concerts into three days that climax with the Grand Parade set for 6 p.m. Saturday.

This year's schedule includes:



Friday, December 13

2 - 6 p.m. – **Art show featuring Ken Hurley** at Whitney's Chevrolet showroom. The western-themed art show will be featured throughout the festival.

6:30 - 8 p.m. – **Live entertainment** at the Montesano High School commons. Refreshments.

9 to midnight – **Street dance** on Marcy Street downtown, featuring The Bruce Hughes Band. \$5

Saturday, December 14

7 - 11 a.m. – **Pancake Breakfast with Santa** at the Montesano Community Center. \$7 a person, free for children 5 years and younger.

8 a.m. – **Santa's Sweet Shoppe** opens at the Montesano Community Center. Purchase goodies.

9 a.m. – **Jingle Bell Jog** – 2-mile fun walk or 12K race. Registration at MHS. Adults \$20, children \$15. The race begins on Pioneer Street.

9 a.m. - 2 p.m. – **Craft fair and Christmas Bazaar** Junior High Gym and High School Commons.

11 a.m. - 3 p.m. – **Cookie decorating** at the W.H. Abel Memorial Timberland Library.

Noon - 5 p.m. – **The Chehalis Valley Historical Museum**, 703 W. Pioneer Ave., will provide activities and refreshments.

3 - 7:30 p.m. – **Cookie decorating, pictures with Santa** for kids and furry friends at the Odd Fellow's Building, Marcy and 1st streets.

3:30 - 5 p.m. – **Scavenger Hunt** Umpqua Bank.

4 - 6 p.m. – **Chowder Feed** provided at the Montesano Fire Department. Donations appreciated.

4 - 6 p.m. – **Santa's Workshop** at OCCU, 211 Pioneer Ave. E., featuring kids' crafts and snacks.

4 - 7 p.m. – **Homemade chili & cornbread** at the Montesano Moose Lodge, 3 Monte-Elma Rd. \$3.

4:30 - 7 p.m. **Cocoa Factory** at Montesano Fitness Center Studio, 125 S. Main St., Create your own cup of cocoa from the cocoa bar. Donations to a local charity.

5 - 6 p.m. **Open House** at the W.H. Abel Memorial Timberland Library, refreshments and live music.

6 p.m. – **Grand Parade** Angie Brown, grand marshal

7 p.m. – **Lighting of the Yule Log** at Fleet Park.

7:30 - 8:30 p.m. – **Live Nativity** presented at the Montesano Presbyterian Church, 201 E. McBryde Ave.

Sunday, December 15

1 p.m. – **Yule Log and Sing-along** for the whole family at Schafer State Park.

7 p.m. – **Christmas Cantata** presented at United Methodist Church, 401 E. Spruce Ave. 

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JEFFRO UITTO'S SAFARI ON THE SOUTH BEACH

STORY AND PHOTOS BY MARGUERITE GARTH



Jeffro's studio



In poetry, words are strung together to form images and ideas. A poet will use rhythmic patterns, flowing lines, imagination and evocation to create a poem. Tokeland resident Jeffro Uitto uses driftwood as a poet would use words. The textures, rhythms and majesty of his work combine to elicit strong emotions. His work is stunning.

While Uitto used to primarily craft furniture, now he devotes his time and artistic energy to fashion sculptures depicting wildlife using driftwood as his medium. Recently he created a nearly life-size sculpture of an elephant head in a fascinating months-long process.

When the artist looks at a piece of driftwood he sees something that others don't. "I am seeing gestures, energy and movement inherent in the wood that I am compelled to bring out," Uitto said. It's that unique vision that has allowed Uitto to make a living from his art since high school.

Uitto was brought up by his Harley-riding grandmother in the same house where he lives today. He attended Ocosta High School and is still friends with some of his former teachers.

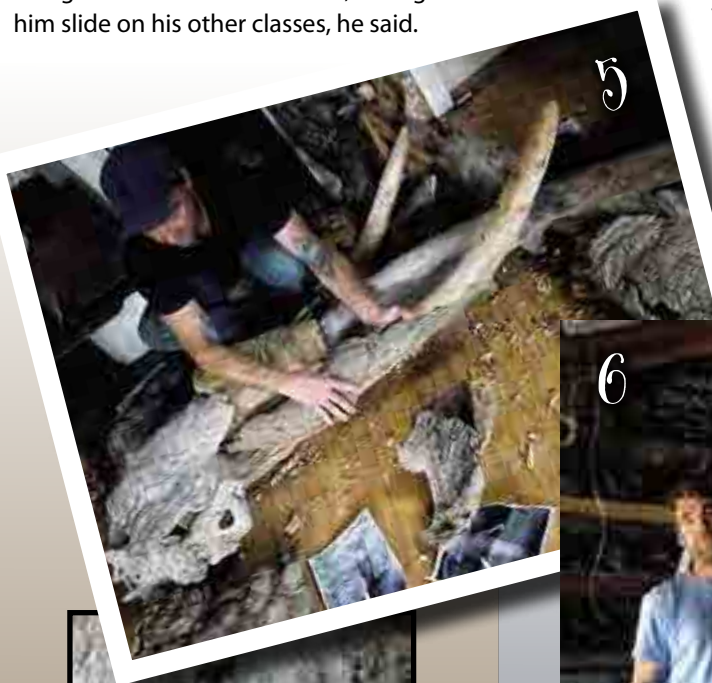
As a teenager he reconnected with his mom who lives in Grayland. And recently, he met his father for the first time.

When he attended Ocosta, Uitto spent most of his time in the woodworking class there. His prescient teachers recognized his immense talent, letting him slide on his other classes, he said.

"Jeffro was a one-of-a-kind student," recalled his former woodworking teacher, Ed McNett of Westport. "He wasn't the

type of person you told what to do or build. You just waited to see what he would come up with next. He was very upbeat and focused in class.

(Continued on page 10)



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6



1

Artist Jeffro Uitto crafted a huge elephant head from driftwood inside his Tokeland studio. The photos capture the process: 1. Gathering wood and ideas, 2. Selecting the tusks, 3. Building a structure to support the head, 4. Removing wood to reduce the weight of the piece, 5. Starting to form the head, 6. Head off the floor and taking shape, 7. Refining the eye, 8. Working on the ears, 9. Positioning the tusks



2



3



4



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7



8



10

Jeffro's elephantine process continues: 10. Creating interior support, 11. Finishing interior support, 12. Finished! 13. On display at the Ohana Festival, Dana Point, Calif.



11

JEFFRO UITTO

(Continued from page 8)

"I am amazed at how he can take a pile of driftwood and transform it into the masterpiece that he does. I'm extremely proud of him and his work," McNett said.

As an adult, finding peace and stability in his home life has been important to Uitto. He has found serenity with his partner, Zela Dove and their two daughters, Timber and Leah.

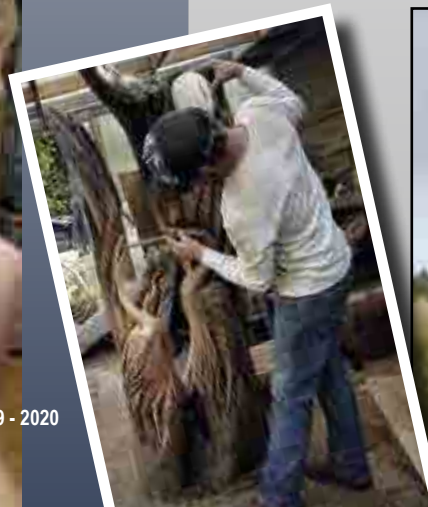


12



13

Below, Jeffro's crane pieces are popular with collectors. He adds a second crane and moon to this work.




He draws creative inspiration from his relationships and nature, he said.

"A lot of my friends inspire me. Zela Dove always inspires me. She has a great eye and the work always has a better outcome when she is involved. Growing up here definitely had a huge impact, surrounded with nature, creating my own opportunity and entertainment within this magic place."

From inception to completion, watching Uitto's months-long creative process as he constructed an elephant's head, allowed step-by-step glimpses into his imaginative, resourceful genius.

"Jeffro is a true artist. His work is exquisite," said Kelly Boodell of Tokeland. She is one of many art lovers who have discovered Uitto's work and collect it to display in their homes.

Whatever he creates, the finished result is pure poetry.

Jeffro Uitto's work can be seen on display at Tokeland Hotel, North Cove Bar and Grill, Westport Winery and Cranberry Road Winery. He can be reached at www.jeffrouitto.com, [@jeffro_art](https://www.facebook.com/jeffrouitto), or by email at jeff_ro@live.com. 



Timber, Jeffro and Zela pose with a driftwood arch.



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Winterfest

December 7 & 8
Downtown Aberdeen

Saturday, Dec. 7

Breakfast with Santa 9 a.m. - 11 a.m.
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Holiday Market

10 a.m. - 3 p.m. 117 W. Wishkah.

Gingerbread House Contest & Display 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. 118 W. Wishkah

Music & Entertainment: "Elf"
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Sunday, Dec. 8

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FLEDGLING GRAYS HARBOR SINGER/SONGWRITER PREPARES TO FLY

BY CHRISTINE VINCENT PHOTOS BY V.A. DAVIS

A stunning young voice can be heard on the Harbor.

Accompanying herself on the piano, 18-year-old singer/songwriter Amanda Ransom delivers excellent covers of Sara Bareilles and Adele songs and other favorite pop-soul/ R&B singers. She easily switches to rowdier pieces when called for. Amanda also performs her own songs. The Harbor may be witnessing the start of an exciting career.

Rather than being fashionably negative, Amanda sparkles with positive energy. This is all the more amazing considering that life has not always been easy for her.

The Wisconsin native began classical piano lessons at age 10 when her family moved to Kirkland, Wash. "Classical music wasn't my favorite," Amanda recalled. "But it was good for me to learn to read music and especially to learn about chords. I wanted to be a singer and the chords bridged the piano and the singing."

Sadly, her piano lessons stopped when financial hardship forced the family of six

to live in a trailer in Yamhill near Portland. "It was awful; it was so cold," she said. "There was no space for playing my keyboard."

Finally, the family purchased a dilapidated house on a beautiful lot in the Wishkah Valley. Later they bought a nice home on an adjacent lot. Another setback hit when Amanda's mother, Jen, was diagnosed with a brain tumor. This tragic news made the young musician stagnant for a while. "She's doing okay now," she said with a sigh. "She is still alive."

Living in the trailer, Amanda was desperate to resume her piano playing. Her mother put up canvas walls for insulation in a room of the broken-down house on their property. Here Amanda could finally play her keyboard again. She has posted recordings of that time on YouTube. Take away the canvas background, add some glitter and sound quality, and you can see an amazingly accomplished performance with confident vocals and piano.

At 12, she wrote her first song. "I like to write intimate ballads – deeply felt. My first good songs were sad post breakup

(Continued on page 15)



Amanda

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(Continued from page 13)

love songs. Looking back I realize that it was a little unrealistic to write about my dating experience at age 16."

The catchy "Old Habits Die Hard" falls into that category. She wrote and taped the entire piece in 45 minutes. Songs don't always come that easily. Amanda labors to discover them from deep within her. Her newest song is about temporary feelings, mood swings, something she experiences often. "I ultimately write songs for myself and hope that the audience will like them, too."

While she grew up with classic rock including The Beatles, Elton John and The Black Crowes, today her biggest inspiration is Sara Bareilles. Amanda's beautifully modulated voice, even her mannerisms, betray a close study of her idol. She recently attended a Sara Bareilles live concert in Portland with her boyfriend Hunter.



"It changed my life," she said. "Sara is such a wonderful performer with a phenomenal stage presence. I cried. There was a moment when Hunter returned from the bathroom and thought he heard me singing."

Amanda's mother brought her into contact with Wil Russoul of Stone Soup Artists and the Play it Forward scholarship and instrument program. The new director of the Aberdeen Main Street Program, Russoul is working to establish a music district in downtown Aberdeen that includes connecting

businesses with musicians to perform on their premises. She is grateful for his support, for including her in one of his performances, for getting her gigs, and – very important for an aspiring professional musician – for his business advice.

"You have the power to go somewhere but it's completely up to you to get it going."

– Amanda's Mom

At 17, Amanda began to perform at Tinderbox Coffee Roasters in downtown Aberdeen. In the intimate space of Tinderbox, she sang mellow versions of pop songs. When she began to perform at nearby Mount Olympus Brewing with its larger and noisier atmosphere, she adapted her repertoire to include faster, upbeat songs. "At Last" by Etta James, "Jolene" by Dolly Parton, and "Power of My Love" by Elvis were favorites.


In 2017, the Grays Harbor music scene received an invigorating boost with the opening of The Garage Music and Arts Center at The Shoppes at Riverside Mall. Founded by JR Lakey and Kelly Durham, The Garage offers music workshops, rehearsal spaces and a performance venue as well as retail music supplies. Amanda was in the right place at the right time – in Lakey's jazz choir at Grays Harbor College. The Garage director encouraged his talented student to participate in the Bridge Music Project.

Hosted by The Garage, The Bridge offers eight-week sessions for crafting an original song, which is then recorded in a traveling studio. Bridge director Bobby Williams introduced Amanda to guitarist Joshua Holman and tenor Elliot Loudenback. Together they formed the

band Just Us. Holman and Loudenback wrote the song "Emerald City," which they recorded with her. Just Us performed the song at the college, the Westport Winery, the Summer Music Festival at Sam Benn Park in Aberdeen, and the Brats, Brews and Beer Festival in Olympia.

Amanda Ransom enjoys performing cover songs, but hopes to eventually perform and record her original songs. She is grateful for the help she has received from many people but her key supporter remains her mom, who would often tell her: "You have the power to go somewhere but it's completely up to you to get it going."

Recently her mother secretly nominated Amanda for a contest by South Sound Sound recording studio in Shelton. Amanda won a four-hour recording session, enough time for two songs. She plans to take "Old Habits Die Hard" there.

Amanda Ransom will be performing at Mount Olympus Brewing from 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 27 (the day before Thanksgiving); on Sunny 102.1 at 9 a.m., Dec. 20, singing Christmas songs with other artists, and at Tinderbox Coffee Roasters from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Dec. 7 during Aberdeen's Winterfest 2019. Visit her Facebook page: [amandaransommusic](https://www.facebook.com/amandaransommusic) 



ABERDEEN'S MURALS:



"A Walk in the Park," by Douglas Orr (State Street off ramp of the Chehalis River Bridge).

Photo courtesy of Douglas Orr

8

Building a vibrant community through art

BY JULIANA WALLACE
PHOTOS BY RICK MOYER

Aberdeen provides a startling lesson in contrasts. Thousands of tourists pass through town each year on their way to the beaches, averting their eyes from panhandlers and the boarded-up windows in the downtown core.

Across Wishkah Street, Douglas Orr's "Bubbles" float along the side of the D&R Theatre. And half a block west, Erik Sandgren's "Nirvana and Aberdeen" mural offers a 1990s time capsule on the wall of Moore's Interiors.

In fact, a one-mile stroll around downtown Aberdeen takes you past at least 10 outdoor murals. Start with the fanciful "Star Wars" mural on the wall of Sucher & Sons Star Wars Shop. Then wander past walls filled with history, the natural world, native culture and modern Harbor life. Bonus murals line the alleyways. Pick up a "Murals on the Map" brochure at the Aberdeen

Timberland Library, 121 East Market St., to give you more details as you walk.

The murals found their start in 1988, with a state grant to celebrate the Washington Centennial. That grant sponsored the 10 original murals in Aberdeen, including the now restored "History of Transportation" painting at the Transit Station. Twenty-five years later, with the originals in disrepair, Sylvia and Michael Dickerson spearheaded an effort to restore some of the aging murals and commission more.

"We know from experience that the way you turn a city around is to focus on the arts," explained Michael Dickerson. Sylvia agreed, adding, "Public art celebrates the community. It soothes the soul of the



4

Jenny Fisher, in front of "Kelp Forest" (City Center Drug).
"The Immigrants," by Jenny Fisher (Union Gospel Mission).

And yet, a closer look shows a vibrant cultural life, with art gracing nearly every corner.

For example, if those same tourists pull into the City Center Drug parking lot at the intersection of Wishkah Street and Broadway, they will find themselves in an astonishing gallery of public art. Jenny Fisher's "Kelp Forest" mural stretches along the drugstore wall, a profusion of color that pulls visitors into the mystical depths of the ocean.



10

“Public art celebrates the community. It soothes the soul of the people who live here, and it advertises our history and our psyche to the people passing through.”

– Sylvia Dickerson



7 Douglas Orr in front of “Hands and History,” (120 West Heron). Below is his imaginative, “Bubbles,” (D&R Theatre).



Photo courtesy of Douglas Orr

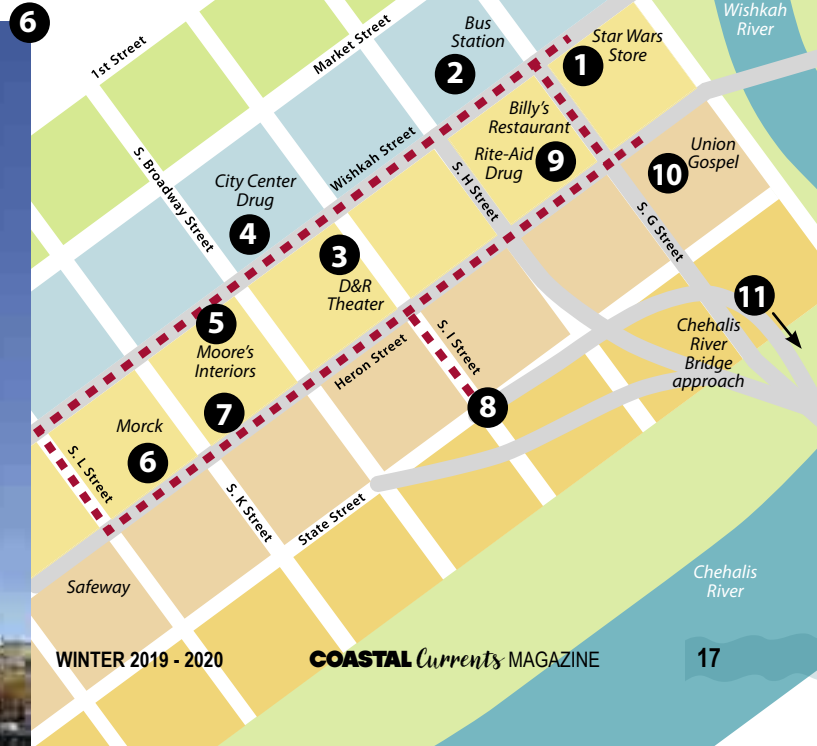
people who live here, and it advertises our history and our psyche to the people passing through.”

For Orr, the murals blend his dual passions for art and community service. “Public art can act as an economic driver,” he said. “But more importantly, I love

my city, and I want young people to stay here. We don’t need to preach to them about the value of community. We need to show them. And we can do that through art.”

(Continued on page 19)

“Kape’ Jiluupak,” by Guy and Cecil Capoeman
(215 South K Street, across from Safeway).

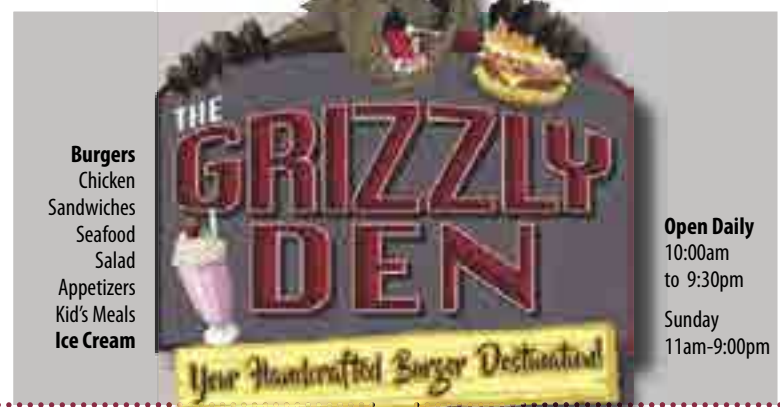


Walking tour of downtown Aberdeen’s outdoor murals

- 1** “Star Wars,” by Hans Rehder
(Sucher & Sons Star Wars Shop)
- 2** “History of Transportation in Grays Harbor,” by Jenny Fisher
(Aberdeen Transit Center)
- 3** “Bubbles,” by Douglas Orr
(D&R Theatre)
- 4** “Kelp Forest,” by Jenny Fisher
(City Center Drug)
- 5** “Nirvana and Aberdeen,” by Erik Sandgren with Anthony James Cotham, Dominic Senibaldi, Jason Sobottka and David Wall
(Moore’s Interiors)
- 6** “Kape’ Jiluupak,” by Guy and Cecil Capoeman
(215 South K Street, across from Safeway)
- 7** “Hands and History,” by Douglas Orr
(120 West Heron)
- 8** “A Walk in the Park,” by Douglas Orr
(State Street off ramp of the Chehalis River Bridge)
- 9** “Grays Harbor: A Maritime History,” by Jenny Fisher
(Billy’s Bar & Grill)
- 10** “The Immigrants,” by Jenny Fisher
(Union Gospel Mission)
- 11** **Bonus:** Take a walk across the Chehalis River bridge to see the historic mural on Swanson’s Grocery, painted by Bob McCausland and Gavin Miller.

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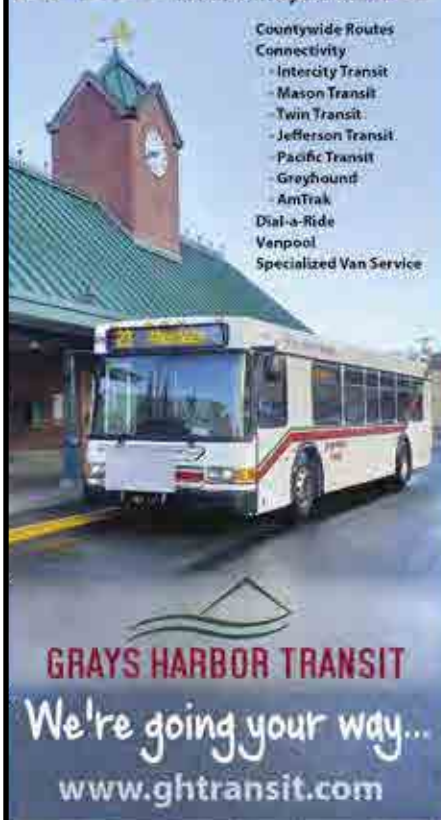


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5

(Continued from page 17)

That sense of community includes citizens from all walks of life. For instance, Fisher treasures a macramé hanging given to her by a homeless man who befriended her while she painted. "In reality, I was painting the wall of his living room," she said. Another group of people experiencing homelessness took up a collection and handed it to the artists to express their appreciation.

Aberdeen's murals offer a glimpse into local culture, a praise to the wonders the


"Nirvana and Aberdeen," (above) by Erik Sandgren with Anthony James Cotham, Dominic Senibaldi, Jason Sobottka and David Wall (Moore's Interiors).
 "Kelp Forest," (below) by Jenny Fisher (City Center Drug).

4



7

"Hands and History," (left) by Douglas Orr (120 West Heron).

Harbor has to offer. Whether you discover a rich history in the murals along Heron Street or simply let yourself drift into the endless summer afternoon of Orr's "Walk in the Park," the murals will lift your soul. 

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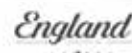
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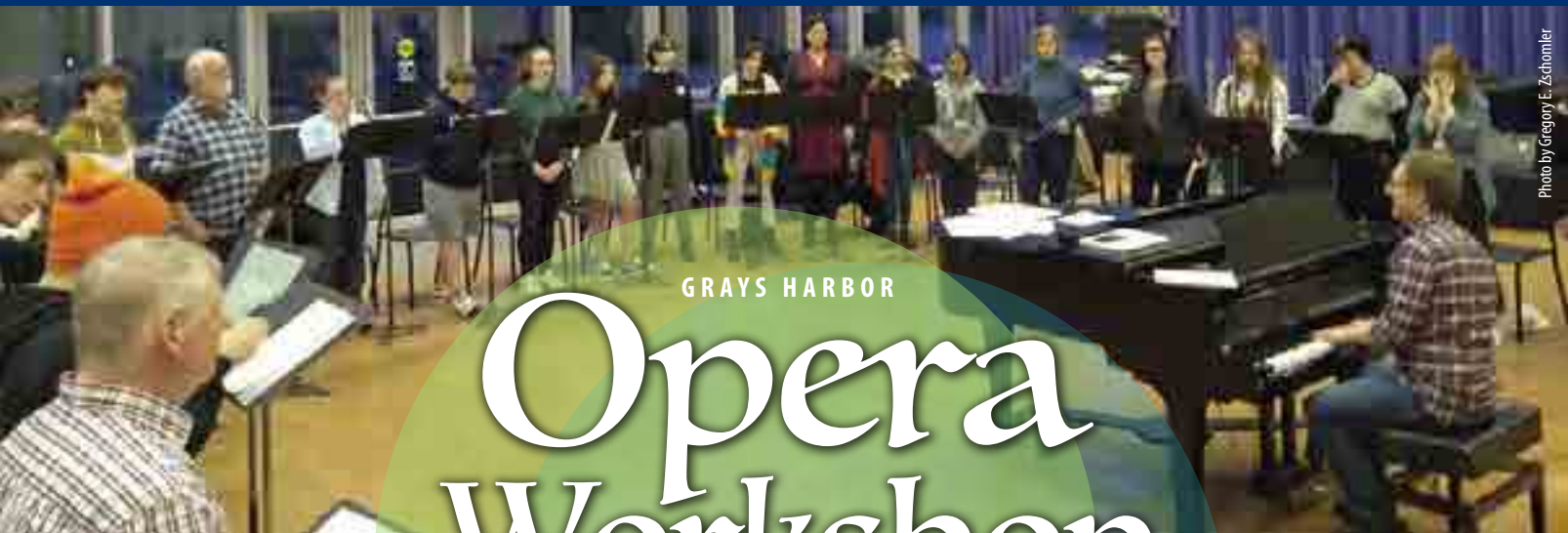
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GRAYS HARBOR

Opera Workshop

The ensemble for GHC's production of "The Magic Flute" rehearses around the the grand piano played by Ian Dorsch.

BY GREGORY E. ZSCHOMLER

When you think of opera you might have visions of the Met Fifth Avenue in New York City, but did you know there is opera in Grays Harbor? Ian Dorsch and his wife, Joy, have seen to that. Ian is a Grays Harbor College (GHC) vocal and music professor, who graduated from Aberdeen High School, returned to the Harbor after his college music education and got to work on some serious music.

"I left Grays Harbor as this punk kid thinking I was going to become a rock star," said Ian. Instead, he ended up in the music department at Western Washington University where he says classical and choral music changed his life. Now the GHC professor is changing other lives. "I get a lot of joy seeing students go through the discovery of what I went through."

When he and Joy returned to the Harbor in 2004, Ian quickly swung into action, directing the Civic Choir from 2005-2012 and the Grays Harbor Chamber Singers.

It wasn't until 2016 that he initiated the Opera Workshop and its accessible presentation, in English, interpreted through a modern, American lens. A collaborative effort, Ian said he directs the big group and staging while Joy coaches performers' vocal technique one on one. They are assisted in staging by the Bishop Center for Performing Arts'

to present
"The Magic Flute"
 at Bishop Center



Grays Harbor Opera Workshop presents

"The Magic Flute"

January 11 & 12

Saturday 7:30 p.m., Sunday 2:00 p.m.

All tickets \$12, 12 & under free

professional theater staff, Art Oestreich and Matt Mahon.

The first year the ensemble performed scenes and arias from various operas. That was followed by Gilbert and Sullivan's "Trial by Jury." Two years ago a fully staged version of "Amahl and the Night Visitors" was performed; then came Mozart's "The Impresario," Humperdinck's

"Hansel and Gretel," and, finally, "Pirates of Penzance" by Gilbert and Sullivan.

The Opera Workshop is a college and community partnership performed by students, faculty and community members at the college's world-class Bishop Center for the Performing Arts. Participants can take the workshop for college credit if they'd like, but that's not required.

The 2019-2020 Winter show, Jan. 11 and 12, is a condensed English version of Mozart's fairy tale "The Magic Flute" and features about 30 cast members. Cast members range in age from 13 years old to senior citizens. About two-thirds of the ensemble are returning performers from a previous opera, 30 percent are students and half of the cast is under the age of 20. But, don't think that the age of the cast, or their non-professional status, means a shoddy show. Oh, no, no, no! Hearing them sing is jaw-dropping.

Second year music education student Ryan Urvina, who plays Tamino, a lead, is in his third opera at GHC. "I enjoy opera so much," said the twenty-something. "It's losing its touch with modern music (so) it's fun to make it (work) for today."

And, if this production is anything like the previous, audiences of all ages are going to be tickled and awed.

"The goal," said Ian, "is to present a story for kids to enjoy. It's a fantasy opera of fun!" He said he didn't want to give too

Photos by Gregory E. Zschomler



Ryan Urvina



Andy Blake



Analei Holt



Set design work by Analei Holt

much away because there are a couple of plot twists. The witty and moving tale has light triumphant over darkness and love conquering all.

The production will be staged, with projected scenes created by student Analei Holt, who plays The Queen of the Night, a lead. An art major, Analei is a talented artist, singer and actor who hopes to work for an animation company or perform theater.

Analei, who also created the scenic paintings for last year's "Pirates," said, "The Magic Flute" has always been one of my favorite operas and having the opportunity to not only be singing the most iconic soprano role in opera, but to also be designing the backdrops and costumes? It's a dream come true and I cannot wait for the finished product."

Andy Blake, a GHC psychology major and first soprano in the ensemble said, "Opera Workshop opened my eyes up to a genre of music I hadn't considered (that) I found I have a passion for." Andy had the part of Isabelle in "Pirates" and is


Joy and Ian Dorsch flank their daughter Emma on the set of "Amahl & the Night Visitors."



thinking about sticking around GHC for an extra two years of music.

The Bishop Center always has something top-notch going on to entertain and educate. (See sidebar.) Many shows and concerts, like the Opera Workshop production (and unlike larger city venues) are priced affordably for families (and often free for students). Tickets for January's "The Magic Flute" can be purchased at www.ghc.edu/bishop or by calling (360) 538-4066.

All the productions and presentations are intended to open the eyes (and ears) of all. "That's a major goal of ours," said Ian, "not just to make entertainment – it needs to be entertaining – but to evangelize for this type of music."

For more information, follow the Opera Workshop on its Facebook page. 

Production photos by Keith Krueger



Grays Harbor Opera Workshop productions, "Amahl & the Night Visitors," "Hansel & Gretel" and "Pirates of Penzance."

Upcoming Events

The Bishop Center for the Performing Arts has a variety of offerings this winter. They include:

GHC Jazz Concert • December 5 • 7:00 p.m.
Featuring the GHC Vocal Jazz and Jazz Band
Tickets \$5, 12 & under free

Andrew Allen • December 8 • 3:00 p.m.
Singer/songwriter • Tickets \$15, 12 & under free

**Grays Harbor Civic Choir and Concert Band
December 15 • 3:00 p.m. Tickets \$12, 12 & under free**

**Grays Harbor Opera Workshop production of
"The Magic Flute" • January 11 & 12**
Saturday 7:30 p.m., Sunday 2:00 p.m.
All tickets \$12, 12 & under free

Grays Harbor Jazz Festival • January 16
School jazz musicians 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Free
Evening show 7:00 p.m. All tickets \$10, 12 & under free

"Call Mr. Robeson" • February 1 • 7:00 p.m.
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**Spring Musical "Oliver" GHC Drama Department
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ABERDEEN'S SAMURAI SUSHI BAR & GRILL IS A FEAST FOR THE EYES TOO

BY GAIL GREENWOOD AYRES

A young father looking for something to do outside the home was the impetus for the creation of one of Grays Harbor's most popular and well-reviewed restaurants – Samurai Sushi Bar & Grill in Aberdeen.

On a recent Saturday night all of the restaurant's 48 seats were full. Patrons included high school students dressed in tuxes and gowns for a formal dance, families with young children, older couples on date nights and several regulars sitting at the sushi bar ordering their "usual." In addition, people periodically popped in to collect their take-out orders.

Owner Sun Il Kim, 32, is modest about the restaurant's success. "I think it is partly luck. I wasn't expecting much. I needed something to do and I figured if I have a restaurant we will at least be able to eat."

Born in Korea, Kim moved to the United States by himself as a 17-year-old to attend high school in Olympia.

After graduating, he attended Eastern Washington University in Cheney, where he earned a business management degree. While he was a college student, he worked at a sushi restaurant in Spokane, where the head chef taught him the trade.

In 2014, his wife, Katherine, was offered a job with the Aberdeen School District as a school counselor. Shortly after, the couple learned they were expecting their first child so they decided to put down roots and buy a house in Aberdeen. Kim worked at his translating business from home and was able to care for their infant son.

When their son was about one-year-old, Kim started looking for a job in business, but after months of unsuccessful searching, he decided to start his own business. When he discovered the available space at 327 West Wishkah St., which had been a sandwich shop, he knew he had found the right spot for his sushi restaurant. He put his business smarts to work, carefully creating a

business plan and then adding plenty of elbow grease to paint and panel the room and construct the bar.

Finally on January 15, 2016, everything was ready for a soft opening. To say that things didn't get off to a great start is a bit of an understatement. Fifteen minutes before the doors were to open to a waiting line, his chef severely cut his little finger and immediately headed to the hospital. He never returned to the restaurant. That night the doors opened on time anyway, and later Kim had to scramble to find a new chef.

"Things were pretty hectic for a while so we never ended up having a grand opening," he said. "But, people have found us and we have been warmly welcomed. Customers have told us that they are grateful we are here and that we are a nice addition to the town."

Not only is the food noted for being delicious, Kim and his two other chefs, Michael Harris and Austin Prosch, create dishes that are a feast for the eyes.

(Continued on page 26)

Samurai Sushi Bar & Grill's food is as beautiful as it is tasty. Below, owner Sun Il Kim is with his other chefs, Michael Harris, left, and Austin Prosch.



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SAMURAI SUSHI

(Continued from page 25)

“There is a Korean saying that loosely translates ‘Better looking food is better tasting food,’” Kim said. “People eat sushi with their eyes first. And it is easy to make the presentation beautiful because there are lots of different colors to work with in sushi. It looks charming and desirable to eat.”

The creation of sushi rolls looks anything but easy, which leads some patrons to favor sitting at the bar to watch the chefs as they deftly create edible art. The attractiveness of the food is also a plus in this social media world, Kim noted. Phones are often brought out to capture the meal before it’s consumed.

For those who haven’t tried sushi, Kim suggests starting with a roll that includes tuna or salmon, because for most people those are familiar tastes. Samurai Sushi’s best-selling sushi is the “Westport.” It is a good “sushi gateway roll” for someone without much sushi experience, Kim jokes. It includes imitation crab (made from pollock), cream cheese, avocado and salmon, seared with house honey sauce and served with ginger and wasabi on the side. It is delicious.

But the restaurant offers more than sushi rolls; the extensive menu includes 13 appetizers, Bento Boxes, vegetarian dishes, yakisoba, udon and ramen

noodle dishes, familiar favorites such as chicken teriyaki and Korean specialty dishes such as galbi and bulgogi beef. Several beers are on tap, including the locally brewed Steam Donkey Beer.

Like the menu, the venue has variety. Although it is just one big room, it is versatile. While the lighting and décor make it nice for a special dinner out, for key sporting events the 110-inch TV screen comes down from the end wall and Samurai Sushi becomes a popular place to hang out to watch the big game.




“THERE IS A KOREAN SAYING THAT LOOSELY TRANSLATES ‘BETTER LOOKING FOOD IS BETTER TASTING FOOD.’ PEOPLE EAT SUSHI WITH THEIR EYES FIRST.”
– SUN IL KIM

The restaurant is open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and from 5 to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday. It is only open from 5 to 9 p.m. on Saturday and is closed on Sunday. Kim recommends reservations for groups larger than four people, especially on Friday and Saturday nights.

The hours are helpful to maintain good family time for Sun Il Kim and Katherine and their now five-year-old son and two-year-old daughter. Kim’s six employees also appreciate the family-friendly hours.

And Kim appreciates them. “I like working with the team here. Our newest employee has already been here one and a half years and the rest have been here since the beginning. All the team members seem more like family. We are just having fun here and a lot of customers see that.”

Kim and his helpful, gregarious staff are often mentioned in restaurant reviews and are part of the draw at Samurai Sushi. They offer their culinary knowledge without pretense to comfortably guide even a sushi newbie into a delightful eating experience.

For more information, visit the website at www.samuraisushiandgrill.com or call (360) 612-3229. 

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SIXTEEN BOOKS AND COUNTING

Romance writer Stephanie Hoffman McManus produces popular young adult novels

BY GREGORY E. ZSCHOMLER

Grays Harbor County is home to art and artists of all kinds; that includes those markedly literary. Writers and authors abound and have flourished over time on the Harbor, telling their stories and spinning yarns, reporting the area's history and making things up to entertain others.

While there are many working authors around Grays Harbor County, none is currently quite as successful and prolific as Hoquiam's Stephanie Hoffman McManus, 29. The romance writer published her first novel in April 2014 at the age of 22 and has since published 15 others, with more in the works.

Stephanie's young adult novels all feature an element of romance and predominately "bad boy" types. It's a type that works for her and her many fans. As a full-time writer – who makes her living from the craft – she has to keep at it to keep her readers happy. She's already put three books out this year and expects to finish a fourth before 2020!

"The book I'm working on now is my first dabble in paranormal fantasy," said Stephanie. She said it's also the first time she's left a book with a cliffhanger



Stephanie Hoffman McManus of Hoquiam.

leading into book two. The new book, "Born of Darkness," is the first in the Touch of Chaos series, and takes place in New Orleans. To conduct research for the book, she traveled to the Crescent City during Mardi Gras last year.

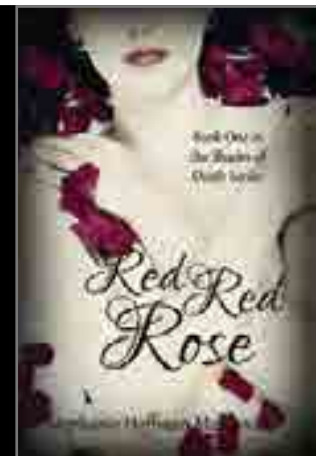
"I've always been an avid reader," Stephanie said. "I loved writing in school, but never considered it as a career." That is, until she tried her hand at running her own bakery business, The Recipe Box in

Hoquiam. At 21, the young entrepreneur found that sort of business much more stressful than she'd anticipated. That was a changing point for her, but she didn't want to work for anyone else either. "I was used to being my own boss."

So Stephanie began writing her first book as a passion project. When she let friends read her finished work they said, "You have to be pursuing this!" She put the book online as an e-book via Kindle Direct Publishing, selling 2,000 downloads in the first two months. Book two and three followed and so did a following. She'd found success – enough for her and her adopted son, Skylar, 12, to live on.

What's next? She'll travel to New York this summer for a book signing, as well as likely do a few more signings around this area, but mostly she's content to write and spend time with her son. In addition, Stephanie plans to soon make a foray into horror writing under a pseudonym.

Her books are available online in either electronic form (\$2.99-\$3.99) or as paperbacks (\$14.99) as well as at her dad's shop – the Seabreeze Gallery in Ocean Shores, and at Harbor Books in Aberdeen. You can follow Stephanie on your favorite social media platform. [CL](#)



DECEMBER

THROUGH DECEMBER 12 . Fall Gala Art Show
Spellman Library, Grays Harbor College

THROUGH DECEMBER 31 . The Rowan Tree Gallery - Small Works Exhibit . Aberdeen

DECEMBER 4 . 1st Wednesday Comedy .
8-10pm . Hoquiam Brewing Company

DECEMBER 4-6 . Elma HS Fall Drama . 7:00pm
High School production

DECEMBER 5 . Elma's Old Fashioned Christmas Tree Lighting . 7pm . Elma Chamber Visitors Station

DECEMBER 5 . GHC Jazz Band Concert . Aberdeen . 7pm . GHC Bishop Center

DECEMBER 6 . First Friday Art Walk . Aberdeen . 5-7pm . Aberdeen Art Center

DECEMBER 6 - JANUARY 31 . Elements Exhibit . Aberdeen . Alder Grove Gallery

DECEMBER 6-7 . Opal Art Glass Annual Holiday Open House . Cosmopolis . Sat. 10am-5pm, Sun. 10-4

DECEMBER 6-8, 13-15 . "Live Radio Theater – A Christmas Story" . Ocean Shores . Fri. 7pm, Sat. 7pm, Sun. 2pm . Ocean Shores Lions Club . Production by Stage West Community Theatre

DECEMBER 6-8, 13-15 . "Over the River & Through the Woods" . Aberdeen . Fri. & Sat. 7:30pm, Sun. 1:30pm . Driftwood Theatre

DECEMBER 7 . Santa by the Sea . 10:30am . Westport Maritime Museum

DECEMBER 7 . Shop Tokeland - Local Artists
11am-5pm . Tokeland Hotel & North Cove Bar & Grill

DECEMBER 7-8 . WinterFest . Aberdeen . Complete information on page 6

DECEMBER 7 . WinterFest South Pole Featuring The Olson Band . Aberdeen . 7pm . Seaport Landing

DECEMBER 7 . Amanda Ransom . Aberdeen
11:30am . Winterfest - local singer/songwriter at Tinderbox Coffee Roasters. See page 13.

DECEMBER 7 . Movie: Elf . Hoquiam . 7:30pm . 7th Street Theatre

DECEMBER 7 . Movie: Elf . Aberdeen . 7:00pm
D & R Theatre

DECEMBER 6-7 . Hank Cramer . Ocean Shores
8pm . Galway Bay Irish Pub

DECEMBER 8 . Andrew Allen . Aberdeen . 2pm . GHC Bishop Center . Winterfest, Holiday music by this Canadian musician, eh

DECEMBER 8 . Silver & Gold Christmas Dinner & A Movie . Aberdeen . 5:30pm . Harbor City Church

DECEMBER 11 . North Beach HS Concert 6pm

DECEMBER 11 . Montesano HS Band Concert
7:30pm . HS Gym

DECEMBER 12 . Aberdeen HS Concert . 7pm

DECEMBER 13 . Live entertainment . 6:30pm
Festival of Lights event - Montesano High School.

DECEMBER 13 . Street dance on Marcy Street downtown . 9pm . Festival of Lights event, featuring The Bruce Hughes Band. pg 6

(Continued on page 34)

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SUN - THURS 11AM - 9 PM
FRI - SAT 11 AM to MIDNIGHT

(Continued from page 30)

DECEMBER 14 . Lunch with Santa . Aberdeen
11am . *Extreme Fun Center . See ad page 35*

DECEMBER 13, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23 .
Pictures with Santa . Aberdeen . Fri. & Sat.
12-7pm, (except Sat. 14th 3pm-7pm) . Sun.
12pm-5pm . *Shoppes at Riverside Mall*

DECEMBER 13-15 . Festival of Lights .
Montesano . *See complete schedule on page 6*

DECEMBER 14 . The Craft of Woodburning .
Amanda Park . 1pm . *Learn how at the Library*

DECEMBER 14 . Festival of Lights Grand
Parade . Montesano . 6pm . *Lighting of the Yule*
Log at Fleet Park 7pm . See page 6

DECEMBER 14 . Winter Bazaar at Town Hall
Seabrook . *Local artists & crafters sell hand made goods.*

DECEMBER 14 . Holiday Parade . Seabrook .
7pm . *Annual parade starts on Meriweather Street.*

DECEMBER 15 . Yule Log & Sing-along .
Satsop . 1pm . *Schafer State Park*

DECEMBER 15 . Christmas Cantata .
Montesano . 7pm . *United Methodist Church*

DECEMBER 15 . Quinault Christmas Cantata
Neilton . 3pm . *Comm. of Christ Church on Hwy. 101*

DECEMBER 15 . Civic Choir & Concert Band –
Ring in the Season . Aberdeen . 3pm . *GHC*
Bishop Center

DECEMBER 16 . Hoquiam HS Holiday Concert
7pm . *7th Street Theater*

DECEMBER 17 . Aberdeen HS & Miller Choir
Concert . 7pm

DECEMBER 19 . Elma HS Band Concert 7pm

DECEMBER 21 . 3rd Saturday Art Walk .
Ocean Shores . 12pm . *Gallery of Ocean Shores,*
North Beach Art Guild, Assoc. Arts of Ocean Shores

DECEMBER 21 . The Randy Band . Aberdeen .
7pm . *Members & Guests of Aberdeen Elks #593*

DECEMBER 21-22 . Movie: White Christmas
Hoquiam . Sat. 7:30pm, Sun. 2pm . *7th St. Theatre*

DECEMBER 22 . Crafty Kiddos ‘Snowflake!’

Elma . 2pm . *Nellivander’s Shoppe*

DECEMBER 31 . New Years Eve Masquerade
Ball . Aberdeen . 7pm . *Membership drive -*
Aberdeen Elks #593

JANUARY 3 . First Friday Art Walk . Aberdeen
5-7pm . *Aberdeen Art Center*

JANUARY 11-12 . “The Magic Flute” .
Aberdeen . Sat. 7:30, Sun. 2pm . *GH Opera*
Workshop . GHC Bishop Center

JANUARY 16 . Jazz Festival featuring Dukes
of Swing . Aberdeen . 7pm . *GHC Bishop Center .*
Also school jazz musicians 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

JANUARY 17-18 . Movie: Indiana Jones & the
Last Crusade . Hoquiam . Sat. 7:30pm, Sun.
2pm . *7th Street Theatre*

JANUARY 18 . 3rd Saturday Art Walk . Ocean
Shores . 12pm . *Gallery of Ocean Shores, North*
Beach Art Guild, Assoc. Arts of Ocean Shores

JANUARY 18 . Winter Wine Festival . Elma

JANUARY 18-19 . Urban Unglued Vendor

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FEBRUARY 1 . "Call Mr. Robeson" • Aberdeen
7:30pm . A one-man play. GHC Bishop Center

FEBRUARY 1-2 . Montesano HS Senior - One Acts . Sat. 8pm, Sun. 2pm

FEBRUARY 5 . 1st Wednesday Comedy .
8-10pm . Hoquiam Brewing Company

FEBRUARY 7 . First Friday Art Walk .
Aberdeen . 5-7pm . Aberdeen Art Center

FEBRUARY 7, 8, 14-16, 21-23 . "Bell, Book and Candle" . Aberdeen . Fri. & Sat. 7:30pm, Sun. 1:30pm . Driftwood Theatre

FEBRUARY 14-16 . Ocean Shores Renewed Antique Show . Convention Center

FEBRUARY 14-15 . Movie: Walk the Line
Hoquiam . Sat. 7:30pm, Sun. 2pm . 7th St. Theatre

FEBRUARY 15 . 3rd Saturday Art Walk .
Ocean Shores . 12pm . Gallery of Ocean Shores, North Beach Art Guild, Assoc. Arts of Ocean Shores

FEBRUARY 22 . QCED Concert . Barbershop Quartet Champions . Ocean Shores . Quartet Champions, Evergreen District, Convention Center

FEBRUARY 22 . Missoula Theater Production
Westport . Ocosta Junior - Senior High School

FEBRUARY 22-23 . Chocolate at the Beach Festival . Pacific Beach & other north coast locations . Sat. opens 10am, Sun. 11am-4pm. North coast, many locations. Chocolate Hall of Sweets at Pacific Beach Elementary featuring over 30 west coast chocolatiers. Live demonstrations, seminars, samples.

Additional events will be added to our website calendar as the information becomes available. Check out www.coastal-currents.com for the most up-to-date information.

What stories or ideas should we know about? We know our readers see and hear things we don't, and we want your ideas. Let us know what you think we should cover involving art, music, theater, food and festivals in Grays Harbor. Email: info@coastal-currents.com - **Thank you!**

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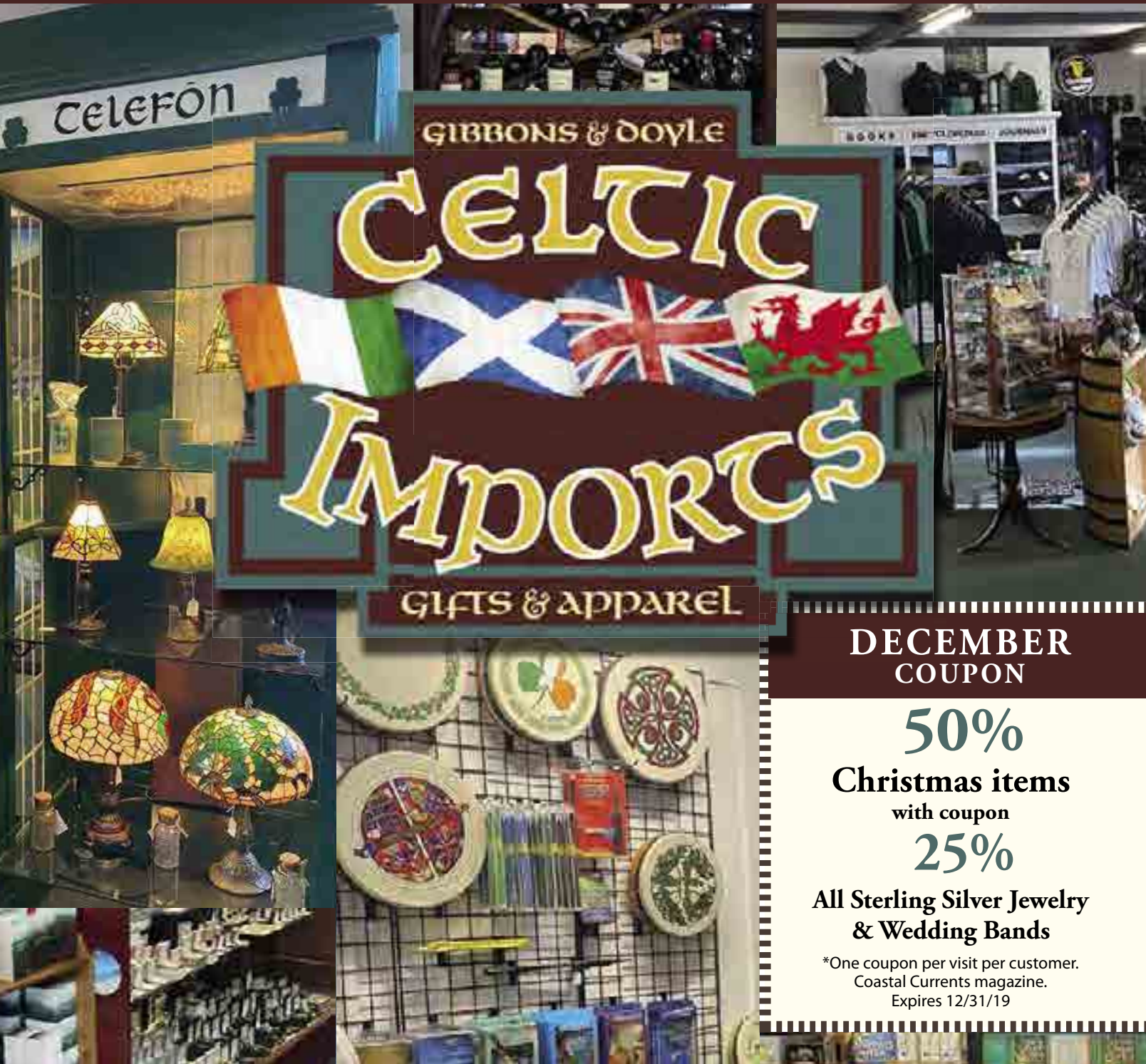
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