

■ SEE **CASES**, PAGE A7

■ SEE **WORK**, PAGE A7

Subscriber mailing label below this line

8 |||| 0 4 8 7 9 || 0 8 0 9 4 |||| 7

■ SEE SENIOR, PAGE A7

Rainier resident Craig McCauley sets up tables last week for a St. Patrick's Day meal at the Yelm Senior Center. McCauley, 72, has volunteered at the center for four years, primarily helping with kitchen/food-related duties.



## WORK:

*Continued From Page A1*

last week between volunteer shifts at the Yelm Senior Center. “It doesn’t make any sense if I’m to the point where I can’t talk and I’m all twisted up to keep me alive. I don’t want to be a burden on my family.”

McCauley — clad in jeans and a Harley Davidson T-shirt this day, his long, reddish-blond beard asway — sets tables at the center, carefully placing napkins, silverware and glasses in their appropriate places for a special St. Patrick’s Day meal for the center’s guests.

He has volunteered at the center for about four years, his high-pitched, hushed voice audible to other volunteers only if they stand close. Hard of hearing and unable to read anymore since a ghastly motorcycle accident in 2012 nearly killed him, McCauley exudes a certain fatalistic nonchalance — a will to shrug and let nature take its course — that other seniors at the center also exhibit.

Prepare, they say, but don’t fret.

For some, that means relying on a higher power.

Theresa Wostsa, 79, is quick to smile and laugh, though these days her anxiety is likely to periodically torment her. Wostsa moved to Yelm from Virginia four years ago to live with her daughter and two grandsons.

A devout Catholic, Wostsa prays about 45 minutes a night, she said.

“I pray every night that we don’t get the virus, and I just pray that God is listening. I let my religion help me and think about all the sickness and suffering and the poor and needy. I try to think of other people besides myself,” she said.

Like her counterparts in the senior center, Wostsa has been following the recommendations of health experts — washing her hands three to four times a day and sleeping on clean bedding and recliner covers thanks to her diligent daughter.

And what if she contracts the virus?

“It would get pretty boring to have to quarantine for 14 days in a way,” she said. “But I’d try to find something to pass the time.”

For the past four years, senior center volunteer Danny Gaytan has been passing his time making meals, fashioning desserts



Paul Dunn / Nisqually Valley News

Yelm resident Alice Bickle spends time last week perusing intriguing books on cooking and health at the Yelm Senior Center. Bickle, 91, spent much of her life raising her three daughters and also operated a daycare center.

and cleaning pots and pans for the center’s members. The 63-year-old has lived in Yelm for 18 years, retiring some years ago from his second career as an environmental technician. Before that he drove big-rig trucks, criss-crossing the country delivering janitorial supplies.

Seemingly stoic by nature, Gaytan hasn’t yet let COVID-19 spook him, though his diabetes disease makes him more vulnerable to coronavirus complications.

“I haven’t really worried about it,” he said, “because I don’t want to be a worry wart. I’m taking all the precautions I need to, and if I get it we’ll just have to go day by day. I’m trying to stay positive.”

The same holds true for Gaytan’s wife of 24 years, Sharon Stepp, though her situation’s a bit more fragile, he said.

“It’s getting my wife pretty worried, because she’ll be 65 this year and has multiple sclerosis,” he said. “And we’re both trying to stay away from crowds because of our age group.”

What they’re not doing is buying carloads of paper products as some people apparently have.

“Why are people buying so much toilet paper and water?” Gaytan asks incredulously. “We need to be buying Gatorade and flu medicine, not toilet paper and water. We need liquids that will help our immune systems.”

But if those measures don’t work and Gaytan is forced to



Yelm resident Danny Gaytan prepares roasted potatoes for a recent St. Patrick’s Day meal at the Yelm Senior Center. Gaytan, 63, has volunteered at the center for four years, primarily helping fix meals and cleaning up in the center’s kitchen.

quarantine for two weeks, he figures he’ll stay busy enough to avoid going stir crazy. He and Stepp live about 5 miles out of town with their chickens, goats and three cats.

“I’d stay occupied with our animals and chores around the property,” he said, noting that he’s always kept at least two week’s worth of supplies to ride out emergencies.

“I was taught from an early age to always be prepared for the unexpected,” he explained.

That adage in a nutshell also explains Jeanie James’ philosophy. James, 70, is the senior center’s executive director.

“We, as seniors, are at an age where we are prepared for anything,” she said. “We plan for emergencies, and perhaps that’s a reason there’s no hysteria here at the senior center.”

James, who has lived in Yelm since 1975, quickly learned the anti-coronavirus drill health experts have been emphasizing.

“I wash my hands a ridiculous amount of times, and I drilled it into my children and grandchildren, too,” she said. “People should be doing this all the time.”

And though she wouldn’t call it hoarding, James keeps her home’s shelves stocked.

“I just don’t run out of stuff, because seniors plan ahead for

## WORK:

*Continued From Page A1*

Tornado Alley parent dropoff), and at the front and back gates at Clearwood.

These meals will be available Monday through Friday and will not be available during spring break week, April 6 through April 10.

The child must be present to receive their meal. No identification is required, and the child

does not need to attend class in the school district.

The district also has child care available through the YMCA’s Y-Care program.

Services will be provided Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Registration is required and can be found at this link: <https://southsoundymca.org/y-care/>.

For families of the Yelm Boys and Girls Club, an all-day camp will be available for a fee of \$70 per week for every child with

scholarships available to those who qualify. Registration for that begins on Wednesday.

Running Start students are expected to continue with classes as planned. Spring quarter will begin a week late, on April 13. They’ll in most cases work remotely.

Rainier School District will also offer free meals during school closures, starting Wednesday, March 18. Those can be picked up from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Rainier Elementary School.

## CASES:

*Continued From Page A1*

the number of public gatherings to 50 people and also called for the closure of all restaurants and bars — and many other businesses — for two weeks.

Multiple cities, counties and other jurisdictions have enacted state of emergency measures. These declarations ultimately concentrate legislative and operational authority to executives, but may mean varying things depending on the organization.

During an emergency meeting on Thursday, March 12, the Thurston County Board of Commissioners and Board of Health passed a resolution declaring the outbreak of COVID-19 a local emergency.

The board also suspended the work of all of its advisory boards, commissions, committees and councils for at least four weeks on Monday.

“We are taking these measures to help protect the health and safety of our most vulnerable populations in Thurston County and lead by example,” said Commission Chair John Hutchings.

“We will continue to assess and take additional measures to minimize the risk of spreading COVID-19 throughout our community.”

The City of Tenino enacted a state of emergency declaration. This measure will last indefinitely until further notice.

“I want to get ahead of any potential issues,” Mayor Wayne Fournier said in a statement. “Our normal contracting process is designed for long lead times. We can’t be reactive here; suspending the normal acquisition procedure allows us to be proactive. We want to prevent the worst from happening, not simply clean up the mess.”

This proclamation allows the city to take authority on emergency spending procedures to ensure the welfare of the city, its residence and customers. It also gives the city’s police chief more power, such as directing people away from areas if necessary.

Tenino will suspend all collection actions, late fees and the accruing interest on overdue accounts during this state of emergency.

Yelm councilmember Joe De-

Pinto wrote in a Facebook post on Monday that Yelm will not be proclaiming a state of emergency, but instead will cancel all non-essential city activities.

That includes in-person utility and bill payments, municipal court, passport services, pet licensing and other customer service-related business, DePinto said.

“The city will continue to provide essential services such as water, sewer, police and emergency management, building permit and inspection services,” the councilmember wrote. “City parks and bathrooms will also remain open. The city will not shut off utilities for non-payment for anyone who cannot pay due to the impacts of the coronavirus. Customer account balances will continue to accrue though.”

Here are the numbers, as of Tuesday morning, related to the spread of COVID-19:

- In Washington state, there had been a total of 904 total confirmed cases and 11,582 negative cases. The number of coronavirus-related deaths stood at 48, according to the state Department of Health.

what they’ll need,” she said.

Like toilet paper.

“Somebody told me I could go on the corner and sell a toilet roll for \$100,” she said, laughing.

James, who said she has had the flu twice in the past five years, isn’t fretting about COVID-19, but she has advice for people who might be.

“If you have a fear of getting the virus, you should do what makes you feel most comfortable,” she said. “If you have a compromised immune system you might consider staying home. Make educated decisions, because there shouldn’t be hysteria.”

Alice Bickle seems to have made educated decisions all her life, because at age 91 the senior center member is a picture of health and intellect.

““I have had an exceptionally healthy life with a strong immune system,” she said. “So I’m not worrying about the virus, and I’m not going to let it panic me.”

Like James, Bickle credits her ability to persevere to the long life she’s lived.

“From day one, you make due with your circumstances, and whatever happens, you can handle it,” she said. “The fact is you’re going to go at some point, and it’s not your decision, so there’s no point worrying about it.”

And that’s the philosophy Bickle’s taking with COVID-19.

“If I get sick, I’m going to just stay home and not force my children (three daughters in nearby towns) to take care of me,” she said. “Whatever happens, happens.”

Craig McCauley couldn’t have said it any better. After all, he suffered a motorcycle accident that kept him in a hospital for two months — and lived to tell about it.

“I was close to dead,” he said, “but I survived.”

Whatever happens, happens.

**EDITOR’S NOTE:** *The Yelm and Rainier senior centers will be closed until COVID-19 is no longer a communicable threat. THE YELM CENTER will be closed until at least April 7; the Rainier center will be closed until further notice for eat-in meals. The center will be open for take out meals and home delivery for people who are homebound. Volunteers will deliver meals to people’s homes; lunch will be ready for pick up or delivery at noon.*

plement its contingency plan.

“We are currently in the process of developing district plans to support students with non-educational services as requested by the Governor and OSPI. Further communication regarding these services will be forthcoming. The Tenino School District will provide regular updates to the staff, students, parents and community via Skyward email, District and school websites and social media,” he wrote.

ed Way of Thurston County also announced Sunday the establishment of the Thurston County COVID-19 Response Fund.

This fund will benefit public health workers in their response to the coronavirus outbreak. It will also benefit disproportionately impacted families and individuals, as well as the organizations that serve them.

“Together, UWTC and the Community Foundation will gather data to identify emerging needs, as well as gaps in existing services, and work to rapidly mobilize and deploy resources to the people who are most vulnerable to the economic impacts of COVID-19 in Thurston County,” a media release stated.



J.D. Power has honored State Farm® as "Highest In Customer Satisfaction Among Life Insurance Providers."

**Honored to be your choice for life insurance.**

 **State Farm**™

Providing Insurance and Financial Services  
Next to Yelm Anytime Fitness

Stop in for your free Latte with your quote!  
Like us on Facebook! 

Call us today to see how I can help with your insurance needs.

steeleclayton.com **360.400.1400 - STEELE CLAYTON - AGENT**

CH596110W