

STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

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COURTESY OF RANDY BELLES

A search and rescue team airlifted Randy Belles Sept. 14 after he had a heart attack while hiking down from Vesper Peak.

Crews save Camano hiker

He suffered a heart attack descending Vesper Peak



By EVAN CALDWELL
Staff Reporter

Randy Belles felt as if a knife had stabbed his heart. “It was such a sharp pain,” the 50-year-old Camano Island resident said. “I couldn’t move.”

Belles and three friends were descending from Vesper Peak in eastern Snohomish County on Sept. 14 when his chest suddenly tightened. “I loosened the chest straps on the backpack. No relief,” said Belles, an avid hiker. “I sat down, began dry heaving and it wouldn’t stop. I was breathing, I was conscious, I just couldn’t move.”

Laying on the trail at the base of the switchbacks to Headlee Pass — about 1.5 miles from the trailhead — he put on extra layers of clothes and took two aspirin. His friends Tony and Nolan set out in a hurry to the Verlot Ranger Station to call 911. His other friend, Tracy, stayed with Belles, building a fire for warmth and to signal a helicopter if the need arose. A solo hiker then arrived and activated a distress signal on his GPS beacon.

■ SEE HIKER, A6

Unlocking Leque

Dikes coming down to restore habitat, open recreation



WDFW

The Leque Island dike will soon be removed, allowing water to flood into channels winding through the site.



EVAN CALDWELL | STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

Dirt from the site is used to form a new, higher berm to protect Stanwood.

Letting the water in

In mid-October, crews will start removing the 135-year-old dike surrounding the 250-acre southern portion of Leque Island and allowing seawater to flow into channels dug two years ago. A new 0.75-mile trail off of Eide Road and parking near Davis Slough will provide public access to the site for kayaking, bird-watching or hunting.

See more photos at SCnews.com



By EVAN CALDWELL
Staff Reporter

Camano Island will soon look more like an island. Workers will breach the 135-year-old dike surrounding much of Leque Island — the land between Stanwood and Camano Island — in mid-October, allowing seawater at high tide to flood into 250 acres and surround Highway 532.

“There will be tidal marshes on both sides of the highway,” said Loren Brokaw, restoration projects coordinator with the state Department of Fish and Wildlife. “Camano will finally feel like an island.”

The incoming tide will flow into channels dug two years ago during the first phase of the Leque Island restoration project, led by the WDFW. The channels snake through the former farmland and will even connect to Davis Slough, the existing channel marking the beginning of Camano.

“It’s going to look wildly different,” Brokaw said. “It’ll actually look like what the land originally looked like.”

Before settlers started to dike the land in 1886, much of Leque Island was a saltwater marsh that provided habitat for many species, including juvenile salmon. The dike was expanded throughout the years to reclaim land for farming and homesteads.

■ SEE LEQUE, A6

Stanwood Camano Food Bank switches to ‘grocery store’ model

By MARY JENNINGS
For SC News

Stanwood Camano Food Bank clients now have more choice. Rather than stopping by the Food Bank for box of pre-selected items twice a month, customers are now able to browse aisles weekly for fresh produce, dairy, meat and other staples and select what they need.

Food banks nationwide have been moving to a “grocery store” model that allows for greater choice. The organization made the change in its traditionally slow August and bought new equipment such as shopping carts, executive director Lynne Ayers said.

“These changes to our service model have been a long time coming,” she said. “Giving clients more choice not only cuts down on waste but it makes for a much more positive and empowering experience.”

Changing to the new model not only meant moving shelves and supplies, but it also required additional training for staff and volunteers, operations manager Kathy Moe said.

■ SEE FOOD BANK, A6



MARY JENNINGS | FOR THE STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

Client Heather selects produce at the Stanwood Camano Food Bank in Stanwood in September.

Food Bank

■ FROM A1

“Our volunteers have worked incredibly hard and have been flexible with all the changes,” she said.

Long-time volunteer Yvette Beloit said the new model allows her to better connect with customers.

“I really enjoy being out in the aisles and interacting with our customers as they browse,” she said. “We get to know our families and they tell us what items they like and what doesn’t work so well.”

Heather, a client who recently visited the Stanwood Camano Food Bank, said the new format is an improvement.

“Giving people the power to choose what they want to eat is wonderful,” she said. “I especially enjoy being able to

select the produce that I need. Much of the produce is donated by local growers, and I truly appreciate this.”

However, since the food bank is open more, the food bank is in need of more volunteers, Moe said, adding that many regular volunteers leave the area for the winter.

“It takes many hands to make things work here,” she said. “We could not provide this level of service to our community without our volunteers. Being a food bank volunteer will change your life for the better.”

The Stanwood Camano Food Bank, a nonprofit organization supported by donations and the organization’s thrift store, serves over 1,000 community members a month.

Interested in volunteering or donating? Visit stanwoodcamanofoodbank.org or call 360-629-2789.



EVAN CALDWELL | STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

Loren Brokaw, restoration projects coordinator with the state Department of Fish and Wildlife, walks to the edge of a new channel on Leque Island.

Leque

■ FROM A1

But in the past few years, parts of the dike had failed, most recently in 2016.

When crews began the next phase of the project in July and mowed down thick blackberry brambles shrouding the dike, officials discovered parts were only inches wide in places.

“It probably wouldn’t have lasted too much longer,” Brokaw said.

Because of fears that the dike would fail, WDFW opted to dig channels on the land two years ago in case the ocean busted through onto the land making it inaccessible for heavy equipment, Brokaw said.

“We didn’t want to risk the project,” he said. “If the dike failed, we wouldn’t have been able to do work.”

The project, which has been in the works since 2004, has started and stopped several times to address concerns of landowners with nearby wells, hunters and other citizen groups. But officials completed studies and surveys to mitigate concerns, Brokaw said.

Recently, state and tribal officials completed two other nearby estuary restoration projects: a 131-acre site on Fir Island west of Conway and a 107-acre site across the Stillaguamish River from Leque Island called “zis a ba.”

The restored saltwater marshes provide habitat for young salmon and other wildlife, including birds.

When complete in mid-October, the

Leque Island site will feature a .75-mile trail atop a new, higher berm meant to protect Stanwood from large waves.

“With water in this estuary, we needed to protect Stanwood from potential wave action,” Brokaw said.

At 15.5 feet high, the berm is about 5.5 feet higher than the existing dike and is designed to survive a worst-case scenario event, such as a storm during a king tide. It was built using soil scraped from the site to create low wetland areas at the headwaters of the new channels.

The trail is accessed from a new parking lot off of Eide Road and will feature benches, interpretive signs and places to launch kayaks. The Davis Slough parking lot along Highway 532 will also feature access to a new kayak boat launch.

In addition, Stanwood continues to develop two parks on properties along the Stillaguamish River — Hamilton Landing and Ovenell Park, which will have boat launches.

“The road onto Camano will suddenly have all these easy-to-access recreation opportunities,” Brokaw said. Waterfowl hunters will continue to have access to the site, he added.

Puget Sound Acquisition and Restoration Program, National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, WDFW’s Estuary and Salmon Restoration Program, Ducks Unlimited and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are helping pay for the project.

“We’re guessing this is going to be a popular site,” Brokaw said.

Hiker

■ FROM A1

“We don’t know what got to the emergency crews first — the 911 call or the GPS — but all of a sudden you could hear the chopper,” Belles said. “Seeing the chopper 100 feet away lifted my spirits.”

Belles said he estimates he spent between two and three cold hours on the ground under an emergency blanket before the Snohomish County SnoHawk 10 rescue helicopter arrived just after 5 p.m.

The search and rescue team immediately spotted the smoke from their fire, according to the Snohomish County Sheriff’s Office.

“We were lucky because it was too foggy at the top,” Belles said. “This was the only clear spot in the hike.”

The helicopter dropped off a rescue technician and a flight medic who applied defibrillator patches and inserted an IV into Belles before lifting him into the chopper.

Meanwhile, his wife and son were in Everett and planned to meet him after the hike.

“I came out of the Old Navy dressing room and saw all these messages on my phone from our friends at the Verlot Ranger Station,” said Lynn Belles, who hurried to the trailhead. “When we got there, the fire chief said he was conscious, and that’s when I knew he would

be alright.”

Randy Belles was transported to Providence Regional Medical Center Everett where doctors quickly confirmed he suffered a heart attack and needed two stents because 40% of his heart’s left two arteries were completely blocked.

“I have never had heart issues before — I had never experienced pain like this before, period,” he said. “But it does run in the family.”

Three years ago, his younger brother died of a heart attack, he said. Randy Belles was luckier. He was released from the hospital Monday and is expected to return to work at the city of Everett’s motor vehicle division next week.

Belles said he thought he had escaped the family’s heart issues. He eats healthy, exercises regularly and does taxing hikes, such as climbing Mount St. Helens and Park Butte near Mount Baker earlier this year.

“It’s crazy how quickly it came on. We were taking selfies just minutes before,” he said. “I just want to thank our friends and Snohomish County Search and Rescue for getting me home safe and alive.”

However, the misadventure won’t dampen his adventuresome spirit, he said. They’re already planning to summit Vesper Peak next Sept. 14 to commemorate the “heart attack hike” anniversary, Belles said.

“But my next hike will probably be a shorter one with plenty of people,” he said. “Maybe Oyster Dome.”



PEGGY WENDEL | STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

Michlynn Kahahane, left, and her children march Friday along 271st St. NW in Stanwood.

40 join international climate strike Friday

By PEGGY WENDEL
Staff Reporter

About 40 people marched in Stanwood to add their voices to millions of people around the world who marched in small towns and large cities during Friday’s Global Climate Strike. The point was to bring attention to the climate crisis in hopes to get world leaders to do something at the U.N. Climate Summit, a three-day session that began Monday in New York.

Michlynn Kahahane heard about the worldwide Climate Strike and wanted to be part of it. With help from Camano Island Democrats, she organized a march in Stanwood, where her children go to school.

“We just came out of the classroom today to be part of the Youth Global Climate Strike. It’s an unexcused absence; we already know that. But we’re learning by leading, leading by example,” Kahahane

said at the march. “My seventh generation is standing up for the next seven generations.”

She’s referencing the Seventh Generation Principle, which comes from the Native American sustainability practice of considering the effects of today’s actions on descendants seven generations into the future.

Stanwood’s protesters started at city hall, marched down SR 532 and then Main Street with signs that said, “Save the Planet,” “Act Now on Climate Change,” “Planet over Profits,” “Protect, Restore, Fund” and “There is no Planet B, We Must Act Now!”

The small group waved at passing drivers, who sometimes honked and waved in support. Kahahane hoped that awareness would spread from the march.

“Little changes have big effects,” she said.

OBITUARIES

BETTY JOAN PARR 1929 – 2019

Betty Joan Parr (nee Bjork) passed away Tuesday, Sept. 17, 2019, at the age of 90.

The daughter of Axel and Minnie (nee Ludamen) Bjork.

Joan leaves behind two sons from a previous marriage, Joel (Barbara) Morsch and Anders (Carol) Morsch; grandchildren Jennifer Morsch, Jessica (Brad) Lucht, Bryan and Alex Morsch; she was great-grandmother of six and great-great-grandmother of two.

Cremation will be accorded, no services are planned.



JOHN HENRY RIDGE April 27, 1953 - August 21, 2019

John Henry Ridge, resident of Stanwood, Wash., went home to be with the Lord Jesus on Aug. 21, 2019, at the age of 66. He died of complications related to kidney failure.

He was born April 27, 1953 in Richmond, Calif., to Jack Harold Ridge Sr. and Pauline (Fortner) Ridge.

John is survived by his wife of 44 years, Susan (Higashi) Ridge; sons, David Ridge and wife Jasmine, Jeremy Ridge and Elizabeth Sunderland and Peter Ridge; his siblings, Cheryle (Ridge) Hadfield, Jack Harold II and Marcella Joyce Ridge, Jeff and Karen Fortner, George L. and Lorna Fortner, Joel and Sherry Fortner, along with many nieces and nephews and grandnieces and grand-nephews.

John taught science at

Pasco High School and taught one year at a small village, Kongiganak, Alaska. He also taught science and math at Lincoln Hills Alternative School in Stanwood.

John retired from teaching in 2010.

The family would like to thank all those who supported us through this difficult time. Special thanks to the staff of the ICU ward and the Palliative Care Team and Comfort Care at Providence Hospital Everett, Wash.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made to the American Kidney Fund.

A memorial service will be held Oct. 5, at 2 p.m. at Mabana Chapel, 3871 South Camano Drive, Camano Island. Reception to follow. Greg Summers will officiate.

For directions go to the website www.mabanachapel.org.



KARI BETH PETERSON May 24, 1963 - September 15, 2019

Kari Beth Peterson, age 56, of Mount Vernon, Wash., died Sunday, Sept. 15, 2019.

She was born May 24, 1963 to Carolyn and Glen Peterson in Arlington, Wash.

After attending Stanwood, Wash., schools, she graduated from West Valley High School in Spokane, Wash., with the class of 1981. She attended Pacific Lutheran University followed by her receiving Associate of Arts and Science degrees in 1995 from Everett Community College.

Kari was employed as a financial accountant for Today’s Plumbing.

Kari was drawn to live near family and so always worked close to home in Big Lake, Wash. Her family also loved gatherings at her home. Through the years she was a favorite “auntie” and babysitter, not only of her nieces and nephews, but also of their pets.

She loved animals including dogs and especially golden retrievers. In her youth she had ponies to ride and would take care of injured birds.

Second to family as foremost in Kari’s mind, was her passion for reading. She was a very capable piano player, flute and piccolo player. She also loved following and watching NASCAR races involving favorite driver Jimmy Johnson.

Kari was also a confirmed and baptized member of Peace Lutheran Church in Silvana, Wash.

Kari is survived by her mother Carolyn (Sandness Peterson) Ihde and stepfather John Ihde; brothers Kurt Peterson, Kenn Peterson, and Kyle (Kim) Peterson; sister Keli (Jim) Wilson; special former sister-in-law Wendy Peterson; nine nieces and nephews; two great-nieces and two great-nephews; and close friend Stuart Lervick.

Kari will be forever missed and remembered by us all.

She was preceded in death by her father Glen Peterson in 1986. Her inurnment will be next to her father in Zion Cemetery.

A memorial service for Kari Peterson is scheduled to begin at 2 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 19, 2019 at “The Little White Church On The Hill,” 23605 Pioneer Hwy., Silvana, which is located just outside of Silvana heading north.

Memorials may be donations to Zion Cemetery Endowment Care Fund c/o Peace Lutheran Church, P.O. Box 100, 1717 Larson Rd., Silvana, WA 98287.

You may offer your condolences and share memories of Kari to her family online at www.kernfuneralhome.com