

CAMAS-WASHOUGAL POST-RECORD

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WSD reaches out to Latino families

Jemtegaard Middle School counselor Kirstin Albaugh (left) talks with seventh-grader Laura Perez and eighth-graders Arianna Reyes-Piedra and Efrain Garcia on Sept. 30 about the College Bound Scholarship program, which will be a topic of conversation at the Washougal School District's next "Spanish Speaking Family Night" later this month.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO COURTESY OF RENE CARROLL

Lack of communication results in 'frustration on both sides'

By DOUG FLANAGAN
Post-Record staff writer

Last spring, Washougal resident Sandy Renner approached Jemtegaard Middle School principal David Cooke to express her frustration with the Washougal School District's inability to effectively communicate

with its Spanish-speaking families.

"When the school system calls, the parents don't answer their phone because they know they're not going to be able to understand," Renner told Cooke. Cooke then met with several Hispanic parents, who verified Renner's claims.

When the JMS principal

showed the parents a list of district-offered educational activities and programs, they said that they didn't have any idea that those things existed. They also voiced their dissatisfaction about not knowing how their children are progressing in school.

Cooke left that meeting with more questions than answers.

"There was a whole bunch of frustrations on

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Community Chest kicks off 2020 campaign

Grant-funding organization helps nonprofits that benefit Camas-Washougal families

By KELLY MOYER
Post-Record editor

The Camas-Washougal Community Chest is edging closer to its 75th birthday, but the local grant-funding organization shows few signs of slowing down.

In fact, numbers from the group's 2019 campaign show the Community Chest collected \$108,500 in personal and corporate donations last year and funded 29 grants that served local, at-risk youth, helped Camas-Washougal residents in need and highlighted the importance of natural resource conservation.

This week, the Community Chest launched its fundraising campaign for its 2020 grants.

Joelle Scheldorf, the new president of the Community Chest, said the grant-funding organization's leaders had feared a downturn in donations after the Georgia-Pacific paper mill in Camas announced major layoffs in 2017, but that the 2019 fundraising cycle proved just as robust — if not more so — as in previous years.

Georgia-Pacific still donated \$10,000 to the group in 2019, and paper mill employees continued to give through pre-tax deductions. The group also gained a few more employee groups that were willing to donate to the Community Chest on a "per paycheck" basis, including public city and school district employees in Camas and Washougal. Individual donations also were up in 2019, but Scheldorf said the organization's leaders haven't yet figured out what made the difference.

"We're always analyzing data and trying to figure it out," Scheldorf said. "We did try to increase our community exposure ... but we haven't done anything too different."

In fact, the Community Chest, which started in 1946, has operated much like it has for more than seven decades — relying on an all-volunteer board, funding nonprofits that directly benefit Camas-Washougal residents and keeping its overhead costs so low that more than 98 percent of donations go straight to the grants.

Scheldorf, who served as the organization's vice president for the past three years before being named president earlier this year, said she would like to see the organization continue to grow.

"If something happens and we lose (Georgia-Pacific), then we would want to maintain (our current level of grant-funding)," she said.

Inspired by her mother, Jeane Moksness, who specialized in early childhood development and knew how hard it was for many working parents to make ends meet, Scheldorf said she felt drawn to the Community Chest's model of distributing locally collected

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THEIR BOLD VOICES

LGBTQ storytellers to share coming-out experiences at Camas library



PHOTOS BY KELLY MOYER/POST-RECORD

Members of the Our Bold Voices storytelling group, including Joe Marshall (second from left) and Stephen Herndon (right, front), of Camas, gather in Vancouver on Friday, Sept. 27, to discuss presentations planned for the Camas library and Battle Ground High School.

Oct. 12 presentation, resource fair will be celebration of National Coming Out Month

By KELLY MOYER
Post-Record editor

Joe Marshall has pretty much always known his gender didn't match the sex he was assigned at birth.

"I was very aware of gender by age 3," Marshall, a 27-year-old trans man who lives in Camas and graduated from Camas High in 2010, explains. "I think my third birthday party was the last time I wore a dress."

Although his immediate family supported Marshall when he told them he was



Paul Iarrobino (right), the founder of Our Bold Voices, talks to group member Heidi Bruins Green at a Sept. 27 rehearsal.

male, not female — and most people in his close

circles had always thought of him as a boy, anyway —

Marshall balked at the idea of coming out as a trans teen at Camas High School.

"There was really no support network in the area (in the early 2000s) ... and I struggled to find books that felt relatable," Marshall says.

As a 15-year-old just starting his gender transition journey, Marshall was eager to immerse himself in the region's young LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) community and meet other teens questioning gender constructs and sexuality.

See Coming out, page A5

Washougal begins 2020 budget process

City Council members set tentative public hearing date for Nov. 12

By DOUG FLANAGAN
Post-Record staff writer

The city of Washougal's general fund operating budget "is very tight heading into 2020," according to Washougal City Manager David Scott.

Jennifer Forsberg, the city's finance director, presented city council members with a preliminary overview of Washougal's 2020 budget during a Sept. 23 workshop.

The council is tentatively scheduled to hold a public hearing and adopt the 2020

budget at the Nov. 12 city council meeting.

City revenues are estimated to increase 3.83 percent from 2019 to 2020, and operating expenses are estimated to increase 2 percent, Forsberg said.

"Our overall general fund operating situation is that we are OK for 2020," Scott said after the workshop, "but we will need to address the sustainability of our general

fund programs as we move into the future."

The challenges arise from the fact that the city has "frozen" many of its supplies and services for two consecutive years, Scott said.

"(That) basically means that the team is having to deliver the same services but with less buying power than it had for supplies and servic-

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BRAVE & TRUE

Camas photographer launches magazine to empower girls: **Hometown, Page B1**

'EARLY BIRDS' LEAD LOCAL SWIM TEAMS

Experienced athletes return to Camas, Washougal programs: **Sports, Page A6**



Coming out:

From page A1

With no resources readily available in Camas-Washougal, Marshall's parents drove him into Portland to go to the Sexual and Gender Minority Youth Resource Center (SMYRC).

Today, Marshall volunteers as a mentor at Triple Point, a Vancouver-based support group for queer and trans youth run by the Children's Home Society of Washington, and says he sees positive changes in his hometown of Camas surrounding LGBTQ issues.

"It's exciting to see how much things have changed," he says. "Camas schools, I think, have made progress. They have a GSA (Gay Straight Alliance) and I think the environment has changed. There are a lot more conversations (about LGBTQ issues)."

Marshall is one of several members of Our Bold Voices, a local storytelling company founded by artist-director Paul Iarrobino in 2016 as a platform for sharing stories from marginalized community members and, as Iarrobino recently wrote in a grant to obtain funding for outreach to Southwest Washington's more rural areas, for "building community through these meaningful and impactful stories."

On Saturday, Oct. 12, Our Bold Voices will celebrate National Coming Out Month (National Coming Out Day will be observed on Friday, Oct. 11) with a resource fair, panel presentation with coming-out stories and a question-and-answer session with audience members.

The family friendly event, sponsored by the city of Camas, the Friends & Foundation of the Camas Library, Molina Healthcare and Lisa Le Properties, is set to begin with a resource fair at from

10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Oct. 12, at the Camas Public Library, 625 N.E. Fourth Ave., Camas. Our Bold Voices speakers, including Iarrobino and Marshall, will talk about their own personal "coming outs" and answer audience questions at 11 a.m. in the upstairs meeting rooms at the library, with refreshments to be served afterward.

The Camas presentation is a little different from the group's typical storytelling format, Iarrobino says.

"We really want this to be for families," Iarrobino explains. "This is going to be more like a conversation. It will be collaborative. I suspect we'll be feeding off each other's answers. And we'll keep it pretty casual."

The library has acquired several LGBTQ books recommended by Our Bold Voices members and there will be resource booths set up throughout the library starting at 10 a.m. that day.

Marshall says he's looking forward to the LGBTQ resource fair and speaking event in his hometown.

"I think the biggest thing is that this is raising visibility and promoting connections," Marshall says. "When you have folks telling their own personal experiences, others can relate to that."

For other teens struggling to understand their gender identity, Marshall — who has a long-term girlfriend, works for his father's construction and real estate business and is hoping to get his master's degree to become a middle or high school teacher — could be a beacon of hope that life really does get better.

"I feel really excited that this is happening in Camas and Battle Ground," Marshall says. "That's a huge step for these communities. And to see how supportive the folks at the Camas library have been, to see that the community seems to want this ... is exciting. I hope we can



Joe Marshall (left) and Joshua Thomas (right) attend a rehearsal for Our Bold Voices in Vancouver on Friday, Sept. 27.

reach out to folks in the community, maybe in the school district — to teachers, parents or anyone who knows someone in their life who is questioning their gender or sexuality. I think this can be really helpful in making people feel like they're not alone."

Our Bold Voices is hosting another presentation, "Coming Out as You," from 2:30 to 5 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 20, at Battle Ground High School in Battle Ground.

Stephen Herndon, a gay man who lives with his husband, Joe, in Camas, works as a program planner and facilitator for Triple Point and as a volunteer with PFLAG Southwest Washington (a group for friends and family of LGBTQ youth).

Herndon agrees the Camas and Battle Ground presentations by Our Bold Voices will help bring diversity and resources to two of Southwest Washington's less urban areas.

"I would tell people, 'Come and check it out. Hear other people's stories, because we all grow from each other and there is power in telling stories and in hearing each other's stories,'" Herndon says.

As a man who came out as gay later in life — Herndon was 39 and married to a woman with two teen children when he came out — the Camas man has a story that often is much different than other members of Iarrobino's Our Bold Voices story-

telling group. And, as a facilitator and educator, he sometimes struggles to find a balance between the type of storytelling he does in his work and the type of personal storytelling Our Bold Voices calls for.

"When I'm engaged with the public and talking about LGBTQ issues, I'm leading a conversation. But, when it comes to telling my own story ... there's a vulnerability that exists within that," Herndon says. "It will be very different telling my own story. But I think we can learn from each other's stories. That's how we process our own stories."

Herndon says he thinks the power of storytelling is why social media has proven to be so popular. "It lets us get a glimpse into each other's lives ... to sort of look behind the scenes," he says.

The Camas event, he hopes, will allow him to share some of his experiences and maybe help someone find their own truth in the process.

"I'm not looking to change or fix anything, but by sharing my unique story I'm hoping it can help somebody look within," Herndon says. "We all have the potential to be that one person in somebody's life, to help somebody through a difficult period in their life. That's the power of telling stories in a group. People will process all of our stories in different ways. And maybe we can

help somebody make it through another day."

The storytelling group's presentations in Camas and Battle Ground are partially funded by a \$1,500 grant from the Washington State Arts Commission. In his grant proposal, Iarrobino says Our Bold Voices is "intentionally reaching into these smaller communities outside of Vancouver to create awareness, start community conversations and engage with service providers."

According to Iarrobino's research, Camas in eastern Clark County and Battle Ground in northern Clark County share some similarities: "Both are small, close-knit communities, but lack programming or services to the LGBTQ community," Iarrobino states in his grant application. "According to the most recent census, Camas is 87.4 percent white and Battle Ground is 90.5 percent white. Roughly half of these households have children under the age of 18 living with them. In addition to the lack of racial diversity, children and youth lack LGBTQ role models. Numerous studies have shown that LGBTQ youth have a higher rate of suicide attempts than do heterosexual youth. ... It is our hope to create more visibility for residents of these small towns, especially children and youth."

In the work he does on a daily basis with LGBTQ youth, Herndon says he is discovering that change needs to happen, but mostly in the older generations.

"The kids are OK. It's society that's dragging behind," Herndon says. "Youth are changing the way we look at gender and sexual orientation. They're changing and charting new territory. But schools can be not quite prepared to work with trans or non-binary youth. We (adults) need to learn from the youth. We need to change."

Iarrobino says he sees subtle changes happening,

particularly in his dealings with Camas city officials and leaders at the Camas Public Library.

"Having the support of the city of Camas is critical for this program's success. The Camas library is supportive of our efforts because it aligns with their recent needs assessment survey. Residents are interested in more diversity and equity programming," Iarrobino states in his grant proposal to the state arts commission. "They understand how the lack of visibility and resources for LGBTQ community members is problematic and are very invested in this partnership."

In a letter of support for the Oct. 12 presentation, Camas Library Director Connie Urquhart writes that she is pleased to work with Iarrobino's group.

"In Camas, we are all about community and collaboration," Urquhart states in her letter of support for the grant proposal. "The Library is excited to be part of a multi-day event that includes the Liberty Theatre and works to bring peace and understanding to a sometimes-difficult subject."

The Oct. 12 "National Coming Out Month: Our Stories" event in Camas will feature seven panelists, including Herndon, Iarrobino and Marshall. Other panelists include: Grayson Cole, an 18-year-old nonbinary person who says they want to share their coming-out story "and maybe reach someone who needs to hear it"; Heidi Bruins Green, an educator and researcher who identifies as bisexual, pansexual and queer; Joshua Thomas, a social justice advocate who works as the Oregon Food Bank's equity and inclusion coordinator; and Abasi Umoh, a 22-year-old gender queer who volunteers with Triple Point.

For more information about the Our Bold Voices storytelling group, visit OurBoldVoices.com.

IN BRIEF

Candidate forums planned in Camas, Clark County

The Clark County League of Women Voters has scheduled several non-partisan candidate forums ahead of the November general election.

The first forum is set for 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 9, at the Vancouver Community Library, 901 "C" St., Vancouver.

The Oct. 9 forum will feature candidates for the Port of Vancouver, Fire Protection District No. 6, city of Vancouver and Vancouver School District races.

A second forum, set for 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 16, at Dollars Corner Fire Station, 21609 N.E. 72nd Ave., Vancouver, will feature candidates running for city council and mayoral positions in Yacolt, La Center, Ridgefield and Battle Ground.

From 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 23, at the Camas Public Library, 625 N.E. Fourth Ave., Camas, a forum will feature candidates for the Clark County Council, city of Camas and city of Washougal city councils, the Port of Camas-Washougal, and the Washougal and Evergreen school boards.

The general election will be held on Tuesday, Nov. 5.

Following the forums, video recordings from CTVV will be posted at cvtv.org/program/election-2019.

Coupons for free leaf disposal available

The season is changing, which means leaves are falling from trees all around Clark County. Residents of Vancouver and Clark County can dispose of up to five cubic yards of leaves for free with coupons provided by Clark County Public Works and the city of Vancouver.

Coupons can be downloaded from the Green

Neighbors website at <https://clarkgreeneighbors.org/en/green-blog/free-leaf-disposal>, and used at four locations:

H & H Wood Recyclers, 8401 N.E. 117th Ave., Vancouver; McFarlane's Bark, 8806 N.E. 117th Ave., Vancouver; Triangle Resources, 612 S.E. Union St., Camas; and West Van Materials Recovery Center, 6601 N.W. Old Lower River Road.

Coupons must be presented at the drop-off site and are for leaves only. Regular disposal fees apply to leaves mixed with other yard debris.

Clark County reminds residents not to blow, rake, sweep or dump leaves onto streets, where they can block storm drains, cause flooding, and create driving hazards.

To help prevent flooding on neighborhood streets with relatively light traffic, residents can clear clogged storm drains by standing on a safe location away from traffic and using a rake or other garden tool to pull leaves from the path of flowing water.

Residents should not try to clear storm drains on busy streets. Call Clark County Public Works at 564-397-2446 to report clogged storm drains or flooding on busy streets outside city limits.

'Tail to Remember' benefit set for Saturday, Oct. 12

The West Columbia Gorge Humane Society (WCGHS) will host its annual fundraiser, "A Tail to Remember," beginning at 5 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 12, at Warehouse 23, 100 Columbia St., Vancouver.

The evening includes dinner, wine and a chance to bid on silent and live auction items.

Dave Ryckman from Stokes Auction Group will conduct the live auction. Wayne Havrely, an Emmy

award-winning journalist (and reporter for the Camas-Washougal Post-Record) will emcee the event.

"A Tail to Remember" is the WCGHS's largest fundraiser of the year. Attendees will have the opportunity to bid on more than 80 silent auction items and 15 live auction items donated by corporations, individuals and area businesses. Some of the live auction items up for bid this year include a weekend in Asheville, North Carolina; a getaway to Newport, Oregon; a private, one-hour flight over the Columbia River Gorge and Cascade Mountains; a whiskey tasting for six; and a private chef's dinner for eight.

Local animal welfare celebrity Amanda Giese, founder of Panda Paws Rescue and star of the Animal Planet show, "Amanda to the Rescue," will share an exclusive sneak-peek of the show's second season at the Oct. 12 fundraiser.

Funds raised from this event will help WCGHS continue its life-saving mission by providing homeless animals with a safe haven, quality medical care, food and love while they await their forever homes.

Tickets are available at wcghs.org or wcghs.ejoinme.org/dinnerauction2019. Individual tickets cost \$75.

West Columbia Gorge Humane Society, a 501c3, nonprofit organization located in Washougal, is dedicated to ending unnecessary euthanasia of all healthy or treatable companion animals, and finding them permanent, loving homes.

In 2018, West Columbia Gorge Humane Society was able to help more than 700 cats and dogs either find their way home, or find a loving new home.

For more information, visit wcghs.org or email info@wcghs.org.

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