

STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

COVID spike continues

Stanwood-Camano schools delay plan to bring more students back into buildings

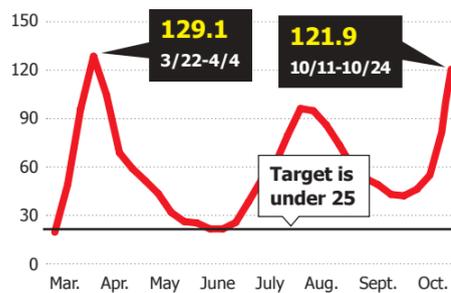
By EVAN CALDWELL
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Case rates continue to climb in the Stanwood-Camano area. In Snohomish County as of Monday, the infection rate shot up to 121.9 per 100,000 residents from Oct. 11-24 — near the highest rate the county has

recorded during the pandemic. The infection rate in Island County has increased to 38.9 cases per 100,000 people and the rate in Skagit County is has steadily increased to 54.2 infections per 100,000 residents, according to the state Department of Health.

■ SEE COVID, A6

Snohomish County COVID-19 case rate per 100,000 residents



FARM & FOREST FOREVER

Conservation deal will keep iconic Kristoferson Farm from ever being developed



EVAN CALDWELL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

Morning light illuminates parts of the 231-acre Kristoferson Farm on Saturday on Camano Island. The family, local organizations and county government have joined forces to help preserve the land in perpetuity.

“It’s important to the island that this place be here the way it is now. This place is special.”

— Kris Kristoferson, on protecting the Camano property into perpetuity

By PEGGY WENDEL
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Everyone traveling East Camano Drive sees the farm’s scenic red barn with a serene lake surrounded by green fields and forest across from Camano Plaza.

More than a century ago, Albert Kristoferson started with 10 acres on Mercer Island and a rowboat. He built a large, innovative dairy serving Seattle.

In 1912, he bought 1,400 acres on Camano Island and created a dairy, cattle and sheep operation. It included what is now Camaloch and extended down to Triangle Cove. Today, the Kristoferson descendants are also

known for innovations that keep the family farm running on the remaining 231 acres.

In addition to sustainable timber and farming, the family business includes ziplines through the forest and team-building, problem-solving sessions for business leaders. The public gathers in the fields for a harvest celebration called the Pumpkin Project with games, cider pressing, bands, booths, face painting and pumpkin trebuchet.

The Pumpkin Project is on hold this year because of the pandemic, but that didn’t stop Kris Kristoferson from seeing how far he could hurl pumpkins across the field using a trebuchet.

■ SEE FARM, A11



SUBMITTED

The five managing Kristoferson siblings are gathered with their mother, Pat. From left, back: Betsy Kristoferson, Kris Kristoferson, Melissa Elliott. Front: Nancy O’Neal, Pat Kristoferson, Mona Campbell.

Voter turnout outpacing 2016

Number of ballots could set record

By SC NEWS STAFF

Nearly half of Washington state voters have already turned in their ballots for the 2020 general election.

The Secretary of State’s office reports 2,018,495 ballots were turned in by Oct. 24. There are 4,828,253 registered voters in the state.

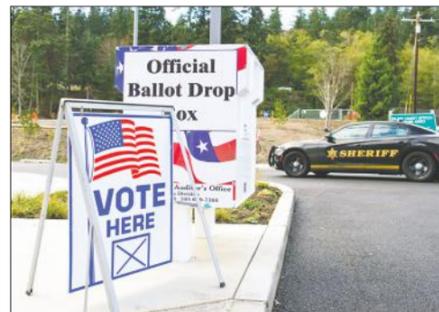
That’s a stark difference from 2016 when the number of returned ballots at the same point

was just around 10%. A total of 78.76% voted in the 2016 general election.

In Island County, 29,644 of the 62,561 ballots (47.4%) have been returned — the eighth-highest rate of return of the state’s 39 counties. There were 307 rejected ballots so far, according to votewashington.info.

In Snohomish County, 185,296 of the 513,312 ballots (36.1%) have made their way back to the county election’s office. There have been 1,901 rejected ballots so far, per votewashington.info.

■ SEE BALLOTS, A9



EVAN CALDWELL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

About two-thirds of ballots in Washington are being returned via official drop boxes, like this one at the County Administration Building on Camano.


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Farm

► FROM A1

On Saturday, Kris Kristoferson picked a small boy out of the masked onlookers and asked him to do the countdown, which little 3-year-old Calvin did: 3-2-1 Go!

The pumpkin blasted into the sky and traveled more than 200 feet before smashing to the ground.

Throughout the weekend, small crowds gathered to buy squash, shallots, apple or pear butter and other farm goodies. Visitors were invited to guess the weight of three massive giant squash.

Compared to last year's pumpkin event, things seemed quiet on the farm, but a grand endeavor is afoot to keep operations intact through the ages.

Environmental organizations and local government are helping because of the oversized role the property plays in the area's ecology.

Better together

Not all large family properties have been able to keep their tracts intact through the generations. Properties get split up between relatives, sold off or developed.

Kris Kristoferson said that a great responsibility comes with the property. Some relatives may not be able or interested in keeping it. They may have moved far away or would like to cash in and buy a house somewhere else. He said that statistically, the passion of the first generation usually subsides within three generations.

Not so with the Kristofersons. Five siblings currently manage the property. They are the fourth generation of Kristofersons and the next generation is eager to continue the tradition and the responsibility.

This sustainable organic family farm and timber operation is working on a new trajectory to keep the acreage together, come what may through the generations. They're working on putting it into a conservation easement, which means by law it must be kept in farm and forest and can't be divided into lots or developed into homes.

Steps are being taken with Whidbey Camano Land Trust shepherding the way through the slow process. It takes coordination between the family, organizations and government.

But this month, a significant step was taken: Island County Commissioners approved \$300,000 in Conservation Futures funding to match state and federal funds for a total of \$2,250,000.

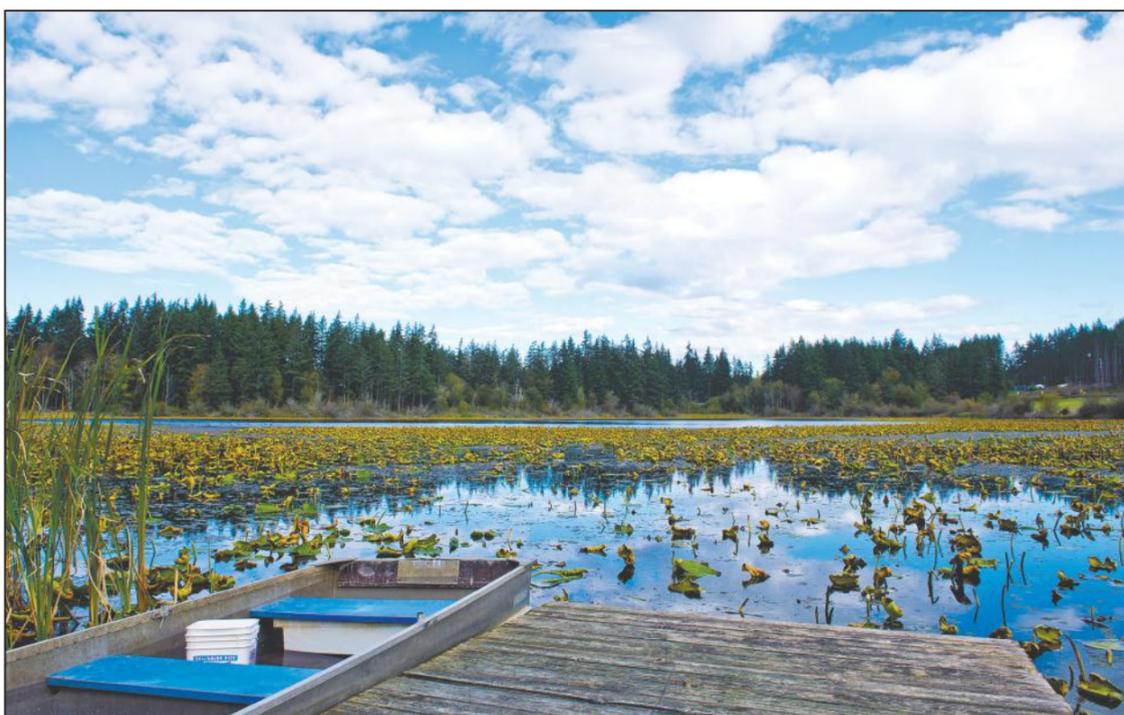
Land Trust lead Ryan Elting said that it could take about another year to finish the process. The family business will get a sum of money, yet to be determined.

"The family will still own and manage the farm," Elting said.

"The land can be sold or transferred, but it can't be subdivided or developed. It can be passed down through the family, but is always subject to the terms of the conservation agreement forever. ... These easements are for working farmland and sustainable timber production. That's really the goal of it, that the property stays in open space, farmland, healthy timber production and healthy habitat."

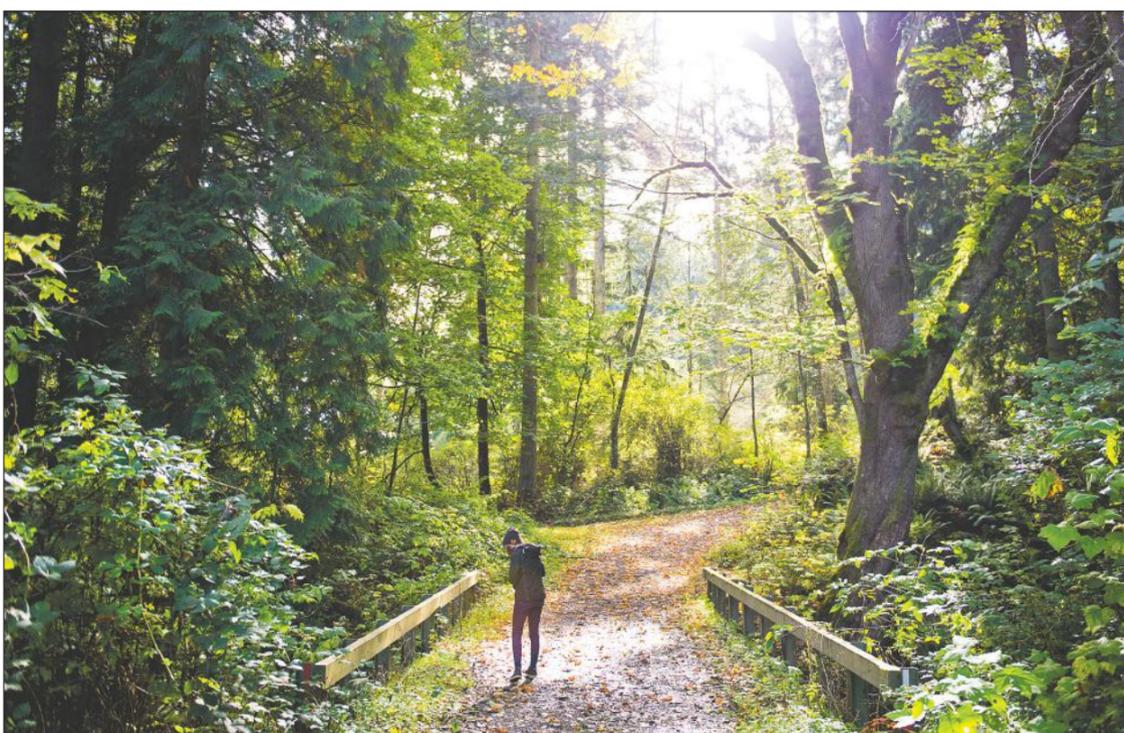
The owners will get money to offset development rights that they give up by legally binding the property to remain in farm and timber.

"Any proceeds that we would get goes back to the farm, it goes into main-



PHOTOS BY EVAN CALDWELL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

Kristoferson Lake feeds Kristoferson Creek, which flows through the farm to Triangle Cove. In recent years, the creek has had fish-friendly improvements such as larger culverts and habitat restorations.



Mona Campbell, one of the five Kristoferson siblings who manage the property, walks over a bridge built in the past few years that replaced a culvert.



Kris Kristoferson watches a pumpkin launched from the farm's trebuchet on Saturday. See more photos with this story at SCnews.com.

taining the property," said Mona Campbell, one of the five Kristoferson siblings who manage the property. "Everything the farm makes, every endeavor we undertake, it all goes into the farm."

Kris Kristoferson noted that family sizes are smaller now and farms have to shift to make it work. The easement money would allow them to manage and add staff to handle more of the day-to-day operations.

"The financial part is a good thing, but not the primary thing, which is

protecting the property into the future," he said. "Conservative futures just a portion of what we are seeking to accomplish."

A diverse ecosystem

This 231-acre farm and forest has prime agricultural soils, a large pond, wetlands and creeks. The family raises organic hay, lavender, apples and pumpkins without herbicides or pesticides on 84 acres. Operations have diversified with ecotourism, corporate leadership training, team-building and farm events which add

to the local economy.

In 2014, Kristoferson Farm was named "Washington State Wildlife Farmer of the Year" by the Washington Association of Conservation Districts.

Both Campbell and Kris Kristoferson cited their mission statement and said that anything they do has to fit with a mission statement: "Kristoferson Farm celebrates family, honors heritage and respects the land."

"When we contemplate what we're going to do, it has to fit nicely with that set of ethics," Kris Kristoferson said.

When they were considering a zipline tour through the forest canopy, they realized it would have a low impact on the land and an opportunity to highlight their stewardship, Campbell said. The display panels on the zipline platforms show how flora, fauna and the property's systems work.

The family now has 100 acres in forest and logs about 10 acres on rotation every 10 years. Each section has 90 years to grow, except for 10 acres that will never be logged, Campbell said.

This provides a diverse ecosystem with everything that animals thrive in, from a sunny area with shrubs and plants to shady mature forests with less undergrowth.

Something much bigger

"Kristoferson Farm and Forest lies at the very heart

watershed is the second largest watershed on Camano with 3,027 acres draining into it. It's the only watershed on Camano with documented salmon use. ... Kristoferson Lake is the largest body of water on Camano Island. It's the headwaters for Kristoferson Creek, a fish-bearing stream that flows through more than a half mile through the property then off the property to Triangle Cove."

Elting said the full ecological value extends well beyond property lines because Kristoferson Creek empties into Triangle Cove, an estuary that feeds into Port Susan Bay.

"Small salmon fry leave the big rivers and they need a place to grow and feed and get ready for that great migration out into the Pacific Ocean," he said.

"They find places like Triangle Cove and Elger Bay. A very small number are going to be going up places like Kristoferson Creek to spawn."

Obstacles for salmon migration have been removed and fish-friendly improvements have been made to the creek both on the farm and off. The family put in fish-friendly crossings and planted trees for nutrients and shade to keep water cold.

The conservation easement will protect a huge aquifer recharge area that provides stormwater retention, flood prevention and filtration — important because the island depends on this sole source aquifer for drinking water.

"We don't have any snow-fed waters, so we rely on that rainfall," Elting said. "Being resilient in the future with climate change means protecting these places that keep our water clean and safe."

"(The easement) really protects the property into perpetuity," Campbell said. "It really carries our vision forward, to steward the land and preserve the forest and farmland."

Kris Kristoferson agreed.

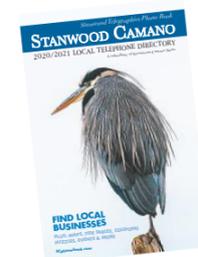
"It's important to the island that this place be here the way it is now. We'd like that to be accomplished on our watch," he said. "This place is special."

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