

SEQUIM GAZETTE

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SHS Class of 2020: Strength in unity, community



Administrators for a new Facebook page "Sequim High School Adopt a Senior 2020" look for all 201 SHS seniors to sign up so they can be "adopted" by the community to receive cards, goodies and encouragement as many of their events and milestones have been cancelled or postponed in the last months of their K-12 academic careers. Submitted photos

Facebook group looks to 'adopt,' support local graduates-to-be

BY MATTHEW NASH
Sequim Gazette

They've worked hard, kept their grades up, served the community, lettered in sports, set up scholar-

ships and future careers, and planned to celebrate the end of their K-12 education with common milestones like senior ball and graduation.

And while the 2019 novel corona-

virus has tried to derail the class of 2020, students, families and community members remain hopeful.

One rising effort is the new Facebook group "Sequim High School Adopt a Senior 2020," a virtual gathering that like its national model seeks to support each graduating high school senior in some capacity.

The group had "adopted" more than 50 graduates-to-be by press

time, but there are another 150 yet to post on the site by parents/guardians/seniors; Sequim School District officials note that 201 seniors are set to graduate.

Christine Bekkevar, a 2007 SHS graduate, started the online group on April 20, along with Karen Baker and Coleen Tenneson, looking to show support for Sequim 12th graders by sending them letters, cards,

snacks, etc.

Bekkevar said she doesn't know any Sequim High seniors but "thought it was such an amazing thing."

"If I was a senior, it'd be so special," she said.

To start, families or seniors themselves can post one or more pictures

See SENIORS, A-11

Council selects two new members

BY MATTHEW NASH
Sequim Gazette

Following the resignation of Jennifer States in February and death of Ted Miller on April 10, Sequim City Councilors selected two new councilors on Monday night.

Following an executive session, councilors chose Sarah Kincaid, 76, a retired office manager and quality control supervisor, and Michael "Mike" Pence, 68, a municipal government employee who retired as a public works director in Missouri.

See CITY, A-13

SERVING UP SOUP



Volunteers, from left, Shelley Jefferson, Shelley Langston and Shawn Langston bag and prep soup to deliver to area apartment complexes on April 21. As long as there is need, volunteers plan to make soup four nights a week during the COVID-19 pandemic, Jefferson said. Sequim Gazette photo by Matthew Nash

School staff serves soup for Sequim apartment complexes

Volunteers help cook, deliver 4 nights a week

BY MATTHEW NASH
Sequim Gazette

Proper food handling skills, a clean bill of health and a big heart make up the ingredients of Shelley Jefferson's kitchen.

In the last week, the assistant principal at Helen Haller Elementary gathered a growing base of volunteers to help with a new soup kitchen out of the Sequim Boys & Girls Club during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I've just been seeing what's happening with

families statewide and here," Jefferson said.

"I felt a call to action to help."

Four nights a week (Monday-Thursday), volunteers make one of 10 soups and deliver them the next night (Tuesday-Friday) to several apartment complexes: Elk Creek, Mountain View, Seabreeze and Vintage at Sequim.

In the first week, Jefferson said, volunteers delivered soups over four nights to 32 homes with 47 adults and 38 children between the three apartment complexes.

This week, at least 96 people signed up to receive soup and bread between the apartments.

"I wanted to reach out to the apartment

See SOUP, A-11

School board considering \$2M in budget cuts

BY MICHAEL DASHIELL
Sequim Gazette

The projected cuts aren't as severe, but Sequim schools superintendent Dr. Rob Clark anticipates having to cut about \$2 million from the school district's approximate \$41.6 million budget for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Clark presented a modified version of his budget plan to board directors on April 27.

The reductions, he noted, are drawn from across the district, from supplies, extra-and co-curricular activities, travel costs and technology as well as from personnel positions from custodial, transportation and special education departments.

The biggest cuts by dollar figure are from basic education — \$700,000 that would pay for about eight teaching positions — along with 15 para-educators (teacher and school assistants), saving the district \$450,000.

"If we need to cut \$2 million (from the budget) the majority of that has to come from salaries," Clark said at a board workshop on April 27.

While the board doesn't have to approve a budget plan for the 2020-2021 academic year until August, the district needs to notify staff of their employment status by mid-May.

"This is better than it was two weeks ago but it is still unpleasant," Clark said.

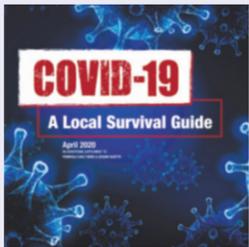
Clark's projected cuts dropped from his April 13 proposal by about \$600,000 after the district saw some staff give notice of resignations, retirements or temporary leaves.

"This is better than it was two weeks ago but it is still unpleasant."

Rob Clark
Sequim schools superintendent

See CUTS, A-10

Special section inside



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Clallam County sees more cases of COVID-19

Testing on North Olympic Peninsula ramping up

BY ZACH JABLONSKI
AND PIERRE LaBOSSIERE
Olympic Peninsula News Group

Health officials on the North Olympic Peninsula are ramping up testing for the new coronavirus in Clallam and Jefferson counties as the state increases its lab capabilities and more test kits are

being produced.

Dr. Allison Unthank, the Clallam County health officer, also said cloth masks continue to be important.

While they are not available to the general public at the county's Emergency Operations Center, there are some supplies there for health care providers, first

responders and people who work in nursing homes.

Increased testing is seen as the immediate need before the economy can begin to reopen, health officials have said.

"I'm recommending testing for anyone with symptoms consistent with COVID-19, regardless of where

you live or what you do," Unthank said during a daily briefing Monday, April 27.

"If you have cough, fever, shortness of breath, cold-like symptoms or flu-like symptoms, we recommend you get tested," she said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention expanded the guidelines this

See COVID-19, A-10



Sequim graduation conversations continue

Safe and Sober Party seeks support

BY MATTHEW NASH
Sequim Gazette

The preference of parents, guardians and Sequim's Class of 2020 is to hold a traditional graduation ceremony in the summer, Sequim High School Principal Shawn Langston said.

Langston met online with families and Sequim School Superintendent Rob Clark to explore options for the potential graduation, tentatively scheduled for June 5, with group gatherings on hold due to state guidelines for the 2019 novel coronavirus.

If Gov. Inslee's "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order remains in place, other

possible options for graduates include a parade inside cars, and/or an online graduation ceremony.

"We're still talking," Langston said in a phone interview. "No decision has been made."

He said any decisions on graduation won't be made until late May at the earliest.

However, Sequim schools superintendent Rob Clark said at an April 27 board meeting that the June 5 graduation will not happen.

"At Senior Parent Night we talked about doing something symbolically (that day)," Clark told board directors this week

Clark and senior parents are

"dragging their feet" on scheduling the next meeting as they wait on what restrictions Gov. Inslee may ease in coming days and weeks.

Erin Dwyer, ASB senior class president, said student leadership are "aiming for administration to hold an in-person graduation in as traditional fashion as possible."

Safe and Sober party

Bobbi Stringer, parent president of the Class of 2020's Safe and Sober Party, said no decision has been made if the party will still happen, but that parents "would love to have some kind of celebration for them."

However, because the coronavirus is limiting so many people financially, she said, fundraising has come to a halt.

A golf tournament at Cedars at Dungeness was cancelled, as has the annual flamingo flocking that sees students place flamingos on residents' lawns and at businesses as a fundraiser.

Community letters went in the mail in January to past supporters, but Stringer said her heart goes out to local businesses because "we know a lot of them are really struggling."

At the same point in time, I want to make our (SHS) seniors know we have every interest to celebrate their successes," she said. "There are many seniors who are hurting."

Stringer said the senior parent group's goal is for each student to receive something, and they're about one-third of the way there.

Contributions can be mailed to: Sequim Graduation, Party P.O. Box 4, Carlsborg WA, 98324.

Stringer can be reached at 360-477-5942 and gradpartyshs@gmail.com

The group is also on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SequimSeniorPartyPlanning.

Yearbooks

Sales remain ongoing for 2019-2020 Sequim High yearbooks students and families at the school's webpage shs.sequimschools.org.

They can also mail a check made out to "Sequim High School" to Sequim High School, 601 N. Sequim Ave., Sequim, WA 98382. Cost is \$60.

Reach Matthew Nash at mnash@sequimgazette.com.



Above, Andy and his mom Anita Benitez prep ham for split pea and ham soup during a recent night of soup prep. Anita is one of many Sequim School District staffers volunteering with the program. Right, Rigo Langston knocks and drops off soup and bread for residents at Mountain View Apartments. Sequim School District employees, church volunteers and their families volunteer to make soup and drop it off at Sequim apartment complexes. Sequim Gazette photos by Matthew Nash



Soup

From page A-1

complexes because I knew they were some of the most impacted people in the community," Jefferson said.

She spoke with Andra Smith, executive director of Sequim Food Bank, and began coordinating with her for supplies, such as bread, dry and canned food and meat.

Smith said the food bank

partners often with local groups and churches for meals and soup kitchens like this.

"This totally fits within our mission and what we do," she said.

Scoop on soup

Prior to delivery, flyers went up at the apartment complexes for residents to sign up.

Jefferson said important elements of the soup delivery is that sign-ups are ongoing,

soups can go to anyone in the buildings — not just families — and the program will continue into the foreseeable future.

Vintage at Sequim started receiving deliveries this week, and once the program becomes more established, she plans to explore expanding offerings to housebound seniors, too.

Soups include: chili, vegetable beef, split pea, white chicken chili, chicken and rice, loaded baked potato,

lentil, taco soup, chicken noodle, and beef barley lentil.

"I'm hoping it tastes so good to them that it's a treat," Jefferson said.

Volunteers bring sealed food to residents' front doors, knock, and leave to limit any possible contamination. Residents can freeze the food if they want if they don't want to warm it up that night, Jefferson said.

Those making deliveries don't have to hold a food

handler's permit, but they must in order to prepare food in the kitchen.

Volunteer/donate

For now, Dungeness Community Church and Sequim Community Church volunteers will each cook and deliver soups one night a week while Sequim School District staff volunteer the remaining nights.

"It's exciting to see how many people are excited to come and help," Jefferson

said.

The soup kitchen works under the umbrella of the Sequim Food Bank, and the Boys & Girls Club's kitchen is approved by Clallam County Health Department.

While many ingredients come from the food bank, some soup items such as dried beans, carrots and meats have come from private donors.

To donate, email Jefferson at sjefferson@sequim-schools.org.

Seniors

From page A-1

of the SHS senior with some information, such as interests, future plans, etc. Those starting out put #notadopted atop the post and change it #adopted when people comment or message the parent/guardian/senior.

Bekkevar said it's encouraged that more than one person adopt each senior.

#Adopted

Without a better phrase to describe it, Payton Sturm, SHS ASB executive president, said it feels "pretty weird" to be home so much with the "Stay Home" order and communicating with classmates and teachers via online meetings.

Like many, she's missing her friends and the socialization aspect of school, and as Operetta Club president she was excited to help put on "The Addams Family" during the Irrigation Festival.

Sturm, who plans to attend Baylor University, said she first was adopted on the "National Adopt a 2020 Senior Project" by 18 people, which she called "mind-blowing."

On the local page, she's been adopted a few times, too. Family friend Shenna Younger surprised her by decorating their fence with encouraging chalk art for Payton.

"Oh, it amazes me," Sturm said. "It is so incredible to see how the community comes together."

Kylynn Stringer, another Sequim senior and Peninsula College Running

Start student, said she was "definitely upset" when she learned of all the cancellations but she's found some positive aspects from it including a new opportunity in the health field.

She started April 20 at Olympic Medical Center working full time screening employees and patients before they come into the Port Angeles hospital.

While it's not a typical after school job for many teens, Stringer said she's been working on her prerequisites to become a pediatric nurse so the position is a natural fit for her.

"I definitely like it," she said. "I see it as the first step into my career."

Prior to the pandemic, she used to volunteer at the hospital's information desk.

If school activities like her favorite, fastpitch, weren't cancelled, she said she'd be helping Sequim pursue another spot at state.

"We had a really strong team this year, and I really saw us going far in state," Stringer, a pitcher and first basemen, said.

"Last year, we didn't make it to the second day of state, but I was feeling a lot better about our chances this year. We had a lot of strong bonding and knew each other's strengths and weaknesses."

Stringer said she isn't giving up on playing this summer, though.

"I might be able to play with TNT Fastpitch (team) this summer, so it's not over yet," she said.

Like Sturm and many other Sequim 12th graders, they've been adopted on the national and local senior

pages. Stringer said she's been adopted because she was becoming a nurse, and she's received homemade cookies, cards, gift certificates and more as a way to say "good job in school."

Missing milestones

Many 12th graders say they're missing out on important events and accomplishments during the COVID-19 closure to end cap their senior years.

Victoria Lelle, a 2020 grad and hopeful veterinarian technician, is missing her final softball season too along with FFA, which she won state for in 2018 for sheep showmanship and all-around showman.

Grace Niemeyer, who plans to become a nurse, got to experience some of her final year on the Sequim Equestrian Team before the season was cancelled. German exchange student Hannah Kokoschka, who lives with Grace, joined the team too, and COVID-19 could have dampened their spirits but they dressed in their prom dresses and made a fancy dinner anyway.

Kara Schoenle, Brooklyn Schoenle's mom, said

she was looking forward to prom and a perfect dress for years but her academia remains a positive as she plans to graduate from Sequim and receive an Associates in Arts degree from Peninsula College, too.

Others wish they took more time to say goodbye in person.

Makenzie Campbell told her mom Sara she didn't realize that when she walked out to her Jeep on the last day of school (physically), it would be the last time she walked through those halls as a senior.

"She's sad she didn't get to say goodbye to teachers that have impacted her life so much," Sara said of her daughter.

Makenzie, an active FFA member in high school, also shot trap, and lettered her sophomore and junior years but not as a senior due to the virus' cancellations.

"It is beyond devastating that she wasn't able to letter her senior year, let alone get her last season," Sara said.

Erin Dwyer, ASB senior class president and an active in a number of clubs, said the hardest part for her has been the "lack of contact with people" including her teachers in-person.

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