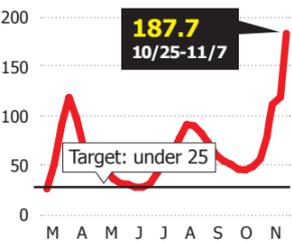




STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

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



COVID rates hit record high

Surge in local cases continues

COVID-19 case rates have reached unprecedented levels this week in Snohomish County.

Powered by a series of single-day record numbers of confirmed cases reported last week, the infection rate marched higher for the seventh straight week, according to data released Monday. There were 480 confirmed cases in Snohomish County from 1 p.m. Friday to Monday.

INSIDE

Schools: Improving data needed before bringing more kids back, **A8**

WIAA outlines high school sports plans, **A11**

“The bottom line is let’s try to keep bending that curve and let’s get it pointed downward,” Dr. Chris Spitters, Snohomish County’s top health officer, said in an online news conference last week. “Let’s try to bring things back down to protect our older populations and other medically vulnerable people and to reserve hospital capacity.”

The COVID-19 infection rate shot up to 187.7 per 100,000 residents from Oct. 25-Nov. 7 — topping the previous highest rate of 129.1 cases per 100,000 the county reached in April.

■ SEE COVID, A3

Area races go down to wire

District 10 leads change hands as count continues

By EVAN CALDWELL
ecaldwell@scnews.com

Tight tallies and lead changes weren’t exclusive to the presidential contest.

Locally, several races are in too-close-to-call territory, including all three District 10 leg-

islative contests and an Island County Commissioner race.

After the initial count on Election Night, all three Democrats held slim leads. However, in subsequent tallies updates last week, two of the Republicans have pulled ahead.

In the race for state Sena-

tor, incumbent Ron Muzzall, R-Oak Harbor, now leads Democrat Helen Price Johnson by 1,210 votes. Price Johnson, a former Island County Commissioner, had a 2,800-vote advantage on Election Night.

■ SEE RACES, A5

District 10 results so far

State Senator
Ron Muzzall (R): 50.6% (44,349)
Helen Price Johnson (D): 49.26% (43,139)

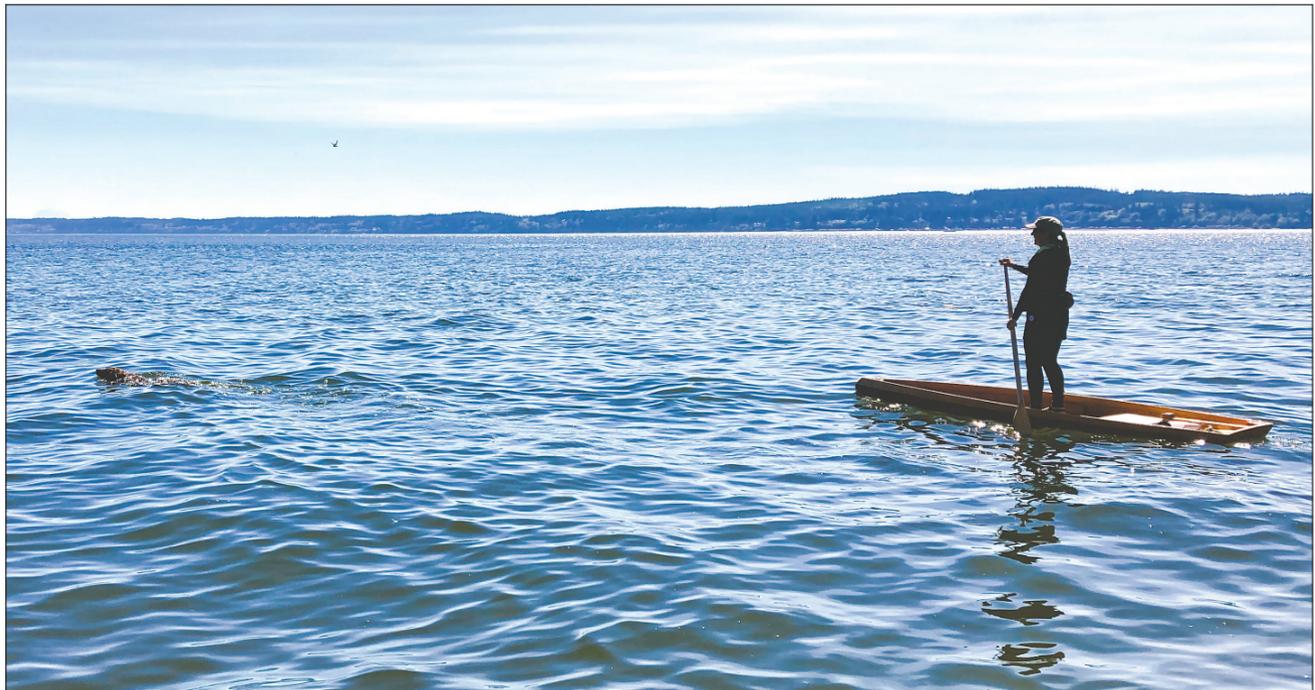
State Representative, Pos. 1
Greg Gilday (R): 50.1% (43,049)
Angie Homola (D): 49.6% (42,635)

State Representative, Pos. 2
Bill Bruch (R): 49.3% (42,719)
Dave Paul (D): 50.6% (43,880)



DOG PADDLING

Willa Rose, a chocolate Labrador, completes swim around Camano



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Tracy Gilroy and Willa ply their way along Saratoga Passage in August during their journey around Camano.

INSIDE

In a separate journey, a group of humans circumnavigate Camano’s beaches over four days

PAGE A10

By PEGGY WENDEL
pwendel@scnews.com

Willa Rose, a chocolate Labrador, is more of a sea creature than a land animal.

So when her people, Tracy Gilroy and Mason Hinn, decided on a dog-centric adventure, they took to the water.

Willa swims all day in front of her Tye Beach home on Camano Island. Port Susan Bay is her “front yard.”

She’ll dog paddle four to five hours, take a break, then go in for more. She likes hanging out around seals and has had a close encounter with an orca whale. She even dunks for crabs.

“Every day, she is out in front of our house swimming circles for hours. Everyone on Tye Beach knows who Willa is,” Gilroy said.

In late August, Willa took her show on the road.

Team Willa set off with the goal of

circumnavigating Camano Island in eight days, with the lab leading the way and humans behind on paddleshells. Paddleshells are flatboats with about a 7-inch rail, which Hinn designed and constructed for stand-up paddling.

“We could have done it a lot faster, but it wasn’t about us,” Gilroy said. “We went at Willa’s pace.”

■ SEE DOG, A10

Giving local veterans a voice

New book honors the 50 veterans from Stanwood-Camano who died in action

By MARY JENNINGS
For Stanwood Camano News

Etched into granite pedestals in west Stanwood are the names of 49 local veterans and one nurse from the Stanwood and Camano area who died serving their country.

Now, local historian Richard Hanks has breathed life into the stories of each of these heroes

honored near the Stanwood Area Historical Society Veterans Memorial at 27130 102nd Ave. NW in Stanwood.

Hanks’ book, “Solemn, The Drums Thrill: Essays on the Fallen Heroes of Stanwood Camano: World War I to Afghanistan,” provides an account of each of these individuals.

“My goal was to tell the stories of the short time on Earth of these people who gave

so much,” he said. “I wanted to make their sacrifice more than names carved in stone.”

Hanks and his wife Robin moved to Camano Island in 2014. He was eager to return to a simpler way of life he remembered from his boyhood.

“I grew up in a rural community in Illinois, and the Stanwood area just felt so familiar,” he said. “Although I had spent much of my adult life in Southern California, I had always longed to return to small-town living.”

■ SEE VETERANS, A6



Richard Hanks
Author of “Solemn, The Drums Thrill: Essays on the Fallen Heroes of Stanwood Camano”

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Group circumnavigates Camano's beaches

COVID-19 spurs new adventure

By PEGGY WENDEL
pwendel@scnews.com

Jason Dorsey has fond childhood memories of adventures in the wilds of south Camano Island with siblings and cousins, trekking cross country, walking beaches and building rafts. So when plans for a monthlong road trip with his daughter Jackie Dorsey was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they thought about what they could safely do to celebrate her graduation.

"During COVID, everything was on shut down. It was nice to get out, be outside and have an adventure," Dorsey said. "It was kind of disappointing, but we thought about what else could we do."

So father and daughter circumnavigated Camano Island, about 50 miles, on foot in four consecutive days starting June 28. They weren't alone. Dorsey is the pastor of Redeemer Redmond church, and they invited the youth group.



SUBMITTED

Jason Dorsey, on bended knee center, and Emily Dorsey, front right, take a photo break while rounding the north end as they walk the perimeter of Camano Island.

Jason Dorsey camped out in beach yards along the way and the rest of the group went back to stay at Sunnyside Gallery at night. He walked the entire trip, while a core group of 14 walked every day and about 10 more joined for parts of the journey.

As it turned out, these four days were best for low tides during the day — a bonus when walking the beaches,

especially below bluffs and outcroppings. They got their feet wet during a bit of high tide on the first day.

"It was pretty crazy at first, I can hardly go on a mile hike," Jackie Dorsey said.

On the first day, they started at Sunnyside and ended at Indian Beach. They found a whale vertebrae on an isolated southeast Camano beach and left it on a log.

They walked across boulders and driftwood and through soggy sinkholes in the sand. Mile after mile of rambling on a sloped beach was hard. It felt never ending, but no one complained, she said.

"I was so impressed with myself. I thought I could never do that in my life, and that was just day one," she said.

Along the way, friends

and family met the trekkers, bringing water, soda and snacks. A friend showed up at Livingston Bay to inspire them with how he ran triathlons. Members of Utsalady Ladies Aid cooked a big dinner for them one night.

Traveling from English Boom across the north end was challenging.

"We were climbing over mud and had to swim

through a little canal — that was a highlight," Jason Dorsey said.

Jackie Dorsey walked ahead with two friends and found a message in a bottle in Livingston Bay. When the group gathered, they broke the bottle to read the note written by a girl in Everett. She hoped that whoever found the bottle felt encouragement just when they needed it — which hit the spot with the weary walkers. They found her on Instagram and told her they found inspiration in the bottle.

The last leg of the journey brought back childhood memories.

"My brother Jed joined, my sister April, nieces and nephews, a cousin ... and my mom did the last part of the trip," Jason Dorsey said.

These had been the kids who explored south Camano long ago, except for mother Ann Dorsey.

"I had so much fun. There's something about being outdoors, enjoying nature and not being stuck on technology for a few days," Jackie Dorsey said.

"(When the trip was over,) my daughter said, 'we're doing it again next year.'"

Now Jackie Dorsey is pursuing an art degree at Covenant College in Georgia.

Dog

► FROM A1

Canine care

Since 9-year-old Willa has arthritis from an elbow injury, Gilroy and Hinn consulted with her veterinarian beforehand and mid-trip. They planned to take breaks if Willa seemed tired.

Camano Sit, Willa's dog sitter, was on call in case something happened or if they fell short of reaching their day's endpoint where their car was parked.

Hinn timed excursions to keep Willa off the beach when low tides exposed

barnacle-covered rocks that could hurt her paws.

This meant that the humans had to stay behind this alpha dog. If they passed her, she'd paddle to shore, run down the beach — barnacles or no — and take her proper place at the head of the pack.

Dog legs

Hinn calculated each leg of the trip around Willa's abilities.

He knew from shorter excursions that Willa could swim at a pace of about 45 minutes per mile and could easily swim four hours — 5 miles — without touching shore.

He looked online to Google Earth for the distance around Camano Island, about 43 miles, including a couple of shortcuts across bays.

He figured that Willa could cover that in eight days, going 6-8 miles per day.

They found access points that worked well with their mileage points: Cavalero County Park, Iverson Spit, English Boom, Maple Grove, Camano Yacht Club, Cama Beach State Park, Camano Island State Park and the Port of Mabana.

Hinn studied wind and tides. A person standing on a paddleshell has more resistance to the wind than a dog in the water. It was harder for Gilroy and Hinn to paddle into the wind, but that kept them behind Willa. And that kept Willa off the barnacles.

"She had not one case of barnacle paw," Gilroy said.

They didn't need to worry about overtaxing Willa. They went home at the end of each day during the adventure — where Willa resumed swimming in her "front yard."

Finding the way

Camano Island has many landmarks when traveling on the water.

North of Mabana has beautiful pools of water in the sand when the tide was low.



SUBMITTED

With Willa in the lead, Mason Hinn paddles toward Cama Beach.

Every area has its resident harbor seal watching them pass through, Hinn said.

They looked at Willa with special interest, Gilroy said.

Barnum Point boasts a shipwreck.

At high tide, Triangle Cove fills with acres of water. When the tide drops, all this water rushes through a small opening, just around the corner from Barnum Point.

"When the water comes out of that cove, it's book-ing. We shot the rapids to get across," Hinn said, estimating the stream was moving at 5 knots.

Port Susan, on the east side of the island, is fairly calm. The west side is rougher with boat traffic letting loose large wakes.

A big rock south of Rocky Point looks like a giant hamburger with barnacles mimicking the sesame seeds on a toasted bun.

Elger Bay features a forest of kelp and eel grass that's home to a lot of fish.

Willa tried retrieving kelp and quickly found that it wasn't fun, Gilroy said. The dog discovered that kelp bulbs weren't tennis balls and snaky seaweed slowed her down.

English Boom to Iverson Spit was the most memorable and difficult leg of the trip.

"English Boom was spectacular," Gilroy said. "You felt so close to Mount Baker, and you saw the pilings with eagle, seagull, heron, eagle, seagull, heron. It was funny. It was as if they were watching Willa and cheering her on."

Continuing from English Boom, they weren't sure if they could find Davis Slough — or if they should take the Stillaguamish River, which would add a mile to the trip. Fortunately they easily found

the slough, but then were confronted by forks.

The tide would soon be running out of Port Susan, and they needed to get to Juniper Beach before it turned to sand and muck, Gilroy said.

"It comes and goes fast, so we could miss (the water) in a matter of 15 minutes with an 8-foot tide," Hinn said.

They moved through a marshland full of obstacles. Hinn moved logs out of the way. Gilroy laid on her paddleshell and drifted under a big log. When they were faced with an impassable log jam, they portaged 200 yards. After Gilroy tripped and fell on a log hidden in high grass, Hinn pulled both boats like sleds over the grass.

They found 5 inches of water on the other side. The paddleshells only needed 2 inches to float with the fin retracted. Meanwhile, Willa was having a ball in the muck as they made their way west along Juniper Beach.

They cut across Livingston Bay's deeper water toward their day's destination at Iverson Beach. The wind picked up and so did whitecaps. Gilroy fell in but was able to climb back aboard. They crossed without further incident for the day. Of course, when they got home, Willa headed out for another swim.

When the trip was done, Willa wanted her humans to keep going. But for now, she's swimming in the "front yard" on Port Susan Bay.

After all, it's this dog's life.

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