



DECEMBER CRBJ VISITS BUSINESSES FINDING PATHS FORWARD IN THIS COVID CHRISTMASTIME

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Pacific County all set for covid shots

State expects 1st vaccine vials next week

By **BRANDON CLINE**
Chinook Observer

LONG BEACH PENINSULA — With a coronavirus vaccine becoming available in the United

States as soon as this week, providers on the Long Beach Peninsula are preparing to receive and distribute the initial batch of doses before Christmas.

Both Ocean Beach Hospital and Peninsula Pharmacies have enrolled into the federal Covid-19 Vaccination Program, a necessary step in order to receive and distribute coronavirus vaccines procured by the federal government. With

Pfizer's emergency use authorization for its vaccine expected to be approved following a Dec. 10 Food and Drug Administration hearing, doses could be shipped throughout the country in just a matter of days.

The vaccines are expected to be shipped in batches of 975 doses, in a storage container with dry ice pellets that can be re-iced several times to help ensure the vaccine remains at the appropriate tem-

perature. Pfizer's vaccine must be stored at minus-70 degrees Celsius to be effective when administered.

The storage containers are critical for providers that do not have the ultra-cold freezers at their facilities, such as smaller, rural providers. Jeff Harrell, owner of Peninsula Pharmacies, said none of the company's pharmacies have ultra-cold freezers of their own, and have been told that the containers

the vaccines are being shipped in are roughly the size of five pizza boxes stacked on top of each other.

Larry Cohen, CEO of Ocean Beach Hospital, said Pacific County officials purchased an ultra-cold freezer for the hospital to have for storing the vaccine once it arrives, but the freezer's vendor is backlogged and it likely

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SOUTH COUNTY RAPID TESTS OFF TO FAST START



LUKE WHITTAKER

Wendy D'Agostino puts on personal protective equipment before collecting a covid sample from the first patient at the drive-thru covid rapid testing site on Thursday, Dec. 3 in Ilwaco.

Pacific County nears 500-case milestone

By **BRANDON CLINE**
Chinook Observer

SOUTH BEND — Adding 33 more cases in the past week, Pacific County nears a 500-case milestone since the start of the pandemic.

The county sits at 479 cases overall, according to a Dec. 7 news release from the Pacific County Health and Human Services Department. Of that total, 306 have been confirmed via a PCR test, and 173 are considered probable following a positive rapid test.

The county seems destined to cross the 500-case threshold by the end of the year, although the 33 cases reported by the health department since last Wednesday constitute a fairly steep reduction following back-to-back weeks of more than 100 cases. Still, it's a weekly figure that was unheard of for Pacific County prior to the current surge the county has been in the midst of for about a month.

According to weekly zip code data provided by the county health depart-



LUKE WHITTAKER

Wendy D'Agostino, Eric McMillan and Samantha Millner prepare a covid test sample taken moments earlier at the drive-thru covid rapid testing site on Thursday, Dec. 3 in Ilwaco.

ment, a clear majority of the new recent cases continue to be concentrated in people who list their permanent residence as Raymond or South Bend, with about a quarter of new cases consisting of peninsula residents.

Wahkiakum County reported five new cases over the past week, bringing

its total to 39. Clatsop County reported 35 new cases over the same period, increasing its total to 418 — still fewer cases than Pacific County has reported, even with a population about twice as large.

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Court OKs deal to keep Jessie's afloat

San Francisco Pucci Foods taking over

By **LUKE WHITTAKER**
Chinook Observer

ILWACO — A new owner is set to take the helm at Jessie's Ilwaco Fish Co., allowing the landmark waterfront business to resume operations.

San Francisco-based Pucci Foods is positioned to take ownership after a ruling by Judge Goelz on Monday, Dec. 6, in Pacific County Superior Court in South Bend. This ends a several-month saga that started when the prominent fish-processing operation filed for receivership in February 2019.

Two bidders vied for the colorful facility at the Port of Ilwaco — John Phillips, owner of Nelson Crab in Tokeland, and Pucci, owned by Chris Lam in Hayward, California.

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Young dad-to-be fights for life after collision on deadly curve

By **JEFF CLEMENS**
For the Observer

SMITH CREEK — One curve on U.S. Highway 101 north of Raymond is gaining a reputation as among the most treacherous spots on the scenic route through Pacific County. In the aftermath of several other serious 2020 wrecks, the section claimed two more vehicles last week and sent several people to the hospital, including one clinging to life.

Local law enforcement and emergency medical services from multiple agencies scrambled to the scene of a two-vehicle

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Meet Frank Lehn: Moderator of lively peninsula web page

Facebook guy boosts community, zaps rudeness

By **PATRICK WEBB**
For the Observer

In the much-needed crusade for civility, Frank Lehn is the Peninsula's leader.

It's a role he plays so diligently that he is garnering applause from Chinook to Leadbetter for his efforts to keep everyone speaking

PENINSULA FRIENDS

From the "about" page:

www.facebook.com/groups/245639117923

"Long Beach Peninsula Friends of Facebook is a group to help make the bottom left-hand corner of Washington the best place to live and play. Posting local things to see and do. Listing local community events and posting pictures to show the world. With the help of my friends, we can make this group awesome."

kindly.

Lehn is the administrator for the Long Beach Peninsula Friends of Facebook web page.

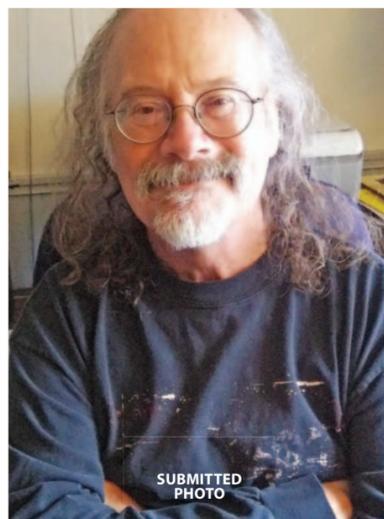
The page is dedicated to postings about the region's storied history of storms and shipwrecks, up-to-date weather and traffic alerts, recommendations for ser-

vices or projects, and more.

It's also a page that's "inhabited" by folks who grew up on the Peninsula and moved away, plus those who own second homes and visit periodically.

House hunters like Anita Lester

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SUBMITTED PHOTO

'I MAKE IT CLEAR THAT YOU NEED TO BE NICE TO PEOPLE.'

Frank Lehn, web page administrator

MORE INSIDE

In her darkest hour, neighborliness triumphs • A9



In her darkest hour, neighborliness triumphs

Loss prompts the Peninsula to display its kindness

By **PATRICK WEBB**
For the Observer

If anyone needed an example of positive neighborliness, they need look no further than last week on the Long Beach Friends of Facebook page.

California resident Rose Wells may well have brought a lump to the throat of every person who read her Dec. 1 post.

“My partner and I joined this group while planning on moving to this area,” she wrote. “He has passed suddenly and I’m heartbroken. Seeing your positive beautiful posts have been helping me through this difficult time. Thank you for this group.”

Kathy Erskine was not alone in stepping up with kindness — offering to chat in a message or send her phone number.

“I’m so sorry for the sudden loss of your partner,” Erskine wrote. “It is so tragic, and difficult to get back on your feet. Please know that many of us understand and grieve with you.”

“I’m so glad you find solace in this group. May we help with your healing process and help to get you back on your feet. Don’t worry about how long it takes.”

She was not alone. Carrie Day sent “healing hugs” and Brenda Barron-Christiansen and Sabrina Thayer immediately added their prayers. Brenda Bliss posted a “gif” graphic of a cute teddy bear offering a hug.

“I’m so sorry for your loss,” wrote Lara Anderson, who lost her partner three years ago. “If there’s anything you need, please feel free to reach out.”



‘I FEEL VERY BLESSED AND LOVED.’

Rose Wells, describing Peninsula response

“Let us know if we can help and welcome you.”

Jeff’s death at age 43 was unexpected, and although not covid-related she is still waiting for full details. “He is my heart and I’m so broken right now,” she posted on her own Facebook page as relatives expressed shock and condolences. To add to the family’s sadness, Jeff’s brother, James, had died eight days earlier.

As she sorts myriad details after Jeff’s death, Wells plans to keep links with the Peninsula through the Facebook group. “I will stay in there,” she said.

“Jeff and I had been planning on moving up, to purchase a home. It was a 1- to 2-year plan to move. It’s still something that I would like to do. I like the area. And he was very connected to the ocean.”

The power of the ocean to heal was stressed by several people on the Facebook page. Janet Averre Isaacson of Longview was among those who mentioned that even hearing the sound of the ocean on an online video can have a soothing effect. “‘Tis very uplifting ... so relaxing.”

Mary Kanz wrote, “Sincerest condolence for your profound loss. May the sounds of the sea always give you peace.”

That was echoed by JoAnn Walker. “I’m so sorry. I moved here after my husband passed. This is a very healing place.”

And Shelly Washburn added, “The beach has always been my place to get my head straight. The people are amazing.”

Well said in her interview that she was overwhelmed by the Peninsula’s caring response. “I feel very blessed and loved.”

Wells had dreamed of moving to the Long Beach Peninsula to be near her sister, who lives in Chinook. Her partner, Jeff Brown, had Astoria connections and both had enjoyed postings on the Long Beach Facebook site. Together they would view the photos of scenic views. The images helped Jeff overcome some difficulties in his life, she said in a phone interview.

“The ocean centered him. We would look through the pictures and the other stuff. There was no political stuff, it was things like dogs on the beach,” she said. “We thoroughly enjoyed that.”

“It’s so positive. The beautiful pictures of Cape Disappointment, the waves.”

For Wells, the reaction from complete strangers was a joyous surprise.

“It just touched me so much, I never expected any response. Everyone was great. People were saying,

Lehn

Continued from Page A1

post queries about potential water bills or newcomers like David James seek recommendations for fence contractors; others just like the images and dream of moving to the beach.

Its success is in its tone — all positive — because Lehn keeps it that way.

There is no politics.

No arguing allowed

And, definitely no rudeness.

“I belong to quite a lot of Facebook groups. There’s a big problem with people being rude,” he said. “The anonymity of being online brings out the worst in each other. But I make it clear that you need to be nice to people. People appreciate that.”

Lehn, 66, divides his time between tending his five acres off Cranberry Road in mid-Peninsula and approving posts before they can appear online.

“I have had to space things out,” he said, noting that sometimes he is slaving over a hot keyboard until 11 at night. “I could sit at the computer all day, but I kind of have to take a break.”

The site was created about 10 years ago by Ed Archer, who then asked Lehn to administer it. It soon grew from the initial handful of neighbors and now boasts more than 14,800 members.

“That’s one heck of a babysitting job you have, Frank,” posted Susan Seidl when Lehn updated the number Saturday.

“I am so thankful for this group, this being my former hometown. It lets me keep up, view all the amazing photos and ‘see’ friends I miss,” wrote Micky Smith from Arlington, a view echoed by Barbara Canney in Boston, Mass., 3,000 miles east.

“Awesome. And everyone’s been nice,” added Susan Moretz.

Life highlight

Lehn moved to the Peninsula in 2005. He grew up in Camas, graduating from high school in 1972, and becoming the third generation of his family to work at the Crown Zellerbach paper mill.

“After 27 years, I was diagnosed with degenerative disc disease and given a

medical retirement. I sort of floundered around for a few years and then was given the opportunity to move to Long Beach.”

His family, like scores in the greater Camas-Vancouver-Portland area, had been playing on the Peninsula beaches since the 1920s. “When I was growing up, we came here on vacation each summer. Those vacations were the highlight of my life, and I always wanted to live here.”

Historical milestones

Lehn is a huge fan of the Columbia Pacific Heritage Museum’s “awesome” staff and has linked up with them since 2016, initially through its community historian project. As a collections volunteer, he has access to old photographs. He posts on the anniversaries of storms which rattled the region, most recently the Great Coastal Gale of 2007.

“I’ve always been interested in history, and this area is rich with it,” he said. “I figured the group would be a good place to share what I know about local history, starting with my local shipwreck stories.”

Photos are key

Regular posters include talented photographers like Nellie Hux and Jane Winkler Webb, whose scenic and wildlife images draw considerable “wow” comments. Hux regularly captures eagles and waves crashing at Cape Disappointment, each more spectacular than the last.

Webb posted some impressive bobcat photos from the South Bay Unit of the Willapa National Wildlife Refuge and just a day later added shots of a pileated woodpecker. These were admired by Denise Tank, Carolyn Duvall Taylor and Claudette Terry. Phil Martin teased, “Jane, you have great luck finding wildlife and getting them to sit for you.”

No sales listings are allowed, because there are other sites that cater to people offering their treasures. Some posts highlight coming events or celebrate past activities, allowing people to stroke their neighbors. Linda Wood-Robinson highlighted the recent virtual concert by the Oyster Crackers, a trio of north Peninsula musicians.

“What a great folk art kind of music,” wrote Wood-Robinson. “The voices are beautiful and the songs are soulful.”

Others are amusing. Black bear, coyote and even suspected cougar sightings, some accompanied by blurry photos from motion-detector cameras, are common. Shelby Mooney posted a photo of wildlife poop and wrote, “City girl needs help with scat ID — elk or bear?” It drew 93 replies, most from writers with tongues planted firmly in cheeks.

Radio link

Lehn links regularly with Joanne Rideout, the indefatigable radio journalist at Coast Community Radio (KMUN) in Astoria whose widely appreciated mission is to keep everyone safe by broadcasting or posting emergency information. They share information and cross-post to help get the word out. Her popular Ship Report broadcast gives him full credit when she adapts his fascinating shipwreck stories.

The two have met only once. Rideout values his contribution, calling him an “amazing” historian.

“He’s also really good at keeping a lid on interlopers on his page who try to steer the conversation to politics or bashing visitors who don’t know the ropes about common mistakes, like parking on the beach at low tide,” she said.

“Frank won’t tolerate rude behavior from anyone, and loyal followers of his page appreciate his efforts to keep comments kind and positive.”

‘Kudos’

As if the community page was not enough screen time, Lehn is active on his personal Facebook page, too. Posts vary from poignant recollections on the loss of his dear Australian shepherd Cocoa to lists of songs that topped the charts 50 years ago. These draw nostalgic reactions from fellow Baby Boomers who attended concerts way before aches and pains of maturity kicked in.

Rideout delights in all Lehn’s positive contributions. “He deserves big kudos for all he does for the community,” she said.

Lehn is aware of his important gatekeeper role, and is especially vigilant when newcomers and long-timers spar over perennial Peninsula issues like driving on the beach, fireworks or littering.

“I sometimes feel like I’m herding cats, but if you stay on top of it, it’s OK,” he said. “My real reward comes from the members who appreciate the positive nature of the group.”

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