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**HIGH SCHOOL  
CONSTRUCTION  
NEARING THE  
HOME STRETCH** | A11

# STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

SCNEWS.COM ◆

◆ TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2020 ◆

◆ \$1.50

## COVID relief money helped stores

67 businesses on Camano, in Stanwood receive grants

By EVAN CALDWELL  
ecaldwell@scnews.com

The federal stimulus money made available to small businesses in the spring only went so far.

But by summer, a different stream of federal CARES Act money eventually made its way to 15 Stanwood companies and 52 Camano Island businesses.

Island County allocated \$1 million in CARES Act money for a small business grant program.

Camano Island was allocated \$333,000, and the Camano

Island Chamber of Commerce took the reins in getting the money to businesses in need.

The money was specifically for local businesses with fewer than 50 employees to help with expenses such as rent, utility bills and supplies for Safe Start reopening.

"We wanted to reach people who had not received other funding yet," said Jessica McCready, Camano Island Chamber of Commerce executive director. "This pot of money also caught some of the things that weren't covered, such as lease payments on equipment and for marketing."

■ SEE MONEY, A6

### INSIDE

Theater, bowling alley reopen. Plus much more local business news, PAGE A9

## 'I like going fast'

Camano Island 19-year-old has been dominating the national soap box derby circuit for the past decade



PHOTOS BY EVAN CALDWELL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

Ronan Johnson, who has racked up more than 100 first-place finishes in soap box derby racing, poses with one of his derby cars at the track earlier this month at Arrowhead Ranch on Camano Island.



Ronan Johnson and his father Rich Johnson, right, say the gravity powered sport has brought the family together. Their family team name is Scuderia Veloce, Italian for "Stable of Speed."

By MAZEY SERVIN-OBERT | mservin@skagitpublishing.com

Ronan Johnson wasn't immediately good at soap box derby racing.

The 9-year-old Camano Island boy was eliminated in his first two rounds at the old Stanwood course in 2011. It didn't matter. He was hooked.

"I like going fast, and the Stanwood track was perfect for that," Ronan said of the steep hill down 276th Street by the Stanwood Senior Center. "That's the fastest track I have been on."

Three years later, the self-described "super competitive" kid won his age group and division at the Stanwood race. It would be just one of more than 100 first-place finishes he would rack up over the next 10 years traveling the country with his custom soap box derby car — including his most recent win was the NDR National Championships at

Indianapolis in the Legacy and Masters Divisions last month.

"The harder we worked, the more we won," said Ronan's father, Rich Johnson.

The now 19-year-old Ronan, a seven-time National Champion, continues to practice at the dedicated track at Camano Island's Arrowhead Ranch, now home to the area's soap box derby events.

"He is the only driver in history to win seven National Championships; the nearest to him has five," Rich said.

■ SEE FAST, A6

## Candidates meet in virtual forum

By EVAN CALDWELL  
ecaldwell@scnews.com

Candidates for several local races explained their platforms and answered questions from area residents in a virtual forum last week.

About 100 people watched the live event, which is traditionally held at Stanwood Middle School but moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. But many more have since watched the nearly two-hour forum at aauwsc.org or online with this article at SCnews.com.

The forum has been sponsored by the Stanwood-Camano branch of

### INSIDE

More local election coverage, PAGE A8

American Association of University Women in partnership with Stanwood Camano News since 1998.

Among the many races featured were the two Island County commissioner races where the candidates outlined different points of views.

In the District 1 race, candidate Melanie Bacon cited her experience as the director of Island County Human Resources as a positive. Meanwhile, candidate Damian Greene said his outsider perspective would lead to fresh ideas.

■ SEE FORUM, A6



Screenshots of Island County Commissioner candidates during the forum, which is available to view at SCnews.com.

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## Forum

► FROM A1

In the District 2 race, incumbent Jill Johnson said her experience gleaned from eight years in office will help lead the county through the pandemic. Challenger Dan Evans said outside-the-box thinking and new ideas are needed.

The forum featured nine local races, including 2nd Congressional District, 10th District state House Position 1, 10th District state House Position 2, 10th District state Senate, Snohomish PUD District 1, Snohomish County Judge Position 8 and Island County Judge Position 2.

Read more about each race at [SCnews.com](http://SCnews.com).

Ballots were mailed last week. State residents can still register to vote — either online, on paper or in person. To register online, visit [votewa.gov](http://votewa.gov). To learn more about the election and candidate, visit [sos.wa.gov](http://sos.wa.gov).

The mail-in ballot requires that the voter sign the return envelope. No stamp is needed. A ballot can be placed in a ballot drop box or mailed. Mailed ballots must be postmarked by Nov. 3 to count.

There are also 500 drop boxes state-

## ELECTION 2020

### Upcoming previews of local races in the SC News

- Oct. 27 Snohomish County Judge, Position 8
- Oct. 27 Island County Judge, Position 2
- Nov. 3 Election day, ballots due by 8 p.m.

See our previous local election previews at [SCnews.com](http://SCnews.com)

Register to vote at [vote.wa.gov](http://vote.wa.gov)

wide. Drop-box locations can be found at [VoteWA.gov](http://VoteWA.gov), Washington's online voter portal.

Any registered voter who has not received a ballot should log in to [VoteWA.gov](http://VoteWA.gov) or contact a county elections office to request a replacement. Information: [islandcountywa.gov/auditor/elections](http://islandcountywa.gov/auditor/elections) or [snohomishcountywa.gov/5609/supervoter](http://snohomishcountywa.gov/5609/supervoter).

## Fast

► FROM A1

Rich said his son's ability to compete under pressure helped power him to all those checkered flags in the gravity-powered races for ages 7-21, mostly managed by the Ohio-based International Soap Box Derby.

"Even the best set-up car won't win if you don't have a really, really good driver, so we are really fortunate Ronan has turned into a really, really good driver," Rich said. "You have to have the combination of a good car and good driver."

It was the perfect sport for their family, said Rich, a chief engineer at Boeing.

"This is an activity where both boys and girls compete against each other," Rich said. "We just like the family vibe of the different people you meet and families you get to know."

Rich and his son and daughter worked together building the derby cars and mentoring along the way. Meanwhile, mother Allison is race team manager who helped manage travel, meals and Ronan's race day schedule. For a couple years, both Ronan and his older sister Willa raced so it was a whole family activity. Their family team name is Scuderia Veloce, Italian for "Stable of Speed."

"If you don't have a village of people helping you, you can't be successful at the highest levels," Rich said.

Soap box derby racing has kept Ronan and his family close, but he also has become part of the national soap box racing community.

"It's all positive energy and people are really friendly," Ronan said.

The Johnsons even started a father-son YouTube channel about soap box derby racing to provide information to other families interested in getting involved.

Locally, the Stanwood Camano Soap Box Derby typically takes place in mid-June, but the event was canceled this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



COURTESY

### Ronan Johnson poses with this seventh National Championship trophy after his win in September in Indianapolis.

In 2019, about 1,000 people watched a record 93 racers race for glory.

Meanwhile, Ronan knows he's nearing his career's finish line.

"I'll probably do this one or two more years," he said. "I'm going to be busy with school, and I feel like ... maybe just slow down but not stop completely."

Ronan will participate in three races in November in Florida and Tennessee.

State Park, attempted a delivery/pick-up model early in the COVID-19 pandemic, but eventually closed for several weeks when state parks were shuttered.

Meanwhile, King secured an Economic Injury Disaster Loan and Paycheck Protection Program loan for Cama Beach Cafe to help cover payroll. But the money from Island County helped pay for equipment and advertising.

"When we reopened, we had to get current with all the health guidelines — new software, new shelving, new signage," King said. "It was almost like starting a new business all over again."

Though the cafe's business has since rebounded, the catering operations — which made up about half the business — have not returned because large gatherings are not allowed.

That means Cama Beach State Park is not renting the cafe's space for night functions, as it had in the past. But there is an upside.

"Because the hall is not being rented, we can have dinners in there now," said King, who recently began opening on Friday and Saturday nights. "I think that will save us without catering to get us through winter."

## Money

► FROM A1

Many local business owners said they were unsure if they would be able to keep their doors open, according to results from Camano Island Chamber of Commerce survey of grant recipients.

Local businesses called the money "a lifesaver" and an "incredible relief."

A five-person panel of Camano Island residents reviewed and scored the 94 applications submitted by July 1. They awarded 53 Camano businesses the full \$333,000 in amounts ranging from \$800 to \$10,000.

In Stanwood, a similar program has awarded \$93,500 of its \$170,600 to 15 businesses from the Stanwood SOARING Grant Program, funded by the CARES Act and the Coronavirus Relief Fund.

"It gives people a little breathing room, especially the ones who were forced to shut down but had ongoing expenses they had to keep up with," McCready said.

Cama Beach Cafe owner Donna King said the money helped save her business.

"Without it, we would have definitely had to close," King said.

The cafe, tucked away in Cama Beach

## OBITUARY NOTICES

Obituary notices may be sent by using an online form at [scnews.com/obituaries](http://scnews.com/obituaries), by email to [obits@scnews.com](mailto:obits@scnews.com) along with a photo attached, or by mail to Stanwood Camano NEWS, P.O. Box 999, Stanwood, WA, 98292. The fee to print an obituary is \$10.90 per column inch, including the photo. A short death announcement the week prior to the full obituary will be printed at no charge. An obituary may be linked to an online guest book for an additional \$30 charge. For more information call 360-629-2155.

## OBITUARIES



**ALDEN WENDT**  
August 22, 1936 -  
August 20, 2020

Alden was born on a ranch in Lookout, Calif., August 22, 1936 to Howard and Josephine Wendt. He was the youngest of nine children, raised by his four brothers and four sisters after his mother died when he was 15 months old. Alden loved sharing stories of growing up on the ranch. He loved to pass on tales of hunting with his dad and his brothers, fishing in Thousand Lake Valley and on the Sacramento River, and growing up in Redding, Calif.

Alden moved from Redding to the Seattle area in 1961, where he continued a career in the grocery business. Working for over 20 years for Albertson's, he managed stores in the Seattle area. In 1980 he opened Alden's Family Grocer, in Bothell, Wash. Alden and Rosalie moved from Kirkland to Stanwood in 1998, and in 2002 to the farm he loved. Once retired he cut down to working two jobs, at Bull Dog Storage and as a substitute bus driver for the Stanwood Camano School District. Then he retired again, this time to tend to the garden where he grew delicious raspberries and incredible dahlias.

A spiritual man, Alden loved woodworking and made beautiful furniture and outdoor garden décor. His family received many handmade treasures throughout the years. Above all else, Alden loved his family. He especially enjoyed camping and fishing when family could join in the fun.

Alden passed away at home two days before his 84th birthday, at peace on the farm that he loved. Covid-19 restricted visits but he remained connected to his beloved family via Zoom and FaceTime during his final days. He was amazed and delighted by this technology.

Alden is survived by his loving wife of 45 years Rosalie, and a beautiful blended family including Wendie, Terry, Jeff (Iliana), Minda (Warren), Kyle (Elizabeth) and Kevin (Jana). Alden was known as Papa and cherished by 12 grandchildren, Kaitlin, Kelsey and Kendra Crow, Maggie, Fisher and Ingrid Phillips, Ashir Green, Matthew, Destiny, Dylan, Anika and Mackenna Wendt.

To honor Alden a small family celebration was held in his garden. The family suggests donations to Stanwood United Methodist Church, PO Box 296, Stanwood, WA or a to a charity of your choice.



**BETTY MAE NIELSEN**  
June 20, 1929 -  
October 11, 2020

Betty Mae Nielsen passed away in Burlington on Sunday, October 11, 2020. She graduated from

Burlington-Edison High School and received her Bachelor of Fine Arts from Washington State University; she remained a lifelong staunch Cougar fan. She spent several years working and traveling in Europe. She married in Basel, Switzerland and then returned home to raise her daughter. She went back to school to complete a teaching degree and loved to engage young minds. She was passionate about books and writing and shared this passion with all her students during her long teaching career.

After retiring from the Stanwood School District, she became a Master Gardener and spent many hours in her own garden as well as sharing her knowledge of plants with her family. She was also an avid bird watcher and loved photography. She was a keen reader and more recently, she began studying Norwegian and German again.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Adolph and Johanna Nielsen, and her brothers Lloyd Nielsen and Carl Nielsen.

She is survived by her daughter Lisa Nielsen, and grandchildren Madeleine, Olivia and Jacob.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in her memory to Skagitians to Preserve Farmland or Skagit Audubon.

A graveside service will be held on Wednesday, October 21, 2020 at 1:30 p.m. at Greenhills Cemetery in Burlington.

Please visit [www.hulbushfuneralhome.com](http://www.hulbushfuneralhome.com) to share your thoughts and memories and sign the online guest register.



**NANCY J. TRONSON**  
March 14 1947 -  
September 5 2020

Nancy J. Tronson was born March 14, 1947 and passed away peacefully September 5, 2020. She is predeceased by her husband Edgar Tronson, her parents Arnie and Sylvia Jones, sister Sandra Jones and brother Mervin Jones.

She is survived by her sons Dale Creager, Marshall Creager, Darius Creager, their wives and children, stepchildren Karl Tronson and Jana Anjum. Her siblings Cleata Tetreau, Jeanette Wehling, Peggy Skinner, Jim Jones, Cheryl Yates, Steven Jones, and Karen Jones.

She loved keeping in touch with her brothers, sisters and their children. Nancy always made sure she was the first to call and wish everyone a happy birthday!

Born in Aberdeen Wash., she raised her family in Seattle. She was very involved in her children's school, she wanted them to have the very best education. She volunteered in the classrooms and helped out at the school wherever she was needed. Nancy was awarded the Golden Acorn award for her exceptional fundraising skills raising money for Daniel Bagley Elementary.

She traveled with her husband Ed many times to Reno where she loved to play black jack.

Nancy has resided on Camano Island since 1990. She was always there to help her fellow neighbors, loved having her family and friends come visit and enjoy the beach. Spring was one of her favorite times when the grey whales would return to Port Susan Bay. She was always the first to alert everyone on the beach that they had returned after the winter.

Christmas was also a special time for Nancy, having her family around watching them opening the gifts she spent all year shopping for, seeing the joy and surprise on all their faces, helping cook the big dinner. Nancy will be dearly missed by all.