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STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

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TUESDAY, MAY 5, 2020

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State slowly starting to reopen

Inslee releases road map to ease restrictions in 4 phases

By EVAN CALDWELL
ecaldwell@scnews.com

The Stanwood-Camano area, like the rest of the state, will begin a slow reopening in the coming days and weeks, beginning Tuesday, May 5, with parks and golf courses.

While extending the state's coronavirus stay-at-home order through at least May

31, Gov. Jay Inslee on Friday also laid out a roadmap to ease the restrictions in four stages, which will advance based on metrics showing a decline in the COVID-19 pandemic.

"If we stick together for a while longer, we don't lose the gains we've already made," Inslee said in a Friday news conference.

Phase One starts Tuesday and includes

allowing drive-in spiritual services with one household per vehicle; restart of existing construction projects; outdoor recreation like hunting, golfing and fishing; some non-urgent surgeries to resume. Day-use activities will be allowed at state parks, including Cama Beach and Camano Island state parks. Stanwood, Snohomish County and Island County will also begin reopen-

ing parks and trails for day-use. Bathrooms will remain closed.

The ban on large gatherings will remain in effect.

"We have not won this fight against this virus," Inslee said.

Statewide, there have been more than 15,100 cases and 830 deaths. In Snohomish County, there have been about 25 new cases a day for the past three weeks.

■ SEE REOPEN, A5

The parallels to polio

Coronavirus reminds older area residents of surviving polio epidemic

By PEGGY WENDEL
pwendel@scnews.com

While people all over the world are self-isolating, waiting for the COVID-19 contagion to subside and a vaccine to be developed, two Camano Island residents remember another pandemic virus: polio.

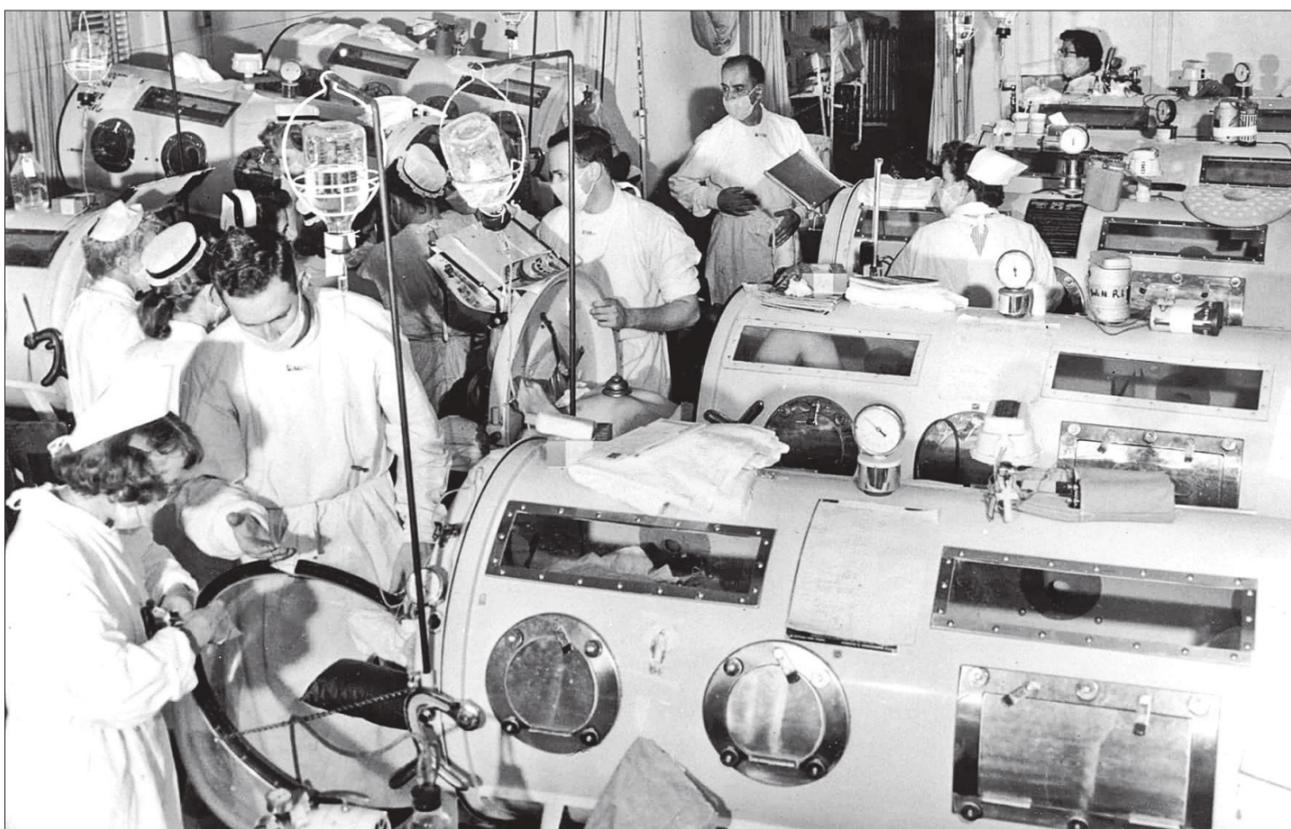
Betty Metz took the trial vaccines when she was young and later as a nurse worked with polio patients. Kristin Jensen contracted polio before the vaccine came out when she was 18 months old. Both have the experiences seared into their memories.

The polio and corona viruses have similarities and differences. At first, people didn't know much about either virus.

Betty Metz of Camano Island remembers how it affected her life as a kid in grade school in 1945-46. From her perspective as a child, she wanted to go out and play, but the world outside was a dangerous place.

"When I was young, I couldn't go to the swimming pool. Other young people did, and they got polio," Metz said. "It was a frightening time because they didn't know what caused it, and they didn't have a vaccine. But we got through it and we'll get through this," she said, referring to the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ SEE POLIO, A11



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

In the late 1950s, Betty Metz worked as a registered nurse taking care of polio patients in "iron lungs," similar to this 1950s photo of a Pennsylvania hospital treating people in the long metal cylinders that maintain negative pressure and manually work the lungs to breathe for the patient.

Polio and COVID-19

Polio was once one of the most feared diseases in the U.S., according to Centers for Disease Control. In the early 1950s, before polio vaccines were available, polio outbreaks caused more than 15,000 cases of paralysis each year.

Scientists studied the poliovirus, as they are doing now with COVID-19, to learn how it

works and how it's transmitted.

According to CDC, the two viruses are spread differently. The poliovirus spreads primarily through fecal matter, especially in pools and contaminated water. But the coronavirus is spread by coughing and sneezing, or by touching surfaces that the virus has landed on.

Some people can carry the polio or corona viruses without showing symptoms, while others come down with flu-like symptoms,

like coughing, sneezing, fever. Polio symptoms tended toward intestinal problems while COVID-19 symptoms include trouble breathing and persistent pain or pressure in the chest.

COVID-19 attacks the lungs while polio infects the spinal cord and can cause paralysis, including to muscles that work the lungs, according to CDC.

— Peggy Wendel / SC News

Remote learning underway in Stanwood-Camano schools

By EVAN CALDWELL
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Jessica Jansma sat in her Elger Bay Elementary School classroom answering questions about verbs.

Aside from her second-graders attending via Google Classroom, learning isn't all that different from what would take place without the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We miss the kids; we want to give them a hug and see them," Jansma said. "This is not what we wanted to do when we became teachers. It's the social interaction we miss most. But we will still be there to help kids anyway we can."

Last week, Stanwood-Camano teachers began rolling out new instruction through remote learning platforms — such as Seesaw, Clever and Google Classroom — as well as through paper packets for those unable to connect to the internet.

■ SEE SCHOOLS, A8



EVAN CALDWELL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

Second-grade teachers Aileen Cruise, left, and Jessica Jansma work on a new Seesaw lesson in Cruise's classroom Thursday, April 30, at Elger Bay Elementary.

Polio

► FROM A1

Polio left some people with severe handicaps. It wasn't unusual to see children with withered limbs or braces on their legs, she said.

March of Dimes

President Franklin D. Roosevelt was never able to walk again on his own after contracting polio. He founded the March of Dimes in 1938, which was boosted by radio and Hollywood. "School children collected pennies, nickels and dimes. It was promoted as children helping children," Metz said.

It was a time of working together. Americans united to get through World War II, so they worked to get through this, too, she said.

According to the March of Dimes, the organization helped fund Dr. Jonas Salk in leading the project to create a vaccine. Tested in a massive field trial in 1954 that involved 1.8 million schoolchildren known as "polio pioneers," the Salk vaccine was licensed for use in April 1955.

Metz was one of those students who received the trial vaccine when she was a high school junior and senior. She lived in Hamilton, Montana, where her uncle's cousin worked at the state public health service lab helping the effort to create the first polio vaccine. The same lab is working on a vaccine now for COVID-19, she said.

Iron lung

In the late 1950s, Metz worked as a registered nurse. There were far fewer polio cases, but new cases came in as people who didn't take the vaccine contracted the virus.

"I would take care of people who had polio in the old iron lungs," Metz said.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

A young boy stricken with polio gets physical therapy. In the early 1950s, before polio vaccines were available, polio outbreaks caused more than 15,000 cases of paralysis each year.

"They didn't have ventilators at that point. They had these great big old machines that would take up half of the room. My heart just broke for them because of what they were having to go through."

The patients would each lie with their body sealed in a long cylinder with just their head sticking out. The cylinder maintained negative pressure and manually worked the lungs, basically breathing for the patient.

Polio patients couldn't move and their skin tended to break down. Their worldview was limited to an overhead mirror that reflected someone standing behind them.

It was hard for nurses working with polio patients. They'd work through ports in the side, so the iron lung could maintain proper internal pressure to work the lungs, Metz said.

"It was heartbreaking, because by that time (scientists) had come up with a vaccine. I don't believe they had been vaccinated," Metz said.

Vaccine was too late for some

For another Camano Islander, the effects of polio have been a life-long challenge.

Kristin Jensen contracted polio two years before vaccine came out in 1954.

"My dad and I had polio at the same time," she said. "I was a tiny little child."

"I remember the headache and my dad holding me," Jensen said.

She also remembers going up unending stairs in the original Swedish Hospital where she got a shot of penicillin, which was new, and she said led



PEGGY WENDEL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

Graphic artist and musician Kristin Jensen of Camano Island survived polio as a child.

to a lifetime of allergies, although she thinks it saved her life.

The hospital wouldn't take polio patients because it was so contagious. But a doctor agreed to let her mother smuggle her husband in. She had to carry him up the back stairs.

After contracting the disease, her father was never the same.

"He'd get terrible muscle cramps in the middle of the night, drink quinine and stomp his feet to get the pain out," she said.

Jensen didn't have the muscle wasting, but she was sickly and worked hard to grow straight. She had physical therapy and went to the YMCA pool, where other polio patients were swimming. The lifeguard

steadied a pole, which she held while kicking in the water. That helped, but it wasn't easy for her to grow straight. Even now, one side is not as limber as the other.

"In junior high I had to think about every step to walk straight. I'd get in trouble for not standing up straight," she said. "I clearly had a bunch of crookedness that I've had to deal with. One shoe would be all messed up. I only had one pair of shoes a year, so I had to teach myself to walk straight."

She found out when she was 28 that she'd developed scoliosis, not sideways, but inward. In spite of the challenges, she stayed positive.

"I wasn't in an iron lung or anything, thank God," she said. "From that first

experience, it changed my whole entire life. A serious disease can make you more aware and certainly grateful," she said.

Staying safe

Jensen is taking the COVID-19 pandemic seriously. She's lucky she has a gardening job, working alone "in quarantine paradise." She said that having something like this, an infection of the lungs, people can lose their whole health.

"Do anything you can to avoid it," she said.

Metz sees some of the same behaviors today as she did decades ago.

"There was a lot of fear back then as well as now. We certainly didn't have the information daily updates hourly updates; you had to wait for the newspaper to come out. There was a lot of uncertainty," Metz said.

Back then, some people didn't believe in vaccines, like today's anti-vaxers. Some didn't think the disease was so bad. It's different if you've seen it with your own eyes, she said.

"It was quite a terror throughout the world. It caused a number of deaths, and it caused lifelong incapacitation for people, and crippling after-effects for many," Metz said. "Deny at your own risk."

"If people put on their thinking caps, and look at the facts, they would say I'm going to stay home, do social distancing and protect my loved ones and others."

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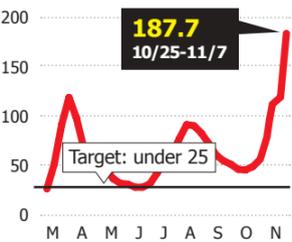
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STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

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
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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)

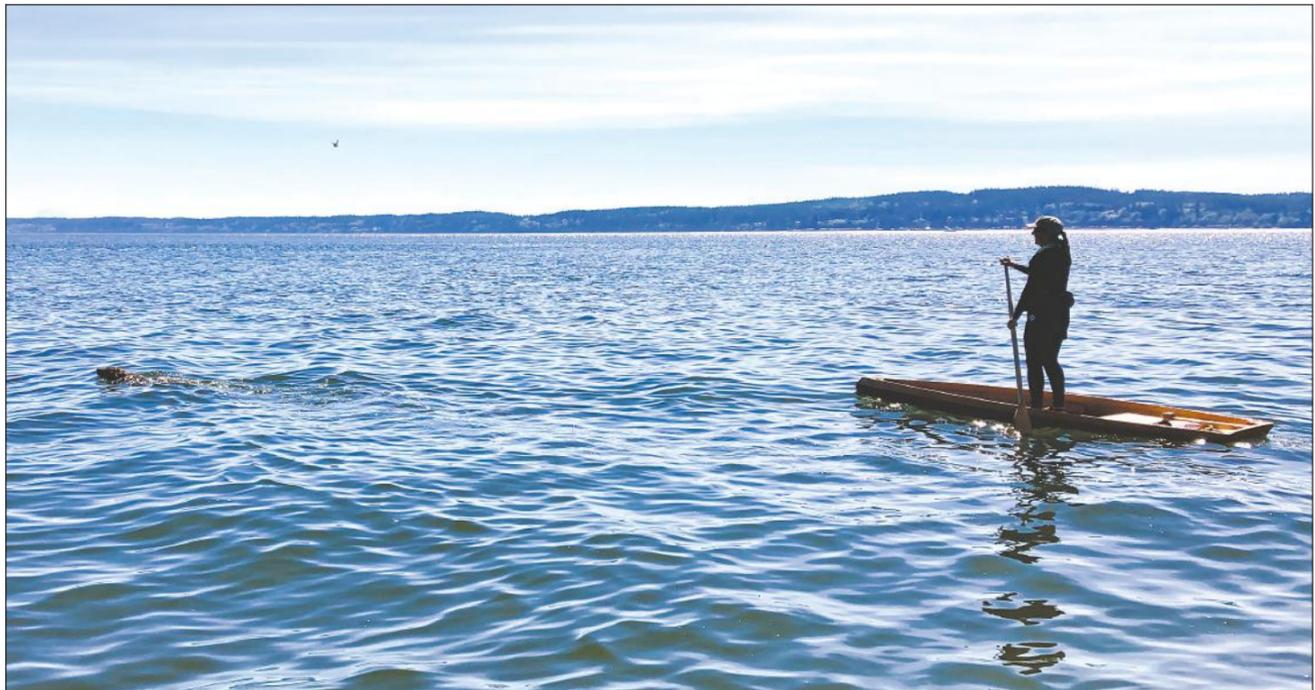
State Representative, Pos. 1
Greg Gilday (R): 50.1% (43,049)
Angie Homola (D): 49.6% (42,635)

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
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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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STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

‘Every day is a battle’

Pandemic a challenging hurdle for toddler fighting rare cancer



PEGGY WENDEL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

Madalynn Warlick, Rachel Warlick, Nancy “Nana” Cary, Matt Hedgcoth and baby Mackenzie Hedgcoth have a holiday get together between the baby’s cancer treatments.

By PEGGY WENDEL
pwendel@scnews.com

Rachel Warlick and Matt Hedgcoth know first hand how the COVID-19 response has affected non-COVID patients needing serious medical care. With a toddler in the hospital, the family has been split between Stanwood and Seattle.

Their ordeal began in August, soon after Mackenzie’s wellness check up. “She was super fussy all the time,” Warlick said. “They said it could be teething ... but as a mother, I knew

something was wrong,” she said.

While rubbing her toddler’s tummy, Warlick found a massive lump. She took Mackenzie, then 19 months old, to the doctor’s office. She was advised to go to Seattle Children’s Hospital immediately.

Although they didn’t know it at the time, what happened next would split the family for months to come.

Warlick met Hedgcoth at his workplace to drop off their daughter Madalynn, age 5. Warlick then picked up her mother and went to Seattle Children’s Hospital.

■ SEE BATTLE, A10

“Not only does my baby have cancer, but we can’t be with my family. It’s hard doing this alone.”

— Rachel Warlick, whose daughter Mackenzie is quarantined while receiving treatment for neuroblastoma

SCgive sees record giving

Annual effort reaches goal for first time

By EVAN CALDWELL
ecaldwell@scnews.com

Stanwood-Camano residents smashed giving records during the annual SC Give event on Dec. 1.

“The giving just absolutely exceeded my expectations,” said Bev Pronishan, Stanwood-Camano Area Foundation executive director. “It blew away the records.”

So far, more than \$77,500 from 671 donations have been made to 18 different local organizations participating in SCgive.org, surpassing this year’s goal of \$65,000.

This is the first time in SCgive’s six-year history the event met its fundraising target.

“It was amazing seeing that goal hit 100% for the first time,” Pronishan said. “We had a lot more afternoon activity this year.”

The prizes offered throughout the day — such as where donors can earn matching dollars for specific organizations — were extremely popular this year, she said.

“The matching prizes usually go pretty fast, like in six minutes, but this year they were gone in six seconds,” Pronishan said. “It was wild.”

This year, SCgive.org, which is still accepting donations this week, bested last year’s record total of \$59,435 given during the 24-hour event.

The day of giving moved to a mostly online format in 2019, a step that proved extra helpful as many initiatives have transitioned online during the COVID-19 pandemic.

■ SEE SCGIVE, A9

COVID continues its rampage

By EVAN CALDWELL
ecaldwell@scnews.com

About a month after fresh statewide restrictions were put in place, the coronavirus continues to spread rapidly, steadily filling hospitals.

As of Monday, there were 83 Snohomish County residents in the hospital due to COVID-19 and 15 on a ventilator, according to Snohomish Health District data.

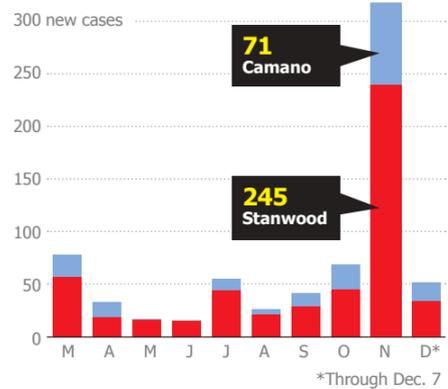
“If we don’t see mitigation in our case numbers and don’t see an improvement in the hospital

capacity, which is becoming ever more concerning, it would seem unwise for us to reopen what has been closed down at a time when we’re not seeing the fruits of that effort,” Snohomish County health officer Dr. Chris Spitters said in a media briefing last week.

Over the weekend, Snohomish County recorded more than 988 new COVID-19 cases, according to data released Monday from the Snohomish Health District.

■ SEE COVID, A9

COVID-19 cases in Stanwood and Camano Island, by month



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Battle

► FROM A1

The first two people in the door became Mackenzie's caregivers. Now Warlick and her mother are the only ones who could enter the hospital with Mackenzie while strict COVID-19 restrictions are in place. Caregivers can't be switched. That means Hedgcoth can't visit his daughter, nor can her siblings.

"It was the first two people in the door," Hedgcoth said.

After biopsies and scans, Mackenzie was diagnosed with a very rare cancer — a high-risk neuroblastoma that had already spread.

Doctors found cancerous tumors in Mackenzie's abdomen, kidneys and liver. A tumor hangs from her heart and several are tucked behind her spine. She had tumors on her skull and jaw. Cancer also has spread to her lymph nodes, Warlick said.

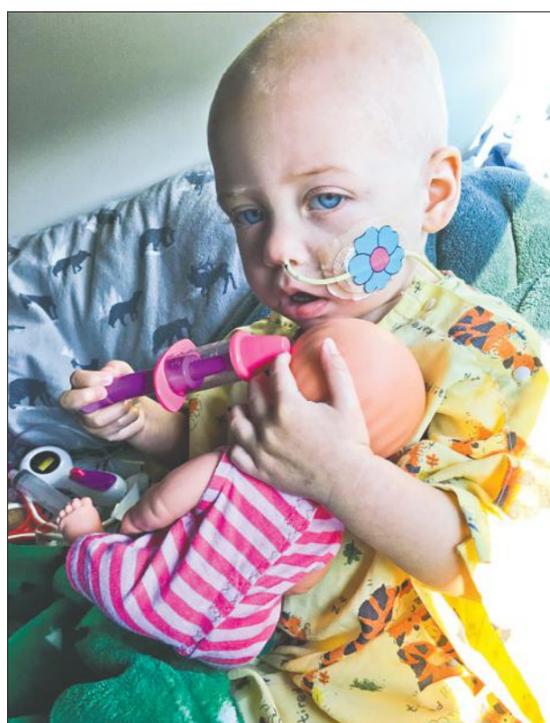
She was overwhelmed with information as doctors described the treatments and prognosis.

With a direct line placed into her heart for chemo and blood draws, Mackenzie was susceptible to infections that could quickly kill. If she should get a fever, she must get to the hospital within 30 minutes. So Warlick moved to the Ronald McDonald House near the hospital, while Hedgcoth stayed home in Stanwood with Madalynn and worked.

"Not only does my baby have cancer, but we can't be with my family. It's hard doing this alone," Warlick said.

But she found a way to keep her husband connected while apart.

"When I have meetings with the oncologist, it's on FaceTime; that's just



COURTESY PHOTOS

At top, Mackenzie Hedgcoth receives treatment at Seattle Children's Hospital for cancer. Above, Mackenzie, at age 21 months, and sister Madalynn Warlick, age 5, pose during a short October visit.

normal for them, too. I can have him on my phone through an entire appointment. Every time they give me paperwork, I go over it with him," she said. "Any big medical decisions, we always make the choice together. If it wasn't for FaceTime, I don't know what we'd do. It's how we stay connected."

Warlick's mother comes for major treatments, to make grocery runs and to help as she can.

Refuge for healing

Warlick has a home away from home at The Ronald McDonald House, a refuge that gives families a supportive place to stay when children receive treatment at Children's Hospital. She describes it as a hotel room with two beds, a bathroom and shower. There's a shared laundry room and kitchen with a mini fridge for each family staying. Each day, restaurants donate dinners.

"They supply everything: laundry soap, towels, everything you could need. All you have to bring is your clothes and toiletries," Warlick said. "I brought a recliner. You're allowed to bring whatever you need to be comfortable, so it can feel like home."

COVID forced changes at the Ronald McDonald House, too, said Dianna Finnerty, executive director.

"Our occupancy is reduced, so we can have people spread out. We had to close all of the communal areas, so people can't hang out together," she said.

Families used to mingle in shared common spaces like the kitchen and dining room, large living rooms, computer room, library, free laundry facilities, teen room, play areas, exercise room and theater.

Volunteers from different organizations and churches would come in to cook for the families. But now there are no more volunteers, no siblings and no visitors.

Everyone is masked, even kids, Finnerty said.

Now the caregivers and patients stay in their rooms. They can't hang out in the kitchen, but they can come in to grab a breakfast buffet set out by house staff or a box dinner donated by local restaurants, she said.

"The main thing is how mentally draining it is because you have to do it alone," Warlick said. "You don't have support of other families or your family at the hospital or at the Ronald McDonald House."

Back and forth

Mackenzie's first hospital stay was 24 days. She's had four rounds of chemotherapy, each with a major hospital stay. Following each round, Mackenzie's white blood count goes to zero and she must build it back up, which takes longer each time. Warlick stays with Mackenzie in the hospital and between chemo sessions at the Ronald McDonald House. Recently Mackenzie had an infection and had to go to the emergency room.

Meanwhile, Hedgcoth stays home with Madalynn. He works in a foundry where his workweek and income had been cut in half since July. Fortunately, the hospital and the Ronald McDonald House is covered by insurance. His job was restored to 40 hours last week, he said.

In a time of COVID-19 restrictions, Warlick has found some advantages. Madalynn hasn't been in school, so there are less germs at home so Mackenzie is safe to visit. Also, people weren't working and could help with daycare for Madalynn.

"We've had all this help that we wouldn't have had," Warlick said.

Warlick and Mackenzie have gone home four times for two- to three-day stays between treatments.

"Other than that, it's been FaceTime only," Hedgcoth said.

Now mom and baby are at home for a rare week, preparing for Christmas. On Dec. 14, they go back for treatment.

"She'll get a trial radioactive medicine that can pinpoint small tumors and hopefully zap them into nothing," Warlick said.

After 18-24 months of treatments, Mackenzie will be in remission maintenance with doctors tracking her progress to make sure the cancer doesn't come back. Warlick doesn't know how long she'll need to stay in Seattle, but the Ronald McDonald House will keep her room for her as long as she needs it.

"I don't know what I'd do without this place," said Warlick. "I'm still hopeful. I believe in God, so I think he'll help us get through this. Every day is a battle, and I take it day by day."

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STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

PUD rates to stay the same > A3

Wesco unveils its own plan for high school sports to return > A9

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Virus rate slows

Vaccine begins arriving at area hospitals

By EVAN CALDWELL
ecaldwell@scnews.com

The COVID-19 infection rate dropped in the Stanwood area during the first two weeks of December — the first decline since summer.

However, the virus is still widespread throughout the region, and parts of Snohomish County are still seeing coronavirus infection rates increasing, according to data released Monday from the Snohomish Health District.

“Just about every indicator has tended to go in the wrong direction still,” Snohomish County health officer Dr. Chris Spitters said in a briefing last week.

Overall, Snohomish County’s rate of positive cases, hospitalizations and deaths remain at elevated levels, a trend that officials warned could continue for weeks if people flout recommended restrictions.

The number of workplace outbreak investigations increased from 32 new outbreaks in the last week of November to 42 new outbreaks the first week of December, Spitters said. There are about 65 ongoing outbreaks in Snohomish County workplaces, and there are 56 active long-term care outbreaks with more than 500 cases in the past month.

Over the weekend, Snohomish County recorded 499 new COVID-19 cases. Stanwood recorded 131 new cases since Dec. 1. Camano had 62 infections from Dec. 1-18, according to the most recent Island County data.

■ SEE COVID, A6

COVID can’t stop the music

Bands play on and choirs get creative as coronavirus curtails class



SUBMITTED

A screenshot of the Stanwood High School Choir singing to a guide track during a recent class. Listen at SCnews.com.

By PEGGY WENDEL
pwendel@scnews.com

Stanwood High School music teachers A.J. Brodin and Erik Ronning have all of the challenges that other teachers have — and then some.

They’ve had to transfer normal classroom lessons into online exercises, engage students working amid distractions at home and connect at a distance. Yet students in band and choir build rapport and community while creating music. This is hard to replicate online — and students feel the difference.

The school’s music program is an interactive community that many students join for all of high school.

Teaching music online is “not as clean of a transfer as if you were teaching English, math or science,” Assistant Principal Carolyn Coombs said. “But these hard-working music teachers are going hours beyond the school day to combine all the music they get



INSIDE
World famous violinist spent later years on Camano, PAGE A11

from the kids. They’re doing a lot of extra work for their students ... to find a way to help kids be successful.”

Ronning teaches three choirs: a jazz choir of 14 kids, a chamber choir of 40 and a

treble choir of nine. He also teaches guitar.

Brodin teaches a jazz band with 16 students. This year, he’s combined the wind ensemble and symphonic band with 35 upper-level students. Concert band has 28 to 30 ninth graders. Ten percussion students work in a cadence group; they also play with the other bands.

Digital hurdles

Ronning and Brodin use Google Meet for daily classes. Each music class is online with everyone on separate devices at home. The school provides Chromebooks for those who need a computer at home. Many students use their phones.

Conferencing platforms like Google Meet and Zoom work OK for lessons, such as music theory, but when it comes to making music as a choir or band, there’s a problem with lag time.

■ SEE MUSIC, A10

Brightening holidays for those in need

Local volunteers get creative to make centerpieces for food bank

By MARY JENNINGS
For the Stanwood Camano News

A small army of volunteers worked tirelessly early last week to make sure that clients of the Stanwood Camano Food Bank each received a festive bit of holiday cheer.

Deanna Kitchen, founder of the Growing Kindness Project, an international network that encourages gardeners to grow flowers as gifts of goodwill, led what has become an annual effort to provide decorative evergreen centerpieces to

brighten the homes of those in need.

“This is the third year that I’ve connected with the food bank to provide holiday décor,” she said. “I truly believe having some fragrant evergreens in your home during the holidays can be very uplifting.”

Last month, Kitchen contacted Stanwood Camano Food Bank Executive Director Kathy Moe to get an estimate of how many centerpieces would be needed this year.

The answer was a lot — more than twice as many from a year ago.

■ SEE CHEER, A5



Chrissy Sprouse builds holiday centerpieces at Cohost in Stanwood in December.

MARY JENNINGS, FOR THE STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

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Music

► FROM A1

There's a small lag between the drummer's beat and when the clarinet hears it and another lag before the clarinet's notes reaches the drummer's ears. Amplify that effect by everyone in the band, and every musician will sound a hair off, depending on how fast and far individual signals are routed.

A couple of times in Ronning's class, he had everyone unmute to sing "Happy Birthday." Not only was the timing off, an algorithm grabs the loudest voice to highlight, which bounces around between students.

"You could hear the cacophony," Ronning said.

So students must mute their microphones and play

along while teachers play a guide track, Brodin said.

Teachers can't hear the students and students can't hear each other, but they are learning music in new ways.

Stitching the pieces

Instead of rehearsing side-by-side and self-correcting to meld into a harmonizing whole, music students now listen at home to guiding tracks with ear pods and record their individual parts. Brodin and Ronning then align the pieces and compile them into a musical whole.

For the December show, Ronning recorded himself singing all the parts and sent them to the students with drum or metronome tracks to guide them.

Christmas assignments were due Friday and were

stitched together over the weekend.

"I showed a recording in process to a ninth-grade class. They said whoa, we did that?" Ronning said.

For the end of fall quarter, Brodin put on a tux and stood in an empty auditorium to record an introduction to the bands' playlist. Numbers include the marching band's athletic songs and the jazz band's tunes complete with solos.

Students are excited to hear the parts put together, but say something is missing.

"The way we have it now, it's just a bunch of individuals. You miss the main point of these programs — to build a community," said senior Adam Klein.

He plays clarinet in the wind ensemble, baritone



ONLINE

Visit this article at **SCnews.com** to watch and listen to this year's Stanwood High band and choir performances

sax in the jazz band and bass in the chamber choir.

"When we listen back to the samples, there's one thing that's slightly off — we're all individuals in these recordings, we aren't a band; we're not a choir."

Missing musical community

Music students miss the physicality of making music together.

"The hardest thing is not being able to be part of the larger ensemble," said Emily Abshere, a senior who marches with saxophone and plays oboe in band. She and Klein are drum majors, which are team captains in charge of the marching band. They're the

conductors and field tech; they help people out.

Klein said it's tougher to help people or show the freshmen around in an online format.

A sophomore Abshere didn't recognize said hello at a drive-through. It turned out they were in band together but had never met in person.

"We all miss being in the same room together and getting to see faces," said In choir, he's a tenor. He spent years in band playing French horn and has been in the percussion program.

"Sometimes when you get a note wrong, oh it's live, it's exciting. You're on the edge of insanity when you get a note wrong. The excitement flows through your veins," he said.

But there's an upside to making music remotely, as well.

"What's cool about being online, you don't have the fear of people watching, fear of mistakes," Poetzl said.

Senior Andrew Killinger has been in choir throughout high school.

"I love people, and when we can grow in sounds to-

gether in learning, it's just amazing, phenomenal," he said. This year he sings bass and baritone in the jazz ensemble and chamber choir.

"We're given these assignments, which are wonderfully created and the best that can be done ... but frankly just being with people and making music with people, hearing those sounds, allowing those sounds to go off, allowing people to sing, allowing chaos — it's all part of it."

For the record

There are advantages in learning new ways to make music, and some tools could be used when classes resume in person.

Today's band students know how to record themselves, listen and learn from what they've done then do it better.

Ronning said when students record and re-record, there's more self-reflection. They can achieve a higher level of musicianship than in a classroom situation.

"The self-analysis aspect is huge," Ronning said.

Students record many times and send in their best take.

"A positive is ... you get to do it as many times as you want to get it right. You could probably never sound better," Poetzl said.

Klein admits that he's learning music faster than normal because he's listening to how professionals play the music he's studying.

Ronning and Brodin think they will use some of these digital tools when students can gather again.

Ronning sees ways to incorporate the Google classroom as a secondary virtual message board for information and, if absent, assignments.

Brodin uses individual recordings to give students specific feedback. He can also see teachers using student audition recordings for good placement into the next year's music programs.

Final take

Today's seniors are sad that they won't have that last assembly, that one last walk down the hall, the competitions or a final concert.

"Now it's going to be our last zoom call, our last Google classroom meet," Abshere said.

But there is a bright side for the class of 2020: "They'll remember us for sure, we're all online. We recorded everything."

Brodin created a virtual community concert of his band classes in a private YouTube playlist. The ticket is this link: tinyurl.com/shsbandfall20

Ronning created a virtual community holiday concert with his choir: tinyurl.com/WinterChoir20

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STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

COVID rate falls again

Transmission down, vaccine distribution inches forward

By EVAN CALDWELL
ecaldwell@scnews.com

Virus transmission decreased for the sixth consecutive week in Snohomish County, but health officials warn that there's still a long way to go.

The rolling two-week case rate in Snohomish County decreased to 119 cases per 100,000 residents down from 144 infections per 100,000 people, according to data released Monday from the Snohomish Health District. That's the lowest virus rate since early October.

Over the long weekend, Snohomish County recorded 172 new COVID-19 cases. As of Monday, there were 38 COVID patients in Snohomish County hospitals — down from about 100 a month ago, according to county data.

"I hope the community keeps masking up and physically distancing, so that trends continue to decrease the rate in the community," Dr. Chris Spitters, health officer for the Snohomish Health District, said in a media briefing last week. "And that also alleviates the pressure on the schools, reducing the likelihood that a staff member or a student will enter the school with a case of COVID."

Stanwood has recorded 45 new cases during the past two weeks, down from 55 new cases during the previous two weeks.

■ SEE COVID, A8

Taking flight

Bird-watching soars as safe activity during pandemic



COURTESY JOAN HELBACKA

Snow geese flock in front of Mount Baker during a recent sunset. These migratory birds are just one of many species a growing number of local bird-watchers are spotting, tracking and photographing in the region.



COURTESY JOAN HELBACKA



COURTESY PHOTOS

At top, common merganser male ducks appear to run on water. Above, Joan Helbacka, at left, and Jeff Osmundson and Colleen Shannon are among the growing number of local residents who find bird watching a safe, satisfying hobby during the pandemic.

By PEGGY WENDEL
pwendel@scnews.com

Birders can't flock together at Stanwood's annual Snow Goose and Birding Festival, which joins a long list of festivals canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but birding itself isn't canceled.

For years, birders have gathered at events like the Snow Goose and Birding Festival — usually held in late February — to share tips, make friends and expand knowledge. For nearly a year, even the regular guided walks offered by groups like the Audubon Society have been on hold.

Yet more avian aficionados are winging it to favorite bird-watching spots than ever before. The outdoor, socially distanced activity is experiencing a boom during the pandemic.

More people are out and about tracking and photographing birds, according to birdwatching sites such as ebird.org. Downloads of popular bird identification apps have spiked. And the birding industry — everything from bird seed suppliers, birdhouse builders and small businesses helping people connect with birds — is seeing huge growth, according to the Audubon Society.

And the Stanwood-Camano area and neighboring Skagit Valley — home to world-class birding opportunities — are seeing more people migrate to the hobby in the past year.

■ SEE FLIGHT, A9

Stanwood Police get 3 new officers

By PEGGY WENDEL
pwendel@scnews.com

Every February, a few new faces show up on Stanwood's police team. "At least three people come and go every year," Stanwood Police Chief Rob Martin said. "We always have a plan to train up new people."

INSIDE

Officials seeing increase in some property thefts, PAGE A6

The Stanwood team is contracted through the Snohomish Sheriff's Office and currently has the police chief, a school officer, two sergeants, a detective and six patrol deputies.

Once a year, patrol deputies have a chance to relocate

within the county. They can bid for other positions in 17 different locations in the county and are assigned according to seniority based on start dates with the Sheriff's Office.

This way, the deputies can experience different shifts in types of locations from rural to suburb to city, Martin said.



COURTESY PHOTOS

Deputy Sennen Klassen, left, and deputy Leon Elliott joined Stanwood's police force earlier this month.

"It's good for us; it's good for the community," Martin said. "It's good for a deputy to experience a small town."

New to Stanwood

This year, three of the six patrol deputies are learning how being a deputy is different in a small town. Stanwood's

new deputies are Leon Elliott, Sennen Klassen and Maxwell Schrader.

Elliott grew up in Marysville and has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Central Washington University.

■ SEE POLICE, A6



COURTESY VASILY BARANYUK

A pair of snow geese on Wrangel Island, Russia, watch over their two 3-day-old chicks, in late June 2020. These chicks grew into big grey snow geese by the time they flew to the Pacific Northwest for the winter.

Snow geese population growing

Many of the snow geese that winter in the Puget Sound area come from a huge colony on Wrangel Island, Russia, in the Arctic Sea, where they spend most of the year, nesting and raising their young. Each winter, great flocks of snow geese leave this colony and fly 3,100 miles to our shores.

Russian biologist Vasily Baranyuk, a frequent speaker at Stanwood's Snow Goose and

Birding Festival, has studied the web of life on Wrangel Island for 40 years. He bands geese with GPS transmitters that relay information about their activities, behavior, temperature, migration and escapes from hunters. Scientists are learning how global warming is changing life in the Arctic. Wrangel Island, for instance, now gets more rain but less snow and ice.

Baranyuk wrote in an email to the Stanwood Camano News that he hopes to return to the festival next year. For now, he gives an update and scientific summary. Summer and fall of 2020

were good for snow geese on Wrangel Island, Baranyuk wrote. But there were very few lemmings. Arctic foxes eat lemmings and lacking that, will eat snow goose eggs. But there were few Arctic foxes this year. Snowy owls did not breed.

The 2020 study by the Working Group on Waterfowl of Northern Eurasia states that the Wrangel Island Snow Goose population is growing rapidly, but no new colonies have yet formed.

"Nesting conditions were very favorable for snow geese on Wrangel Island in 2020: after a winter with low snow

precipitation and an early spring, geese did not experience a shortage of nesting sites. The spring population of the WISG in 2020 was estimated at 685,100 individuals. This is 243,100 (or 55%) more than last year's population."

The colony had about 214,100 nests. About 57,500 goose pairs were counted, up nearly 37% from 2019. They laid 802,500 eggs in 2020 and 652,915 goslings hatched, resulting in 81.4% hatch success.

Although about 2,620 adult birds died during nesting, the mortality rate was only 0.6% of the nesting geese.

— Peggy Wendel / SC News

Flight

► FROM A1

Something safe

Jeff Osmundson and Colleen Shannon, married more than 40 years, expand their world during isolation by watching birds. Years ago when they took up birding as an empty-nester hobby, they started spending more time together.

"In the spring when COVID was busting out, we didn't know what we could do safely. We figured this would be safe," Shannon said.

Their son, a biologist, was alarmed that they weren't sequestered inside, until they sent him a photo that showed just the two of them and hundreds of birds.

Yet even out in the wild, they've found that more people are getting outside, coping with being cooped up.

"Everybody and their brother are out walking ... getting rid of cabin fever," Osmundson said.

They found that Wiley Slough on Fir Island was a good place to watch birds, because the new dikes are wide, so people can safely pass. Barnum Point Park on Camano Island is another good spot. Eide Road Preserve, between Stanwood and Camano, is good but can be crowded.

Shannon and Osmundson have permission to visit a secluded spot south of Stanwood. Even there, a few people show up. But there are far more birds.

Avian abundance

Snohomish, Skagit and Whatcom counties are hot spots for birding.

Winter is especially interesting with Arctic visitors flying in, such as snow geese and trumpeter swans, Shannon said. Ducks and waterfowl congregate in the wide-open river deltas for most of the winter.

Osmundson said his theory is that birds wait for the snow to melt in the Canadian mountains to return to their breeding grounds.

Then eagles come down from the east after they feast on the salmon runs up-river and find all these birds waiting to go north.

Osmundson and Shannon stand on a dike near Stanwood; their view is of salt marsh tidal flats. Water gives way to a sandbar, with deeper water beyond. To the naked eye, the place looked deserted. But looking through binoculars or scope, it's a big feathered world with American woodpeckers whistling, ducks quacking and trumpeter swans honking.

Shannon peered through binoculars across the flats, noting that ducks lined the bank of the sandbar, and Dunlins were plentiful.

Dunlins, the little brown



PHOTOS COURTESY JOAN HELBACKA

Dunlins flash their bellies as they turn in unison. See more birding photos in a gallery at SCnews.com.



A great blue heron gobbles down a snack.



At top, a cedar waxwing puffs its feathers. Above, a Greater yellowlegs finds plenty to eat at Wiley Slough in the Skagit Wildlife Area.

sandpipers, feed in the shallows. Dunlin flocks flash from brown to white as the birds twist and bank in unison. Huge flocks fly in aerial maneuvers called murmurations.

"Seven swans a swimming," Shannon said. "A falcon went down on the Dunlin. The Dunlin are up. It's a peregrine."

Osmundson set up a scope on a tripod.

"Holy mackerel! Look at those Dunlin, like ants on an anthill," he said.

She asked, "How many should we put down?"

They list what they see at

eBird.org, an international bird counting site managed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, that tabulates millions of bird global sightings as a powerful resource for research, conservation and education.

"It's a way to stay engaged and have your birding mean something and track what you do," Shannon said.

"Listeners" use eBird to document their trips and what they've seen. Shannon uses it to contribute to "citizen science," helping with the international understanding of changing migratory patterns, climate change and overwintering.

The Anna's hummingbird didn't use to winter here, but now stays all year.

"We're seeing species here that we've rarely seen before," she said.

In recent times, local birders have sighted a Vermillion flycatcher and a painted bunting.

The couple recommends birding as a lifelong social or solitary activity for all ages and families.

Shannon said, "The best times to go birding is ..."

"When you can," Osmundson finished on cue.

Birds at home

Julia Petrakis puts out feeders so the birds come to her.

"Here I am, watching the birds every day," she said.

Petrakis gets around in a wheelchair and watches birds from windows or on the patio under heat lamps where she enjoys the show with Stellar's jays, chickadees, bushtits, a pileated woodpecker, nuthatches, sparrows, juncos, finches, pine siskin, towhees, robins and variegated thrush.

Lately, there's no birdseed out because of a regionwide salmonella concern, especially for the pine siskin. Birds still flit about the bushes and peck around the patio.

"I have flicker families in what I call the bird condo, which is the huge evergreen out the front door," Petrakis said.

She's been watching birds since she was a teen in New Jersey.

"I get great pleasure in-

tellectually and emotionally in identifying these birds that come," she said. "It's part of who I am to love the birds."

Photo angle

People get into bird watching for different reasons. There's a spectrum between birders and photographers, with people having skills anywhere in between, said Joan Helbacka. Some people focus on listing what they see, others focus on photographing them.

Helbacka watches two pair of Stellar's Jays that have staked out their territories — one pair in the front yard and one in the back. She opens the kitchen window and throws out a handful of peanuts. They can only pick up two at a time, so they take their time picking that first nut, to get

the size and shape just right. "Just watching them is fun," she said.

Helbacka moved from Renton to Camano Island a little over a year ago. She hadn't met many people here yet when the pandemic struck. She takes care of her husband at home and hung bird feeders so they could see birds from the window. She gets out and finds local wild spots to photograph birds.

"This has saved my sanity. The idea is to get out and about and see what there is to see, get a little exercise and do something creative. Being out in nature is just good for people," she said.

As she looks through old photos, she's seen how her skills have grown.

"Birding is social, but that part is missing," she said. "It used to be you take a shot and say, 'Hey look what I got.' Now you can't do that."

Still, birders are a friendly bunch. Helbacka runs into them on her outings — like Donna Decew, from the south Puget Sound area, who had just seen a murmuration of Dunlin on Fir Island. Decew stopped at Eide Road Preserve, hoping to glimpse the rare sight of a snow bunting and met Helbacka. They chatted while masked and socially distanced.

"If you are a birder or a bird photographer, you always have friends — you just haven't met them yet," Helbacka said. "You have a lot in common: birds, love of the outdoors, conservation and interest in providing habitat for wild species. People are so good about sharing their knowledge."

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