

Protest

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Between 200 and 300 individuals participated in a 12-block march west to Walmart before returning to Sequim's main downtown intersection, eliciting cheers and horn-honking from motorists.

Courtney Thomas, who organized the Wednesday event through social media, said she was moved in recent days to do something locally.

"I'm scared for the world, for my son; I don't want this world for my son," Thomas said, with 5-year-old S. Beckett nearby holding a sign.

"We will not be silenced. We will not stand for this."

"This is the least I can do."

The next day, about 200 people did the same, chanting "Black Lives Matter," "No racism," "I can't breathe" and more while marching from the downtown intersection to the roundabouts at South Ninth Avenue and River Road.

At the farthest intersection, demonstrators laid down in the roundabout for 8 minutes and 46 seconds in honor of Floyd — a 46-year-old black man, who died on May 25 in Minneapolis, Minn., from asphyxiation, after being handcuffed face down.

Police officer Derek Chauvin, who is white, knelt on Floyd's neck for nearly nine minutes. Chauvin and three officers with him were fired the next day after videos made by witnesses and security cameras became public. Two autopsies found Floyd's death to be a homicide, and the officers were later arrested.

Sequim High senior Wren Fierro-Burdick organized the Thursday protest with fellow graduate-to-be Zoe Yates, saying they wanted to "take immediate action" for the movement.

"We wanted to help get Sequim involved in Black Lives Matter," Fierro-Burdick said.

On Friday afternoon, more than 130 demonstrators held a vigil at the Sequim Civic Center plaza for an hour with most of it spent in silence along with another opportunity for participants to lay face down for 8 minutes and 46 seconds to honor Floyd's memory.

Several Sequim participants read dozens of victims' names, held signs, and placed flowers and pictures of black victims of police violence near the plaza's totem pole.

Co-organizer Vicki Lowe said their intent was to create a place for people to grieve the losses from racism, acknowl-



On June 5, more than 130 people gather in front of the Sequim Civic Center for a vigil to grieve black people who have died from police violence. Sequim Gazette photos by Matthew Nash

edge racism is embedded in our institutions and society, and to acknowledge that healing the ongoing impacts of historical trauma that is inflicted on Americans of color is incumbent on us all.

"Those underlying feelings when something traumatic happens, it really brings out the emotions and people feel depressed or sad or sometimes angry," she said.

"We wanted to give people a place to let their feelings out because what happened was awful."

Another peaceful protest is scheduled for noon on Friday, June 12, at the corner of Washington Street and Sequim Avenue.

Opportunity

Some of those marching and/or standing in silence at the vigil in Sequim said they found hope from fellow residents.

Gabriel Stark of Sequim helped lead Thursday's march, saying that it's "touching to see so many people from Sequim participate."

"I've been here about nine years and I've experienced a few racists but it's nice to have affirmation that most people aren't (racist) here," she said.

Fierro-Burdick said she believes racism isn't as prevalent in Sequim as other rural communities in Washington.

"We have an overwhelming amount of people in favor of (Black Lives Matter)," she said.

"I think the police department is as supportive as possible given the circumstances."

The protests brought an array of people from the area



Eleven-year-old Maisy French of Sequim places flowers down by pictures of black people victimized by police brutality on June 5 at the Sequim Civic Center. She participated in the vigil with her parents and brother with her mom Tammy saying they participated because they wanted to make sure something is done about the violence occurring in the nation.

to demonstrate too.

Amber Nelson of Port Angeles marched with her 7-year-old grandson in hopes of teaching him about "standing up for the rights of himself and others and the importance of protesting."

Deej Jones of Sequim said he doesn't normally participate in events like Thursday's protest.

"But as one of the few black people in town, I felt led to participate," he said.

His hope is that local white people will be friendlier to him and other people of color.

And amidst the COVID-19 pandemic still in effect, it was still important for Diane Schanz Miller of Sequim to participate.

"It's important to speak up and to let people of color in the area and the authorities know (how we feel)," she said. "The more protests the louder the message."

Lowe said her intent with the vigil was to discuss historical trauma because pretending it did not happen or saying it's in the past contributes to the pain.

"We need to be accepting of each other's beliefs," she said. "There's not one religion in this country and not one way to think. We need a more accepting viewpoint and strive for more tolerance of other people's beliefs."

Police response

The Sequim protests came on the heels of other demonstrations across the nation, including Port Angeles and Port Townsend.

said. "There are a lot of things happening in parts of the country we as a society need to address."

"We (law enforcement departments) are learning as we go along (and) in general our profession has grown," she said.

"There's room for a bigger conversation."

Rumors

The City of Sequim also posted on facebook that the protests remained peaceful throughout, despite rumors to the contrary. Crain said she talked to a local business owner who during the protests posted a video warning locals of potential violence and disorderly conduct. After a conversation with that owner, the video was taken down, she said.

A group of armed men congregated near the rally.

"I get that their heart's in the right place, (but) rumors and bad information can do a lot of harm," Crain said.

She said the department fielded phone calls for much of the day about what turned out to be a non-violent demonstration, calling it a "cautionary tale."

The city's social media post noted, "At no point at today's event, was there any factual evidence suggesting violent or bad actors. Members of the community are reminded that rumors that get out of control can make people nervous and panic unnecessarily. During this time of national crisis, it is important to remember that people do want to be heard and we can anticipate more protests. It is in our history to support peaceful protests in our community from groups that need to be heard. The Sequim Police Department, as always, will monitor these events."

"Please disregard any rumors that members of Antifa are being bused to Sequim from out of town. There is no police intelligence to support this rumor."

Clallam County Sheriff's Office are investigating whether social media posts led to harassment of a Spokane family in Forks on June 3.

PA man killed in ATV wreck near Sequim

BY PIERRE LABOSSIERE
Olympic Peninsula News Group

A 26-year-old Port Angeles-area man was killed in an all-terrain vehicle wreck on Saturday, June 6, on a U.S. Forest Service road south of Sequim, law enforcement officials said.

The man was the driver of a "side by side" ATV. His name was not released by the Clallam County Sheriff's Office pending notification of family members.

His passenger, a 43-year-old man also from the Port Angeles area, was injured and taken by ambulance to Olympic Medical Center. He also was not identified.

The wreck happened at about 3:40 p.m. on a gravel forest road about two miles from Lost Mountain Road.

The driver and his passenger were among a group of off-roaders. Others in the group saw them go off the road when they were unable to negotiate a left turn while going about 25 to 30 miles per hour, the Sheriff's Office said.

The ATV rolled down a steep 20- to 30-foot embankment. Both men were ejected from the vehicle; neither was wearing a seat belt or a helmet, said Sgt. John Keegan of the Sheriff's Office.

Witnesses called 9-1-1. The passenger was injured but conscious while the driver was unconscious and not breathing when first responders arrived. CPR was started by witnesses and continued until they were relieved by first responders.

Lifeflight and the U.S. Coast Guard were contacted for a possible extraction out of the remote area by helicopter. However, Keegan said the helicopters were not necessary and the men were transported out of the area by ambulance. The driver was declared dead en route to Olympic Medical Center, Keegan said.

Keegan said alcohol was present, but there was no evidence that alcohol was a factor in the wreck.

He said sheriff's deputies were on the scene until midnight.

The sheriff's office traffic safety unit is investigating.

In addition to the sheriff's office, Olympic Ambulance and Clallam County Fire District No. 3 also responded.

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