

See You at the Movies: Yelm Cinemas Reopens

After Several Months of Being Closed, the Cinema Will Offer Classic Movie Titles

BY PAUL DUNN
Nisqually Valley News

For all of you who have been stuck at home during the pandemic watching reruns of “Gilligan’s Island” on television, your purgatory has come to an end.

That’s because Yelm Cinemas reopened on Friday, July 3. The theater complex had been closed since March 16 after Gov. Jay Inslee ordered restaurants, bars, and entertainment and recreational facilities to shutter for two weeks due to COVID-19.

But as everyone knows by now, the two-week timeline eventually morphed into a three-month shut-down before Thurston County entered Phase 3 of Inslee’s Safe Start Washington economic reopening plan.

Noah Aden, Yelm Cinemas general manager, has been busy getting the theater complex ready to reopen as he complies with Phase 3 mandates. Under Phase 3, the complex must limit patron capacity to less than 50 percent, adhere to social distancing guidelines, and follow strict cleaning and sanitizing procedures.

And require face coverings. “There is just a ton of stuff we are doing to comply with a safe reopening,” said Aden, 27. “The most important thing is requiring everyone — staff and patrons — to wear masks in the building.”

That means anytime they’re not in an auditorium — such as when buying tickets or goodies at the concession stand, using restrooms, etc.

Once patrons enter their individual auditoriums to watch movies, however, they may remove their masks to eat and drink, though Aden is encouraging — not mandating — them to wear their masks the rest of the time, too.

“We are hoping people will display good judgment about wearing the masks in the auditoriums even though it’s not required,” he said.

And, by the way, people showing up to the theater without masks will be offered one by theater staff so they may enter the building, Aden said.

Yelm Cinemas is also requiring 6-foot distances in auditoriums between parties or families, at cash registers and concession stands and generally in the lobby. Floor markers indicating safe distancing will also be in place sometime in July when Aden expects the order he made for them to arrive.

“We have a plan for directing people to make sure the lobby isn’t overloaded with patrons and staff,” he said.

The theater complex will also try to limit possible exposure to the virus by initially operating only five of its eight auditoriums. And roughly half the seats in those five will be blocked off to ensure respectable social distancing and limit capacity.

And then there’s cleaning and sanitizing: More time has been allowed between movies for staff to thoroughly clean and disinfect all surfaces patrons and employees



Paul Dunn/Nisqually Valley News

Yelm Cinemas General Manager Noah Aden in the theater complex’s lobby on Wednesday, July 1. The complex reopened to the public on Friday, July 3.

touch. That includes everything from counters to door knobs. Employees are also encouraged to wash their hands as often as possible.

“We intend to extensively clean every 30 minutes,” Aden said.

And now ... about the movies. For the first six weeks or so patrons can look forward to seeing classic films from the 1980s and 90s and other newer movies they may have already seen.

“It’s a mix of older movies we’re getting based on movies we think people will want to see,” Aden explained. “They will be similar to movies we have shown in the past.”

The first Friday showing, July 3, included “Jurassic Park,” and “Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark.”

Friday, July 10, will showcase “Star Wars The Empire Strikes Back,” a Disney movie called “Inside Out,” and “Black Panther.”

As it turns out, brand-new movies won’t be available until around mid-August, Aden said. The films are ready to show, but have yet to be released because the coronavirus had closed movie theaters across the country. So about six weeks from now Yelm Cinemas patrons should start seeing new titles online or in person at the theater.

Though Aden doesn’t expect huge crowds for the initial Friday movies — particularly because of the July Fourth holiday, he’s spoken to a few customers and reviewed online feedback that indicates patrons are thrilled the theater’s back in action.

“The feedback online has been incredible from people showing their support for us that the theater was reopening,” he said.

And in a nod to its customers, Yelm Cinemas has reduced its ticket prices from \$9.75 to \$6 and chopped prices for certain items at the concession stand, too.

See you at the movies.

Democrat Running for Rep. J.T. Wilcox’s Seat

By Nisqually Valley News Staff

Veronica Whitcher Rockett, a full-time caregiver and vice chair of Thurston County Democratic Women, is running to unseat Rep. J.T. Wilcox, R-Yelm, in a bid for the 2nd Legislative District’s Position No. 2.

She joins Eatonville School Board Director Matt Marshall, a Republican, who is also looking to unseat Wilcox.

Whitcher Rockett, who is running as a Democrat, has served as a precinct committee officer in Thurston County the last three

years and also chaired the Thurston County Young Democrats in 2018.

“These are unprecedented times,” Whitcher Rockett’s campaign site reads. “It’s time

to rebuild our economy with living wage jobs, affordable health care, a move away from fossil fuels, new infrastructure investments and a commitment to affordable housing.”



Rep. J.T. Wilcox



Veronica Whitcher Rockett

Her candidacy has been endorsed by the Thurston County Democrats, Thurston County Young Democrats and Pierce County Young Democrats, among others.

Born in Pierce County, Whitcher Rockett moved to Thurston County at a young age, her website says. She attended school at River Ridge High School and

later attended class at South Puget Sound Community College and Cornish College of the Arts.

Whitcher Rockett has three kids, two of whom have special needs.

“I’m running for them,” she states. “I’m running because I want to make sure our schools are protected and the programs so many kids rely on aren’t cut.”

She’s also a PTA member at her children’s school.

Whitcher Rockett says she’s also running to fight for lower health care costs and to push for widespread rural broadband

rights, a topic that has been garnering support as more people work from home due to COVID-19.

“The internet is no longer a luxury, but a necessity for work, school and play,” her website reads. “We need a legislator who prioritizes the need for fast connections and who can work across the aisle to find common ground and collaborate towards an internet system which works for everyone.”

More information on her candidacy can be found at www.vote-veronicald2.com.

NEWS BRIEFS

League of Women Voters Hosting Candidate Forums

By Nisqually Valley News Staff

The League of Women Voters of Thurston, Pierce and Mason

counties are hosting a number of virtual forums with candidates running for public office in August’s primary election.

A list of forums can be found at www.lwvthurston.org/forums.

Candidates running for many local seats, including the open state Senate seat for the 2nd Leg-

islative District and the two seats up for reelection on the Thurston Board of County Commissioners, have been featured in this forum series.

Thurston County Auditor’s Office Mailing Voters Pamphlets for August Primary

By Nisqually Valley News Staff

Starting July 8, the Thurston County Auditor’s Office will begin mailing voters pamphlets for the Aug. 4 primary election to every household in the county, according to a news release.

More information can be found at www.thurstonvotes.com. Ballots will be mailed out July 15.

The two candidates who garner the most votes in each race during August’s primary election

will move on to the general election in November.

Local Churches Holding Saturday Service in Rainier Park

By Nisqually Valley News Staff

Rainier Chapel, Valley Heart Assembly of God and a number of other churches are hosting a monthly service at Wilkowski Park.

The gathering, named “Church in the Park” by local faith leaders, meets at 4 p.m. on the third Saturday of every month.

“We don’t need a building to do church,” Rainier Chapel Pastor Mark Tietjen said.

The next service is scheduled for July 18.

Face coverings are required for attendees.

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