



# STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

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## Local shops get creative ahead of holidays

Area retailers combating supply chain squeezes, pandemic

By MARY JENNINGS  
For the Stanwood Camano News

Even though global supply chain issues and pandemic restrictions present a challenge, local merchants are finding creative ways to keep shelves stocked for holiday shoppers.

“By being persistent in my efforts, I was able to find new products,” said Traci Smith, owner of the Picnic Pantry, a specialty kitchen and gift shop in Stanwood. “While it’s been a lot of work and a lot more hours than usual, I feel confident in having a great supply of unique, quality gifts for the entire season.”

Smith and fellow Stanwood-Camano businesspeople were able to lean on their flexibility to find products over the past few months.

The global supply chain is being hit with a multitude of problems — factories closed due to COVID-19 surges, a lack of containers, backups at ports and warehouses, and a shortage of truckers — prompting smaller retailers to cast wide nets to get goods.

“Being the buyer and owner of a small gift shop allows me the flexibility to order from any suppliers that I choose,” Smith said. “As the year progressed and I could see keeping my shelves stocked was going to be an issue, I just kept ordering product.”

■ SEE SHOPS, A15



## Saving the bell

The historic Camano City schoolhouse will soon ring again



PHOTOS BY EVAN CALDWELL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

**Ed Bednarczyk, a vice president of the Camano Schoolhouse Foundation, inspects the refurbished bell and its new tower that will be lifted onto the historic 1906 building in early 2022.**



CAMANO CITY SCHOOLHOUSE FOUNDATION

**The Camano schoolhouse seen in this undated historic photo with its bell in a tower.**

By EVAN CALDWELL  
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It’s been 85 years or more since the Camano City schoolhouse bell rang out over Saratoga Passage.

That will change early next year. “It’s the crown on the schoolhouse,” said Ed Bednarczyk, a vice president of the Camano City Schoolhouse Foundation. “It’s symbolic; bells are just symbolic. It’s a sound that will return back to this community and certainly be heard out on the water.”

In 1906, the cast iron bell was perched atop the one-room school-

house, calling students to and from class until 1936 when the district consolidated with Stanwood, and all students were bused to town.

The bell was housed in a bell-tower until the 1940s when it was removed, possibly because the tower was rotting and people feared the about 300-pound bell falling through the roof, Bednarczyk said.

The bell was taken to the nearby Camano Chapel.

“They were probably just looking for a safe nearby place to stash it for a bit, but it ended up being forgotten about,” Bednarczyk said.

■ SEE BELL, A12

## Island County officials declare state of emergency after storm

Rep. Rick Larsen tours damage

By EVAN CALDWELL  
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The Stanwood-Camano area is still reeling from extensive damage caused by a devastating storm Nov. 14-15.

A blast of tropical moisture that dumped rain for days, causing flooding and mudslides throughout the region, also whipped up powerful westerly winds that toppled trees, knocked out power to thousands and fueled a damaging storm surge.

“The damage was stunning to me,” Island County Commissioner Janet St. Clair said. “The north side of the island was hammered.”

The Island County Commissioners



EVAN CALDWELL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

**A storm surge pushes ocean water into homes at Utsalady Bay on north Camano Island during a weather event that hit the region on Nov. 15 causing widespread damage and flooding.**

on Nov. 16 voted to declare a state of emergency, which could open access to Federal Emergency Management Agency assistance.

On Friday, U.S. Rep. Rick Larsen,

D-Washington, and St. Clair toured damage on the west and north sides of the island.

■ SEE STORM, A4





At left, the storm surge and winds pushed boats, driftwood and debris into homes on the west side of Camano Island during the storm on Nov. 14-15. Above middle, one of the many trees that fell over power lines Nov. 15 also blocked North Camano Drive near Maple Grove Road. At right, the aftermath of the storm was revealed Nov. 16. Many boats, bulkheads, boathouses and property were damaged in the weather. See more photos at SCnews.com.

# Storm

FROM A1

“In my 56 years, I haven’t seen many storms that have caused damage like this throughout north-west Washington,” Larsen said.

He and St. Clair urged property owners to document damage, which is a key part of the requirements to unlock FEMA aid.

The storms featured several wind gusts of more than 50 mph, according to the National Weather Service. But the highest sustained winds came along with a high tide.

That combo of forces created a storm surge that inundated low-lying areas and tossed boats and driftwood into yards and structures. Bulkheads were ripped from their cement anchors, decks were dismantled and buildings sustained water damage.

The county’s state of emergency declaration also kick-started the process of Public Works officials doing a damage assessment of county roads and property, St. Clair said.

“They’re busy,” she said last week. “We already have seen so much damage from the wind and the waves.”

The winds and high water also whacked Warm Beach area, including swamping Kayak Point Park and damaging its iconic pier.

Much of the region was without power for several hours Nov. 15, and some people had no power for more than two days.

“The damage out on Camano Island was severe,” Snohomish PUD spokesperson Aaron Swaney said. “The island got hit really hard this time around and was in some of the worse shape our crews have ever seen it post-storm.”

In all, the storm knocked out power to about 65,000 customers, the majority of those outages were customers in Stan-



PHOTOS BY EVAN CALDWELL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

The Skagit River, seen here on Nov. 16, floods the area near Conway and Fir Island, north of Stanwood.



At left, a fallen tree damaged a garage in the Lost Lake neighborhood. No one was injured. The tree was one of at least 27 reports of large trees down that were received by Camano Island Fire & Rescue during the 24 hours of the storm. At right, U.S. Rep. Rick Larsen (center) tours storm damage Friday in the Madrona Beach area of west Camano Island.



wood, Lake Goodwin and on Camano Island.

Swaney said PUD crews spent most of their time and effort on Camano Island.

“More than half of our resources were spent on Camano on jobs that were complex and time-consuming,” he said. “The typical storm crew job takes between 2-10 hours. In the

aftermath of this storm on Camano, we had multiple jobs take over 30 hours. Some of the jobs had multiple jobs within jobs.”

In all, 15 PUD line crews, 16 two-man service-crews and six tree crews were working on the island.

There were also reports of clogged culverts prompting creeks and ditches to

overflow. There were also calls to emergency services about downed powerlines triggering small fires.

The combination of power outages and blocked roads also prompted the Stanwood-Camano School District to close school on Nov. 16.

The bulk of the storm’s moisture veered to the north, sparing the Still-

aguamish River from a major flood. The river topped out at 14.8 feet in Arlington later on Nov. 12 — lower than forecasters feared and lower than the crest of a flood in late October.

In downtown Mount Vernon, a floodwall — completed in 2018 — survived its first major test last week, preventing potentially devastating downtown

flooding.

The Skagit River crested at 36.9 feet early Tuesday morning — the second worst flooding in Mount Vernon since 1990, when the river crested at 37.4 feet, according to historical record.

On Friday, U.S. Sen. Patty Murray visited with local and state officials and FEMA representatives to discuss the success of the project.

In 2005, Murray helped secure \$200,000 in federal funds to study flood protection in downtown Mount Vernon.

“I did not know that years later I would be standing here and see a downtown that was saved because of this wall behind me,” Murray said in remarks to the press.

However, it was the low-lying areas outside of town that suffered the greatest impacts.

Even with river levels dropping, flooding was still occurring in fields at lower elevations. It may take weeks for the water to fully drain out of some fields.

Some farm animals were also lost to the flood, said Don McMoran, director of the Washington State University Skagit County Extension. He declined to provide details for confidentiality reasons.

He said many animals were relocated to higher ground, in part thanks to Skagit County’s animal rescue plan.

McMoran said the levee system helped keep the Skagit River mostly within its banks.

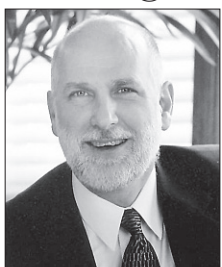
“I’m very pleased with our diking (district) commissioners, and pleased with improvements they made to the diking system since 1990 (flooding),” he said.

More than 6 inches of rain fell in parts of the North Cascade mountains.

Though the storms have passed, weather officials warned of landslide risks.

Near the Canadian border, Sumas city officials said hundreds of people were evacuated, and they estimated that 75% of homes had water damage in a soaking that reminded people of the November 1990 flooding when two people died and there were more than 2,000 evacuations.

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