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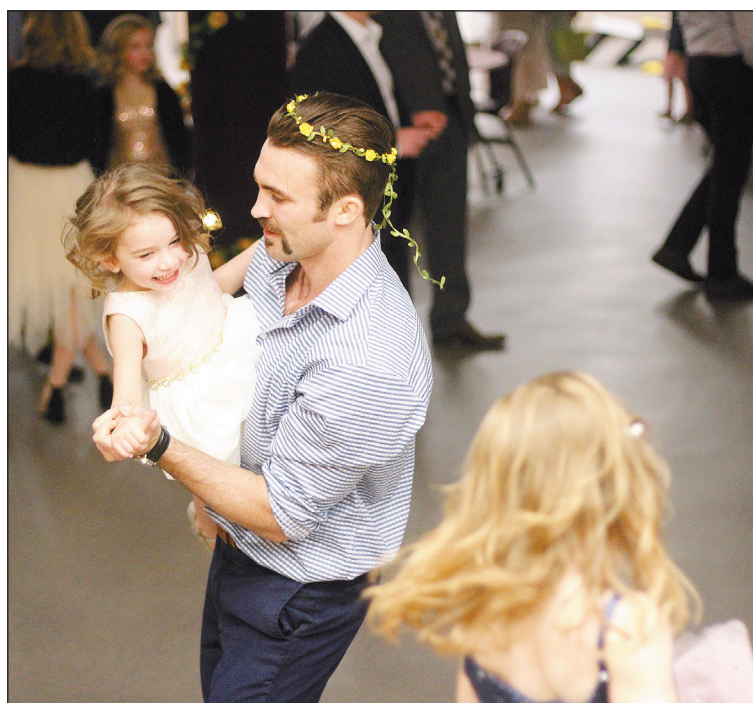
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Family bonding at the annual boogie



PHOTOS BY RAY MILLER-STILL
Fathers and daughters were jumping and jiving all day long last Saturday during Enumclaw Rotary's annual Father Daughter Dance, which raises money to support local seniors as they head off to college. Pictured are Les O'Brion and his daughter, Emelia, and niece Emery Shurman (top); Ellie Martin busting a move with her dad T.J. (bottom left); and Joey Pierotti swinging with Teagan McCarthy (bottom right).



Enumclaw COVID testing site closing April 1

By RAY MILLER-STILL
Editor

Editor's note: Although the Enumclaw COVID testing site is closing, there are other ways to get tested, from going to another testing site in Auburn or Bonney Lake to ordering at-home testing kits from the Washington Department of Health or the federal government. Find this article online at courierherald.com for more information.

One year, three months, and 20 days — that's how long Plateau residents and visitors from King and Pierce counties were able to get tested locally for COVID-19.

But two days from now, the testing site located at Enumclaw Middle School — which saw close to 50,000 tests performed in its tents — will be shutting down, with no plans to open at another nearby location.

"Due to decreased demand, the last day of operation for the COVID-19 testing site at Enumclaw Middle School will be April 1. Thank you @DiscoveryHealthMD @UWMedicine @MOEinsurance @EnumclawSD and the City of Enumclaw for your partnership in this site's success," Public Health — Seattle & King County tweeted on March 15, referring to Discovery Health MD, the private company that ran the site; UW Medicine, which helped process data; and Mutual of Enumclaw Insurance, which first hosted the testing site when it opened Dec. 10, 2020, before moving to EMS May 27 the following year.

According to site manager Amber Nonamaker, her staff have been testing a few dozen people per day and, maybe even more importantly, less than 10 percent of those tests have been coming back positive.

"We have actually had a few days where it's been totally clear," she said in a recent interview as an individual, rather than as a representative of her company; according to King County data, Enumclaw had a seven-day average of 1.3 daily COVID cases as of March 19, a marked decrease from when the city experienced a peak of 97 cases alone on Jan. 10.

But despite the obvious good news, Nonamaker is unsure if closing the site is the best thing for the Enumclaw community.

"I get to see all the other numbers from other sites, so I'm able to see that the Enumclaw site still has the highest test numbers out of all the sites my company runs," she said, adding that this site is the only one in King County Discovery MD staffs, with much of the rest being in Pierce County, including the site in Bonney Lake. "That's seeing 40, 30 people a day or so. Everywhere is less than that, which is another reason why it's funny they're closing [this site] down, because there's definitely still a need for it, even if not at the same capacity as it was with Delta and Omicron."

Public Health had a lease with the Enumclaw School District to operating on its grounds, but the lease expired at the end of 2021, and the two parties agreed to continue site operations on a month-to-month basis. Since then, the two entities talked about closing the site in unofficial terms until Public Health requested the district send an official request to stop operations, pointing to the drop in COVID cases and a need to reclaim the parking space the testing site was occupying.

According to Dr. Mark Del Beccaro, a deputy assistant chief with Public Health and who oversees the county's testing operations, Public Health

Enumclaw Food Bank to merge with Plateau Outreach Ministries

By RAY MILLER-STILL
Editor

Starting this week, Plateau Outreach Ministries will be taking over the Enumclaw Food Bank.

The merger announcement, made March 16, quickly puts to rest any fears that the Enumclaw Food Bank, which has been serving the local community since 1962 — far longer than POM — will be closing.

"...The physical location of the Enumclaw Food Bank, which is adjacent to and part of the Enumclaw Senior Center, will remain the same," Elisha Smith-Marshall wrote in the release. The only real difference, she continued, is that

"the POM Board of Directors and staff will begin to oversee operations on April 1."

In fact, the merger doesn't appear to be affecting much change at all for either EFB or POM, at least for the foreseeable future.

"The EFB is ran by a strong team of volunteers and POM will retain all of the volunteers from the EFB to continue with the wonderful service they provide our community," Smith-Marshall said in a recent interview. "POM will be adding a staff position, a food bank manager, to help with the transition and be a bridge between both programs as we become one."

The decision to operate both nonprofits under one roof, metaphorically speaking, was spearheaded by Lawton Case, director of the EFB for 35 years, who is officially retiring from the food bank March 30.

"I am confident that POM will administer the Enumclaw Food Bank... with integrity and continue [its] legacy of service," Case added in the release. He will be turning 91 later this year, which prompted his exit from EFB leadership.

In a later interview, Case said he was looking for someone to take over his position at the food bank for a couple of years, but his search ended in vain, hence the need to join forces with Enumclaw's other food bank in order to continue aiding the local community.

One of the reasons Enumclaw has had two food banks for so long is because POM and EFB receive donations and funds from different sources

Breaking down Washington police reform from this year and last

Legislators passed a number of bills responding to concerns around policing. Let's dig into them.

By ALEX BRUELL
Reporter

Enumclaw police have faced a whirlwind of police reforms — and re-reforms — over the last few years.

In short, officers can once again use force to briefly detain people while on patrol, though vehicle pursuits will remain a tool for only the most urgent of situations. In the meantime, they'll be picking up new less-lethal launchers, which are now legal once more.

All those changes and more were addressed by the Washington state legislature this year, and they go beyond Enumclaw, Buckley and Black Diamond. Law enforcement officers statewide, from sheriffs to police to troopers, are in the middle of some major changes to the way they do their jobs.

First, a refresher: Legislators last year passed more than a dozen bills aimed at reforming law enforcement, sparked by a nationwide cry for police accountability and bolstered by efforts from regional activists and families of those killed in encounters with police.

That 2021 legislation session restrained situations in which police could pursue or use force against suspects, and banned military equipment, chokeholds and no-knock warrants.

Supporters argued the changes would reduce the number of police confrontations that turn deadly, address racial bias in law

enforcement and keep officers honest.

The ACLU points to a roughly 60 percent drop in the number of people killed by police in 2021 compared to the two previous years (roughly 30 fewer people killed) as evidence the bills are working. Fatal police encounters in Washington fell to a five-year low last year.

"I think what was significant about last year was that the tactics bill and use-of-force bill were preventative of police violence," said Enoka Herat, a policy attorney at the Washington State branch of the ACLU focused on police and immigration.

"They took away some of the most egregious, harmful tactics and tools used by law enforcement ... and (required) that officers use the least amount of force, (and) stop using force when the necessity to use force ends," Herat said. "Having that consistency across the state is really important. It's about having a certain quality of policing across our state."

Critics, meanwhile, said that some of the measures hamstrung officers, blocking them from using basic tactics to investigate crimes and giving criminals a pass in some situations to break the law.

Police wanted a thoughtful rebalancing of those laws, not a knee-jerk "rollback" to the status quo, said Steve Strachan, Executive Director of the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC).

"(We sought) both the changes the community expects along with public safety," Strachan said. "And that sentiment came

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