

# THE NEWPORT MINER

THE VOICE OF PEND OREILLE COUNTY SINCE 1901

www.pendoreillerivervalley.com

Wednesday, April 7, 2021

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## Late Census info complicates redistricting

BY DON GRONNING  
OF THE MINER

NEWPORT – The fact that population data from the 2020 census won't be available until the end of September has made it more difficult for state and local authorities to redistrict voting districts, according to a presentation given to Northeast Washington Counties during a meeting in Newport Wednesday, March 31.

NEWC is made up of county commissioners from Okanogan, Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille counties. Stevens County commissioners Wes McCart and Mark Burrows joined Pend Oreille County commissioners Mike Manus, John Gentle and Brian Smiley in person in the Pend Oreille County commissioners' room. The other commissioners attended remotely.

Pend Oreille County Auditor Marianne Nichols presented a PowerPoint presentation from Pierce County

SEE **CENSUS, 8A**

## Sears joins Newport City Council

BY MICHELLE NEDVED  
OF THE MINER

NEWPORT – There will be a new face on the Newport City Council, Monday, April 19, after the council approved the appointment of Jami Sears to take the empty seat vacated by Christian Meador, who moved out of the state. The council approved Sears' appointment during a brief council meeting Monday night, April 5.

Sears is co-owner of Wedge Wood Products.

"I would like to give back and facilitate change to make the city great for all residents," she said on her application. "I have the time and capability to devote to this position. I also believe I have the skills to look at things objectively and logically without letting personal feelings cloud my judgment."

Sears said she thinks people struggle in Newport because of lack of affordable housing and gainful employment.

"We need to focus on these two aspects to support local businesses and help residents enjoy our great commu-

SEE **COUNCIL, 2A**



MINER PHOTO/SOPHIA ALDOUS

## Easter colors coincide with egg hunt

The Newport Easter egg hunt was a blur of eager children last Saturday, April 3 as they hunted for plastic, prize-filled eggs in Newport City Park. More than 100 people from Washington and Idaho attended the hunt, which was called off in 2020 due to COVID-19. The hunt was organized by Newport Mayor Shirley Sands who said there were more than 4,000 eggs.

## Pride parade draws attention to Fox murder

BY SOPHIA ALDOUS  
OF THE MINER

NEWPORT – Last Saturday marked the first gay pride parade in the Pend Oreille Valley as a couple hundred people marched through Newport and crossed state lines into Oldtown in honor of murder victim Jason Fox. Fox, a former Newport resident whose body was discovered in a shallow grave in October 2020, would have turned 20 years old on April

3. Those who gathered in Newport City Park Saturday afternoon maintain that Fox's death is a hate crime and that he was killed because he was gay.

Four people have been charged with Fox's murder and are currently in custody, including Matthew Raddatz-Freeman, 28, Kevin Belding, 24, Claude Merritt, 25, and Riley Hillestad, 26.

"Jason loved people and all he wanted was love and acceptance," event co-organizer Dustin Jolly said. "He would

be alive today if he wasn't gay in rural America."

The Pend Oreille County Sheriff's Office has maintained that they are still investigating the motive for Fox's murder, and while a hate crime has not been ruled out, neither is it confirmed. In order to convict a defendant of a hate crime, the prosecutor must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant committed the crime because of the victim's race or sexual orientation or for some other

prohibited reason.

Fox's mother, Pepper Fox, made a video last month on the social media platform TikTok that went viral, attracting more than 10 million views.

"He (Jason) was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen," Pepper Fox said at the pride gathering. "There was one time where we were in the car together and he was singing that Adam Levine

SEE **PARADE, 2A**

### BRIEFLY

#### Priest River Council breaks early for Zags game

PRIEST RIVER – Priest River City Council were ready to get down to business at their general meeting Monday, April 5 in order to adjourn in time for the Gonzaga versus Baylor NCAA title game (the Zags ended up losing 86-70). Before the game though, council addressed several issues facing the city, including, but not limited to, the White Diamond Concrete, LLC construction contract for Third Street and Highway 2 pedestrian ramp improvements and the process of turning the land the Priest River Senior Center stands on over to Bonner County. Read more on

Priest River projects in next week's issue of The Miner Newspapers.

#### Free food distribution April 14

BLANCHARD – The 2<sup>nd</sup> Harvest Mobile Market will hold a free food distribution Wednesday, April 14 at the Blanchard Community Center from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The drive-thru event serves up to 300 families and will be given out while supplies lasts. No appointment or identification is necessary. Social distancing and safety measures will be practiced and masks are required.

The community center is located at 685 Rusho Lane in Blanchard.

#### Vaccinations available

NEWPORT – Adults over the age of 16 are encouraged to get their COVID-19 vaccination. Vaccinations are free. All Washington residents 16 and older are eligible to get their vaccine as of April 15. Clinics are scheduled for the Newport Rodeo Grounds Monday, April 12 and Tuesday, April 20. Call 509-684-2262, Option No. 4, or visit www.netchd.org.



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**GET YOUR REELS READY**  
FISHING OPENER APRIL 24  
SEE FISH GUIDE ON STANDS APRIL 21

# Jury finds Kelly not guilty on three charges

BY DON GRONNING  
OF THE MINER

NEWPORT – A six-person jury found Robert J. Kelly not guilty of taking a motor vehicle without permission and two counts of fourth degree assault follow-

ing a two-day trial that wrapped up Tuesday, April 6.

Kelly, 26, was accused of punching a driver of a truck in May 2020, kicking a woman who came to help and then taking the truck.

Defense attorney Brett

Billingsley successfully argued that the timeline was inconsistent, with one witness testifying he saw the abandoned missing truck before the events were alleged to have happened. He also pointed to other inconsistencies in the witnesses' testimony.

Prosecuting attorney Lori Smith presented witnesses who testified that Kelly attacked them and took the truck as well as photographs of the man who testified Kelly beat him, taken by law enforcement showing contusions on the man's face.

Six witnesses testified, including the co-owner of the truck, who testified via Zoom from Colorado. Kelly did not testify.

It was the first Pend

Oreille County Superior Court trial since the COVID pandemic started. The six-person jury was agreed to by both prosecution and defense because of COVID precautions. Normally there are 12 jurors. It was the first Superior Court trial in Pend Oreille County since a civil trial in August 2019 and the first Superior Court criminal trial since July 2018.

Kelly remains in Pend Oreille County Jail facing unrelated charges.

# Prescribed burns planned in Washington, Idaho

OLYMPIA - Annual prescribed burning on state and federal land in Washington and Idaho are planned for April. Prescribed burning is a forest management practice that intentionally burns off accumulations of vegetation and logging debris. The fires are intended to promote forest health and prevent more intense wildfires by reducing fuel.

In Washington, WDFW plans a prescribed burn in the Rustlers Gulch area, on 523 acres about 15 miles southwest of Newport.

Prescribed burns are also planned for the Colville National Forest.

In Idaho, multiple prescribed burns are planned. Prescribed burning is part of each Ranger District's annual natural resource management program.

In both states, fire managers evaluate weather and fuels to determine when burning can be safely conducted.

## WOODLAND ESTATE

131-acre parcel fronting on US Hwy 2 at Roger's Pass on 4 lane section of US2. Enjoy quiet living, seclusion & privacy in the 6 BR 4 BTH family home built in 2010. 3 BR 2 1/2 BTH on 1873 sq ft main level. Full daylight basement with 2 BR, bath, media room & more. Immac. home that reflects care & maintenance. Island kitchen. 2 c garage. Fiber optic internet. Timber cut 18 yrs ago. Nice stand of red fir, cedar, hemlock, pine & deciduous trees. Seasonal stream flows most of the year. Rugged land terrain with ridges, valleys, meadows, pond, rock outcropping & more. Within 30 min of N Division "Y" easy commute to Spokane with private place for home office. By appt.



**\$950,000**

*Dick Bockemuhl*

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COURTESY PHOTO|DAVE DRUM

## Day before Easter bunny

Photographer Dave Drum snapped this picture of a snowshoe rabbit losing its winter coat Saturday, April 3 on a hill above Baker Lake.

## HOT BOX

Special deadline Tuesdays noon.

### CELTIC DESIGNS EGYPTIAN LINK

April 8. Draw Celtic patterns 1:00- 3:00 or weave Egyptian link with copper wire, 3:00- 5:00. Create, Newport. www.createarts.org (11p)

### YARD SALE SEASON

is beginning. If you are trying to turn some unwanted items into cash an ad in The Miner can help. Let more people know to stop by and check out your treasures. Ads start at \$17.50.(11)

### ELTC LAW GROUP

is here to support you and your family. Unexpected illness and death can happen and new tax changes that will affect everyone's estate have been proposed. Make sure you are prepared and please call our office for your Estate Planning, Asset Protection, After Death Transfers, Long Term Care/Medicaid and General Business needs (509)447-3242.(11)

### KNOW LOCAL

When you need to know what's happening in our community, turn to the No. 1 source for all things local – The Miner Newspapers

### LITTLE DIAMOND KOA CAMPGROUND

has seasonal positions available in our welcome center, housekeeping and recreation director. Abilities to include a customer service mentality, good communication skills and a team player attitude! Must be 18 years of age to apply. Please apply online: Equiitylifestyleproperties.com click on: Career opportunities/ Current jobs / WA. St / Newport WA. / See the current positions to apply.(11-3)

### PEND OREILLE DEMOCRATS

Meeting April 11th (Sunday) at 2:00 p.m. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, meeting will be via ZOOM. For more information access https://podemocrats.com/ or email pocdemocrats@gmail.com.(11)

### DOWN MEMORY LANE

Doesn't always make it into the paper, but it is on our Facebook page every week. Like us on Facebook today.(51alt-TF)

### STAY INFORMED

Read The Miner Newspaper every week.

### WINNERS!

Manny Willoughby, Resa Thayer, Jayce Waterman, Everett Addington, Ava Griesemer, Honisty Lewis, Colton Goettemoeller and Arianna Reamer have prizes waiting at The Newport and Gem State Miner office. Call to arrange pickup (509)447-2433 by noon on Friday April 9th.(11)

### WANT YOUR NEWSPAPER TO FOLLOW YOU?

The best way is to let us do a temporary or permanent address change. The Post Office only forwards a few weeks and it will take longer for your paper to get to you. Call The Miner Newspaper office at (509) 447-2433, email miner-subscriptions@povn.com or visit our website www.pendoreillerivervalley.com (51alt-TF)

### JOSE'S LAWN CARE

Clean up and shrub pruning. Weekly- bi-weekly. References (509) 270-8082.(9HB-tf)

### CHECK OUT SPORTS

You may have missed a story or picture of someone you know.

## FISH: View meeting online

FROM PAGE 7A

some trout. Many are popular options for anglers in Washington and can provide economic and biological benefits, but can also affect local ecosystems and native fish populations.

The public can provide comment on the draft policy on the WDFW website at wdfw.wa.gov/about/commission/non-native-game-fish. WDFW also hosted a

public meeting to discuss the draft policy on March 16; a recording of that presentation can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3DaATT-vlM&t.

If you are unable to access the survey online and need to request a paper copy of the survey, call 360-902-0045. Written comments may be mailed to: Fish Program Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, PO Box 43200 Olympia, WA 98504.

## CENSUS: District 2 up for election

FROM PAGE 1A

that outlined some of the problems the late Census data will create. Every 10 years voting district boundaries are set based on the Census data. Voting districts are supposed to be roughly equal in population.

Ordinarily, local jurisdictions receive Census data from the state Redistricting Commission in the spring and have eight months to redistrict. That gives time for the redistricting to be completed so that people can see what districts they live in and consider whether they want to run for office.

The census data was originally scheduled to be available to the state July 31, 2021, with counties and other local jurisdic-

tions receiving the data within 45 days after the state receives it. Local jurisdictions need time to receive local input and approve the redistricting.

Election filings take place the following May. Since Pend Oreille County Commissioner District 2, the seat held by Mike Manus, is up for election in 2022, that's important here, Nichols said. People may want to run and will need to know if they live in the district.

Pend Oreille County has 27 precincts that can have no more than 1,500 people in each district and Pend Oreille County doesn't have close to that many people in any one precinct, Nichols said. Precincts are the smallest voting district.

That's quite a bit fewer

than Okanogan County, which has 248 precincts. Still, Nichols said there are 67 different ballot combinations that can occur in Pend Oreille County between all the jurisdictions such as fire districts, school districts and other districts with elections. Defining district boundaries takes time.

County commissioners have the authority to set voting district boundaries, based on population, Nichols said.

She said that in Pend Oreille County it seems probable that Commissioner District 3, in the north county will continue to extend south. There is a precinct that encompasses both sides of the Pend Oreille River that could be changed, she said.

In addition, it appears that the 5th Congressional, represented by Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers may move west when the census data comes in.

According to the state constitution, Feb. 8, 2022 is the latest day the state Legislature can amend the Washington State Redistricting Commission's congressional and legislative district boundaries and May 2 is the last date county commissioners can adopt precinct boundary changes. Candidates must file for office shortly after that in May for the 2022 election cycle.

You can help end the COVID-19 pandemic.

Get vaccinated. It's FREE!

Schedule your vaccination, call 509-684-2262, option #4 or visit www.netchd.org



## Where to Join

**PRIEST RIVER AMERICAN LEGION #147**  
For God and Country  
VETS HELPING VETS  
Community Breakfast A.Y.C.E. \$6.00  
1st Saturday 8:00a.m. - 10:30a.m.  
Meeting follows at 11:00a.m.

**SOROPTIMIST OF NEWPORT**  
Meetings second and fourth Tuesday at noon  
PineRidge Community Church  
1428 W. First Ave., Newport  
Contact Micki Weisbarth  
509-671-2552  
www.facebook.com/siofnewport/

**OLDTOWN AMERICAN LEGION POST #155**  
VETS SUPPORTING VETS  
in the ID/WA area  
Meeting 2nd Saturday at 10:30 am  
Oldtown Rotary Park  
509-671-1057

**MILITARY SUPPORT GROUP**  
ALL Branches Welcome  
Meetings every 3rd Thursday of the month  
6 - 8 pm  
759 4th St., Priest River  
208-610-4152