



# KENT REPORTER

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## Kent School District to stay with drive-thru graduations

By STEVE HUNTER

shunter@soundpublishing.com

Kent School District leaders are sticking with the plan for drive-thru graduations despite a student protest and numerous emails and phone calls from parents and students asking for a more traditional ceremony.

Administrators discussed the graduation plans May 26 with the Kent School Board after 13 emails were read by staff requesting a change to use French Field or another outdoor venue rather than the drive-thru at four high schools as announced May 12 by

Superintendent Calvin Watts.

Kentridge High School senior Ally Haisch told the board she participated at a May 26 student rally at the district headquarters to request a change in graduation plans similar to what nearly every other district around Kent and beyond is doing. Auburn, Federal Way, Highline, Renton, Seattle and Tacoma are among the districts using outdoor stadiums.

"Listen to us and reconsider the plans for graduations," Haisch said in her email. "Why is Kent School District always last to do what is right for its

students?"

Haisch said it took a student rally to help persuade the district to allow athletic contests to return this spring after many other districts already had announced plans.

Haisch also testified at the May 12 board meeting about how students wanted to use the district's French Field next to Kent-Meridian High School as a venue.

Tami Perna told the board her online petition received nearly 400 signatures in favor of a more traditional ceremony at an outdoor venue. She said the

district could have used T-Mobile Park in Seattle and each student could have had five guests.

"Covid stole their senior year but you stole their graduation," Perna said.

Despite the pleas, drive-thru ceremonies it will be.

Israel Vela, the district's chief school operations and academic support officer, said at the board meeting that planning for graduations started last fall with high school principals. He said input from student leaders was gathered in January and February.

Vela said French Field was considered as an option, but

turned down because each graduate would only be able to get two tickets for family or friends to attend.

"We have a lot of multigenerational families and requests for more spectators," Vela said. "Without a large venue with at least six tickets per graduate, we decided school based was the best option for our diverse school district."

Vela said the accesso ShoWare Center, where graduations were held since 2009 prior to last year's drive-thru ceremonies

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## Kent couple celebrates 75th wedding anniversary

By STEVE HUNTER

shunter@soundpublishing.com

Roland Allen had a quick two-word answer when asked about the key to staying married for 75 years.

"Yes, dear," he said.

Bobbie (Barbara) Allen didn't quite catch her husband's response the first time. After she heard it, she replied right back.

"Liar, liar pants on fire," Bobbie said.

Roland and Bobbie Allen celebrated their 75th wedding anniversary on Monday, May 31 at Farrington Court Assisted and Senior Living in Kent. They were married in 1946 in Wichita, Kansas. Bobbie is 96. Roland is 95, 11 months younger than his wife.

"We are very blessed," Bobbie said during a May 27 interview at their apartment.

Bobbie explained why she believes their marriage has lasted so long.

"You have to love them a lot," she said. "Of course you're different people and you don't change each other. That's the whole secret."

Not that she hasn't tried to alter a few things.

"I'm still trying to change him though and it doesn't work," she said with a laugh.

Bobbie realizes many people no longer look at marriage the same way as she and her husband of 75 years.

"It seems like young people if things don't go just as they want, they get a divorce and will just get married again," she said. "It wasn't like that in our day. It's just a different world. If you got married, it was forever. You might disagree a little bit. That's just the way it is. You are two different people."

Maybe it's the banter and laughter between Roland and Bobbie that's kept them together.

Check out how they responded to a question about Roland's proposal. "I didn't propose," he said.

Roland hesitated to give further details.

"Well, if you're not going to tell the story, I will," Bobbie said with a chuckle.

They had dated for a few years and Roland had the engagement ring at his mother's house.

"We were at his mother's home, and she told him to go get it and show it to her and that's when I got an engagement ring," Bobbie said.

Roland said his mother asked him during that visit if he had purchased an engagement ring.

"I said certainly, 'Well when are you going to give it to her,'" his mother asked. "Well, I hadn't made up my mind yet."

But after Roland brought out the ring, they started talking about plans for a wedding.

They actually met their senior year of high school in Wichita, but didn't start dating until they each attended Wichita State University. Bobbie asked Roland to a college event called Haul your Man, and the rest is history.

"He had tried to get a date for quite a while," Bobbie said about Roland's interest in her. "I always had some other date. But he impressed me."

She's continued to be impressed by Roland.

"He's been very special," she said. "I lost a leg 54 years ago to cancer. I always wore a prosthetic until the last five years. He never ever let me think I had anything wrong with me. Everything was always just fine."

Bobbie didn't let the loss of a leg slow her down.

"I did my housework, I went to the grocery store, I raised our children," she said. "You kind of have to do what happens, you don't get a choice."



COURTESY PHOTO, ALLEN FAMILY

**Bobbie and Roland Allen were married May 31, 1946, making this year their 75th wedding anniversary.**



STEVE HUNTER, KENT REPORTER

**Roland and Bobbie Allen, of Kent, celebrated their 75th wedding anniversary on May 31.**

Roland served a couple of years in the U.S. Army and then took a job with Boeing at its Wichita plant building the B-47 and B-52 for the U.S. Air Force. In 1968, Boeing wanted Roland to move to Seattle.

"They said we want you here in Seattle," said Roland. "I said 'I don't want to go to Seattle (it was the first year after Bobbie lost her leg).' She was on her artificial leg."

But they moved.

"They made an offer you couldn't refuse," Roland said.

He ended up in Seattle working on the Boeing SST (Supersonic Transport) program for a few years. Congress dropped funding to the program in 1971. He was transferred to Renton to work on the 707 and 727 commercial airplanes.

The U.S. Postal Service recruited him in 1971 to Washington, D.C. to help start up what the government hoped would be a profit-making operation.

"The intent was the cost of delivering mail would be less than the

income the government could generate," Roland said.

But when the public subsidy to the Postal Service was eventually cut in 1981, Roland said he had enough of that job.

"The subsidy was zero so why stay there?" he said.

So he resigned and came back to Seattle to work again for Boeing until he retired in 1987.

The couple raised a son and two daughters. They moved to the Kent retirement center from their longtime home in Bellevue about 10 years ago to be closer to their son David Allen, who worked 32 years for Boeing prior to retiring. David Allen died in 2015 at age 63 from pancreatic cancer.

"It was hard to lose our son and we are still here," Bobbie said.

Daughter Audine (Dee) Holm lives in Glendale, Arizona and daughter (Debbie) Allen lives in Arlington,

about 50 miles north of Seattle. They also have three grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

The family had a 75th wedding anniversary party/lunch on May 31 at Farrington Court.

Bobbie uses a scooter to travel the long hallways at the retirement center. Roland can still walk but also will use a scooter to get around. Their dog Sophie typically rides on the front of Bobbie's scooter and has become sort of the retirement center mascot.

And while Sophie's mascot status might be in question, there's no doubt Farrington Court staff says that Roland and Bobbie are the longest married couple at the center, although a couple of others are in the low 70s.

When asked if they ever thought they would be married for 75 years, Bobbie had a simple answer.

"You never know," she said.

## Kent apartment rents increase 2.8% over the past month

By STEVE HUNTER

shunter@soundpublishing.com

Apartment rents in Kent were on the rise again in May.

Rents have increased 2.8% over the past month, and have increased significantly by 5.4% in comparison to the same time last year, according to the latest report from apartmentlist.com. Currently, median rents in Kent stand at \$1,356 for a one-bedroom apartment and \$1,735 for a two-bedroom.

This is the third straight month that the city has seen rent increases after a decline in February. Kent's year-over-year rent growth leads the state average of minus 0.1%, as well as the national average of 5.3%.

Throughout the past year, rent



COURTESY PHOTO, THE PLATFORM APARTMENTS

**The Platform Apartments in downtown Kent.**

increases have been occurring not just in the city of Kent, but across

the entire Seattle-Tacoma metro area, according to the report.

Redmond has the most expensive rents in the Seattle metro, with a two-bedroom median of \$2,294; the city has also seen rent growth of 3.8% over the past month, the fastest in the area.

Over the past year, Seattle proper has seen the biggest rent drop in the metro, with a decline of 9.8%. Median two-bedrooms there cost \$1,895, while one-bedrooms go for \$1,520.

Lakewood has the least expensive rents in the Seattle metro area, with a two-bedroom median of \$1,475; rents were up 2.1% over the past month and 10.5% over the past year.

As rents have increased significantly in Kent, other large cities nationwide have seen rents grow more modestly, or in some cases, even decline, according to the

report. Compared to most large cities across the country, Kent is less affordable for renters.

Rents increased sharply in other cities across the state. Rents have grown by 20.4% in Spokane and 12.8% in Vancouver.

Kent's median two-bedroom rent of \$1,735 is above the national average of \$1,165. Nationwide, rents have grown by 5.3% over the past year compared to the 5.4% increase in Kent.

While Kent's rents rose significantly over the past year, many cities nationwide saw decreases, including San Francisco (-14.3%), New York (-10.2%), and DC (-7.8%).

Renters will generally find more expensive prices in Kent than most large cities. For example, Spokane has a median 2BR rent of \$1,235.



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