

Your Independent Hometown Award-winning Newspaper

LA CONNER WEEKLY NEWS

VOL. 14 • NO. 42

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2022

www.laconnerweeklynews.com

\$1.25



A NEW LOGO FOR A NEW AGE - Swinomish artist Jeanette Quintasket holds the new Braves mascot she designed after the La Conner school board approved it at its Jan. 24 meeting. Behind her are board members John Agen, Lynette Cram, Susie Deyo and Amanda Bourgeois, from left. Superintendent Will Nelson is in back. — Photo courtesy of La Conner School District

School Board adopts new mascot

By Bill Reynolds

La Conner schools are big on tradition.

And the district's newest tradition promises to be among the most significant in school history.

The bright blue image of an eagle bearing an interlocking L and C, created by Swinomish artist Jeanette Quintasket, was introduced during the Jan. 24 school board meeting as the new La Conner Braves mascot.

The colorful icon reflects regional Coast Salish artistic imagery and replaces prior Braves graphics that for decades depicted Hollywoodish Plains Indians caricatures.

Formal recognition of Quintasket and introduction of her artwork highlighted a busy 80-minute session.

Her design is a striking symbol reflecting La Conner's cultural diversity and enduring status as "home of the

Braves." It was chosen from more than three dozen entries in a district-wide mascot design contest launched last fall.

The board also approved purchases of a portable, free-standing 2,300-gallon above ground fuel tank and new campus security cameras, reviewed cost estimates for upgrading the roof of the high school building and roof and siding at Landy James Gym, discussed the ongoing process for adopting a new district math curriculum, accepted a \$2,000 donation from the La Conner Rotary Club, heard correspondence from the North Puget Sound Association of Realtors announcing selection of the school district as a 2021 Citizen of the Year Award recipient and a letter from Coupeville resident Renae Mulholland praising the La Conner High cheer team and sponsors for their spirited support of Braves teams.

After adjournment, board members were treated to a dinner prepared by culinary arts students as part of school board recognition month. Then it was on to a community presentation on campus by motivational speaker Nathan Harmon.

Unveiling the new Braves mascot and honoring Quintasket at the outset of the board meeting set the tone.

The district acted on 2021 legislation Rep. Debra Lekanoff, D-Bow sponsored, giving local tribal governing bodies final say over use of Native American names, symbols or images to identify public school teams.

Last July the Swinomish Tribal Senate approved a resolution authorizing continued use of the name while tasking the district with developing a more authentic, less stereotypical mascot image.

JoAnn Self, La Conner softball coach, leaves legacy

By Bill Reynolds

Some people are aptly named. JoAnne Self was not.

Her friends – and there were many – insist the late La Conner school district staff member and coach was one of the most unselfish people they knew. Self died Jan. 8 in Sedro-Woolley.

Her giving nature was noticed.

The school district, appreciative of the various roles she filled there, years ago established an annual scholarship award in her honor to recognize those students who best emulate her example of selflessly contributing to the campus and community.

Whatever her assigned task – whether driving buses, preparing and serving food in the cafeteria, assisting students with research projects in the library or helping develop the softball program – she is remembered for having done so cheerfully and with no hesitation.

"I know she was loved by so many people," Suzy Lowry, one of her former players and later a caregiver, said of Self, who died at age 81 after an extended illness.

"She was amazing," said Lowry, "Every time I mentioned her name, people would say: 'Oh, I just love JoAnne.'"

Cherri Kahns, the district's executive assistant to the superintendent, knew Self as a neighbor, family friend, coach and life mentor.

"She was kind, sweet, supportive and full of encouragement," Kahns told the Weekly News. "She was a great softball player and coach, great mentor, on the quiet side, but very competitive on the softball field."

"She always displayed positivity and enthusiasm," Kahns added. "I had so much respect for her as a person, coach, athlete, mentor and friend. I always trusted her. JoAnne had the ability to inspire me to be the best player that I could be. She earned our trust by being fair, honest and challenging. She taught me so much about how to work together as a team both on and off the field. She held me accountable."

Those lessons have been lasting, insisted Kahns, who knew Self, her husband, Richard and sons Jim and Joe, since childhood.

"JoAnne was responsible for a lot of what I became foundationally," Kahns noted. "Her influence was tremendous."

Others concur.

"She was part-time mentor and coach and part-time mother figure," said Jenifer Bright, a 1980 La Conner High School graduate and, like others, coached by Self at the youth and high school levels.

"A lot of people don't know this, but JoAnne Self was instrumental in bringing girls' and women's softball to La Conner when there weren't any structured programs in place," Bright

recalled.

Bright, Kahns and Lowry retain fond memories of playing on the Pepsi youth teams she coached.

"We were rag-tag and rambunctious," recalled Bright, "but somehow she managed to get a district championship win out of our group. I remember riding in the 'Self-mobile' to the Chuck Wagon Drive-In in Mount Vernon after our big win. The Pepsi girls were hanging out of the car, whooping and yelling. It truly was a childhood highlight and made us all believe a little bit more in what we could achieve in life if we worked hard."

Self, a Sedro-Woolley native, coached La Conner youth teams along with Kahns' mom, Judy Iverson and their mutual friend, Janet Robison. She would later join with Lois Coonc to guide the newly minted La Conner High softball program.

Together Self and Coonc created a blueprint that would result in the Lady Braves earning post-season tournament berths through the decades.

"I remember her smile and laugh and how much she loved slow-pitch softball and all the girls that played for her," Peg Seeling, a retired La Conner teacher, coach and administrator, said of Self. "She had her kids well coached and they performed well."

As a coach, Self could certainly lead by example. Kahns remembers her as an integral part of a standout La

Town asks \$625,000 for library COVID-19 costs

By Ken Stern

La Conner Mayor Ramon Hayes led his dream team of advocates for \$625,000 in state funds for the new La Conner Swinomish Library figuratively through the halls of the state government last Thursday. Hayes coordinated 15 minute Zoom meetings with Joe Timmons, Gov. Jay Inslee's Northwest Washington Regional Outreach Representative and LD 10 Sen. Ron Muzzall and Reps. Greg Gilday and Dave Paul.

The governor and legislators understand the setbacks in construction projects from the coronavirus pandemic and associated schedule delays and cost increases in labor and materials, Hayes said. Library board co-chair Jim Airy pointed out that the time to receive all of the required permits increased from eight weeks to eight months. During this time, the cost of wood tripled and other construction costs increased significantly as well. As a result, every bid received was substantially higher than the construction budget.

Gilday, a member of the House Capital Budget Committee, has sponsored the House version of the funding request, part of the supplemental budget negotiations, staff member Kelley Payne wrote in an email. Supplemental budgets make minor adjustments to 2021's two-year budget. Muzzall is sponsoring the funding in the Senate's bill.

Hayes' assessment: "We are really in a fortunate position. We have had two rounds of funding already. It is being built and it is not the first project that has come to the legislature because of COVID. Had it not been for delays and increases due to the pandemic, the library would have been completed and operating last fall."

He said Timmons told the group that state COVID-19 emergency funds could also be explored.

Hayes said his message for Inslee was "this has been an extraordinary, unprecedented two years." That prompted Hayes to use the Association of Washington Cities lobby day to pursue the Town of La Conner's request for the La Conner Swinomish Library project. He had noted the governor's support last year for the Mount Vernon Commons project, with its library, community center and parking garage.

Hayes complemented the La Conner team, which by the last meeting included library director Jared Fair; library foundation director Susan Macek and Airy; town administrator Scott Thomas and Swinomish Senator Brian Wilbur.

The project met its \$3.74 million goal of being fully funded in 2019 based on \$1.20 million in two state of Washington allocations, \$500,000

(Continued on page 3)

Salmon bill adding habitat put on hold

By Bill Reynolds

On one issue, all in western Washington are agreed.

Saving wild salmon runs is a priority.

What is not clear cut, as testimony during a virtual State House of Representatives committee hearing indicates, is what sacrifices must be made, and by whom, to preserve Washington's signature migratory fish.

House Bill 1838, designed to protect salmon habitat areas, is a key element in Gov. Jay Inslee's \$187 million salmon recovery program. It is named the Lorraine Loomis Act for the late Swinomish fisheries director and chair of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission.

But the bill, introduced by Rep. Debra Lekanoff, D-Bow, the lone Native American member of the legislature, was pulled following the spirited Jan. 21 Committee on Rural Development, Agriculture & Natural Resources hearing, where repeated concerns were raised that it would take vital agricultural land out of production.

Tribal leaders and supporters of the legislation are regrouping to determine next steps.

The Weekly News has been told that a forthcoming statewide "Being Frank" column published by NWIFC will offer direction. The column is named after Nisqually environmental leader and treaty rights activist Billy Frank, Jr.

At issue is a provision calling for buffer zones along waterways – riparian habitat areas – for green, tree shaded corridors critical for the clear, cold water required by migrating salmon.

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OBITUARY



Roger Allan Robinson
1950 — 2022

Roger Robinson passed away peacefully of kidney cancer on Jan. 7, 2022, at his home perched above Rosario Beach near Anacortes, Washington, with his wife at his side. Their children spent Christmas with them, knowing it would be the last one with all four of them together.

Roger was born on Jan. 26, 1950 in Seattle, Washington. Growing up, he spent several weeks each summer with his grandmother in Anacortes, biking around town, taking swimming lessons at Cranberry Lake on Whidbey Island and helping Wally Funk at the Anacortes American. His grandmother encouraged Roger's artistic talent by enrolling him in art classes and introducing him to her artist friends.

When Roger was eleven, his family moved to Portland, Oregon, where his father took a new position with General Electric. Roger majored in business at Portland State University, where he met Jan Heald. They were married in 1978 at the Pilgrim Congregational Church in Anacortes, which his great-grandfather founded.

Just months after they were married, they purchased a house perched above Rosario Beach that his grandmother built, and spent weekends and holidays there. Roger's efforts to help save South Fidalgo Island began then and continued for 40 years.

Their son Roman was born in 1986 in Portland, and six years later the family moved to a small farm southwest of Portland, where Roman raised sheep and had two pet geese, Ozzie and Harriet. Their daughter AnnaLena was born at home a few months after they moved there. After seven years the family moved to Las Vegas and then back to Portland.

For most of Roger's career he imported fine tabletop glassware for mass markets. Often accompanied by Jan, he traveled on business to Europe and Asia, where over the years they made many lifelong friends.

Roger was first diagnosed with kidney cancer in 2002. Once Roger retired and their children were grown, he and Jan moved to Rosario Beach permanently, at Christmas 2013, into the house his grandmother built. His cancer returned in 2018, but he maintained a positive outlook throughout his illness. On Roger's bucket list was to celebrate the 50th anniversary of his and Jan's first date, on New Year's Eve of 1971, which he lived to do. He died peacefully at home.

Roger's family and many friends will remember him for his storytelling, sense of humor, candor, refinement and gratitude for his life. The world has lost a good soul, and he is greatly missed.

Preceding Roger in death were his parents Ralph and Jean (Paddock) Robinson, his brother Gregory Robinson, and three nephews.

Roger is survived by his wife Jan Heald Robinson; son Roman Robinson and daughter AnnaLena Robinson, both of Portland, Oregon; sisters Lori Nordlund (Brian) of Portland and Marilyn Smith of Green Bay, Wisconsin; and many beloved nieces, nephews, cousins, and in-laws.

To honor Roger's 40-year efforts to help save South Fidalgo Island, contributions may be made in his memory to Evergreen Islands (www.evergreenislands.org).

A celebration of Roger's life will be held in the spring. To share memories of Roger, please sign the online guestbook and bookmark this link for easy return visits: www.evanschapel.com/obituary/roger-robinson

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Laconnerweeklynews.com

Coach . . .(from page 1)

Conner women's softball team formed in the early 1970s and sponsored by Joe's Drive-In. "As a kid," Kahns said, "I would ride my bike down to the school to watch the Joe's Drive-In team play. They were real good. I would study the game and watch the players in awe – JoAnne, Lois, Lupe Guzman, Charlotte Grin and so many others."

"There were some great ladies on that team," said Bright. "Cherri and I played tournaments with them. They drug home a lot of softball hardware and we were along for the injury subs and baserunning. We were front and center to some great players and a period of time when women's sports in Skagit County were really ramping up."

Kahns had much the same experience as Bright when enlisted by Self to join the Joe's roster. "JoAnne always had faith in

me," Kahns said, "as a human being and especially as a softball player. When I was playing in high school, she asked Jenifer Alvord (Bright) and me if we wanted to play for their women's team. Oh, my gosh, my dream came true. This was the big leagues for me."

An avid reader, Self was an open book to the students and players in her charge. They say the way she carried herself was the positive example they needed to write fulfilling, new chapters in their lives.

"She changed my life forever," said Kahns. "My passion for the sport of softball grew and I continued to play softball for over 40 years."

Bright spoke for all who knew Self when asked to assess her legacy.

"I have so much respect for the kind and giving lady that JoAnne was," said Bright. "The world has lost a great lady."

Library . . .(from page 1)

from Skagit County, \$750,000 from the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community and local contributions of \$1.29 million.

The capital budget is negotiated and approved in each

legislative chamber and a final budget negotiated and passed by the Legislature in March. Payne noted requests total more than the (supplemental) funds available, writing "the biggest hurdle this year is the number of capital budget requests."

Get COVID-19 vaccine shots at county health offices

Skagit County Public Health COVID-19 vaccination services now include prime and pediatric vaccinations, as well as booster doses. Make an appointment at skagitcounty.net/COVIDvaccine or 360 416-1500.

Clinic hours are 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday-Thursday from 9:00 a.m. Address: 700 South Second Street, downtown Mount Vernon. Enter through the first floor elevator lobby and go to the third floor to check in.

The Skagit County Fairgrounds clinic is only for

COVID-19 antigen testing services. Testing is done on a drive-through basis and is first-come-first serve for those 5 years and older who live, work, or go to school in Skagit County, and who are symptomatic or have been recently exposed to COVID-19.

Hours are 12-7 p.m. Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Access at the south gate entrance, 501 Taylor Street, Mount Vernon. Fairgrounds site information: skagitcounty.net/coronavirus.

Get a Daffodil Festival Poster

March is around the corner. Get your La Conner Daffodil Festival poster promoting the month of flowers blooming and tourist activities now. Posters can be picked up at the La Conner Chamber of Commerce office. Posters are free for chamber members and \$3 to purchase.

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BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT
featuring . . . **Dr. Ashcraft**

Dr. Ashcraft grew up in the Skagit Valley and earned his undergraduate degree at Western Washington University.

He went to medical school at Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences in Yakima and completed his residency in family medicine at Skagit Valley Hospital.

His passion for medicine is fueled by his focus on preventative medicine, sports medicine, and pain management therapies that don't rely only on medications.

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A View From The State House

Dave Paul
State Representative
District 10

Helping military families, disabled veterans

It is clear that individuals and families need better options for long-term care. This is especially true in rural communities like ours, where people want the resources to age or take care of a loved one at home.

Private insurance used to be an option, but it is not affordable for most of us now. Worse, many plans do not cover pre-existing conditions.

This leaves families with terrible choices. Many spend their life savings, sell their homes and go into bankruptcy to pay for long-term care.

We even see couples married for over 50 years get divorced – not because they no longer love each other, but as a financial decision to avoid total ruin as they try to pay for long-term care.

That hits home for our family. Our own son had significant health issues when he was a baby. As my wife and I struggled with our own insurance coverage and mounting bills, one person suggested that we could divorce so that my wife would qualify for public assistance. That is just not right.

We can no longer accept our broken system for long-term care. We need to start helping families plan for their future so they can age in place, in their own homes. WA Cares provides a solution and that's why it is so important to make it a successful program and accessible for as many people as possible.

Since this is a new program – and the first of its kind in the nation – there are issues to fix, especially for military families, disabled veterans and other distinct groups.

Many military families retire outside of Washington state, so exempting them from the program makes sense. Servicemembers could already get an exemption; their spouses should have the same option.

Disabled veterans also already receive services at the federal level, so they should also be exempt from paying into WA Cares.

I listened to those concerns and introduced House Bill 1733 to support military families and veterans and worked to ensure the legislation was passed quickly.

I am happy to report this bill got an early vote on the floor and has already been signed into law.

On the same day this important legislation was passed out of the House, I voted for a companion bill, House Bill 1732, to extend the implementation of the WA Cares program by 18 months. Businesses will not have to collect premiums from workers during that time. We will use this extra time to make more improvements to the policy, including allowing people closer to retirement to collect the benefits. This delay also lets people get refunds on any prematurely collected premiums.

It has been an honor to meet so many members of the military, veterans and their families here in the 10th District. As the session progresses, I will keep you informed about important issues – and I'll keep listening and working with you, on common-sense reforms to make this a better place to live and work.

Rep. Dave Paul has worked in higher education for more than 20 years. He and his wife live in Oak Harbor with their four children.

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