

SOUTH WHIDBEY RECORD

SATURDAY, AUGUST 7, 2021

COVERING SOUTH WHIDBEY ISLAND, WASHINGTON • \$1.00



Social media, berry-laden scat back bear sightings

Department of Wildlife official says it's possible, but more likely coyote feces

By KIRA ERICKSON
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A South Whidbey man may have discovered the answer to the age-old question: Does a bear poop in the woods?

A pile of suspected bear scat and the sighting of a bear-shaped animal by a

teenage girl has people on social media speculating that a black bear may be roaming South Whidbey, though a wildlife official confirmed it's not the wandering male that made regional headlines a couple of years ago.

Ralph Downes, a state Department of

Fish and Wildlife enforcement officer, said a Forest Lane resident reported finding bear poop and sent a photograph to the department July 30.

While Downes acknowledged that the berry-laden excrement could indeed have come from a bear, he said it could

also have another origin — coyotes, being opportunists, will also consume berries.

"It might be a bear," he said. "It's not impossible, but it's not likely."

Downes added that the sample was

SEE SIGHTINGS, A10

Real estate prices still soaring

By JESSIE STENSLAND
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The average sales price of homes in Island County continued to skyrocket this summer even as competition for homes eased slightly in the county and the state, Northwest Multiple Listing Service reported.

Island County saw one of the biggest jumps in the state for the median price of home sales in July.

The price jumped from \$421,000 in July 2020 to \$570,000 this July.

That's a 35.39% increase. The greatest increase in the median cost occurred in Central Whidbey, where it jumped by 54% in a year.

The medium price of the 17 homes sold during July was a whopping \$650,000.

James Young, director of

SEE HOME SALES, A10



Photo by Michael Stadler

Relda White-Weagant plays Jacques in the Island Shakespeare Festival's rendition of "As You Like It." This season, the theater company opted to put on only one show.

Shakespeare Festival rises again

Performances continuing through Sept. 12

By KIRA ERICKSON
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Nearly two years since its last performance, the Island Shakespeare Festival is coming back to life in an abridged format for its 11th season.

The theater company opted to focus on one show this summer, "As You Like It," which

opened Aug. 6.

Artistic Director Olena Hodges said the play is a touchstone for the company, since it was performed at the first-ever Island Shakespeare Festival in 2010, and then again in 2016.

"As You Like It" is kind of our

flagship play, and our company is sort of built off of the themes of the play, such as finding empowerment in a rural setting," Hodges said.

Traditionally, actors have come from all over the country to be part of the festival. But for this year, the cast is

composed primarily of people from Whidbey Island, with the rest from the mainland and one from farther down the coast.

The fun runs until Sept. 12. Shows are at 6 p.m. Thursday through Sunday, with a family-friendly matinee at 2 p.m. on

SEE SHAKESPEARE, A2

Council urges mayor to recommend masking in downtown businesses

By KIRA ERICKSON
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Just two months after the withdrawal of its mask mandate, the city of Langley is now strongly encouraging businesses to require that their employees and customers mask up, even if vaccinated.

The recommendation, which does not

carry as much weight as the former mask mandate, originated during a city council meeting this week. It coincides with recommendations from health officials across the nation as cases of the COVID-19 delta variant have surged while many people remain unvaccinated.

Councilmember Christy Korrow pointed to recent cases of COVID-19 among employees at the Braeburn in downtown Langley and the Flowerhouse Cafe in Bayview as a cause for concern.

"It just made me think we should have

SEE MASKING UP, A10

Community hops into action to save life of bunny shot with arrow

By KIRA ERICKSON
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A photo on social media of a rabbit with an arrow piercing its skin turned heads this week.

Residents of the Brookhaven apartments in Langley were horrified to find a bunny of the local colony with a wickedly sharp, steel arrow lodged in its body.

SEE HOPPING INTO ACTION, A9



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MASKING UP

CONTINUED FROM A1

a discussion about it to make sure we're doing enough as a city to share information with the community," she said.

Councilmember Dominique Emerson said she knew of 16 people — all vaccinated but one — who recently contracted COVID-19. She did not specify whether those people lived in

Langley or not.

Councilmember Craig Cyr pointed out that Island County's vaccination rate is lagging behind other counties, such as King County.

"We're in trouble out here," he said. "Breakthrough cases are scary and the delta variant is so much more transmis-

sible."

Mayor Scott Chaplin said he would not be inclined to pursue a vaccine mandate, but he did support a recommendation for those at Langley businesses to mask up.

"I don't think we're out of the woods yet," he said.

Inge Morascini, executive director of the Langley Chamber of Commerce, said she did a survey and 25% of businesses have reinstated masking policies for customers. For employ-

ees, that number is 50 to 60% of businesses.

In a statement, she encouraged masking indoors.

Councilmember Thomas Gill agreed with her.

"I think we really should be encouraging indoor use, especially in businesses that don't have any space to distance, which is basically everybody in Langley," he said. "Much like we did last year, I think we're better safe than sorry."

Holly Price, co-owner of Edit,

said she brought back a mask requirement at her store when she saw the number of COVID-19 cases increasing recently.

"Businesses should not be, in my opinion, nervous about reinstating masks," she said.

In the end, the council members unanimously agreed that the mayor should issue a statement recommending the use of masks by both employees and customers at Langley businesses, despite vaccination status.

SIGHTINGS

CONTINUED FROM A1

not lab-tested, so there is no way to know for sure. Other people joining the bear frenzy have posted poop photos on Facebook, but he said they all appear to be from deer.

The could-be bear droppings may coincide with recent confirmed sightings of a young male black bear on Fidalgo Island a few weeks ago.

Downes described this bear as a bit of a recluse that hung out around forested areas of Anacortes. It was last seen near Campbell Lake.

"Truth is, you can only go so far east or west and if you want to keep walk-

ing, south's your direction," Downes pointed out.

It wouldn't be unheard-of for a bear to travel from Fidalgo to South Whidbey on a quest for companionship.

Downes confirmed that it is not the same as the "island-hopping" bear of 2019, whose lust for a partner took him to Fidalgo, Guemes, Cyprus, Blakely, Orcas, Shaw, San Juan, Lopez and Decatur islands before he was caught near Burlington and safely relocated.

If a bear on South Whidbey does exist, it likely won't be in the area for long.

"I assume if he was spending any time in an area, we'd probably get more reports," Downes said.

Ruby Bond, 16, said she was taking her dog on a run the morning of Tuesday, Aug. 3 when she saw what she described as a medium-sized, fluffy black bear.

She hasn't reported the sighting to Fish and Wildlife, so Downes was unable to comment on it.

Around 6 a.m. near Quigley Road, Bond's dog started to growl at something.

Bond turned around and couldn't believe what she saw.

"I got very stern, pointed my finger at the bear and repeatedly told it to go home and finally it ran off," she said. "My mom didn't believe it, even told me I needed glasses."

The creature she saw was "creeping up" behind her, about 15 feet away.



Photo provided
A Forest Lane resident sent this photo of scat to the state Department of Fish and Wildlife, which has confirmed that the droppings could belong to a bear — or a coyote.

August 13th Harold Haglund is Finally Retiring!

Harold has chosen the Holmes Harbor Rod and Gun club to celebrate. We are having 2 side dishes Lemon chicken and Beef Pot roast with veggies. Please feel free to bring a potluck dish. Put your name on the dish.

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Do you have any Harold stories you would like to share? Hope to see you there.

Come help Harold retire!



HOME SALES

CONTINUED FROM A1

the Washington Center for Real Estate Research at the University of

Washington, also compared the current real estate market to pre-pandemic statistics.

He noted that the prices in suburban counties and in those along the Interstate 5 corridor increased sharply in the last two years.

"Prices in Lewis County are up 54.2% from the July 2019 level, Snohomish County is up 40.6%, and Island County is up 44.3%," he wrote. "Skagit and Whatcom counties underperformed relative to these areas with median price increases of 36.4% and 38.4% respectively."

Young also noted that the number of new listings in the state increased in July 2021 from the same month in 2019. Island County echoed that trend.

Multiple Listing Service reported that the number of new listings has inched up slowly over the summer, but the total number of active listings is still 18% fewer in July 2021 compared to July 2020.

The number of closed sales increase by 9%, from 183 in July 2020 to 200 in July 2021.

"August historically is the last month of the year with elevated levels of new listings before they slowly taper down in the fall and decline more substantially over the winter," said J. Lennox Scott, chairman and CEO of John L. Scott Real Estate.

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WHIDBEY NEWS-TIMES

SOUTH WHIDBEY RECORD

Wednesday, August 11, 2021

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Black bear presence confirmed on South Whidbey

Photograph making rounds on social media

By KIRA ERICKSON
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A state official has changed his tune about the existence of a bear who scared a teenager and left behind a pile of berry-laden excrement on South Whidbey.

Ralph Downes, a state Department of Fish and Wildlife enforcement officer, was initially skeptical about the claim, but a photo circulating on a Whidbey community Facebook page convinced him that a black bear visited South Whidbey for what might be the first time in 50 years.

The photo, which was reportedly taken near Deer Lake in Clinton, shows a slightly plump black bear that appears to be sniffing around a backyard, mere feet away from a patio table and chairs.

"Assuming no one's doing a Photoshop trick, that picture of that bear is real," Downes said.

The photo was shared on social media Saturday morning. As of press time, Downes said he hasn't heard any other reports of a bear in the area since then.

A teenage girl reported to the *South Whidbey Record*

SEE ISLAND BEAR, A3

Spate of officers leaving Whidbey

By JESSIE STENSLAND
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The two largest law enforcement offices on Whidbey Island are facing the loss of significant numbers of commissioned officers this year.

At the same time, police reforms in the state are making the job more com-

plicated and confusing, which may have contributed to some of the staffing issues.

Oak Harbor Police Chief Kevin Dresker recently told city council members that the department will lose eight to 10 officers — in a department of 28 commissioned officers — from May of this year until June of next year. Four or five of the

officers will have left by the end of August.

For some of the officers, the significant changes in laws regarding policing this year were "a piece" of the reason they are leaving the department or law enforcement altogether, Dresker said.

"These changes do have a cost and they

SEE LEAVING, A7



Photo by Karina Andrew/Whidbey News-Times

Priscilla Lowry pours beeswax candles in different shapes and patterns. This year is her first time exhibiting at the Coupeville Arts and Crafts Festival.

Coupeville A&C Fest returns — with pandemic adjustments

By KARINA ANDREW
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A scaled-back arts and crafts festival is returning to Coupeville this weekend.

Whidbey residents can enjoy this coalescence of the vibrant local art scene from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 14 and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday, Aug. 15 on Front Street and

surrounding streets in Coupeville.

Organizers are excited to be up and running after last year's festival was canceled due to the pandemic, but they are still making the safety of guests and vendors a top priority.

The festival will feature work by 114 local artists — about a 33% decrease from a regular year.

Festival Board President Deborah

O'Brien said fewer artists are participating this year to allow for social distancing. The booths must be spaced 10 feet apart instead of side by side.

There will also be less food this year, with seven vendors attending instead of the typical 11.

O'Brien said some of the festival's regulars went out of business during the

SEE A&C FESTIVAL, A2

Trial delayed for suspect in fiance's murder

By JESSIE STENSLAND
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The trial of a woman accused of stabbing her fiance to death last fall has been delayed until December so that the defense attorney can obtain another expert consultant.

Ilene M. Erwin, a 39-year-old Oak Harbor resident, is facing a charge of murder in the second degree, a domestic violence crime with a deadly weapons enhancement, in the Island County Superior Court case.

Erwin is accused of killing Ryan A.

Crumal at a Crosby Avenue home during an island-wide power outage on Nov. 13, 2020.

Erwin's attorney, Matt Montoya, previously obtained a judge's approval of payment for services at public expense in

SEE CONSULTANT, A2

Oak Harbor absent from sewage treatment awards

By JESSIE STENSLAND
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Three sewage treatment plants on Whidbey Island were

recognized by the state for achieving full compliance with their water quality permits in 2020.

By far the newest of the plants on the island, Oak Harbor's state-of-the-art, \$150 million facility was not among the top

performers because of several problems the city self-reported to the state.

SEE AWARDS, A2



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Coders create alternative apps for ferry service

By KIRA ERICKSON

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Ferry riders with a knack for coding have created websites and apps dedicated to navigating one of the state's most scenic routes of travel.

Although the Washington State Department of Transportation has an app with a section dedicated to the ferry system, some have found the app to be lacking a few important features and have set out to create their own version.

Ansel Santosa, a Clinton resident who currently commutes to work in Seattle, created the website Ferry FYI a few years ago after moving to Whidbey Island.

The website relies on Washington State Ferries data, such as information about the sailing schedule and its delays, the capacity of boats and their GPS coordinates on the water. The data is publicly available at no cost.

"That's really generous of them and that's the thing that enables this to work," Santosa said of the ferry system.

In creating Ferry FYI, Santosa was hoping to build a simple website that was "cleaner and easier to use" but also provided additional info, such as predictions about how full a boat will be.

His website does have information for every route in the system. However, Santosa has focused on fine-tuning some features exclusively for the Clinton-Mukilteo route, which he uses most often.

"For our route where we have no reservations and the boat runs every 30 minutes, we don't care if it's late much," he said.

"What you really care about is how many people are in line."

Upon clicking the camera logo on the toolbar near the bottom of the website page, users will find an estimation of cars between ferry cameras for the Clinton-Mukilteo route. Santosa did this by looking at maps and estimating the average size of an American car, but he's hoping to someday make a more accurate prediction of line length by using computer vision, a field of artificial intelligence.

Since the website has been running for a few years, historical data has allowed it to forecast how busy routes will be. This is another feature that the WSDOT app does not have.

Besides its website format, Ferry FYI can be installed for free as an app on the home screen of both Apple and Android phones.

"It's a fun thing to build and I feel like it's useful to people, and it costs me next to nothing to run it," Santosa said.

If people enjoy using Ferry FYI, they can consider making a donation to Ballydidean Farm Sanctuary, which Santosa and his wife own.

A denizen of another island has also been working on a similar project, but exclusively in app format.

Jordan Soltman, a Vashon Island resident, has been working on FerryFriend for nearly a decade.

"My main focus was to create something that was extremely easy to use and sort of brings together all of the state data in a format that is much easier to understand, especially for people who are new to the ferries," he said.



Photo by Kira Erickson/South Whidbey Record

Clinton resident Ansel Santosa developed Ferry FYI, a website that uses data from WSDOT as well as a few of his own features, including predictions about how full a certain boat will be.

Soltman's app focuses more on route delay predictions, using an algorithm he developed on his own.

This is an issue Soltman found specific to the Vashon-Fauntleroy route, which he takes to get to the mainland.

FerryFriend stores tickets, as well as route reservations and a more digestible format of the ferry schedule.

Soltman intends to keep the app free, although he might implement a donation model at some point to help cover the costs.

"I hate advertising so much,

more than anything," he said. "I want it to be free, I want it to be accessible to everyone."

Currently the app, which has been downloaded over 16,000 times, is only available on Apple's operating system. Soltman and a small team are working together to develop a version for Android. He expects that it will be ready around October.

Santosa said he was inspired by Soltman's rendition of an app for the ferry system.

"Ever since I discovered Jordan's app a couple weeks ago, I've been more interested

in adding some features and updates," Santosa said, adding that Soltman's feature for scanning and saving tickets is an amazing idea. "His app is super cool."

Although it's outside of his comfort zone since he mostly works with developing websites, Santosa said he might some day consider making an app version of Ferry FYI.

Future updates to Ferry FYI may include better line predictions, a personalized alert notification system and a way to look at future sailing schedules.

State representative secures funds for wharf substructure

By KARINA ANDREW

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State Rep. Dave Paul secured \$320,000 in the 2021 state capital budget for the Port of Coupeville to upgrade the wharf's deteriorating substructure.

According to a blog post on his web-

page, Paul worked to earmark the funds for the project after meeting with Port Commissioner David Day and learning about the wharf's maintenance needs. Though the Port already had funds for other projects, such as replacing the roof on the wharf building, Paul felt the

substructure needed to be prioritized.

"If we don't fix the substructure, the roof's not going to matter. The structure could fall into the water," he said. "They didn't have enough money for that, so we wrote that into the capital budget."

The money will be used to replace and

restore degrading piles, which are the beams that jut up from the water to hold up the wharf structure. Port executive director Chris Michalopoulos said many of the piles are rapidly approaching the end of their lifespans, if they haven't sur-

SEE WHARF, A7

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Screenshot provided

A photo circulated widely on social media shows a black bear in the backyard of a South Whidbey residence.

ISLAND BEAR

CONTINUED FROM A1

that she saw a bear-shaped animal on Aug. 3 while jogging and couldn't believe her eyes. A few days earlier, on July 30, a Langley resident reported finding bear scat and sent a photograph to the department.

Downes confirmed last week that the poop could belong to a bear, but at the time suggested it may be more likely to belong to a coyote. But he also suggested that the suspicious pile might coincide with sightings of a young male black bear on Fidalgo Island.

After reviewing the reports and looking at the photographs, Downes said he now believes the bear on South Whidbey is real, but isn't the same one spotted near Anacortes. The Fidalgo bear appears to be younger. It was last seen near Campbell Lake Aug. 3, just four days after the South Whidbey droppings were found.

"The Whidbey bear is a little chunkier," Downes said. "I don't know if he's older, but he's certainly better fed."

He surmised that the two bears are young males "both doing what teenage boys do," which means searching for companionship and snacking along the way. Downes pointed to the approaching black bear mating season as the reason the bears may have roamed so far from their usual homes in the forested areas of the mainland.

"I don't think this is the beginning of a bear (living) on Whidbey," Downes said.

"I think he's just passing through and looking for some stuff. I think he's going to get tired of it and scam."

There is no plan in place currently to trap and relocate the wandering Whidbey bear, but if his behavior were to take a turn for the worse that could change.

Right now, Downes said the lone ursid is remaining out of sight, which may be why there haven't been more sightings or more photographs of him.

Over the past 50 years, Downes hasn't been aware of any other bears on South Whidbey. Two years ago, a bear came to Whidbey Island on a similar quest for a mate but did not travel farther south than the Coupeville area.

Downes speculated that the occurrences of young males making the swim over from the mainland could be due to a statewide increase of the bear population. Citizens of the state voted in favor of an initiative in 1996 that banned private hunters from using bait, hounds or traps to kill bears.

Instructors from the Center for Wildlife Studies, a nonprofit organization promoting wildlife conservation and education, advised that people who encounter a black bear should not feed it. If it becomes "food conditioned" and familiar with humans, then that could result in a dangerous bear.

"A black bear is not inherently dangerous, but people shouldn't get themselves in a position where they are very close, as the bear might get nervous and swat," said Dave Garshelis, one of the nonprofit's instructors.

INSIDE THIS EDITION
Bamboo business is growing... A3

SOUTH WHIDBEY RECORD

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2021

COVERING SOUTH WHIDBEY ISLAND, WASHINGTON • \$1.00

Tracks indicate bear may still be on island

BY KIRA ERICKSON
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The South Whidbey bear that has earned the nickname “Whidbey the Pooh” on social media appears to be sticking around longer than expected — although he is not likely the culprit for all the berry-laden

scat that has been photographed over the past two months.

An image containing what looks like bear tracks in the sand was sent Sept. 15 to Ralph Downes, an enforcement officer for the state Department of Fish and Wildlife. The photo was taken on the shore near Brighton Beach Road, about half

a mile up the coast from the Clinton ferry terminal.

Downes said he has been surprised that the ursid, who is suspected to be a young male black bear, has not yet left the island since it is getting toward the end of mating season.

“They have minds of their own. The same thing could be

said about Bruiser,” he said, referring to a bull elk that lives on North Whidbey. “I’m really surprised that he’s been with us for nine years.”

Downes is confident, however, that the Whidbey bear will not join the lonely elk in becoming a permanent fixture of the island and will soon be making a return

to the mainland when his search for companionship is exhausted.

That hasn’t stopped excited residents from emailing Downes nearly two dozen suspected bear poop photos, more than he’s ever received before. Within the space of a few days, he’s re-

SEE BEAR, PAGE 7

Parks, Rec district hopes for share of stimulus windfall

By KIRA ERICKSON
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South Whidbey Parks and Recreation District officials are hoping to get a healthy slice of Island County’s coveted federal stimulus dollars.

The county received \$16.8 million through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, which is a \$1.9 trillion economic stimulus bill intended to speed the nation’s recovery from the economic and health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the Municipal Research and Service Center, the money can be spent on a broad range of things, such as “necessary investments in water, sewer or broadband infrastructure.”

The majority of the money the county received remains unspent; however, the board of county commissioners has been discussing ways to effectively use the funds.

SEE PARKS, PAGE 5



Photo provided

Peaceful Valley Learning Center students learn in outdoor and indoor settings.

Learning center takes school to the farm

By KARINA ANDREW
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South Whidbey gained one more option this year for parents looking to give their children a nontraditional school experience.

As a result of a collaboration between multiple residents, Peaceful Valley Learning Center was able to hold its first day of school Sept. 13.

Peaceful Valley founders Courtney Alampi and Rachel Phillips first had the idea for the learning center last year. Through her experiences with various South End schools, Alampi discovered she liked certain aspects of each

one, but none of them exactly suited her family’s needs. Other parents she spoke with felt the same way.

Before the pandemic, however, forming her own learning center was never in her plans.

“If you’d asked me ever in my life that I was going to open a school of any kind, I would have laughed at you,” she said.

As her daughter and a few other students met in Alampi’s garage for school during COVID-19 shutdowns, however, she realized the small, home-based group had a nice rhythm to it.

Alampi, Phillips and the other parents cre-

ated a vision for an integrated education that provides nature-based experiences, creative outlets, social and emotional learning opportunities and strong academics.

“We’re not going to be perfect for everybody, but we’re going to be perfect for the people we’re perfect for,” Alampi said.

Learning center students are enrolled at the public school through the South Whidbey Alternative Learning Experience program, similar to how typical home-schooled students operate. Instead of learning separately in their

SEE SCHOOL, PAGE 5

Towers, Erickson vie for fire board position

By KIRA ERICKSON
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When Frank Mestemacher decided not to seek re-election for his seat on the board of commissioners for South Whidbey Fire/EMS, his position garnered little attention at first.

That is, until last month, when two candidates filed for it during Island County’s special filing period.

Jim Towers, a former firefighter with the district, and Savannah Erickson, a former Federal Emergency Management Agency spokesperson, are vying for the seat on the fire district board.

Both candidates said they



Erickson

were initially hesitant to run. But over the summer, after thinking things through, they decided to throw their hats in the ring.

Towers was a volunteer firefighter for 35 years who, despite his retirement from the dis-



Towers

trict last month, did not yet feel ready to sever his connection with South Whidbey Fire/EMS.

“I would bring a knowledge of the fire service and how it works, what it needs,” he said.

Although he’s never run for

office before, the naval architect has served on management boards for at least three private companies, including the one he works for currently.

“I know pretty much what the board members are expected to do,” he said.

Erickson, who is now an entrepreneur, spent over a decade responding to large-scale disasters in her previous career as a communications person for FEMA.

“That experience took me across the country serving on major disaster operations, from earthquakes to flooding to hurricanes,” she said.

This is also her first time seek-

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BEAR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ceived photos from various locations around Whidbey, from Coupeville to Clinton.

"If you tracked the bear by the berry scat, it would be a track star running up and down the island," he said.

And there are other critters who consume berries that could be responsible for the droppings. Downes pointed out previously that coyotes, being oppor-

tunists, will go for berries. Deer also enjoy berries. Downes explained that deer scat will take on a lot of different shapes and sizes throughout the year.

The South Whidbey bear continued to make himself scarce and has not caused any issues that Downes is aware of. He surmised that the bear will soon leave the island by the same way it found it — by swimming.

"Perhaps it walks to the water's edge from time to time and ponders, as a bear must, how long is that swim?" he said.



Photo provided

This photo of bear tracks on the beach was captured near Randall Point in Clinton last week.

Pumpkin pie in the sky



Photo by John Fiske

A harvest moon loomed in the sky over Whidbey Island this week. The full moon closest to the autumn equinox is called a harvest moon because it was a sign of yore that it was time to reap crops, according to the Farmer's Almanac. It appears to be orange and larger than usual because it is closer to the horizon.

Health officials urge residents to get flut shots

With the arrival of fall, Island County Board of Health officials are urging families to get their flu vaccinations starting in October.

While flu activity was relatively low last season, there is a greater risk of flu transmission this year as COVID-19 guidelines are eased. To pre-

vent a combination of flu and COVID-19 cases from overwhelming medical providers, health officials recommend that residents visit their doctor's office, pharmacy or clinic event in your area to receive this year's flu vaccine.

For information about

where to get a flu shot, go to www.vaccinefinder.org or call the Help Me Grow Washington hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

In the state, all children under age 19 receive flu and other recommended vaccines at no cost. A provider may charge an ad-

ministration fee to give the vaccine, but a patient may ask that the fee be waived if you cannot afford it. Also, most insurance plans, including Medicare Part B, cover the cost of the vaccine for adults.

Flu shots will be available through early spring.

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