



A PERFECT PARADE ON A PERFECT DAY – Everything a parade needs: kids, dogs in and out of wagons, flags, lots of farm tractors and, essential, spectators. The July 4th parade tradition returned to La Conner Sunday after a year's absence. Pandemic? What pandemic? Barely a mask was worn. – Photo by Ken Stern

## La Conner school board student reps were 'A' contributors

By Bill Reynolds

Recent La Conner High School graduates MacQuaid Hiller and Avery Sloniker enjoyed one last hurrah last week as they closed out their school careers here before taking the next step on their life's journey.

Hiller and Sloniker, graduated June 18 in commencement exercises at Whittaker Field, but were recognized by the school board June 28 for serving as student representatives during a year marked by on-line and hybrid instructional models employed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Board members expressed appreciation for Hiller's and Sloniker's service, thanking them for filling the crucial liaison role linking district leadership and the La Conner high student body.

"Having students participate on the board has been a good opportunity to integrate student voice

into the school board meetings," said La Conner Middle School-High School Counselor Lori Buher.

Hiller, the student body president this past year, facilitated book reviews for board members as they studied sources addressing race and equity issues prior to formulating district policy.

"He was a very positive force during a very challenging year," Buher said of Hiller.

Sloniker made her presence felt, too, said Buher.

"Avery, as always, stepped forward when others stepped back, even while attending Running Start and working part-time," said Buher.

Buher said it makes practical sense to have student leaders serve as representatives on the board since school is a place where young people are educated to become citizens of a democr-

ic society.

"It gives student leaders insight into the reasoning behind decisions that are made by the board," Buher noted. "The more information students have, the better they are able to address student concerns regarding school policies and procedures."

The board last week also welcomed new student reps Delaney Cobbs and Eleanor Drews, who were appointed for 2021-22 after completing a formal application process, including interviews coordinated by board member John Agen.

"Delaney," Buher said, "has always been a motivated student. She is a scholar, an athlete, and focused on a bright future."

Cobbs, a skilled wrestler, competes at elite national youth tournaments. She trains and wrestles with 2A Burlington-Edison during the season since La Conner does not have a mat program.

Drews likewise has impressive credentials, said Buher.

"I served as advisor to our Green Club this past year and found Eleanor, as co-president, to be a strong leader with the ability to listen thoughtfully and problem solve effectively," Buher said.

La Conner Schools officials maintain that one way to nurture democratic citizenship is to involve and engage students in the governing process of the school board. Though non-voting members, input from the student representatives is sought during each board session.

While it might seem a logical and routine function in La Conner, the concept of school board student representation is fairly rare nationwide.

About half of the 50 states report having student representatives on their school boards. But that does not mean that 50 percent of American school boards empanel students. According to a National School Boards Association survey, less than 20 percent of the country's 500 largest school districts have student membership on their boards.

La Conner does it the right way, Buher insists.

"The ultimate goal, in my mind, is to assist our students in becoming informed community participants after graduation."

## La Conner born diaper bank adopted by United Way

By Bill Reynolds

For five years, the Diaper Bank of Skagit County has been their baby.

Now Shelter Bay residents Calista and Dean Scott have adopted it out to be part of the United Way family.

All parties are happy with the new arrangement.

"We're very pleased an organization like United Way of Skagit County saw the value to keep it going," Dean Scott told the Weekly News June 28, the day before formally turning the rapidly growing diaper bank over to a nonprofit network known for investing in a wide range of community needs.

At its inception, the Scotts distributed about a dozen diapers a day. Today, the diaper bank gives away about 25,000 diapers each month, an almost 70-fold increase. It has not been uncommon for the couple to have thousands of neatly wrapped and labeled diapers stored inside their home.

"About 10 months ago," said Dean Scott, "we saw that the demand was such that we either had to get bigger or get adopted by a large agency."

"We're glad United Way saw the need and is taking over," he said.

It was Calista Scott who initially saw the need to make diapers available to low-income families in Skagit County.

"She's a retired maternity nurse and started helping at the La Conner Sunrise Food Bank," Dean Scott explained. "That's when she became quite surprised at the number of young moms who would come in and ask about diapers. She just couldn't get that off her mind."

The seed was further nurtured when the Scotts heard a feature story aired on National Public Radio addressing the issue, especially in terms of how the expense of diapers can significantly impact young parents at a time when their earning and purchasing power is at its lowest.

Lack of diapers can also put mental stress on families and in many cases deny them daycare services, the Scotts learned.

Then came attendance at a national conference in Seattle,

which allowed Calista Scott to dive deeper into the diaper need cause.

"She hasn't been the same since," Dean Scott chuckled.

Calista Scott reached out to Soroptimists of La Conner, representatives of the WIC (Women, Infant, Children) Supplemental Program and other agencies. She introduced research collected during her nursing career indicating that children having to wear dirty diapers for extended periods were found to suffer cognitive learning delays.

The Scotts even went to Olympia to raise awareness among state lawmakers.

Local support was immediate. And, thus, the Diaper Bank of Skagit County was born.

Like a well-fed and nurtured infant, it grew. And grew. And grew.

The Scotts partnered with several entities, among them the Community Action and National Diaper Bank networks. The Children's Museum in Burlington stepped up to donate space to store diapers that were purchased online from donations raised by area churches and service organizations.

The Scotts have dedicated themselves to helping reinforce the fact that diapers are a necessity for families whose children are three years old or younger. That expense can put a major strain on a young family's budget, said Dean Scott.

"It can be tough when you're having to pay the rent, buy groceries, fix the car and clothe children," he said. "Diapers can take up a big part of their income."

Dean Scott said his wife's love of moms and babies has driven a passion that has become infectious throughout Skagit County. United Way has caught the bug, too.

"We knew we couldn't do it forever," Dean Scott said of the diaper bank mission. "So, we began looking for somebody to take it on."

That "somebody," starting July 1, is United Way, which – like the Scotts – is devoted to "improving lives by mobilizing the caring power of our community to advance the common good."

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