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Winter coat drive starts September 1

BY GRACE MCCARTHY

With cooler weather on the horizon, Community Assistance Program (CAP) and Interfaith Coalition are asking residents to donate new or used winter coats to keep their fellow community members warm this winter. The coat drive will start September 1 and run until the end of the month.

“Many families in our community rely on the coat drive to supply them with the warm items they need to get through the warm winter months,” said Amee Nelson, CAP winter coat drive director.

Clean new or gently used coats, hats, gloves, socks and blankets for adults and children will be accepted. The coat drive is especially looking for XXL, XXXL and toddler sizes this year.

The annual coat drive will have several drop-off locations this year: Blaine Library, Pacific Building Center at 2677 Bell Road, the Birch Bay Village golf pro shop, and many local churches. CAP volunteers are adding more drop-off sites that will be updated on the CAP website, blainecap.org.

CAP is a nonprofit made up of local churches that provides assistance to Blaine, Birch Bay, Custer and Point Roberts residents through annual programs such as the coat drive and Thanksgiving baskets.

In 2020, the community donated 383 coats and 341 of those were given out, Nelson said.

Volunteers will distribute the coats
(See Coat drive, page 13)

Home Farm offers activities throughout the fall



▲ Home Farm U-Pick & Events co-owner Bridgette DiMonda picks sunflowers for a bouquet at her Kickerville Road farm. The family farm offers a year-round farm stand with fresh produce and fruit, as well as weekend summer markets with artisan vendors from across Washington. Their market on Saturday, August 28 will feature 40+ vendors and music. Read more on page 6.

Photo by Emily Feek

All students to return to classrooms full time; but vaccines for teachers, masks for all

BY IAN HAUPT

About 50 parents and community members assembled outside of the Blaine High School cafeteria to protest governor Jay Inslee’s mask mandates and encourage the Blaine school board to resist them. While not all of them spoke during the public comment portion of the August 23 board meeting, the majority of those in attendance opposed masks and vaccinations.

Before the meeting started, board president Charles Gibson addressed the bitter crowd. Interruptions and heckles were frequent.

“We want to be able to communicate your concerns to those who can do something about this,” he said. “We are elected officials; we have certain limitations we have to adhere to. We cannot change the law.”

Gibson added if the board and adminis-

tration do not comply with the governor’s orders, the district will lose funding.

State mandates

With two weeks until the start of the 2021-22 school year and rapidly increasing case rates and hospitalizations throughout the state, Inslee issued a mandate requiring all state educators and support staff to be fully vaccinated and required staff and students, regardless of vaccination status, to wear a mask in public indoor settings.

Under the governor’s proclamation, all K-12 educators, school staff, coaches, bus drivers, school volunteers and others working in school facilities are required to be fully vaccinated by October 18. To do so, educators who are not yet vaccinated will have to get their second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, or the only dose of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, by October 4 to be in compliance.

Washington is the first state to implement such a mandate without a testing alternative, as Inslee said such options were proven to be ineffective in preventing Covid-19 infection.

Individuals with legitimate medical reasons and sincerely held religious beliefs can seek an exemption under the new proclamation, he said. Exemptions do not include personal or philosophical objections. Students do not have to get vaccinated, regardless of age.

Under the governor’s orders, all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, will also have to wear a mask indoors, which means students and teachers will have to mask up this fall.

“We should not shut down our economy again. We should not shut down our

(See School, page 4)

Asian giant hornet nest found in east Blaine

BY GRACE MCCARTHY

Scientists found an Asian giant hornet nest in east Blaine August 19, a quarter of a mile from where the first hornet of 2021 was spotted nearly a week earlier near H Street Road. The nest is the first to be found in the U.S. in 2021.

The nest will likely be eradicated this week after the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) fine-tunes its eradication plan, according to WSDA.

“We believe it’s too early in the season

for reproductive [hornets] to emerge so there’s no risk or very, very little risk of new queens emerging from the nest at this point,” WSDA public engagement specialist Karla Salp said in a video statement.

The agency is taking time to gather more information, such as using a thermal camera to find out if the hornets are traveling into the ground or up the tree, which will determine how they eradicate the nest. Scientists will eradicate the nest similar to last year, with the hornets vacuumed and then the nest sealed and removed, Salp said.

WSDA, Oregon State Department of Agriculture (ODA) and USDA’s Animal Plant Health Inspection Service started searching the area where the nest was suspected at 7:30 a.m. August 19. Scientists spotted the nest two hours later.

Scientists found the nest after attempting to track three hornets with a radio tag between August 11 and August 17. Only one hornet led scientists to the nest.

Researchers found the nest more quickly

(See Hornets, page 4)

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