

Guest KPMS reporter writes
about student's journey
to Mexico, PAGE 10

The voice of the
Key Peninsula



Peninsula KEY NEWS

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Goodbye, Santa!



Photo by Rodika Tollefson

Mary Ramsdell aka Mrs. Claus helps her husband get ready for a neighborhood visit.

Santa and Mrs. Ramsdell take a bow after 30 years

By Rodika Tollefson
KP News

Fred and Mary Ramsdell have been the Key Peninsula's most popular people at Christmas-time for many years. Known better as Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus during that time of year, they have braved windstorms, rain, sleet and snow to ride around neighborhoods, bringing along cheer, hugs and candy canes.

The years have transformed the landscape — new subdivisions popped up, streets got paved and the roads filled with cars — and changed the faces of neighborhoods as kids grew up and second- or third-generation lap sitters came out to greet Santa. And as

much as the neighborhoods could count on new homes going in and roads getting more crowded every year, they could count on Santa Ramsdell coming along, rain or cold, to wish them a Merry Christmas.

In December, the cheerful sleigh rides around the Key Peninsula were bittersweet. By this time next year, Fred and Mary will trade the chilly Northwest weather for sunny days in Hawaii. After three decades, their December 2005 Santa act was the last one.

The news hasn't escaped many "regulars" who have been waiting outside their homes every year to greet the couple. As they drove their routes for the last time, the Ramsdells received many well-wishes and even tears, hearing many times over they will be missed.

"I just want to wish Santa and Mrs. Santa a good flight over Hawaii next

(See **SANTA**, Page 20)

Skateboard park gets county funding

By Rodika Tollefson
KP News

A proposed Key Peninsula memorial skateboard park will get a funding boost this year, following a \$100,000 appropriation by Pierce County for this year's budget.

Chuck West, who is spearheading efforts to build the park in memory of his son, Zech, and daughter-in-law, Adrienne, said he knew there was a possibility for some funding but was nonetheless a little surprised to see it.

The money could be used for matching funds from the state or other grants for the project, estimated to cost between \$250,000 and \$300,000.

Councilman Terry Lee, who

(See **WEST**, Page 6)

KP fair's new director has fun in store for July

By Chris Fitzgerald
KP News

From all appearances, Mary Graves is the perfect ambassador to represent the Key Peninsula Community Fair's best interests as it continues to grow. She is a cheery woman in a cotton candy pink jacket with a hearty laugh that bubbles up often. She's an inventive woman who, as a newcomer to Poulsbo (from Kent) 18 years ago, saw a need and filled it by establishing a community-based business welcomed by homeowners and developers alike.

Beginning then with her own unfamiliarity with service locations for auto licensing, reliable tradespeople, library, etc., she made a list, then shared it with

(See **GRAVES**, Page 13)

KPCS plans accounting audit

By Rodika Tollefson
KP News

The Pierce County Council has allocated a total of \$27,500 in funding for the Key Peninsula Community Services in 2006, including a \$12,500 grant from last year that has been rolled over. Councilman Terry Lee, who has requested the funding, last year put a hold on the funding disbursement following allegations regarding accounting discrepancies and other problems at KPCS.



LEE

Lee said the funding is still on hold but would be released once the nonprofit organization conducts an independent audit. Part of the county funding would be used to reimburse KPCS for that audit, which is estimated to cost between \$4,000 and \$6,000.

“I think that (the audit) will provide the level of comfort they need for their contributions,” Lee said. “Several community members said they want to contribute if the audit is successful.”

Sally Nixon, manager of the county’s Aging and Long-Term Care division, said the audit requirement is in the KPCS’ funding contract for 2006 and should be conducted in the first quarter of the year. The organization would be required to hire an outside accounting firm for an audit of financial records, and probably look at financial practices

KPCS board elections

The KPCS Board of Directors will hold elections for three positions in March. Anyone interested to run for the board must submit a letter of interest 45 days before the election. Key Peninsula residents who would like to vote for the board must register to vote with KPCS 45 days before the election as well. For information, call 884-4440.

and policies along with internal controls. In addition to the \$27,500 for programs and audit costs, KPCS would receive \$13,250 for operational costs such as salaries, utilities and insurance. In addition, KPCS receives federal funds through the Aging and Long-Term Care office for its senior meal program, but that grant is not dependent on the audit.

Linda Hubbard, KPCS director, confirmed that an audit is being planned early this year. “We will get it started as soon as a prospective CPA is able to get started,” she said. She said KPCS continues to pursue other grants, and has received considerable private donations. An annual fund-raising letter was also sent out in December to local residents and other supporters, with another mailer planned for spring detailing updates and highlighting programs.

“We hope they are able to start a new, positive chapter,” said Nixon, adding that the agency felt the KPCS board was actively working to solve problems.

Winter trimmings



Photo by Chris Fitzgerald

The Asplundh company is trimming back trees on Key Pen streets in December. The clearing was done under contract with Peninsula Light Co., which regularly trims vegetation near power lines as part of its vegetation management program. The work increases power reliability, according to PenLight.

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2. The objective of Key Peninsula News is to support and create community by reporting news and features and providing a forum for local information. News and editorial coverage focuses on the Key Peninsula and immediately adjacent areas within Fire District 16.

OUR GRATEFUL THANKS TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTE TO THE KEY PENINSULA NEWS!

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KP News receives award

By Irene Torres
KP News

The Pierce County Traffic Safety and DUI Task Force presented its annual awards on Dec. 16 at the Steilacoom Town Hall. The seasonally-decorated hall hosted a holiday buffet dinner followed by the “Night of 1,000 Stars” DUI traffic safety awards ceremony. The event was attended by over 100 people, including six KP News staff, state Rep. Derek Kilmer, and representatives from the Washington State Patrol, Pierce County Sheriff’s Department and local police jurisdictions, as well as volunteers from the Pierce County DUI Victims’ Panel, students, and family members of DUI victims.

Awards were given in eight categories ranging from Good Samaritan to law enforcement.

In the category of media awareness, KP News executive editor Rodika Tollefson received an engraved plaque for her work in writing about the dangerous strip of State Route 302 and the many accidents that plague travelers there, along with funding issues for fixing the highway. In announcing the award, Gig Harbor Police Chief Mike Davis made note of Tollefson’s

poignant writing about a mother’s loss to a drunk driver, as she covered the dedication of the David Doolittle memorial sign near Ravensara. In his remarks, he acknowledged Tollefson’s effective coverage of safety issues, the first traffic light on the KP, bridge tolls, and ramp meters. David’s mother, Nadine Doolittle, was also among the many task force volunteers who were acknowledged for their work to help prevent drunk driving.

KOMO 4 television news reporter Keith Eldridge was the other recipient in the media awareness category. Trooper Dave Bertholf, whose patrol area includes SR-302, was among the recipients in the law enforcement category. WSP Chief John Batiste was the keynote speaker, which was followed by a solemn candlelight vigil. During the vigil, names were read of those lost to drunk drivers in Pierce County since 1958, with the sounding of a bell after each name was read.

The Tacoma Pierce County DUI Task Force was created in 1983 by former Gov. Booth Gardner, who was then the Pierce County executive, and by then Tacoma Mayor Doug Sutherland, currently the commissioner of public lands for the state Department of Natural Resources.

KPMPD, county negotiate land transfer for park

By Rodika Tollefson
KP News

The Key Peninsula Metropolitan Park District is considering extending KP Sports Center (Volunteer Park) by acquiring part of an adjacent property owned by Pierce County. County representatives have been meeting with members of a KPMPD land acquisition committee to tour the property and discuss the potential transfer.

Pierce County Councilman Terry Lee said the county is in favor of making the transfer, either as a long-term lease (similar to the one for the Rocky Creek Conservation Area) or as a purchase for a nominal amount of as little as \$1. Part of the 72-acre property was formerly used as a dump and another part currently houses a refuse transfer station, so the park district would be required to maintain a 260-foot buffer between the park and the dump site. KPMPD Director Scott Gallacher said the park district would consider the

“We are trying to land-bank as much as we can but with a dump property, we need to be cautious.”
-Scott Gallacher, KPMPD

property carefully to make sure there are no environmental concerns. Some possible uses for the property would be trails, camping and equestrian use.

The county would consider giving the park district at least 10 acres, Lee said. The transfer of the property could happen as soon as KPMPD gives the county a formal plan for the parcel’s use and the county accepts it. “We’re ready to go,” he said.

Gallacher said the park district would write the formal proposal letter sometime early this year outlining the desired use. “We are trying to land-bank as much as we can but with a dump property, we need to be cautious,” he said.



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Editorial

Looking forward to 2006

About this time of year in 2003, a skeleton crew of volunteers and a couple of part-timers set off to see the Key Peninsula News reborn after the newspaper had been shut down, and the news mission along with the organization were completely overhauled. At the time, most of us were used to slow times on the Key Peninsula, and we figured we'd print a page or two of news plus feature some events and organizations.

We have discovered in the past three years that the Key Peninsula appears sleeping only to outsiders, visitors who come by for a few hours or on a short vacation. We are constantly amazed at the pulse of our "quiet" community, the never-ending news, and the countless interesting people to feature.

The year 2005 was no exception, bringing a mixed bag of important — or interesting — events to the Key Pen.

Some tempers quieted down at the beginning of the year, after efforts to save the dilapidated historic Wauna post office building were bagged. Other tempers continued to flare at times as a 15-member community volunteer group took on the important, if not delicate, work of devising a 20-year growth plan for the area. They had to listen to people on the right saying more jobs and more development are needed, and people on the left saying that's not what the peninsula is about — then make decisions

on behalf of all the residents. We had our small share of controversies, as stories unfolded involving landlocked residents on 144th Street and a Mayo Cove herring pen business being fought by neighbors. Behind the scenes, battles were lost and won as businesses struggled to survive, community efforts took on the battle against meth, and several local organizations faced challenges.

An emerging e-commerce company moved to the Key Pen, bringing along plans to expand and add future jobs. The state governor visited our middle school to deliver personal kudos for being part of the NASA Explorer program. The dream for a 360-acre park on the north side became very real, after years in the making. As a community, we had several reasons to celebrate.

We also had many reasons to mourn. The year started and ended on sad notes. In February, a teen was killed in a senseless car accident in the Minter Creek area. In November and December, three teens lost their lives in separate incidents. Several members of prominent local families also passed away.

It has been a privilege for us at the Key Peninsula News to watch some of these events behind the scenes or from the front row. It has also been a privilege to be welcomed into the homes of so many people who entrusted us with their stories, and to know we are doing our part to help the community.

We are looking forward to this new year, as we continue to share with you the beat of the Key Peninsula.

New year is time for KP News to celebrate, focus on work ahead

By Irene Torres
KP News

As we ring in the New Year, the Key Peninsula News board and staff members feel a sense of accomplishment from last year's work as we continue to experience steady growth. Increased paid subscriptions, letters to the editor, phone calls, and compliments, all of which continue to encourage the staff, are just some of the ways we've seen our paper grow and mature. If Website traffic is any indication of readership, consider this: In September, the KP News site (www.keypennews.com) had 40,000 visits.

We are continuously evolving, revising policies and editorial coverage to best serve our advertisers and respond to reader feedback.

Despite a break-even, shoestring budget and limited technical resources, we have been able to produce a quality paper month after month. Seeing a good increase in advertiser interest, we developed a new media kit to define our market area, population and demographic statistics. We have also introduced regular special sections that are published quarterly. Our operating budget grew from \$4,870 average per month in 2003 to \$7,068 average in 2005; and we project it to average \$8,171 per month in 2006.

Along with this positive fiscal trend, the hours of our volunteer contributors have steadily increased. From a core group of half a dozen initial volunteers, there are now about 20 regular contributors, donating the equivalent of a full-time employee each month. Without their dedication and commitment, there would be no KP News.

The publishing board is proud of them, and of the superb caliber of our part-time editorial staff. Their expertise, dedication and hard work show in every issue. While one month's paper is being printed, they are busy scouting story leads, following news tips, conducting interviews, making countless phone calls and email contacts, attending evening meetings away from their families, making staff assignments, writing stories, reviewing and revising policies, developing better operating procedures, working out budgets, selling and designing ads, servicing accounts,

Along with this positive fiscal trend, the hours of our volunteer contributors have steadily increased. From a core group of half a dozen initial volunteers, there are now about 20 regular contributors, donating the equivalent of a full-time employee each month. Without their dedication and commitment, there would be no KP News.

collecting revenue, and managing countless details — always striving to keep the best of journalistic ethics. In 2005, we saw some of our staff members recognized at a regional journalism competition with an honorable mention, by the Tacoma Pierce County DUI Task Force with a media awareness award, and by the Puget Sound Business Examiner with a nomination for a "Women of Influence 2005" award. With every such acknowledgment, the KP News increases its visibility and renews its vitality.

We are limited by policy to cover news only within the physical boundaries of the Key Peninsula. Consistent with that policy, our mission is to build a sense of community. In the coming year, we will continue that mission through journalism scholarships, free advertising featuring community events, the volunteer spotlight, as well as continuous coverage of people and news relevant to the local residents. But news is not all, nor always, good. We must, and will, take on controversial subjects of importance to our readers. We hope we can count on support from the community, even when covering this aspect of the news proves difficult. We also hope you will continue to provide feedback and suggest issues that may be important to the community. We welcome and encourage letters to the editor, both positive and negative, as we work to bring balanced coverage of all issues that affect our lives.

We are pleased to have been able to serve our community over the past year, and grateful to our staff and volunteers for their sacrifices to make the newspaper successful.

Irene Torres is the KP News Publishing Board president and volunteer staff member.

Letters to the Editor

Mother apologizes to drivers

Receiving a phone call saying your child was in a car accident is a parent's nightmare. The fear is so overwhelming. I apologize to the Key Center residents who may have seen me fly through Key Center dangerously on the opposite side of the road Thursday, Nov. 17. I had just gotten one of those calls that my daughter had been in an accident. I am very sorry for driving like I did. I want to thank the paramedics; seeing the familiar faces was such a comfort, you are so important to this community.

Chantel L. Rolŕzen
Lakebay

Letters policy

We welcome your letters to the editor. Letters must pertain to Key Peninsula issues/news and contain no personal attacks. Letters are printed based on space available and subject to be edited for length and clarity. Letters should be 100 words or less but longer letters may be printed as space allows. KP News reserves the right to reject any submission considered inconsistent with editorial philosophy and guidelines as set by the Publishing Board. Please include your name and town as well as phone number for verification purposes. Anonymous letters are not published. Send your letters to news@keypennews.com, mail to PO Box 3, Vaughn WA 98394, or submit online via www.keypennews.com.

The opinions expressed on this page are not necessarily those of the KP News. We neither endorse nor oppose issues or proposals discussed on this page and present these views for public information only.

News briefs

Youth council receives funding through partnership

Beginning Jan. 1, and continuing for at least a year, the Key Peninsula Community Council and Pierce County's Safe Streets will become partners in supporting the Key Peninsula Youth Council (KPYC).

Through Safe Streets, the KPYC will receive a 2006 annual operating budget and a stipend for the position of adviser to the KPYC, currently held in tandem by Barbara Trotter and Terry Fandel. A KPYC member will attend the Key Peninsula Community Council meetings, and Trotter, a KPCC director, will assist in an advisory and support capacity.

The 13-member youth council draws its ranks from both Key Peninsula Middle School and Peninsula High School. At their January meeting, they will participate in a budget planning session with Dennis Taylor of Safe Streets, and firm up dates for their first project, a survey of students at both schools. Based on results of the survey, the KPYC will then choose one of several youth-focused community projects.

Pierce County libraries offer e-books

The Pierce County Library System now offers a new service: free downloadable audio books, which may be downloaded by library patrons onto their personal computers.

The library is offering 1,100 downloadable audio books. The books can be played from the computer after the downloading is complete, or be transferred from the computer to certain portable electronic players.

"Downloading and listening to books in the comfort of your own home brings customers an entirely different level of service," said Neel Parikh, director of the library system. "This technology is fast, efficient and fun and something our customers have been asking us to offer."

To get a downloadable book, current and new customers will need to visit one of the Pierce County library branches and sign up for a free NetLibrary account that will allow them to log into the online audio book library and download the files, offered in Windows Media Audio format. The downloaded books expire after three weeks but can be re-checked. Most people can down-

load an average length book with a cable Internet connection in 13 minutes.

Peninsula Light Co. strike off the table

Unionized Peninsula Light Co. employees were discussing a strike possibility last year but according to union representatives, the strike has been averted. Although the bargaining unit voted 37-27 to go on strike, the union requires a two-third majority to authorize such a move, according to Alice Phillips, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 483 business manager.

"We were forced to accept the management's last offer (in November), but the morale of the employees has been severely damaged," Phillips said. The union represents 66 employees from departments like customer service, engineering and warehouse, she said.

The main point of contention for employees was a change in the health insurance coverage. The new, three-year contract introduces premium sharing, but employees did not know how much that expense would be until the insurance renewal comes in, Phillips said.

"They (the company) have changed the medical plan three times in four years to reduce costs," she said. "I have a feeling some employees will have to choose between working and paying their medical" because they can't opt out, she said.

Phillips said the employees had several other big issues, and the union expected to have much more difficult negotiations when this contract expires in three years.

Peninsula Light Co. officials did not return Key Peninsula News phone calls for a comment.

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(From WEST, Page 1)

requested the county appropriation, said he read about West’s efforts to build a park in memory of his son in the newspaper and wanted to see how he could help. “I also feel it’s important for youth of the Key Peninsula to have this type of recreational resource,” he said.

The park is currently planned for the 360-acre North KP park soon to be transferred to the Key Peninsula Metropolitan Park District from the state Department of Natural Resources. Before the new park acquisition became official, West looked at Volunteer Park for a possible location, but said the main challenge is the lack of an easily accessible spot there. Volunteer Park currently has Real Estate Excise Tax matching funds available for the property improvements, but Lee said it would be possible to amend the REET allocation to be used at the new park instead “if that’s the direction the community wants.”

The skate park would be similar to the one in University Place, which has more of a “street scene” with different features and areas for different skill levels. Plans are only in the beginning stages, but West hopes to see the park

If you’d like to help

The foundation continuously seeks donated items that can be raffled off. Northwest Snowboards, for example, recently donated items that would be raffled as part of a senior project by Peninsula High School students.

Contributions are also accepted via a special memorial account in the name of Zech and Adrienne West at Sound Credit Union.

For information on the project, contact Chuck West at 884-1366.

built in the summer of 2007, which gives the group some time to seek grants and pursue other fund-raising. He has been working with local state legislators to identify possible state funding as well.

The park’s first major fund-raiser, a dinner-auction at the Civic Center in November, brought in about \$12,000. So far, the community has shown a lot of positive response and support for the project, West said. The planning group is in the process of creating a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with the IRS, and has already registered as a nonprofit with the state as the Zech and

Adrienne West Memorial Foundation.

Ideas are still being considered for the park, and West said one of those ideas is to make it a memorial in general, so others can be commemorated there as well. He hopes the foundation work will continue even after the park is built, as a vehicle for the community to support other recreational needs on the Key Peninsula.

“We are exploring that avenue,” he said. “It seems to fit the fund-raising mechanism that the park district and friends of the park district can continue to use for other projects.”

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County looks to tighten drug paraphernalia law

By Rodika Tollefson
KP News

A new ordinance being discussed by Pierce County would make the sale of drug paraphernalia such as bongs and pipes illegal and allow for stronger enforcement. The ordinance, introduced by Councilman Terry Lee, was approved by the council’s public safety committee and was expected to go to the full council for a vote as early as Jan. 17.

“The idea is to give more enforcement power to our prosecutor’s office than the state will allow,” Lee said. “We saw it as a way to provide more teeth to the state statute.”

Lee was first alerted to the problem of bongs and glass pipes by Dennis Taylor, a community mobilization specialist with Safe Streets on the Key Peninsula. Taylor saw a pattern after visiting all the smoke shops on the Key

Pen and in Gig Harbor. After being contacted, Lee visited one of the shops to see the problem for himself.

The ordinance was modeled after a similar law in Tacoma that has been more effective than the state laws. The draft ordinance was reviewed by the prosecutor’s and sheriff’s offices, and Lee said they have suggested a few revisions to strengthen the enforcement piece.

“The idea is to get drug paraphernalia, bongs and pipes, things that promote drug activity out of stores that the public frequents,” Lee said.

Taylor said once the law is in effect, Safe Streets will monitor the local stores to make sure they comply. He also plans to take the fight against drugs and crime to the next step: Several of the tobacco stores also sell stun guns, and he hopes to get support for another ordinance addressing dangerous weapons as well.

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Chris Fitzgerald

Show & Tell



Minter Creek Elementary students “make and take” presents at an afterschool event in December sponsored by the PTA.

Photos by Mindi LaRose



KPMS sixth grader Rebecca Paradis files and shapes her ping-pong paddles, a project she is creating in the school’s shop class. The students choose their own projects, and often design them themselves, then get to take them home.
Photo by Mindi LaRose



Photo by Mindi LaRose

KPMS choir students get ready with their Santa hats to sing “Jingle Bells” during the school’s Winter Concert in December.



Photo by Mindi LaRose

PHS student and choir member Nikki Gould sells a poinsettia to Andrea Herrera at the school’s Winterfest at the end of November. The money raised at this vendor booth will support the choir, and proceeds from Winterfest benefit various school activities.



PHS graduate follows family tradition of community involvement

Peninsula High School graduate Ken Uddenberg is a fourth generation family member to call Gig Harbor home.

After graduating from Washington State University with a degree in Hotel and Restaurant Administration, Uddenberg moved to California. Six years later, he decided to return to his community — where his great-grandfather settled in 1906.

“My roots are here,” he says. “I wanted a better place to raise a future family.”

Uddenberg, who graduated from PHS in 1980, established a State Farm Insurance Company in Gig Harbor 14 years ago. He is an active member of the community through the Gig Harbor Rotary Club. A former high school athlete, he has been coaching youth sports in Gig Harbor, including the Gig Harbor Little League and Peninsula Youth Football.

Uddenberg grew up in a family where civic involvement was encouraged. As a child, he recalls his father being active in organizations ranging from the Lions and Masons to Peninsula Light Co. Board of



Directors.

“Volunteering has always been part of me, and it’s a good way to give back to the community and be involved in your children’s life,” he says. “It’s important as a community that we continue to support our schools. We have great teachers, great children, and there are so many volunteer opportunities for people who can get involved.”

Uddenberg’s kindergarten teacher was Mayor Gretchen Wilbert, and his middle school teacher Vicki Tart now teaches one of his two children. He says he had so many wonderful teachers in the Peninsula School District that he doesn’t want to single out anyone, but says some of his more memorable classes were Spanish with Mr. Croppi, English with Mr. James and drivers’ education with Dan Stoican.



“My roots are here. I wanted a better place to raise a future family.”
-Ken Uddenberg

PSD PROPERTY VALUES AND TAX RATES

TAX YEAR	ASSESSED VALUES	M&O RATE/ \$1000	BOND RATE/ \$1000	TOTAL TAX RATE
2002	\$5,063,345,318	\$2.23	\$1.24	\$3.47
2003	\$5,271,865,265	\$2.32	\$1.29	\$3.61
2004	\$5,659,193,399	\$2.24	\$1.41	\$3.65
2005	\$6,199,280,224	\$2.13	\$1.33	\$3.46
2006	\$7,703,702,150	\$1.84	\$1.07	\$2.91

2006 are estimates at this time



Photo of the month

Key Peninsula’s Hugh McMillan, the guest of honor at the Voyager Elementary School Veterans Day Assembly recently, explains a few photography rules to students.

January events

- 19 - Jan 2

No School
Winter Break
- 12

School Board Meeting
6:30 p.m. Purdy
Elementary
- 16

No School - Holiday -
Martin Luther King, Jr.
Day
- 26

School Board Study
Session 6:30 p.m.
District Office

February events

- 16

School Board Regular
Meeting at Discovery
Elementary 6:30 p.m.
- 20-24

No School
President’s Break

At a glance...

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program is a state-supported program that provides quality preschool education, health and nutrition services, and family support to income-eligible children and their families. For more information, visit www.psesd.org, or call 530-1358 for the Evergreen Elementary program and 530-4785 for the Vaughn Elementary program.



KPMS student plans journey to Mexico

By Kristie Byrd
Special to KP News

Skipping a semester of your eighth grade year to go down to Mexico seems astonishing, but an eighth-grader at Key Peninsula Middle School is getting that chance. Hannah Buck will spend the second half of her eighth grade year in Los Barriles, Mexico.

Instead of flying, she will be driving with her family in her motor home. It should take them around four to five days to reach their house, which is in a very tropical location. To keep busy, she has many friends from other families she met on previous trips. Hannah is not fluent in Spanish but it is one of the goals she would like to accomplish while in Mexico, so she will be getting a tutor to help her out.



Hannah Buck

“She’ll be living a much simpler life away from her friends, and I hope she will be more involved in the community down there and maybe do some volunteer work.”

-Patty Buck, mother of Hannah

stressful for Hannah. She especially doesn’t want to leave her dance classes. So, we have someone in Mexico who will give her private lessons. I’m not sure. I suppose the whole thing is just bitter-sweet.”

This journey for Hannah is a great opportunity because she gets to be in a different culture and learn many new things. Hopefully she will take full advantage of this and experience it to the fullest.

The people closest to Hannah wish her well and hope to see her soon. They look forward to hearing about her trip and are excited to see her in a few months. Well, for now Hannah, it’s Adios!

Kristie Byrd is a eighth-grade student at KPMS and a member of the school’s student newspaper.

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Mr. Smith’s ‘Mile’

PHS teacher goes the distance for his students

By Chris Fitzgerald
KP News

A slender young man in loose-fitting jeans with big pockets, untucked short-sleeved shirt and new-looking white tennis shoes leans against a cabinet in the Peninsula High School student newsroom. He is finishing up a plate of something and rice while fielding questions from students keyboarding articles into computers. It is late Friday afternoon, Dec. 9, the beginning of “crunch time.” The student staff and this teacher-adviser, Derek Smith, would be working long, early-to-late hours through the weekend to meet the monthly deadline of the PHS newspaper, The Outlook.

Derek Smith, also a teacher of freshman English and composition at PHS, is possessed of a passion for teaching that kids understand and respect. In his classes, sooner or later, even the most reluctant student shines. Smith experiments, challenges, beckons individuals to explore their talents, until no one is left out of his circle of learning.

From the newsroom, it’s a short sprint (Smith does not “walk”) to the classroom where he teaches four sections of English to 120 freshmen. The classroom is a youth-friendly chaotic nest of posters and pages taped or pinned to walls in layers, books, student projects, and a big box of colored markers. It is a fertile field for creative inquiry, nothing about it static, orderly, or screaming “English 101,” from the mobile hanging in the corner made of cell phone parts that shine and turn on their strings,

“Quiet thinkers have valuable things to say that often the extroverts need to hear.”
-Derek Smith



to the daily “Life Advice” on the blackboard, which, on this day, reads, “Assume nothing. Inside every dumb blonde there may be a very smart brunette.”

Smith did his student teaching here, and has taught incoming freshmen for three years. He finds freshmen “astonishing, coming in with good energy and willing to try new things in the classroom.” His commitment to the students begins hyper-early Monday morning and ends Friday, whenever he leaves campus, except on the monster monthly weekend of the Outlook’s deadline.

“By the end of any week,” he says with a grin, “my apartment looks like a black hole. I’ve vowed not to sleep overnight here (at the school), but I get to know the nightshift custodians really well.”

Smith praises his mentors, PHS teacher Elizabeth Duffy and former teacher Judy Cromett, now with the school district, and likes that the English faculty lunches together, networking to create greater student benefit. He is dedicated to the idea that “when a student walks in, I want him to know he has a clean slate.” In one instance, a student “zoned out” the first half of the year, and Smith was challenged to reach him. “He finally woke up in January,” says Smith, proudly sharing that student’s altered book, a project each student creates during the year. He calls the books “museums of writing,” and hosts an “Altered Book Night” to involve parents in their children’s education.

Smith’s friends are mostly teachers. Recently, they cheered him during a poetry slam competition in Seattle. Participants read three original poems of a specific length, in three rounds, with challenge elimination in every round. He believes strongly in being a good student role model, and when he won the competition, considered he then had some credible authority with writing. He wants his



Photos by Mindi LaRose

Derek Smith answers questions by Abby Aspee and Ashley Cooper as he walks around the class and interacts with students. The ninth graders were reading “The Odyssey.” Top, Smith makes a “pinky promise” with Krista Curry during a discussion of “The Odyssey” after asking the students to come up with words describing the main character.

students to “rethink school — to attend not for rewards or grades, but for the value of learning itself, because learning enriches the mind, and enriches life.”

Every year brings new ideas. This year he stands outside his classroom door to welcome each student with a handshake. Every day. In response, some students have created their own handshakes. “Give me knucks, Mr. Smith,” one of them says walking in, sure he’s welcome in this innovative classroom. Once class begins, Smith looks specifically for quiet students and draws them out, a little at a time. “Quiet thinkers have valuable things to say that often the extroverts need to hear,” he says.

About Derek Smith’s white tennis shoes. Turns out they are not his. The day before, a student was having difficulty, so Smith invited him to take a walk around the track to sort it out. Four times around, to be exact. Four laps make a mile. When Smith and a student walk,

now referred to by students as “Mr. Smith’s Mile,” that student receives 15 minutes of one-on-one time. Issues get worked out, praise delivered; it’s the kind of “walk a mile in my shoes” quality time that people crave and seldom receive.

The white tennis shoes Smith is wearing belong to that student, who is wearing Smith’s shoes. Smith would like to wear the shoes through this monster weekend, if the student will let him. Why? “Because,” says this perceptive educator, “it reminds me to think about him, and how he approaches life.”

Looking up at the classroom clock, Smith says he has to get back to the newsroom. As soon as he turns the corner, a student calls, “Hey, Mr. Smith, does the comma go inside or outside the quotes?” In this room, electric with the energy of students on task, Smith slips behind the student’s console, the interview and his poetry prize forgotten, and leans in to help solve the problem.

Peninsula High School copes with three student deaths

By Rodika Tollefson
KP News

Students and staff at Peninsula High School were hit with news about student deaths three weeks in a row in November and December, and district administration was trying to help the school community cope with the tragedies.

“We are really trying to focus on the positive and getting back to normalcy,” said Shannon Wiggs, Peninsula School District assistant superintendent for education programs.

The three boys were all reportedly Key Peninsula residents, but the school district could not release names due to privacy issues. According to PHS students and other reports, one teen was lost to cancer, the second was struck by a car while riding an All-Terrain Vehicle near Elgin-Clifton, and the third committed suicide.

“These are all three very isolated incidents,” Wiggs said. “We are trying to

reassure parents.”

A letter sent to parents by the school in mid-December said the administration was taking a series of steps to help students, parents and staff cope, including bringing in additional counselors, holding parent meetings, organizing a special assembly with a motivational speaker addressing the need for the student family to come together, and organizing special positive activities with the help of student leaders. The staff also focused on maintaining a routine and keeping the students engaged in learning activities.

“People are still grieving but not as much as before,” said junior student Hilari Haase at the end of December. “I think everyone has come together as a school to help each other through it.”

Wiggs said the grieving has been difficult on some teachers not only at PHS but also at the students’ former middle and elementary schools. The district was providing additional support to those teachers.

Milestones

Danielle Nichol Kulakowski and Adam Michael Lamar have announced their engagement. The couple plan to wed at Hurricane Ridge in Port Angeles on Sept. 23. The reception will be held at Gambrel Farm in Lakebay.

Kulakowski is a 2005 Peninsula High School graduate and the daughter of Bruce and Maureen Morlang of Lakebay. Lamar graduated from PHS in 2000 and is the son of Dan and Dee



Lamar of Lakebay. Lamar, who currently serves in the U.S. Coast Guard, proposed during his recent trip to Austria. The couple plan to make their future home in Kodiak, Alaska.



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others new to her 19-lot development. The list became a booklet, and in just two years, her single sheet of information compiled for her own use had become 100 pages of information with a 4,000-book annual publication that included businesses and advertising.



GRAVES



GRAVES

The first two things Director Graves did were change the dates of the fair, and contract the services of a different carnival vendor. By moving the fair weekend to July, new possibilities were opened for everyone.

With the new dates, the KPCF is the first fair of the season, making possible the entry of 4-H Clubs' participation. By August, the 4-H-ers are gearing up for county and state fairs, with which KPCF could not compete. Graves' hope is that moving the event to the earlier date will also give 4-H youth another venue to exhibit their skills. An open-class event for

"It's just Marketing 101," Graves says. "Move the event away from (other competing) major events."

Additionally, to receive an "official fair" classification from the State Fair Association, the KPCF must have a specific number of animals shown in several categories, for a specific number of years in succession. Once this classification is attained, better judges and larger purses will be available to the contestants.

The carnival in 2006 will feature newer, safer rides, such as the Zipper, and a larger merry-go-round. There will be something to appeal to both young children and teens, including a midway. Entry fees in 2006 will be rolled back to one dollar, and booth fees for vendors have also been adjusted downward. Although the Website (www.keyfair.com) has not yet been updated for 2006, Graves suggests potential vendors and other interested parties check it toward the end of January for fees and applications.

When asked why she applied for this one-event job, Graves' answer was quick. "This community drove me to want this job. Longbranch, Vaughn, Key Center—they just decided to have a fair, gathered volunteers, and pulled it off. It's a reflection of the community — a great agri-vision of this community."

She said she's never been involved in a

-Mary Graves, KP Fair director

community where everyone is involved, from businesses that sponsor the event, to the level of volunteerism she's found here.

About a month after the fair closed last August, organizers held a retreat that resulted in new bylaws, the pricing roll-backs, and an updated mission statement. They looked at suggestions, procedures, process and timelines. They also considered the fair's appeal to local business sponsors and vendors west of the Narrows, including those in Mason and Kitsap counties, as well as Key Center, Purdy, Gig Harbor and Belfair. Graves wants to provide value to supporting businesses, and is looking at several ways of accomplishing this, from program inclusion to banners and announcements.

In September, Graves attended the State Fair Convention in Yakima, and in November, the International Fair Convention in Las Vegas. At each, she spent three to four days in workshops and

classes, “picking their brains dry” for new ideas she could bring back. Particularly at the international convention, she became something of a celebrity, in an odd-duck sort of way. There, when fair directors talked about a “new” fair, they meant an event 35 to 50 years old. When they learned Graves was representing a five-year-old event, there was no newcomer experience to offer this upstart fair. One Midwest community fair director, she says, asked her for advice because they had no community support and were failing.

She discovered how rare it is that local businesses are willing to chance a community fair, both in-kind and with cold, hard cash. Shaking her head in mock amazement, she says, "Communities don't 'just decide' to have a fair. It's just unheard of!" At least it was, until the Key Pen community did just that.

Her head full of ideas for a pizza-eating contest, chili cook-off, and kiddie-parade, Graves hurries off to a committee meeting. "Send in those entries for the 'Best Cookies Ever' contest!" she calls through the doorway. "I know there are great cookie-cooks out there, and we want you at the fair!"

As Graves would say, "See you at the Key Peninsula Community Fair in July."

Come hungry.

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Civic Center to host new events

We have good news: The funding is available to purchase and install our entryway carpet. This will be completed the second week of January. Funding came from the Angel Guild, and a few other sources. We are very thankful for the continued help of our wonderful Angel Guild. Thank you again.

◆ Coming up in January will be a youth basketball skills and drill clinic for youth through second grade. These clinics will be held on Saturday mornings, starting Jan. 28. See www.keypeninsulaparks.com for information or contact Scott Gallacher, Metro Parks director, at 884-9240.

◆ Open Gym will be held Sunday evenings from 6-9 p.m. starting Jan. 8. This is your opportunity to play some basketball with your son or daughter. Cost will be \$2 per hour for adults, children under 10 free. Come and have fun! The schedule will be as follows: 6 to 7 p.m., youth and adult; 7 to 9 p.m., adults

◆ Our next fund-raising event will be a “Sweetheart Dance” with desserts, to be held Feb. 11. Dance to the “Rockodiles,” a band playing classic Rock & Roll from the ’50s to the ’70s. Their music is good-natured, recognizable and easy to dance to. Tickets will be \$15 single or \$25 couple.

◆ Just a reminder of other classes happening on a regular basis: Clogging on Mondays; Karate on Monday and Thursday; Tennis on Monday and Thursday; Tae Kwon Do on Tuesday and Thursday, and for your little ones, Indoor Park on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

If you have any suggestions of what you would like the center to be doing, call 884-9172 or email at kpcca@keypeninsula.com.

—By Phil Bauer, president

Angel Guild welcomes 2006 with thanks

The past year has been an adventure, with moving into the new shop and all that entailed. Angel Guild thanks all our faithful people who donate items we can sell to help the population of the peninsula. We want to thank our regular contributors, such as the Peninsula Market that gives us a percentage of the sales slips we submit. This is a big boost to us. Our customers who bring their sales slips in are appreciated also. Mindy, at the Cutterbug, gives us donations from her Mickey Mouse bank, which bears the sign “Donations for Angel Guild.” We are grateful to all our friends and customers

Fair founder honored

Photo and story by Colleen Slater

Pam Libstaff, president of the Key Peninsula Fair Board, presents Mike Salatino with the first-ever Founders’ Award at the Key Peninsula Civic Center Association in December. Salatino, one of three founders of the Key Peninsula Fair, resigned from the fair board after many years of active participation. The board created the award after hearing about Salatino’s decision to resign.

“It was through Mike’s tenacity that the fair came to fruition, and he never looked back,” said Libstaff. “He was especially helpful to me this year with the many challenges we faced: new and inexperienced leadership, the loss of our fair director, loss of our carnival due to their downsizing and a new carnival that was less than we had hoped.”

Claudia Loy and Fred Ramsdell were the other co-founders of the Key Peninsula Fair.



who help keep us in business. We have been fortunate in getting new members in Angel Guild. Their enthusiasm and new ideas are very helpful. Then there are the tried and true faithful Angels who have been around for some time and always come through when there is a need. They are much valued. Angel Guild is a most satisfying organization to belong to, due to the quality of people who make up the membership.

All during the holidays, our sorters have been busy preparing new items to go in the shop. Come in and see what’s new. We are able to handle some furniture now. We have been fortunate enough to receive some antiques, so check us out. Happy New Year to all. Hopefully, it will be a year without all the tragedies of the past one.

—By Betty Barkubein

Youth basketball skills clinic offered

KP Metro Park District will offer Youth Basketball Skills Clinics Jan. 28 through Feb. 18 at the KP Civic Center. Clinics will be coed and offered for the following age/grades at the following times: 2nd grade, 9-9:50 a.m.; 1st grade, 10-10:50 a.m.; Kindergarten, 11-11:50 a.m.; 3-4 years-olds, 12-12:50 p.m.

Program focus is on basketball skills development (dribbling, passing, and shooting). Adult involvement is required during the weekly clinics.

Scaled down equipment, specialized drills and games will be used to ensure success for all participants.

Cost is \$29 per participant and includes basketball and shirt. Minimum of 10 participants per age/grade and a maximum of 30.

Metro Park District holds 360-acre park meeting

The KP Metro Park District is seeking citizens and groups to assist in the development and planning of the 360-acre park that the district will be acquiring from the state Department of Natural Resources. Next committee meetings will be on Wednesday, Jan. 18 and Feb. 15, 7 p.m. at the Key Center Fire Station # 2 (8911 Key Peninsula Hwy N, Lakebay). For questions, contact Scott Gallacher, 884-9240 or email info@keypeninsula-parks.com

Adult men’s basketball league formed

The Key Peninsula Metro Park District (KPMPD) is accepting team registrations for Adult Men’s basketball. Teams will play a seven-game season plus compete in a season concluding tournament. All games will be on Sunday evenings and will start the week of Feb. 12 at the Key Peninsula Civic Center. Individuals without a team may contact KPMPD and request to be put on a player availability list. League and tournament champions

receive individual awards. Cost \$425 a team. Registration deadline Feb. 3. Minimum of four teams and a maximum of 12 teams. Call 884-9240 for details.

KP Planning Board January meetings

The next meeting for the Pierce County Key Peninsula Community Planning Board is scheduled for Wednesday, Jan. 18. Meetings are held at 7 p.m. in the Key Peninsula Middle School Library. The Community Planning Board is working on policy development for the Key Peninsula Community Plan regarding transportation. Members of the general public are encouraged to attend the meetings.

Local blood drives

The Cascade Regional Blood Services will be available at Peninsula Light Co. on Jan. 10 from 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. in the second floor meeting room. The Pen Light address is 13315 Goodnough Drive NW, Purdy. On Jan. 26 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., a second blood drive will be held at Peninsula High School at 14105 Purdy Drive NW, as a PHS Senior Project. For information contact Maria Johns-Davis, (253) 383-2553, Ext. 265.

Livestock Farm Management workshop

The Pierce Conservation District is a local nonregulatory state agency whose directive is to help landowners protect natural resources. A winter farm management workshop will be offered Jan. 14 from 9 a.m. to noon at Peninsula Light, 13315 Goodnough Drive NW. The workshop will discuss issues that affect small farms in Pierce and Kitsap counties, including keeping livestock healthy in the winter, as well as mud, manure and pasture management. Speakers from the Pierce County Planning and Kitsap Health Department will also discuss regulations for solid waste, and agricultural land use. To register, call Peninsula Light at 857-1530 or the Conservation District at 866-845-9485.

VFW District # 4 Color/ Honor Guard elects new officers

The VFW District # 4 Color/Honor Guards based in Gig Harbor have elected new officers for 2006. Commander-elect Steve Kuhn of Jackson Lake; Vice Commander-elect Karl Bonn of Lakebay; Quartermaster and Supply Officer Ken

Tromsness; Dale Goheen was elected Adjutant. Rick Stout remains as Armorer, Bill Smith as Chaplain, and Gary Helmick and Bob Cate continue to serve as past commanders, trustees and advisors.

The VFW is alive and well on the Key Pen. The VFW District # 4 Color and Honor Guards have an office and armory located at 11025 Creviston Drive. They are one of only 17 veterans’ teams certified by the Department of Defense as fully qualified/certified national cemetery and military honors’ guard details. The teams perform many programs with schools in the local area. They often furnish color guards for various military, patriotic and public service events.

VFW Post # 4990, previously of Vaughn, has been incorporated into Gig Harbor Post #1854, with combined meeting held at 7:30 pm on the second Thursday of each month at the Church of the Nazarene in downtown Gig Harbor. Membership in the Color and Honor Guards is open to veterans from any veteran organization.

The honor guards are available as guest speakers on such subjects as burial in a national cemetery, veterans’ benefits, and military history. For information: Steve Kuhn at kuhn@centurytel.net or Karl Bonn at 884-3248.

Volunteer spotlight: Marv Keizur

Story and photo by Chris Fitzgerald

When Marvin Keizur starts something, he sticks to it, however long it lasts. When the Key Peninsula Lions Club took out its charter in the early 1980s, Marvin was there. Just one month later, he took over as treasurer — a post he’s kept, except for two years while serving as president.

Active in the community, the Key Peninsula Lions sponsors a youth exchange. Last year, it was with Japan. Lions also sponsor the Citizen of the Year banquet at the Civic Center in March. Nominations for this year’s honor are accepted through early February.

Church hosts ‘Mingle and Minister’

“Mingle and Minister” (M & M) is a new ministry offering food and fellowship for seniors, the disabled and anyone who has a need for help with groceries or needs a talk with a friendly person. No one is turned away. Periodically, the food giveaway includes fresh salmon from the local hatchery. Recently this “fishy” event allowed M & M to give out over 200 salmon to folks from our community. There is also a volunteer who comes once a month to give a free haircut.

The gathering and giveaway is on Thursdays at 3 p.m. at the Lakebay Community Church, managed by Howard and Diane Johnson. For questions or a donation pickup, call 884-3659. On Thursdays, M & M also offers coffee, tea, juice and a varied selection of sweets or a cup of soup, along with a place to sit and relax while you snack and visit.

PTA hosts student art show

The Evergreen Elementary PTA invites the community to its first annual Reflections Art Show, Friday Jan. 13 at 6 p.m. at Evergreen Elementary School.

Keizur speaks proudly of the organization’s work in collecting used eye glasses and distributing them to people in need in underdeveloped countries. In their 2-year-old recycling center, members have collected over 10,000 pairs of glasses to date. He recalls a story told to him about a young impoverished woman carrying a baby. Upon receiving her glasses, she said simply, “Now I can see my child.”

Locally, the Lions sponsor eye exams and eyeglasses for children, when hardship is brought to the club’s attention. Through sponsorship with the University of Washington, the Lions NW Sight and Hearing Center collects corneas, surgically restoring sight to the blind.

Just as important is the Lions’ collection of used hearing aids, which, when reconditioned, are given to people in need. Says

Reflections is a national PTA art program that encourages students to create art for fun and recognition. This year’s theme is “I Wonder Why...” Students have the opportunity to create works in these art areas: Literature, Musical Composition, Photography, Visual Arts, Film / Video, and Choreography / Dance. Finalists will be recognized and sent to state competition. Visit the school for an exciting evening with young artists. Questions? Call Seana Lutz at 884-5798.

KP Sportsmen’s Club Holiday Donations

In the spirit of holiday giving, Key Peninsula Sportsmen’s Club members put together a food drive to assist needy families. The donated food was gathered and two baskets were filled with items to insure that these families experienced joy and abundance during the holiday season. The two families selected were from Evergreen Elementary School. The club also made food and cash donations to Key Peninsula Community Services and a cash donation to the Key Peninsula Senior Society. At the Dec. 8 general meeting, elections were held for club officers and board members. Vern Luedke was elected President, Steve Kuhn, Vice-President,

Keizur, “Somebody can hear today who couldn’t before, because of Lions.”

Keizur says the Lions are always interested in new members. “We believe the Key Peninsula is a great place to live,” he says. “We want people to participate in activities in the community — to help each other and work together.”

He is a soloist with his church choir, The Disciple Singers. When injury visited one of his four sons, Keizur’s household grew, as the families combined, Lion-style, to help one another.

“Let’s take some pride in what we’ve got here,” he says, with great conviction. “It’s beautiful here, and if we don’t take care of it, we won’t have it anymore.”

Marvin Keizur is a steadfast family man, a loyal Lion, and someone who knows a good thing when he’s got it.

and Bill Smith, Secretary. Newly elected board members are Jim Blundell, Harry Haynes, and Marvin Rowland.

Outgoing President Dale Frank and his wife, Mary, were presented with a gift certificate for dinner at Anthony’s in appreciation for their many hours of service and dedication to the club.

Bayshore Garden Club

The Bayshore Garden Club will meet at 1 p.m. on Jan. 6 at the Longbranch Fire Station. This month’s hostess is Jean Young. Special guest Loc Meeker will speak on bonzai gardening. Doris Boudreau will speak on horticulture and design. For more information call Sylvia Retherford at 884-2487.

KP Community Council January meeting

The KP Community Council meets on Jan. 11 at 7 p.m. at Key Peninsula Middle School. KPCC committees meet at various times monthly; their schedules will be available at the Jan. 11 meeting. The council welcomes public participation on committees, and encourages peninsula residents to attend the monthly council meetings.



Get Involved: Volunteer opportunities

Tacoma Community College GED class

The Peninsula Adult Basic Education Program offers GED preparation and basic skills enrichment to the folks in the KPN area and the program needs your help. If you are interested in volunteering as a basic skills tutor, call Linda Creswell with Tacoma Community College Peninsula/Gig Harbor Center at 253-851-2424.

Communities in Schools of Peninsula needs commu-

nity members to mentor students for math mentor programs at two Peninsula middle schools. After-school reading mentors at Evergreen, Minter Creek and Vaughn Elementary Schools are also needed. Spend one hour a week helping a student be more successful in school. Contact Colleen Speer at 884-5733.

The Washington Renaissance Faire seeks mature persons to volunteer to assist with numerous faire and pre-faire activities. Call 851-4114 or email Bryonm@washingtonrenfaire.com

Volunteers wanted for the **Evergreen Elementary After ‘Ours**. If you enjoy being with children are have a talent to share please contact Olga McDonald at 530-1300.

Key Peninsula News: Writers wanted to help the newspaper grow. Write about the interesting people of the Key Peninsula, and news important to the community. Some training provided—no newspaper experience needed; high school writers welcome. Also needed: office work volunteer, about 3-5 hours per month. Call 884-4699 (voicemail) or email news@keypennews.com.



Maudie Lucas kayaking on Filucy Bay.
Photo courtesy of Maudie Lucas

At home on the water

Key Pen counselor loves her home, work

By Colleen Slater
KP News

Maudie Lucas was raised on Wollochet and Henderson bays, and claims salt water is in her soul.

A recent part of the Key Peninsula business scene with her counseling office in Key Center, she is no stranger to the area. She graduated from Peninsula High School, had many friends out this way, and used to attend dances at the Civic Center.

When her five children were grown, Lucas resumed her education in clinical-pastoral studies. She worked as chaplain and counselor in Spokane at Deaconess Hospital, and later at Western State Hospital in Steilacoom.

When she returned to this area with plans to set up her own business, her requirement for a home was on the salt water, and this side of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge. She settled on Filucy Bay, where she rows her boat every chance she gets. She also kayaks, swims, clogs, plays tennis and loves softball. She would like to have a 50-plus team of women’s softball organized here. She hiked a lot when she lived in Colorado, but does less of that here.

Lucas loves her work, helping people discover who they really are, finding their own voice, helping them realize they have choices to make in life.

She provides an atmosphere where people with problems can feel safe, where they can connect with their real

selves, and are comfortable interacting with her.

“When they know the truth about themselves, that truth does set them free,” she says.

She provides counseling for individuals, couples and families, and notes that most insurance companies are accepted.

Fifth of seven children of a Baptist minister who was previously in Vaudeville, Lucas and her siblings have license plates depicting their place in the family. Hers is 5 COY.

She grew up on farms with horses, cows and other animals. One of her chores as a girl was stripping the cow after her brother did the main milking. She didn’t enjoy that job.

She hosts family reunions of nearly 100 people at her beach home.

Lucas loves the peninsula area. Fresh air, friendly people, and life in the country are the positives for her.

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Blondie's one year later Key Pen's newest diner celebrates anniversary amidst some struggles

By William C. Dietz
KP News

Blondie's restaurant celebrated its one-year anniversary on Dec. 17 with a live band, and search lights that swept back and forth across the night sky. Since its opening, owner Lisa Marshall has looked for creative ways to attract customers—including open mic nights, live music and other events.

But it's been a struggle to survive, according to Marshall, who cites a long list of business problems including the relationship with her landlord, insufficient floor space, a location that can't be seen from the Key Pen Highway, a shortage of parking along with a long-running dispute over parking with adjacent property owners, and, most important of all, a lack of customers.

"We're still feeding this business," Marshall says. "It's not profitable. But, if I were to charge a cover (for events), people wouldn't come."

That assessment stands in stark contrast

to comments made by both Marshall and landlord Douglas R. Fabre back in April of 2004, when the building was still under construction. When asked about the logic of opening another restaurant in Key Center back then, especially in light of the fact that there are two other eateries in town, Marshall said, "Say you go out to dinner twice a week... How many times do want to go to the same place? More is better."

"That's right," Fabre agreed enthusiastically. "Besides, people are going too fast. They don't have time to say 'hi' to their neighbors. When they walk into Blondie's people will know their names."

Twelve months later, the once optimistic predictions have been replaced by more realistic assessments. "This place isn't big enough," Marshall says. "If I had it to do over again I would make it three times bigger. I need more space in order to do the volume."

Signage represents still another problem. Because the restaurant is well off the beaten path, and would-be

For those who like to make their own music, Tuesday is open mic night at Blondie's; followed by poker tournaments Wednesdays, Karaoke on Thursday, Friday and Sunday; plus live bands on Saturday night. Call 884-1300 for directions, reservations or questions.



customers often have difficulty finding it, Marshall would like to place signs next to Key Pen Highway, but the county has strict limitations where signs are concerned. "No one can find us.... There aren't any street lights," Marshall says. "Folks from Gig Harbor get lost."

Rather than add one more burger place to the peninsula, it was Marshall's intention to introduce a more upscale option, something on a par with Anthony's in Gig Harbor or even the Beach House in Purdy. That's why the dinner menu includes a number of fairly pricey offerings that could keep some potential customers away. But Marshall has an answer for that. "Some people just want to get a burger, and they can ask for the bar menu," she points out, "and still sit in the dining room."

So what does the future hold? Asked if she might move the restaurant to another location, Marshall says that's a very real possibility, but not right now. Her current lease won't expire for another four years. When asked whether her business can survive for another four years Marshall gives a lighthearted answer. "I'm paying my bills, I'm making my payroll, and I'm not a nuisance to society!"

But when pressed for a direct answer, the restaurant owner says, "Yes, I'll make

it." And, in order to ensure that she makes it, Marshall plans to renovate the space directly below the existing Blondie's and start up a new bar called "Blondie's Underground."

"It will have pool tables, dart boards, and a dance floor," Marshall says. "I think the downstairs operation will draw the younger crowd."

Construction is underway and the new enterprise is slated to open in March of this year, assuming all goes well.

Meanwhile, Marshall will allow a licensed host to use Blondie's for Texas Holdem poker tournaments on Wednesday nights starting at 6 and 8 p.m. And, by mutual agreement, O'Callahan's and the Sit And Sip tavern will host similar tournaments on other evenings. The idea being to draw more customers into all three establishments.

So, has the whole thing been painful? No, not according to Marshall, who loves to talk about how great her employees are, the joys of living only one block from where she works, and the pleasures associated with taking good care of her customers.

"Don't get me wrong, it's been hard going, but I haven't had anything like the problems that I anticipated," she says.

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“In the Heart of the Key Peninsula”

January 2006

It is the time of year once again to look back on the real estate activity on the Key Peninsula during 2005. During the past year there were 459 residential properties sold on the Key Peninsula with the average price being \$242,228. Average times on the market were 90 days.

There were 32 homes sold under \$100,000 and 2 over \$1,000,000 (both in the Purdy area). There was also a Vaughn home sold for \$999,000.

Activity remained constant during the year with 90 homes closed the first quarter, 154 the second, 126 the third, and 89 during the fourth quarter. There are now 142 active residential listings on the Key Peninsula priced from \$44,500 to \$2,860,000.

There are 45 pending sales with two being just under \$900,000, one in Longbranch and one in Wauna.

Land, too, has been an active component of the real estate activity this year. There have been 313 sales of vacant land parcels in 2005 with the highest sale being the Devil’s Head 90 waterfront acres for \$2,300,000.

In all, an interesting real estate year with every indication that we will continue to have good activity through 2006.

All statistics are current as of December 15th, 2005 and are courtesy of the Northwest Multiple Listing Service.

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LAKELAND VILLAGE \$225,000
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NORTH GIG HARBOR \$295,000
This comfortable home has 4 bdrms with bath off master, vaulted ceilings, deck off dining area and attached 2-car garage. You will enjoy the quiet of a dead end street, the woodsy setting, and the close to shopping and easy freeway access. MLS 25175064



GIG HARBOR \$195,000
Enjoy private country living within minutes of city conveniences. Very nice home with good floor plan, open and bright. Located on a peaceful and quiet 5 acres with about half in trees and brush, the rest fenced and crossed fenced in pastures with a combo garage, barn and shop. Good commuter home as is within minutes of the Narrows bridge and Seattle ferries. MLS 25173217.



PALMER LAKE \$209,500
View of the lake and on a half acre! This very well maintained home has formal dining room, nice large kitchen with skylight, breakfast nook, vaulted ceilings and extra large master bedroom. Deck area front and side, low maintenance landscaping with cement walkways. Space for large RV and room to build a garage. MLS 25174661

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Property owner seeks road solution

By Chris Fitzgerald
KP News

The building that houses Serenity Salon near the corner of 118th Street and State Route 302 has been hit by cars veering off the road twice in the last eight months. Owner Scott Wagner met with a representative of the Washington State Department of Transportation at the site after both accidents, and requested the installation of a guardrail to keep cars on their own turf. WSDOT declined that action, and instead reapplied road reflectors at closer intervals, and 4-foot fiberglass reflectors as well.

Wagner was advised that the state “doesn’t do things to protect private property,” he said. Wagner said he was curious why the nearby roadside creek had the security of a guardrail, but not his building and the people inside.

According to Steve Bennett, a traffic operations engineer with the WSDOT

in Olympia, guardrails themselves can attract accidents when they impair drivers’ line of sight. The WSDOT is in the business of driver safety, not preservation, and guardrails are used in various ways to accomplish that, he said.

Those fronting creeks and the like prevent errant autos from running off-road into below-grade streambeds, gullies and drop-offs. Guardrails occurring just before concrete barriers the state places on either side of bridges are there to act as cushions, the first line of defense in preventing drivers from crashing into those unforgiving concrete blocks. Bennett was familiar with the building on SR-302, and admits he and his staff are mystified why, after eight years of no traffic-related damage at all, this site could suddenly sustain two accidents in the last year.

“There is no rhyme or reason to it,” he said. “That building must be 25 or 30 feet from the road, giving a driver plenty of time to self-correct.”

Mike Hunziker with the potting shed he built with partner Jon Smith for the Burley family who received a new home by the “Extreme Makeover: Home Edition” television show.



Photo courtesy of
Jon Smith

KP business turns reclaimed wood into garden furniture

By Rodika Tollefson
KP News

A few years ago, Mike Hunziker and Jon Smith came up with the idea of making wood garden furniture in their spare time. They had a few tools in an old shop — including a 1943 table saw — and a relative who created similar items and could give them a few tips.

“We went into it thinking, wouldn’t it be cool if some of this sells, and immediately were over our heads,” Hunziker said. Selling all their inventory right away was an encouraging sign. The two friends started adding new designs to their furniture, and under the name of Garden Wood Designs attended farmer’s markets and a few garden shows. They designed their own Website where they could take orders online —and the business took off. “We couldn’t build it (furniture) fast enough,” Smith said.

Hunziker and Smith, who both work full time as teachers, had to slow down their business for a while due to various other priorities. Now, they mostly build furniture when someone makes an order.

What’s unique about the potting sheds and benches, chairs and planters they create is the wood — they travel all around the state to find old lumber. All the furniture is made out of reclaimed wood. Although it has a weathered look to it, the furniture has great integrity and superior quality, they said.

“It takes a lot of time to find wood that is solid,” Smith said.

The business has great potential to grow, but Smith and Hunziker have to control that growth in order to be successful as well as balance their business with their families and other commitments.

Their designs have evolved and improved with time as they continued to come up with new ideas. Some of their furniture could be seen in places like Cisco Morris’ garden show on television, the “Extreme Makeover” home recently built in Burley, or at a fund-raising show for the Washington Park Arboretum in Seattle.

The two friends often donate their creations to various fund-raisers and causes, but the recent “Extreme Makeover” experience was a highlight. After visiting the construction site and speaking with the project manager, Hunziker’s idea to build a potting shed for the family’s yard received the thumbs up. The next day, they were asked if they could provide two benches as well. “Jon and I stayed up one night until 3 a.m. and put them together,” Hunziker said.

The pair get enjoyment out of building their products, then delivering them to customers and seeing them pleased. As long as they enjoy the creativity and keep their side business fun, they plan to continue coming up with ideas and helping the business evolve.

“Some guys like to go fishing. We like to go to the shop,” Hunziker said.

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Chinese Brush Painting with Laura Masley: Laura's new 8 week session will start on Jan 23 at the Art Barn. Call Laura at 884-1081 to sign up.

Gourd Basics with Kristen Bottiger and Nancy Howard: Learn how to clean, cut and pyrographic design. This class is guaranteed to be fun and informative. Feb. 4 from 12-5 pm. Materials list upon registration.

Lampwork glass beads with Brynn Rydell: Play with molten glass and learn how to make your own beads. Beginners or returning students welcome. I'm flexible on times. Call Brynn at 884-2029 to schedule.

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(From SANTA, Page 1)

year,” a man with a young girl in his arms tells the couple near the Lakebay Christian Assembly. He has caught up with the Santa sleigh on the couple’s penultimate night as they were stopped by a group of cheering teens.

This night is a long one as they cover Jackson Lake, Home, Joemma Beach and other areas — but not as long as two nights earlier, on an exhaustive run around several subdivisions like Lake Holiday. In Santa’s younger days, he would run up to every house to deliver a candy cane. He still sprints from group to group and up many driveways, but it’s easier to run out of steam. Although they no longer trek every single road as they did in the early days — because of the sleigh’s maneuverability — the proliferation of digital cameras and the growing populace have made the runs longer. Another trend has also emerged — kids used to run out on their own years ago, and now the Santa “greet and hug” has become more of a family event.

This last year, the weather has been kind. Only a few rains and a low moisture level made the cold more bearable. A couple passing by the sleigh with their dog jokes, “Do you guys have a heater in there?”

The sleigh, which does have a generator to run the lights, the music and the PA system, indeed has no heater. While Fred keeps warm rushing in and out of the sleigh, Mary must keep busy unpacking the candy canes. She can only wear one glove in order to open the wrapped boxes, and by the end of the night her fingers are red and freezing. Even the candy canes don’t like the cold — the brittle sweet treats keep breaking.

The Ramsdells recall their startup days, when originally they rode on the back of the old fire trucks, which entailed being regularly drenched. Their mode of transportation has changed from the fire truck to a brush pickup and eventually to the sleigh, designed by artist Bev Pedersen who worked at the fire district. Fred and several other volunteers built the sleigh, which originally had no roof and no windshield. The modern version looks quite lovable, with the reindeers perched on top of a pickup that hauls the former trailer. But no heater. And not very good suspension — which means the riders feel every speed bump and pothole during the rough rides.

“You always hope Rudolph has his skids on,” Mary jokes as the sleigh takes a steep downhill toward Von Geldern Cove.

As the sleigh approaches a neighborhood, loud sirens from an accompanying



Photo by Mindi LaRose

Santa gives a treat to Freedom while chatting with her owner, Kim Bjorn.

fire truck or ambulance alert the residents. This night, however, the ambulance had to respond to a call just 15 minutes into the route. No matter. Santa talks on the PA system the entire time, even singing along to the tunes played through the loudspeakers. “Ho, ho, ho! Happy Holidays!” “Enjoy each other!” “Be Happy!” “Come on, Rudolph!” Everyone in the caravan, which also includes a command rig when possible, looks out for children and adults. In the dark, it’s not easy to spot eagerly waiting residents. Santa, Mrs. Claus says, is like an owl: He may not see the kids, but he can hear them from far away.

The wooden Rudolph and all the other reindeer cast a shadow on the ground as the sleigh glides through the neighborhoods, passing multiple children in pajamas and bare feet (a sight that hasn’t changed through years, Mary says), various homes that look like mini-wonderlands with spectacular holiday light displays, dogs that get their own treats from the ol’ fellah, people waving from inside their warm homes, and the many adults who come out on their porches or into the streets to give a hug, briefly chat, and get a candy cane. “This time of year, there is no such thing as age, we are all young,” Santa booms on the mic.

The Ramsdells have been donning their Christmas attire ever since they found out the Spanaway fire department did a Santa run and wanted to bring something similar to the Key Peninsula. At first, they did only some neighborhoods every year as the KP Firefighters Association, who sponsors the Santa visits, had several “actors.” But with time, Fred did more and more routes and eventually became the official deal, also making appearances at the tree lighting and other KP events. For a guy described

by those who know him as a “ham,” it was a natural role.

Mary started out as an elf. One year, Santa’s presence was requested at two different events. To solve the problem of double booking, Pedersen suggested [that] Mrs. Claus could make one of the visits —so she sewed up a costume in a hurry and Mary became Mrs. Santa. People who may not recognize Fred out of costume minus the beard and hat can figure out their identities right away when they see Mary. They receive thank-yours in some unusual places during the year — grocery store lines, hospital stays.

But it’s not the thank-yours that brought them out every year. After a particularly brutal run, with their faces cut by sleet or clothes wet, the two may have wondered why they do it. All they had to do is think about the lit-up faces of the little kids, Fred says, and the question of “retirement” went away. Kids like 9-month-old Joseph Geier, who is brought by mom Jennie to see Santa for the first time. Or 3-year-old Lincoln Lopez and 2-year-old K.I., who brought Santa a letter and cookies. The two made a special trip to their grandparents on the Key Pen just to see Santa.

“They are from the city and never see something like this,” grandpa says.

Santa receives many letters and cookies during his stops, along with wish lists, cards and small gifts. On their final night, with a full moon lighting the sky, they also get greeted by tears: An adult couple in Taylor Bay Estates who put on an incredible light display give them hugs for one last year.

From one father, they hear, “We really love you guys coming around.” From three teen-age boys, “We’ve been running all around Palmer Lake looking for you.” From a man near toward the end of the night, “Have fun!” “We do,” Fred replies.

And that’s how the two former firefighters describe their 30-year affair with the Key Peninsula’s Christmas tradition: fun. It’s the same word they use to describe their new adventure, moving later this year to Hawaii, where they are building a new home. Fred, a volunteer who became the KP fire district’s first paid firefighter (long retired), grew up on Herron Road and has lived here his entire life. Mary, who was also a longtime volunteer firefighter and has worked as a dispatcher (with a dispatch phone in her house), is a longtime resident. An extended family, from Fred’s brothers to the couple’s children, will stay behind on the KP and nearby areas, a guarantee the Ramsdells will visit often.

The two are very excited about their new adventure — as evidenced perhaps by the lighted palm trees that have been part of their outdoor holiday décor the last three years. “I look forward to planting my banana trees,” Fred says, while Mary calls their move “the opening of another door.”

What will they miss the most? “The joy and the kids’ faces,” Fred says.

They, too will be greatly missed by the Key Peninsula’s young and old who have counted on their hugs and cheer. Santa Ramsdell and his missus’ big shoes will be pretty hard to fill.

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Holidays KP style



Photos by Mindi LaRose

Top, the KP Firefighters Association and the KP Business Association sponsored the annual tree lighting festivities in Key Center that included music and a visit by Santa. Above, the Key Peninsula Middle School jazz band entertains the public at the tree lighting.



Left, Haylie Gallacher shares a cookie with her little brother, Caden, with parents Kristen and Scott (KP Metro Parks director) nearby. Photo by Mindi LaRose

Below, One of the boats at Longbranch Marina for the Lighted Boats Parade in December. Winning boat was Andy and Theresa Gano's, "Time Bandit." Virgil and Norma Iverson's "Guds Fred" took second place and Geoff and Lynn Baillie's "Chakw" took third. Photo by Frank Slater



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From Pioneer Stock Myrtle Valley: half a century in Wauna

By Colleen Slater
KP News

Myrtle Valley has lived more than half of her 92-plus years on the county line. Pierce County is on one side of her driveway, but she lives in Kitsap County.

She joined the Wauna Social Club soon after she moved there, and considers herself a part of that community.

Born in Kellogg, Idaho, she grew up with nine sisters and three brothers. The family moved to Oregon when Valley was 10. They lived on the 60-acre homestead awarded to her grandfather as a Civil War veteran.

An uncle, Dick Rowley, was the founder of the Oregon Caves. He cleared the grottos as a young man, and was a guide in the caves for 40 years.

After a year or so in Oregon, Valley’s

father, a painter and paper-hanger, moved the family to various places, including several in Washington.

Her parents were musical. Her father could play any instrument he laid his hands on, and had a violin, an accordion, and a piano. Her mother organized square dances for the family. She made candy or cookies to end an evening of dancing and singing.

In Kellogg, her parents had a small store, which carried her mother’s home-made candy.

An uncle was a blacksmith, and her grandfather ran a saloon. Valley’s dad made hot tamales for the saloon.

Valley, her parents and her siblings picked berries, prunes, and hops in the summer to earn extra money. Hops paid a penny a pound. Her father could pick 100 pounds in a day. Valley remembers

the sticky stems made her hands raw.

They didn’t pick prunes from the trees, but rather off the ground after someone shook the trees. They had to crawl around to fill their 30-pound boxes. Pay for a full box was 4 cents.

Valley took a state test in eighth grade and earned 590 of 600 points, the highest grade in the state.

She didn’t finish high school, but at age 49, earned her GED and took Licensed Practical Nurse training at Clover Park. At 50, she started work at American Lake Hospital; the job lasted 18 years. She received three excellent performance awards.

Valley’s oldest children, Gerry Lee and Dale, graduated from Peninsula High School. Tom, the youngest, attended Lincoln Grade School in Gig Harbor through sixth grade, then had to go to Port Orchard for the rest of his education. The Valley home is in Kitsap County.

Tom is family photographer, and Valley loves to show off his Brownie box camera. “We never knew when Tom

would show up with his camera,” she says with a smile.

She proudly displays the photos and family history albums he put together, with enlargements of his early pictures, as well as those of earlier family members. One is of Valley’s grandfather in his Civil War uniform.

The Valleys moved to Wauna in 1942, when her husband went to work at the Bremerton Naval Shipyard. He painted military transports, including the armored “blisters” for added protection during the war.

The first place they rented had no lights, a later one had no running water, and at one time, they shared a house and cottage with brothers and sisters and their children: six adults and 15 children in all. One family found another place, and when her sister refused to leave, Valley knew it was time for her to move.

They paid \$50 down, \$30 per month at 3 percent interest for their 5 acres, where she continues to live, garden, and visit with her Wauna Social Club friends.

Obituaries

Evelyn G. Bigley Stinson

Evelyn “Evie” Stinson passed away at the age of 93 on Dec. 1, 2005. She was born on July 11, 1912, to Joseph and Lavantia Bigley in Dupuyer, Mont. Evie, her parents, along with grandmother Ellen Bigley and brother Richard were early Vaughn settlers, coming along with several other Montana families in 1926. Her dad, Joe, along with Jim Haines, played his violin for community dances at the old Vaughn Library Hall. Evie kept her dad’s violin all these years and enjoyed dancing as long as she was able.

Stinson graduated from Vaughn Union High School in 1931, and later from Knapp Business College. She worked for the U.S. Treasury Department and was transferred to Washington, DC, during World War II. After the war, she returned to Vaughn and worked in Seattle until marrying one of her classmates, Everett (Tubby) Stinson, in 1947. They built their home on Vaughn Bay. They welcomed into their home young Gary Poland and raised him as their own son.

Stinson worked for several years at Rocky Bay Nursing Home.

She enjoyed flowers and gardening, playing pinochle and crocheting. She



STINSON

and friend Helen Wolniewicz had good times attending the Key Peninsula Senior and Community House lunches, and breakfast at the Sportsmen’s Club. Stinson was still driving friends to doctor appointments, grocery shopping and errands until she was 91. She spent her last 15 months in Vancouver at Glenwood Place senior assisted living, to be closer to Gary and family.

She was an honorary member of the Vaughn Bay Garden Club, Key Peninsula Senior Citizens, Sportsmen’s Club, Pinochle Club, Cootiettes, and served on the Vaughn Bay Cemetery Board.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Everett; parents Joe and Lavantia and brother, Richard.

She is survived by son, Gary Poland and wife Donna, three grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren.

A memorial will take place in the spring when the flowers are blooming. Interment will be at Vaughn Bay Cemetery in the family lot.

Virginia Seavy

Virginia Seavy passed away on Nov. 30, 2005. She was born to Bert and Hannah Berntson in Tacoma on Sept 22, 1916. In 1918 they moved to Lakebay, where her father became a captain in the Mosquito Fleet, joining Ed Lorenz to form the Lorenz-Berntson Navigation Co. She grew up in Lakebay and graduated from eighth grade in 1933 from the new brick school, now housing Key Peninsula

Community Services.

Seavy traveled on her father’s boat, the Arcadia, to attend the first two years of high school in Tacoma. She finished the last two years at Vaughn High School, graduating in 1935. She graduated from Washington State College in 1939 and went to work at Weyerhaeuser Timber Co. in Tacoma. There, she met Marion Samuelson, who had worked with Keith Seavy at the Olympic Hotel in Seattle, and introduced the couple at a YWCA party.

Keith and Virginia were married Sept. 25, 1941 and started married life in Seattle, where Keith was head of the accounting department for Safeco Insurance Co. In 1946 Keith was transferred to San Francisco. They moved to Los Altos where Virginia worked as a school secretary until retiring in 1975. Returning to Washington, they built a home next door to Virginia’s childhood house in Lakebay and joined the Lakebay Community Church that is on the site of her elementary school.

Seavy’s hobbies were gardening — she was a Master Gardener — and square dancing. She helped found the Angel Guild in 1978 and was also a member of the Key Peninsula Historical Society.

She was preceded in death by her husband of 63 years, Keith V. Seavy. She is survived by and lovingly remembered by two sons, Donald Keith (Barbara) and

Gilbert Edward (Lynne); three grandsons, two great-granddaughters, two cousins, a niece and a nephew.

Remembrances may be made to Lakebay Community Church, PO Box 130, Lakebay WA 98349 or Key Peninsula Historical Society, PO Box 577, Vaughn, WA 98394.

Memorial services were held Dec. 10 at the Lakebay Community Church.

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Key Pen serviceman served around the world

By Linda Anderson
Special to KP News

Many men and women join the military hoping to see the world. Senior Master Sgt. Ted Beck actually got to do that.

Beck, a Key Peninsula resident, is a C-17 load master with the U.S. Air Force. He has traveled to 105 countries and participated in many interesting operations during his 25 years of service. He is not ready to retire yet.

Beck comes from a line of military servicemen: His maternal grandfather served in the Navy Reserves during World War II, his father did a hitch in the Marine Corps during the '60s, and his brother is retired from the Army. His father-in-law served in the Army as well.

Ted and his wife, Megan, returned to the Key Peninsula in 2000 with their family after 10 years away at foreign duty stations, which included Japan and England. Megan says England was her favorite, because she was able to travel from there to see many other European countries. And it was there that their youngest daughter, Abigail, was born.

Most recently, Ted and his crew participated in the repatriation of WWII remains from an aircraft that had crashed on an island off the Russian coast. "This is a very special assignment," he says. "America is still in the business of searching out and bringing home those who have given their lives on foreign soil."

In 1989, Ted and his C-17 crew made an air drop of supplies to Antarctica. In October of 2004 they returned with supplies for the National Science Foundation.

"It's quite an interesting place," he says. "It was amazing to see the facilities and people that function in a place the average person still views as all ice and penguins. In fact, my daughter was in preschool during the last visit and shared my whereabouts with her class. The teacher didn't believe anyone was actually there, so we returned to the school for 'show and tell' with pictures."

On Dec. 1, Beck and his crew



returned from four months of providing personnel support in Iraq, Europe and Southeast Asia. They also transported crews and provisions for relief in Pakistan following the recent earthquake. "The devastation was incredible," he says.

Some of his other interesting adventures with the Air Force included walking along the Great Wall of China, snorkeling off the Great Barrier Reef, touring Indonesia and Russia and participating in a full accounting of the Joint Task Force supplies and personnel.

Ted and Megan met as Desert Storm was winding to an end and have been married for 15 years. Abigail has a step-brother attending school in Alaska and a big sister in the eighth grade at Key Peninsula Middle School. Megan, who grew up on the Key Peninsula, says, "It was a wonderful experience to travel the world for 10 years, but I am happy to be

back home. We have moved into the house I grew up in, done some remodeling to accommodate our growing family and are happily back in touch with old friends who are still here."

Megan is full of pride for her husband. "He is fundamentally patriotic," she says. "It is part of who he is, and I have learned a great deal from him. While we have had many great experiences, there have been some difficult times for us as well. We had friends at the Pentagon when the terrorists attacked on 9-11. I knew immediately that life was forever changed for all of us. 2005 has been exceptionally hard on the family, with 182 days of separation from Ted."

The Key Pen community is very proud of people like Ted Beck, for their faithful and honored service to our country, and for their families who have sacrificed time and given their support so that their loved ones could serve their fellow countrymen.



Senior Master Sgt. Ted Beck with his family, wife Megan and daughters Anna and Abigail, at their home.

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Artist’s journey takes her back to her roots

By Jerry Libstaff

Robin Peterson’s family moved to Vaughn Bay some 60 years ago. Her life adventure began here and lead through a great circle that has brought her back, again, to Key Peninsula to find her joy.

She was involved in art and began studies in college; however, after a short while her focus changed to veterinary medicine. She found grounding in the work and went on to become a licensed veterinarian, specializing in large animal care focused on horses. Her journey led to the East Coast, where she practiced for 12 years in both Pennsylvania and North



Carolina. Eventually, the journey took her to California. There she found another desire, one that she had put aside years before. Peterson’s desire to produce art resurfaced and the journey carried her on. She found an intensive course in Santa Cruz, Calif., that satisfied her artistic passion. After training as an illustrator, she quickly received requests for illustrations for scientific articles and equestrian magazines. Both avenues were made available from her years of associations as a veterinarian. Peterson worked for a time in Southern California but decided that “life is too short to deal with the crowds and the tensions of the area.” She decided it was time to “chill out and relax.” Her journey brought her back to Gig Harbor, where she set up shop as an artist and illustrator. Peterson fell into the “relaxing” lifestyle of the Harbor

and began to wind down from the intensity of Southern California. After several years, as the Gig Harbor area grew and developed, Peterson began to feel tinges of San Diego moving into her world. She decided to finally fulfill the circle. Peterson found 22 acres on the Key Peninsula, near the family home she had always loved. She took a year off from her art career and worked on design and construction of her new home. Although she hired contractors to formalize her design and do the construction, Peterson was there at every point. She joined the builder and assisted in the creation of a labor of love. Peterson now does illustrations for magazines in Kentucky and Texas. She feels fortunate to have the opportunity to work from a place she holds dear, creating art. Peterson finds that she is moving more toward portraiture as she goes forward and says, “I’d love to illustrate children’s books. When I have a

title to work from, the illustrations just seem to flow.” She is currently working on a Website to increase access to her work. It should be functional shortly. Peterson is included in a show at the Kimball Gallery in Gig Harbor that will end in early January. The show includes expressions of the Masters with a Christmas theme. Her piece is her rendition of the portrait of Monet, done by Renoir. In her painting, Monet wears a Santa hat. The journey she took was a huge circle; however, the end point could never have been attained without the experiences that ultimately created it. Peterson says, “Find what you enjoy and do it.” In that sense, the journey continues and the circle turns. *Jerry Libstaff, a writer who lives in Vaughn, is president of Two Waters Arts Alliance.*

Key Pen hosts Humanities Washington speaker

By Rodika Tollefson
KP News

An event sponsored by the Friends of Key Peninsula Library will bring Humanities Washington speaker Margaret Hopstein to the library on Jan. 12 to talk about the history and culture of “-stan” countries — from Kazakhstan to Pakistan. Hopstein grew up in Uzbekistan and immigrated to the United States in 1990. As a lecturer with the Washington State University and Institutes and Bellevue Community College, she taught classes on post-Soviet society and political changes, and was a university professor prior to immigration from Uzbekistan. The lecture focuses on the subject “Is it possible to live in peace?” Hopstein addresses the collapse of the former U.S.S.R. and how that impacted events in Islamic countries, including factors leading to the recruitment of members for the Islamic jihad. She also looks at U.S. immigration policies and describes her first-hand experience as an immigrant in Puget Sound, and her work with other immigrants as a social worker with DSHS. “We thought this was an area many people didn’t know about, and people wanted the Friends to do more substantive programming,” said Margaret Campbell, president of Friends of Key Peninsula Library. “Since she (Hopstein) grew up there and now lives in Seattle, we thought she’d be a good person to present.” The lecture is free and will be held Jan. 12 at 7 p.m. at the library. Upcoming Friends events include a presentation on gardening by Ed Hume in March. “With the library being the center for the community, we’re trying to bring in a variety of programs for many interests,” Campbell said.

Hundreds attend forge’s 25th anniversary

By Paula Moore
KP News

The old-fashioned country porch was festooned with Christmas finery. Warm hospitality greeted each person as they stepped through the door. Surprise was expressed as they gazed at the 22-foot tree, garlanded with every type of decoration possible. Statements like, “It’s like going back into the 1800s!” “Wow, look at the old country stove!” and “I have never seen a bathtub like that!” were echoing throughout the house. Many stood around the huge dining table eating and drinking merrily. It was a great party on Dec. 10, as the Old Cedar Forge in Allyn celebrated its 25th anniversary. Just as the house spilled over, the forge was full with customers and guests who watched the “smiths” work the four lit forges. Cameras were busy flashing here and there as eager photographers took pictures of the demonstrations. Parents and children oohed and aahed over all the old machinery, especially the Christmas anvil tree made out of graduating anvils with decorations and garlands draped over them. In the store, where Ina Culberson reigns, jokes and laughter floated all around, as many were buying one-of-a-kind presents for loved ones or even themselves. There were plenty of things to look at, decorative art, home furnishings and accessories, fireplace implements, and hardware. All the designs are Jerry Culberson’s, the smith who owns the forge. Mike Statkus, visiting artist from Belfair, was talking and sharing with customers about his “Nice Mice.”



Jerry Culberson’s grandchildren, Jaymie Tagavilla (l) and Jordan Hogue, pose under the giant Christmas tree.
Photo by Mindi LaRose

Statkus, a retired welder of 30 years, began to make his little metal mice figurines in 1998. He has 40 different types including Woodman, Hiker, Outdoorsman, and Motorcyclist. Other artists’ work was available. Ralph and Karen Norris from Grapeview displayed their wares. Ralph, retired from the paper industry and with a background in forestry, makes “nested wooden boxes” out of one single piece of wood. The wood used is gleaned from logging waste or firewood piles. Karen, Ralph’s wife, paints and decorates gourds. Artist Suzanne Love, also from Grapeview, had “love stones,” cement with glass embedded in it. They make great pet memorials and garden displays. She also had melted bottles that were made into cheese trays and spoon holders. Jerry Culberson said, “About 1,200 or more people attended the 25th anniversary that was held from 9 to 7 that day. There were people everywhere. We had a great time.” Ina added, “It will be the last year we will have the 22-foot tree. Because of health problems we are cutting back.” However, they will continue having the open house and forge next year.

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Vaughn has a few spaces available in the
AM swim session Tues. & Thur. AM. A
new class in Aerobics starts soon, Tues &
Thurs. AM. Also party rentals, monthly
family swim; warm water & hot tub.
Contact Laurie Hall, 253-884-2722.

HELP WANTED Longbranch
Improvement Club annually offers these
contract positions: Clubhouse
Manager/Janitor; Clubhouse Rental
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LIC Board of Trustees, PO Box 111,
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local references provided. 253-884-4538.

FOR RENT Lakebay Beach Home: 2-3
bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, cabin-style
home on private beach, fully furnished,
laundry, large hot tub, deck, Mt. Rainier
view. Winter rates: \$110/night, \$300/3
nights, \$650/week, \$1200/2 weeks,
\$2200/month. Pets OK. 206.789.7789

Call Karen Hale at 253-858-8623 to place
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Email sales@keypennews.com or call ad rep
Karen Hale at 858-8623 for details.

Out & About



Photo by Karen Hale
Key Center looks beautiful in early December as the Key Pen got a very small share of the white stuff.



Photo by Rodika Tollefson
Members of the community joined Communities in Schools of Peninsula board members and staff in December at a holiday Open House.



Photo by Colleen Slater
Members of the Key Peninsula Historical Society meet at the home of Ronda Anderson to discuss upcoming events in 2006. Left to right are Leona Britt, Joyce Niemann, Ronda Anderson, Dale Skrivanich, Phyllis Anker, Dulcie Schillinger and Mary Krumbein. “The Price of Freedom” exhibit will be set up in April to commemorate the men and women who served our country in the military, as well as local citizens who served on the home front. Donations or loans of mannequins would be appreciated. Call Leona Britt at 253-884-3272.



Photo by Chris Fitzgerald
Gabrielle Marina Miller and her student present a winter interlude concert in December at the Key Center library.



Amanda Milbourn, Peninsula High School student, wraps gifts at the Longbranch Improvement Club Kids & Christmas program in December. Girl Scouts and their leaders manned the crafts and gifts tables. Started seven years ago by the Evergreen Elementary PTA, the event has been held at LIC for three years. *Photo by Colleen Slater*