

Washington State Parents Get a Seat at the Table

By Eryn DeFoort*

I have good news for Washington State parents.

On September 30, a text came from my friend who is a Washington school board president. He was in the middle of a virtual meeting for the Washington State School Directors Association general assembly.

WSSDA is the association that oversees and governs all 295 state school boards. They meet annually to vote on resolutions and policy for the upcoming year. He texted me because a topic he knew I cared about deeply had just been proposed as a resolution, and it had ignited a controversial debate.

His first text was cryptic. "Eryn, I'm in the WSSDA general assembly meeting. Parents being recognized as stakeholders has just been proposed! It passed!"

"Tell me more! How are they wording it? What's the language of the resolution?"

He didn't answer for a long time. Then, another cryptic text: "No. Wait. The bigger districts have called for a weighted vote." Weighted votes change the procedure from allowing one vote per district to a "weighted" vote which gives each district a certain number of votes based on their population. This gives more votes to districts like Seattle, Bellevue, and Shoreline.

To understand the sheer gravity of this resolution and the ripple effect it could have for parents' rights, let me apprise you of a little background. Last year, I and over 100 other volunteer coordinators formed a network of 10,000+

Continued on Page 10

Self-Sufficiency for You and Your Family

By Gene Kuhns

Self-Sufficiency is a broad topic that is sometimes misunderstood. Being self-sufficient means being able to provide for one's needs, current and future, and for emergencies without needing to be reliant upon others for support.

In some circles, the topic of self-sufficiency may elicit visions of selfishness and self-centeredness. Self-sufficiency may be perceived this way because of the word "self," in that it may seem like one is only concerned with themselves or their own family. However, when looked at from a different perspective, the result is quite the opposite.

Once an individual, family, neighborhood, or community is self-sufficient, a "self-sufficiency need point" is met, any extra can be utilized for wants and/or to serve and assist others.

It is a challenge to assist others if one's own needs are not being met.

Self-sufficiency involves several facets of a balanced life. Key topics include continuing education; health (physical, mental, and emotional); employment; family home production, storage, and foraging; family finances (budgeting, debt elimination, and saving/investing); spiritual strength; and emergency preparedness.

Now, more than ever, especially on our little Island which is so dependent upon the "Off-island world" to stock our grocery shelves, we need to think about being self-sufficient. Not because we are scared, but because we want to be prepared.

"If you are prepared, you shall not fear."

Initially, becoming self-sufficient may seem daunting, but like any large, worthwhile project, the key is to break it down into bite-sized pieces. The Desmond Tutu quote applies here: "How does one eat an Elephant? A bite at a time."

The first step to conduct is an individual and family evaluation of each of the topics listed above. Write down your thoughts. How are you doing with each? Be honest with yourself. Listen to your gut.

As a second step, make a plan for each item - how to take it to the next level. Don't try to do the whole thing all at once, just this next step. For example, do you want to get out of debt? First, don't get into any new debt ... none. If credit cards are a problem for you, take your credit cards and cut them up. Second might be to list all of your debts, in order of smallest to largest. These two items don't seem like much, but they are really easy to accomplish and can be done in an evening.

Another initial step - do you have a minimum of \$1,000 in an emergency fund? If not, do whatever it takes to get one ... work odd jobs ... sell some stuff. Emergencies will always happen. It is about time to get our heads out of the sand and pretend they won't.

In future articles, we'll discuss specific aspects related to each self-sufficiency topic item. For now, do a simple evaluation of where you and your family stands and develop a list of first, bite-sized steps.

Loop Upgrade – How You Can Help

Since its inception, The Vashon Loop has been two things: free to all and primarily supported by the Vashon business community. We aim to keep the first and change the second, and we are asking for your help to do this. Our reasoning is simple: The past three years have been extremely challenging for small business owners around the world, and our Island is no exception. As we look to the near future, the waves appear as choppy as ever, and perhaps worse.

As a fellow business, and as an advertising platform that wants to keep rates low and affordable for our community, we asked ourselves: "What can we do to help?" In October, an idea began to percolate as our Editorial Team offered a Wintertime Advertising Special to local businesses. In these conversations, we learned that February (not January) is the roughest month of the year for Vashon businesses. In fact, many expect to go into debt every February.

Everything we love about Vashon town, from the reliable hours, needed goods and services, entertainment and sustenance, and fantabulous holiday celebrations that bring us all together, exists because of our people. The same is true for our "not In town" businesses. These are our neighbors, friends, and family. Again, we asked ourselves, "What can we do to help?"

In November, we made two decisions that are one part moral and one part good business. First, every business that advertised with us over the Wintertime - and those who initially stepped up to support our business - would receive a free month of advertising in February.

Second, we want to give our readers the opportunity to financially support The Vashon Loop! Notice, we said "opportunity." The Vashon Loop will absolutely remain *free* for all readers, in paper form and online. That won't change. However, since our September inaugural issue, readers have been reaching out to us, asking the same question, "What can we do to help?"

Now we have an answer! Beginning in January, we will be sharing highlights from The Vashon Loop on Substack. The founders started Substack because (1) what we read matters, and (2) good writing is not only valuable but worthy of support. This platform offers readers monthly or yearly donation options. Watch for our January Issue, where we will give an easy tutorial for readers who want to support our paper.

Of course, if you'd like to become a founding supporter of The Vashon Loop *right now*, we are happy to accept check or cash contributions. Checks can be sent to The Vashon Loop, P. O. Box 2221, Vashon, WA 98070.

We are an LLC, and this newspaper is a labor of love. This means your contribution is not tax-deductible. It is, however, gratefully appreciated and we will put it to good use!

Flying Donuts Versus Flying Saucers

By Marc J. Elzenbeck

In the summer of 1947, Harold Dahl, a tugboat captain from Tacoma, described the hollow-centered crafts he saw as flying donuts. Edward R. Murrow, the nation's foremost journalist, flew out to interview eyewitnesses, and he reported what they saw as "flying saucers." The phrase was soon adopted as common parlance. But doesn't "flying donuts" sound better? Which would you rather be abducted by? While saucers imply civilized cups of tea or classy coffees in the pre-latte era, on most days I'd go with donuts.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Maury Island UFO sightings. One clear Saturday morning, Dahl took along a couple of deckhands, his teenage son Charlie, and their dog Sparky to prospect the bay for rogue logs to tow and sell for timber. Waters were calm, but President Truman had announced the containment doctrine weeks earlier, officially starting the Cold War, and anti-communist tensions were building where anti-fascism had ebbed.

Continued on Page 3



The Vashon Loop

Code of Ethics – Delegate Carefully

When people talk about “trusting the experts,” what they’re really talking about is delegating decision-making to someone else. Sometimes this makes sense, sometimes it doesn’t, but in all cases ... it’s an illusion. Our decisions are always our own, including a decision to follow another person’s lead.

Life is challenging. Anyone telling you it isn’t probably has a bridge to sell you. Parenting, in particular, is extremely challenging, and when parents go searching for ideas, suggestions, or help, they are almost always encouraged to “trust the experts.” Despite the plethora of conflicting advice offered on bookstore shelves, almost all written by “experts.”

What does this have to do with our Code of Ethics, as the Editorial Team of The Vashon Loop? Everything. Of our goals, journalistic ethics is number one, and one of our editors is a card-carrying member of the Society of Professional Journalists. Overall, we are in strong agreement with the SPJ’s Code of Ethics, but a recent email sent out to SPJ members gave us reason to pause.

You see, the concept being expressed in the email actually ran counter to the SPJ’s own Mission Statement. It doesn’t matter what exactly the SPJ did or did not do, what matters is that we are grateful to be reminded of a truth we all ought to hold near and dear to our hearts. Even the best of people are still

people. When so many are attempting to “control the narrative,” is it really all that surprising that a journalistic organization created by humans would falter? No. It’s entirely plausible, likely, and to be expected that people involved in journalism today might slip off the moral high ground.

This is why delegation is so dangerous. If you follow the wrong lemming, you’re going to end up dead, and so will the lemmings that chose to follow you.

What we’re sharing with you today is not sourced from the SPJ’s official Code of Ethics. It’s not even coming from their Mission Statement (which is truly amazing and worthy of respect). It’s coming from us, as we witness the SPJ having a “human moment” and our willingness to see it happening. Because, that’s the thing about humans. They can only be great, so long as we allow them to also be flawed.

We, of the Vashon Loop Editorial Team, are committed to seeking out great wisdom, advice, ideas and guidance from those with greater experience. But, we hold ourselves responsible for the decisions we make, the rules we follow, and the orders we obey.

The Vashon Loop is published monthly

Land Acknowledgment

Red Cedar – Tree of Life

Throughout the world, across time and place, cultures recognize a Tree of Life. The Tree may grow as a specific species, or express as an archetypal form, yet the gifts this Tree bears are not only of physical abundance, but of sacred relationship, generosity, promise, and well-being.

Here in the Salish Sea (Puget Sound) region, the Tree of Life is ṡpayʔac, Western Red Cedar. For millennia, the indigenous peoples and this magnificent tree have served sacred life and death in immense and creative ways, including the crafting of longhouses, canoes, clothing, baskets, and medicines, and in ceremony, story, song, and carvings. In a dance with the earth, ṡpayʔac nourishes and shelters myriad beings, large and tiny, and supports the elements, including the very air we breathe, and the health of the waters and soil.

We honor and recognize the sṡwəbabš, the indigenous people of this Island, and their richly woven relationship with ṡpayʔac. Forcibly relocated, the sṡwəbabš are now part of the Puyallup, Nisqually, Squaxin Island, and Muckleshoot tribes. And so, this season, may we rest into the imaginative beauty and generosity that the Tree of Life offers to our many streams of heritage, and also to our Island with ṡpayʔac, Red Cedar. May we humbly act as trees ourselves, offering our gifts in service to life, one another, and to the sṡwəbabš, the other Salish Sea native peoples, and to ṡpayʔac. May this Island again know widely and deeply

such devotion, human and tree.

Approximate pronunciations:
ṡpayʔac: hpaye-ahts
sṡwəbabš: swhuh-bahbsh

“Children Of the Vine”
film screening
Wednesday, December 14,
2022, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
Vashon Island High School
Performing Arts Wing

With 3.6 billion pounds of Roundup sprayed annually on U.S. crops, the investigative documentary “Children of the Vine” couldn’t be more timely.

Shot primarily in Napa and Sonoma Counties, this unsettling investigation into the controversial herbicide Roundup and its impact on public health was directed by award-winning filmmaker Brian Lilla. At the center of this controversy is glyphosate, now found in breast milk, baby food, wine, and 80% of food grown in the U.S.

Lilla interviewed both farmers who depend on Roundup and those paying the ultimate price for spraying it. Lilla digs deep into Monsanto’s misleading science and 40-year campaign that Roundup is “safe as salt.”

“Children of the Vine” also highlights solution-driven farming practices that don’t put public health at risk. The screening will be followed by a panel to discuss non-toxic farming practices.

Sponsored by: Headley Holistics, LLC, VI Horse Supply, Inc., and Vashon Island Growers Association (VIGA).

What Brought You to the Island?

By Michael Shook

The most obvious method whereby I arrived here is “by boat,” which is, I admit, a dreadful and dreadfully weak attempt at humor, for which I blame a certain recalcitrant eight year-old in my head, who refuses to grow up, and who will not go away, either. I could also blame my father, who, like many fathers, was inordinately fond of the most awful jokes (mostly bad puns), and who would no doubt approve of my answer, juvenile though it be.

Still, boats have figured prominently in the movement of my family, and myself. This was no doubt caused by the lack of air travel in centuries past. My paternal ancestor, Hermanos Shook, arrived about 1769, coming by boat from the Netherlands, and making land in Virginia. I’ve wondered about that Spanish-sounding first name. Was he part of the Jewish diaspora that escaped the Inquisition? And would that partly explain my love of nearly all things Jewish, despite my being a cradle Episcopalian? This is why I lie awake at night.

On the maternal side, my great-grandparents were among the many Irish fleeing the famine who landed in Canada, made their way to New York, and settled in Brooklyn. My maternal grandfather, Frank, then latched onto a boat (again!) in 1884, as a 14 year old cabin boy who jumped ship in West Seattle later that year. He went back to sea, though, and eventually became a Captain in the Merchant Marine. Needless to say, he spent a lot of time on the water, in

boats, although he was shipwrecked when he was 16, and narrowly escaped spending eternity *in* the water, rather than *on* it. In a boat.

Myself, I’ve not spent that much time in boats, even counting ferry rides. I have spent a fair bit of time in the water, though. You’d never know it, since I pretty much have no use for water, unless I’m putting it on my plants, taking a bath in it, or drinking it – if we were meant to swim, we’d have gills – but there was a creek not far from our house in Enumclaw that I wandered about a lot, and from whence I even caught a few fish. And the Green River was a favorite place to hang out, freezing to death with my friends on all but the hottest summer days, while riding inner-tubes down it.

Perhaps that’s how I got here. I started out near one of the far edges of the greater Puget Sound basin, snuggled up against the foothills, clambering around in the mountains, exploring the watersheds of the Greenwater, the White, the Puyallup, and the Green Rivers, and the creeks that fed into them. As the years went by, I sort of meandered down to the Sound proper, not unlike a slow-moving stream, or maybe a salmon stuck in reverse.

That got me to Tacoma, a return to the city of my destiny, where I was born – a gritty Tacoman, and native Washingtonian, honestly come by. And that’s where I was living when I started looking around for a Zen Buddhist Sangha to try on. Lo and behold, there was the Puget Sound Zen Center, right across the water. So,

I started coming to Vashon on Wednesdays, attending the evening sits.

Which got me to a Saturday event, where I met a lovely woman who was already residing on the Island. Things progressed along the lines such things sometimes progress along, and pretty soon it was time to decide – was she going to move off-Island, or was I going to move *on*? On-Island, that is. Here I am, so obviously I moved on, though not *to* Vashon. No, Maury island is the place for me, and they can take me off of it in a pine box, as far as I’m concerned. If it was a properly built box, it could even serve as a boat. Which is how I got here in the first place.

Contact The Vashon Loop to share breaking news!

Send pictures, too.

editor@vashonloop.com



Contact us to advertise your farm animals for sale in The Loop!

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The Vashon Loop

Editors: Caitlin Rothermel, Marc J. Elzenbeck, March Twisdale, Jane & Andy Valencia

Contributors: Eric Coppolino, Orca Annie Stateler, Seán C. Malone, John Sweetman, Kathy Abascal, Eva Deloach, Daniel Hooker, Rich Osborne, Marj Watkins, Suzanna Leigh, Michael Shook, Megan Hastings, Jessika Satori, Carla DeCrona, Emilia Flor, Caelan Angell, Dr. Cori Bodily-Goodmansen, Deborah H. Anderson, and Eryn DeFoort

Comments: editor@vashonloop.com
Placing ads: sales@vashonloop.com

<https://vashonloop.com/>
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We reserve the right to edit or decline to print submissions.

Invitation To Divide

The Vashon Loop has a fun series called, “What Brought You to the Island?” Such arrival stories often include surprising and unique details, but there is also a common thread – a desire for community.

What is community? Is it the mere presence of other human beings? Is it the roads, mailboxes, parks, and stores? Is it familiar faces and shared history? Not really. One can have all of these things and still be in search of community, because community is not a tangible object. It is a feeling, and that feeling is rooted in trust.

It seems that, to find community, we must solve the riddle of trust. Defining trust. Having trust. Building trust. Keeping trust. Feeling trust. When we have these things, togetherness becomes easier and we become a community.

Here’s a short list of traditional Vashon-Maury Island community values: (1) We respect one another and honor our differences; (2) we value myriad viewpoints, preferences, lifestyle choices, and backgrounds; (3) we love and care for nature; (4) we commit to community projects and collaborations; and (5) we support one another in hard times.

This summer, Vashon Islanders resumed their enjoyment of community. We danced in the park, attended artistic performances, hugged and shook hands, smiled and laughed together. Once again, we are singing, working on projects and attending public events. After two and a half years, it almost feels like normal. But for many of us, it’s not.

Flying Donuts

Continued from Page 1

Thousands of former Nazi scientists, graciously adopted by both the United States and Soviet Union, were feverishly working to build intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of delivering explosions remotely, each rocket a Hiroshima magnified by hundred-folds. Space exploration was verging on feasibility, the US was producing 90% of the world’s gross domestic product, and corporations refocused their industrial might back onto customers. At General Motors, Harley Earl was designing tail fins and aircraft-inspired automotive styling for a masterful 1949 Cadillac set to wow war-weary buyers.

In 1947, conditions were perfect for a major UFO craze, and the aliens complied. Before flying in formation near Mount Rainier three days later, before crashing at Roswell on the 8th of July, mysterious objects chose the quiet shores of Maury Island to kick off their campaign. Dahl and his crew saw 6 shiny, circular craft above them. One craft started smoking, lost altitude, had an explosion, and dumped chaff and molten slag straight onto the deck, reportedly killing Sparky and burning Charlie’s arm. They ran the boat aground on Maury and sought cover under its high banks. Initially, they swore each other to secrecy, but were apparently far from the only observers.

The next morning, the original Man in Black allegedly knocked on Dahl’s door and threatened him (unconvincingly, it seems) to say nothing of what he had seen. The



Since March of 2020, normal has been crumbling out from under us. And despite the sweet, summery scent of recreation and frivolity, our foundation remains deeply damaged. With the lockdown, and especially with the mandates enacted in fall 2021, Islanders have felt angry and betrayed by one another.

Some felt vehement that we should all do the same thing, to safeguard our mutual health. Other Islanders, while exploring the issue, came up with divergent ideas for how best to respond, while also keeping individuals and the community in mind. Yet, this was not accepted. How could a community that embraces diversity not accept and encourage different avenues to safeguard health? Then, in late 2021, new mandates took effect in Washington State that left some Islanders unemployable, ostracized and even publicly shamed. On Vashon, we accepted this invitation to divide.

Trust has been broken. For everyone. We all have legitimate

story gets stranger from there, its details best recounted by Steve Edmiston, a local lawyer, writer, and historian whose research and Freedom of Information Act requests resulted in a compelling 2014 documentary, “The Maury Island Incident.” This film has been shown at the Vashon Theater to enthusiastic receptions. There’s also a light, yet erudite, YouTube episode of the same title by Chris at Pretty Gritty Tours, a Tacoma-based channel featuring local history and places of note.

Whether aliens, cross-dimensional travelers, or hoaxes, the Northwest sightings were taken with utmost seriousness at the highest levels. On July 4, a United Airlines crew observed nine objects over Idaho, and hundreds of saucer-like objects were reported all over the US. On July 9, immediately following the Roswell incident, urgent investigations were convened by Air Force Intelligence, the FBI, and Wright-Patterson engineers. All soon concluded that disc-like crafts of unknown and possibly hostile origin were indeed flying about.

Two Air Force officers were sent to retrieve physical evidence of the fallen slag from Maury Island, which had cooled into small rocks. While flying the collection samples to an air base in California, their B-25J Mitchell caught fire and fatally crashed near Kelso. The cargo was lost, and they were the fledgling service’s first recorded deaths. At the end of 1947, a carte blanche government study, Project Sign, was organized, and the sightings, secrets, projects, and hearings have never stopped since.

Even as thousands of pages of meticulous documentation were

reasons to feel betrayed or have continued concerns that our community might not be there for us when stresses resume. What can we as a community do to heal? How do we rebuild the bridges that were burned, and restore our community’s wholeness on a deep level? And how do we prepare to decline the invitation to divide the next time it comes?

Honesty, humility, admission of wrongs committed, forgiveness requested, and forgiveness given are well-known principles that we teach our children, and are a good place to start. We know what we need to do: Listen to and honestly consider others’ perspectives, imagine ourselves in their shoes with their concerns, take personal responsibility when we may have harmed someone, and so on. We can renew our commitment to living these principles with one another.

We can also look to times when we worked together despite adverse circumstances. In 2020, #MasksForVashon, an all-volunteer organization produced over 10,000 masks for Islanders, free of charge. This was a project that built trust, and its voluntary nature was why it was successful. When you talk with those in the #MasksForVashon project, all of them feel good about their participation and the product. This was a true expression of our community and its strength during a deeply uncertain time. When we make our own choices and invent ways to respond that are a match to our unique community, magic happens, and we all thrive.

As we enter the quiet of the year, let’s take time to reflect and prepare.

recorded by FBI agents sleuthing in and around Tacoma, Maury Island was already fading back into obscurity. Still, a new era and way of thinking about our place in the grand spatial scheme of things had started. On one of my first visits to the Island, I was wading, shin-deep in the Sound, rummaging to find good stones for skipping. A piece of volcanic rock, palm-fitting pumice of the sort you find all over Hawaii, jumped out like a piece from the wrong puzzle. Picking it up I looked over at Mount Rainier, and wondered, “Did you get blown all the way here 600 years ago? Or were you dropped by a passing tourist from afar?”

HEIGHTS WATER RATE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Heights Water has an assistance program for qualified customers. Customers whose income is 60% of the Washington State median qualify for a reduction of the base rate of \$74 on their water bill.

For an application call or email
Heights Water, 206-463-0014,
info@heightswater.org

# in household	Yearly income*	Monthly income*
1	\$33,746	\$2,812
2	\$44,129	\$3,677
3	\$54,511	\$4,543
4	\$64,901	\$5,408

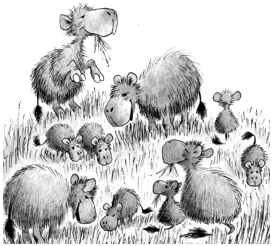
* Gross income (before deductions)

Let us ask ourselves how we might creatively accommodate our diversity going forward, and how we might mindfully rebuild those bridges. Our traditional Vashon values are our treasure. Let’s shelter these values and do our best to live them. In the years to come, these values, combined with our decision to trust in one another, are what will maintain our community and its vibrancy, and truly keep us safe.

Book Review

THE
WUMP WORLD

written and illustrated by BILL PEET



By March Twisdale

If modern scientists are to be believed, when the star we orbit starts to die, it will expand into a red giant, becoming so large that it engulfs Mercury and Venus, and possibly the Earth as well. Until then, life will endure on our planet, and the vast majority of that life will be non-humanoid. We are, inevitably, assuredly, and inescapably temporary dwellers of this pale blue dot. For many people, this is a source of solace. By taking our attention off our own species, and the world as we know it, we are reminded that what matters is life itself, in all its incarnations.

Sharing with our children a sense of hope, wonder, respect, and trust in Mother Nature’s longevity has become a bit trickier lately, as we are increasingly inundated by doomsday predictions. And they’re not all wrong. Even if we suddenly became Vulcans, guided purely by logic and self-restraint – even if we chose to slow down and begin to reverse the damaging effects of the past we’ve still made a pretty big mess. How do we talk about all that with a first-grader?

Thankfully, “The Wump World,” illustrated and written by Bill Peet, is the perfect doorway to conversations with young children. A brilliant children’s book worthy of every family’s bookshelf, this sweet and powerful story speaks to people of all ages, and it ends on a hopeful note!

A pristine world, inhabited by gentle Wumps (creatures closely resembling Capybaras), is discovered by blue people called Pollutians. Soon, the Wumps are driven underground as the Pollutians do what Pollutians do, covering the lush, green world in asphalt, machines, and skyscrapers. Eventually made miserable by their own mess, the Pollutians take off for a new planet, leaving environmental devastation in their wake.

And then, something beautiful happens.

No spoilers here. I’ll leave you to scour used bookstores, your parent’s garage or attic, and the shelves of your friends for a worn out, much-beloved copy ... but I will say this: Come what may, life endures almost every challenge. Our mother will survive whatever we throw at her, and she will thrive once again ... and again and again and again.

Ode to Sheba the Brave

By Deborah H. Anderson

Sheba the Brave captured my heart the first time I met her. A brown tabby who looked more ocelot than cat, we greeted each other, she on her stool and me on my chair, knees to front paws. Suddenly, she stood and crawled into my lap. Her foster mom exclaimed, “I’ve never seen her do that before!” I began to pet Sheba, she purred loudly, and our destiny was sealed. Two kindred spirits with parallel disabilities and needs who became devoted to each other.

Adopting Sheba began with a misunderstanding, an important misunderstanding. All over the country, there is caution within animal shelter culture about letting people with disabilities adopt. The mission to “find good homes” includes an incomplete understanding of disabilities. On a good day, I walk like a well-oiled Tin Man. On a less-good day, I approximate C3PO. It’s bragging rights to a good surgeon and medical team that I’m not in a wheelchair. So it was that the first cat I chose was denied to me. There was an unfounded fear he might charge my feet and cause me to fall.

Living with mobility issues since age nine, when a drunk driver pushed a car engine over my lower half and crushed it, I’m fairly adept at staying upright. A cat is no match for my skills, I say with a smile. When I shared the story of the first cat with my activist friends and colleagues,

there was one response, “Go get a cat!” Then the office of civil rights got wind of it, and they wanted to sue on my behalf. “No thank you,” I said, “But will you be my sounding board while I do this my way and build a bridge?” Disabled people are constantly making the most of opportunities to educate. It is both wearying and satisfying.

Since 1992, I have been a strong supporter of the mission, work, and volunteers of the Vashon Island Pet Protectors. They are good, kind people, devoted to the well-being of Island animals. So it was that I scrolled through the pictures of animals for adoption, and there she was. “Sheba hops like a bunny with her hind legs due to injuries.”

Well, Sheba, I walk funny, too. As a kitten, Sheba was mauled by a dog. A very good vet pieced her back together, giving a pucker to her mouth that looked like she was perpetually ready to kiss someone. Eleven years old, the crushed spine, the traumatic brain injury, a mysterious mass in her stomach, and aggressive behavior. She was on the “probably unadoptable” list.

About to sign the final papers, we reviewed Sheba’s lengthy medical records. Spinal damage “Oh that’s the same as me!” Meds. “Oh, I’m on a steroid, too.” I signed a release absolving VIPP of liability, and we went home.

It soon became apparent that Sheba’s aggressive behavior might be

from overmedication. ‘Roid rage is real. Working with the Fair Isle vets, I cut her dose in half. Knowing about traumatic brain injury, I adjusted my behavior when sundowning set in or if Sheba woke in the night and was disoriented. I’d spent my life using my education and skills to support special-needs kids and families. It was a gift to now share them with this loving, sweet cat who, like me, had had an irregular life. Many negative behaviors lessened.

I thoroughly enjoyed spoiling her with love. Her favorite position was stretched out lengthwise by my left side. Her head nestled in my armpit, she would purr loudly, wanting us to gaze into each other’s eyes while I sang her lullabies. I knew from the beginning that every day was a gift.

Gradually, I realized that she was teaching me. I began to understand I had never lived with someone who was physically disabled. Recognizing I had never truly accepted my injuries, Sheba taught me to love my body as is. To push less, to rest more, to consider myself whole just as I am. She, by example and interaction, set me free. No daily apology for taking up space, being slow and awkward, needing accommodations and accessibility, or failing to keep up. That ship finally sailed.

Too soon, the mysterious mass took her. She took a turn and was gone in four days; 19 months was all we had. I returned her to the Island for her resting place.

This summer, I will miss vacationing on the Island with her. I will walk about the house saying “Sheba, I miss you. Sheba, I love you.” I am grateful. In that mystical way animals have, I believe she knew I had learned what she came to teach me.

The beautiful dark is sometimes a place of trauma, injury, or ignorance. Love is the torch that pierces it, such that light shines through, revealing that the dark is also life-giving. Contentiousness and woundedness are not to be avoided. They are to be faced head-on and heart in. Embrace that which scares or causes you sorrow. It can be a source of renewal.



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The Dorsal Spin: Rare Vashon Superpod

By Orca Annie Stateler

When I lived on San Juan Island and interned at The Whale Museum in the early 1990s, I saw at least one Southern Resident killer whale (SRKW) superpod each summer. A true superpod occurs when every member of the Southern Resident community congregates, though sometimes the term is applied to a gathering of most, but not all, SRKW. I fondly recall standing on the west side of the island, overlooking Haro Strait, and watching in delighted amazement as nearly 100 orcas from J, K and L Pods streamed in from the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

The SRKW lined up facing each other in greeting ceremonies, and then commenced partying in smaller festive groups, where seemingly ecstatic participants engaged in intensive socializing and mating, along with a stunning variety of percussive and tactile behaviors. Witnessing these extraordinary Kéet rituals is a precious gift that induces euphoria in human spectators, as well. The SRKW population peaked at 98 in 1995.

In my September Loop article (The Dorsal Spin: For Pod’s Sake), I named 13 SRKW that the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife designated as vulnerable last summer. Twelve are at markedly increased risk of premature death because of their alarmingly poor body condition: J27, J36, J44, J49, J56, L54, L83, L90, L94, L110, L116, and L117.

Matriarch Racer (L72) merits vulnerable status because she is in late-stage pregnancy. Moreover,

youngsters Kiki (J53) and Lazuli (L123), both seven years old, exhibit stunted growth, and Kiki’s body condition is below-average.

Today, our critically endangered SRKW population has dwindled to 73, the lowest number in 38 years. From November 7-10, all 73 members of J, K, and L Pods – 25 in J Pod, 16 in K Pod, and 32 in L Pod – were in the vicinity of West Seattle and Vashon, hunting salmon, and socializing in a veritable Southern Resident superpod.

During these four days, our friends and colleagues Mark and Maya Sears were the only NOAA-permitted researchers on the water obtaining identification photos and collecting samples – fecal, prey, mucus, whatever floats. They confirmed the presence of all SRKW matriline and 2022 babies, J59 and K45, both females. J59’s mother is Hy/Shqa (J37), age 21, and K45’s mother is Spock (K20), age 36. Mark first spotted Hy/Shqa as a baby in Vashon waters in 2001. He also discovered Spock’s first calf Comet (K38) in Colvos Pass in December 2004. Beloved Blackberry (J27), age 31, appeared skinny when he breached, but he is energetic.

Diminished prey availability substantially contributes to the abysmal decline of the SRKW. This fall, fortunately, Chum, Coho, and Blackmouth (juvenile Chinook) salmon are more abundant throughout the north and central Puget Sound areas where the SRKW are foraging. Odin and I observed several orcas searching for salmon at



Pregnant matriarch Racer (L72) and her son Fluke (L105) near Vashon, 11/9/22. Photo by Mark and Maya Sears, NOAA Permit 21348.

Tramp Harbor on November 9.

These SRKW encounters were exceptional because L Pod has not visited Vashon since January 2020. Superpods and greeting ceremonies are now infrequent, partly because the endangered SRKW of 2022 are considerably more fragile and food-stressed than the SRKW of the early 1990s. A superpod in the central Sound is quite rare. The last well-documented superpod occurred in September 2018 near Victoria, BC. Please read my related November 17 article at <https://www.vashonbeachcomber.com/news/rare-southern-resident-orca-superpod-visits-vashon/>.

Pregnant Racer (L72), b. 1986, and her adult son Fluke (L105), b. 2004, are the gorgeous orcas in the photo. On September 10 2010, Racer carried a deceased female neonate on her rostrum for many hours. She is one of

at least four SRKW mothers seen engrossed in this heart-rending rite. The most extreme case was Tahlequah (J35) in 2018, when she carried her dead newborn for 17 days and 1000 miles. We pray that Racer gives birth to a healthy baby this time.

While we celebrate the annual return of imperiled SRKW to Vashon, we urge readers to embrace personal behavior that promotes the recovery of this culturally and spiritually significant orca population. Reducing our carbon footprint benefits orcas and their food source, salmon. We tread lightly by refraining from chasing endangered SRKW – in fossil-fuel emitting cars, power boats, and ferries – all over the Salish Sea, and by watching orcas at a location closest to where we reside.

Reporting whale sightings to Orca

The Dancing Wild – Within and Without

By Caelan Angell

When I smell the Ponderosa Pine needles baking in the summer sun, I feel a deep warmth in my belly. I feel a sense of homeliness akin to sitting in front of a fire with a cup of coffee. Growing up, I found a home in the wild. The wild home that Merriam Websters defines as “not inhabited or cultivated.” Yet, that has not been my experience. Those wild lands are inhabited by White-breasted Nuthatch, whittling away at a home for her young, and Arrow-leaf Balsamroot, whose sun-drop flowers decorate the hillsides.

These lands have been cultivated by fire and water and wind. By the Spokane tribe and other Salish-speaking peoples of the area who tended these lands with incredible nuance for thousands of years through controlled burning, seed-spreading, and restorative hunting and harvesting practices. To say that these lands were uninhabited and uncultivated is a carefully crafted, yet often undetected, lie.

This colonial narrative has provided a moral justification for the exploitation of many human and other-than-human peoples. In defining a place as wilderness, like the “Great Frontier,” it implies that this is a land untouched by humans, or at least “civilized” ones. This relationship to wildness as something that must be subdued, that is “other than,” relies on the even deeper narrative of the human-nature divide: the belief that humans are separate

from and superior to our earthly community.

But as I sit with Cedar, my back supported by their strong trunk, and we swap our breath, that story of separation becomes an impossibility. The two of us, cedar and me and all of the other beings of that place ... is wildness. Just as that moment when you meet someone in a doorway or in a grocery store aisle, and you both try to pass each other on first one side, then the other, then the first direction again, before pausing to chuckle and finally pass each other, is also wildness. Just as the fire that consumes the limbs of Madrone and Maple, and warms my home as the nights get colder and the earth gets wetter, is wildness just the same.

To me, wildness is not about solitude. To be wild is to be in relation. We must re-member ourselves within this wild web of life. We are a part of this community and have a shared language. The next time you meet a Robin on a morning stroll, I invite you to recognize that both of your movements are a conversation. Their gentle bob and soft whistle is perhaps an inquiry into your intentions. As you encounter the Deer in your yard, pay attention to your body. Are you facing them head-on, body intent on them on as a predator might be? Or can you turn you your body sideways, letting them know you are no threat, merely passing by? Does their body relax as you make this shift in posture?

As I sit with the history of wild, I

recognize the harm that is implicit in its history, and I am curious about how to move forward. What steps can I take to mitigate and stop perpetuating the harm? One recourse could be distancing from the terminology and language, finding alternatives for the entity that the language of wild describes. But this distancing feels wrong to me on a number of levels. Simply abandoning this language feels like erasure.

The weapon that is the ideals of wilderness and “Manifest Destiny” has long been wielded, and has done a lot of damage. That must not be forgotten. And yet, we are living in and interacting with a world that is shaped by the lived experience of this

land, a world of relationality. Wild is us, and we are wild.

It will take time, but I believe we can recognize our role in our earthly community, and move to embody reciprocity. Perhaps this starts by asking ourselves how we are giving back to our local other-than-human community. Perhaps can begin by re-learning our most fundamental language, that of our body, and entering into conversation with our other-than-human neighbors.

Perhaps, by stepping back into relationship with wildness as relationality, we will no longer feel quite so alone in our lives.



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Squeaking Silver

By Seán Malone and John Sweetman

I was down on the floor on my hands and knees when John Sweetman walked in the door. “What are you doing,” he asked? “I have lost a gold crown while biting into a Winter apple,” I replied. John got right down on the floor to help me look. My little Jack Russell Terrier was hunting the floor with us. We called him Duffy the gold digger when he showed interest in a corner of the rug that had been turned up and found the gold crown, which reminded me of Dr. Coutts and Vashon.

We could hear his tires scrunching in the gravel as he came down our steep driveway with his engine off so as not to awaken our parents. Dr. Coutts was our family dentist and had been playing cards at the Sportsman’s Club all night long.

He frequently did this, and on his way home, Dr. Coutts would pick up our Sunday Seattle Times from our paper box, so, he could read the comics to us kids.

In 1948, there were only three of us kids and we silently sat in the breakfast nook while Dr. Coutts read Tarzan, Dick Tracy, and Little Orphan Annie, among others. We listened in awe, and when he was done reading, we thanked Dr. Coutts vociferously, anticipating the next time he would come down our driveway to read to us.

Being in Dr. Coutt’s chair wasn’t quite the same thing. He used novocaine, but no local, so the needle hurt like billy blue. His drill looked

like something out of an erector set. When he put his shoe against the switch on the floor, there was an awful clatter as the black rubber band traveled over three wheels and turned the drill in his hand. The drill was slow, so the vibration against the decay in your tooth was great. So as not to elaborate, having your tooth drilled was pure hell. And then, Dr Coutts asked me to spit into a large white bowl with a little stream of water running around its edge to clean it constantly. When the cavity had been freed of decay, he would ask his assistant to prepare the silver amalgam that was to fill the cavity.

Before Dr. Coutts pressed the silver amalgam into the cavity, he held the silver ball between his fingers and rolled it, causing the silver to squeak. “Can you hear it?” Dr. Coutts asked as he held the ball of silver up to my ear. “Yes,” I replied as he worked the silver into the amalgam, a mixture of an alloy of mercury, and filled my tooth. “Tap, tap tap,” went his wooden hammer and slender rod as he filled my cavity and made my tooth whole again.

My siblings and I hated going to the dentist, because of the pain, but wouldn’t stop saving our nickels and dimes to buy more candy at Mackie’s store at Cove, a half-mile walk from what dad called Run Down Ranch.

Dad never used that name much, because it sounds like Run Down Ranch was a mistake, when it was a paradise of youthful opportunities, some of which were good. Each spring, Mike and I were sent into the peach orchard to paint the trunks

with lime to stop small critters like caterpillars from climbing up and laying their eggs, which would yield thousands of caterpillars who built huge tents and could clean all the leaves from one branch, thus stopping the baby peaches from growing to big peaches.

I was at the top of the orchard, brushing the lime mixed with water, when there was an awful scream from the bottom of the orchard. Mike had splattered lime in his eye, and went screaming to Mom, who washed out his eye with no permanent damage.

Mike told me he was in great pain, but it wasn’t nearly as bad as going to the dentist.

The Dorsal Spin

Continued from Page 4

Annie at 206-463-9041 and vashonorcas@aol.com supports the non-invasive research of Mark and Maya Sears. I deeply appreciate your reports.

On November 23, my mission was to lay eyes on K Pod’s new relative, Baby K45, with her exquisite mother, Spock (K20). Did I succeed? Find out next month.



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Join us December 14th at the Vashon High School Theatre at 7:00 pm for a free screening of the investigative documentary, “Children of the Vine.” Shot primarily in the wine regions of Napa and Sonoma Counties, the film digs deep into the misleading science behind Monsanto's 40-year message that Roundup is "safe as salt."

MINGLEMENT

ORGANIC MARKET EST. 1972

Minglement Tea for the Month of December

By Eva Deloach

Tulsi is one of our staff’s favorites, and is becoming better known. Make up some of this tasty ancient tea remedy to start your day – add honey or syrup to taste. A little goes a long way.

Tulsi (Ocimum tenuiflorum, syn. O. sanctum, Lamiaceae), also called holy basil, and East Indian basil (O. gratissimum) are aromatic culinary and medicinal herbs indigenous to India that have been used in the Ayurvedic traditional medicine system for more than 3,000 years. According to ancient folklore, the Tulsi plant is a manifestation of the Divine Mother on Earth, for the benefit of all creation.



By Marjorie Watkins with Suzanna Leigh

“Kitchen Medicine” is my family’s system of natural healing: the right food for every physical condition, plus home remedies, plus exercises to exercise aches, plus vitamin therapy.

We believe that by immediately eating, doing, and taking the right, simple things as soon as we first notice minor symptoms, we can avert or prevent major illnesses. Kitchen medicine saves us money we might have had to spend on doctor’s and dentist’s bills and prescriptions, and time we might have wasted in physician’s offices and drugstores goes into happy living and creative work.

Another point in favor of our natural remedies is that – sensibly applied – they can do us nothing but good. On the other hand, even such a seemingly innocent pharmaceutical as aspirin can cause an upset stomach or internal bleeding ... and stronger drugstore or prescription medicines have more severe potential side effects.

Part of our kitchen medicine is

family lore, handed down from the proven store of a quick-witted, innovative grandmother ... except that we have replaced some of her cures with others that are as effective and more pleasant. We no longer paint sore throats with iodine or blow boric acid powder into them, for instance, and the dread enema is just an unpleasant memory.

For other herbal remedies and hints on what to eat when and what to do (or not do) in case of various ailments, we’re indebted to Oregon and Washington Indians, Adelle Davis, Euell Gibbons, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

With cold and flu season upon us, here are some remedies with ingredients you may have available in your kitchen:

Magic Potion

Ingredients

- 2 sticks of cinnamon
- 1 tsp to 1 tbsp whole cloves
- Half a saucepan of water

Bring to a boil and simmer for awhile, until the color of tea.

This is an antibacterial, antiviral, antiseptic, and pain relief for sore throats, toothaches, and to combat colds and flu. We use it as a gargle, or add a tablespoon or so to tea or hot lemonade. Add a few slices of ginger root or sprinkle ginger powder and honey for a delightful hot drink that also makes you feel better! Marj suggests taking a little magic potion everyday during flu season, while Suzanna prefers to take it at the first sign of a cold.

Continued on Page 9



From The Roasterie

The fire is glowing in the bookstore – the café is bustling with people coming in from the cold to warm up for a bit on their way to other places. All our coffee has finally arrived from its long trip along the roads, on boats and trains. The coffee is quite delicious and bright after its long trip from plant to cup. There were plenty of challenges with an earlier-than-normal crop, along with changing weather patterns and only a few pickings on some farms. As Jim Stewart says, “It’s a miracle this coffee makes it to our shores.” We never tire of the stories along its way, and we are so grateful for the diligence of the folks who tender its life.

La Fondue

By Megan Hastings of Vashon Snapdragon Bakery & Café

The light is low in the sky, and I am sitting here in my childhood home in Chicago. The air is cool and snow is coming soon. The leaves here have all been raked from the yards, and the streets are quiet. The only sounds are the elevated train from a few blocks away, a couple dogs barking, and the faint hum of cars driving by.

I have a stolen moment to reflect on what this time of year means to me. As the holidays quickly approach, we all have our own memories and baggage that surrounds this time of year. I was born in the early 70s , and things like fondue had been popular with the generation that preceded my own. As a youth later, these fun little enameled pots with their intriguing skewers would flood all of the thrift stores I frequented.



My family wasn’t particularly into celebrating the holidays, something I myself would later make up for by going overboard, complete with all the classic Christmas music. I once hated holiday music; it reminded me of being trapped in the back seat of my Aunt Margie and Uncle Warren’s enormous car, not having the ability to access “real music...” Ah youth! Often, we would go to their house for Christmas; they lived outside of the city in rural Illinois.

There was a long table that would be set up in their basement, and where we would all gather. On one of these holidays, I spotted a fondue set

on the bar, quietly collecting dust. I was so curious about this magical thing that, in fact, could hold so much golden, melted cheese! I have made this dish many times now over the years, and it really does always make me think of the holidays.

You don’t make fondue for yourself. It is an activity to share, hopefully with loved ones. So whatever and wherever you celebrate this season, I hope you are all warm and cozy with ample pots of warm cheese and of course, a loved one. Happy holidays!

La Fondue

Ingredients

- ½ lb gruyere cheese
- ¼ lb swiss cheese
- French baguette loaf
- Olive oil
- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 shallot, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp flour
- 1 bottle white wine
- Pinch of nutmeg
- Dash of dried thyme
- ½ tsp smoked paprika
- 1 tbsp fancy mustard
- Salt and pepper to taste



Sauté the garlic and shallot in olive oil. Add the flour and create a roux with a whisk. Slowly add the wine. Let it come up to heat before adding the cheese. Let it cook on very low flame for about 30 minutes to cook off the wine. Cut your baguette and dip with gusto!

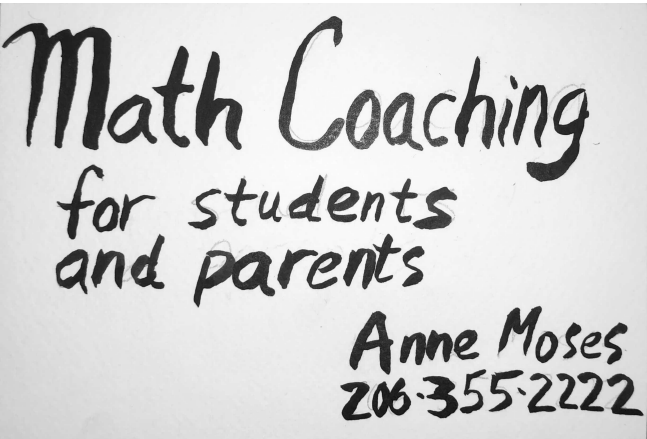


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The Hawthorn Berries Are Ready

By Kathy Abascal

There are many hawthorns on Vashon, and their berries will soon be ready to pick – they are said to make the best medicine after a good frost. Most years, the small trees or shrubs are covered with berries that hang on well through winter. For some reason, few people bother to take advantage of these treasures to dry for tea, to tincture, or process into jam.

The berries are a bit mealy, so perhaps they do not make a superb jam, but I think if hawthorn’s medicinal value were better understood, more people would be planting these pretty trees and gathering their leaves and flowers in the spring and their berries in early winter.

Hawthorn is an old medicine and a tree rich in history. It is also a well-studied medicine. A 2003 analysis in the American Journal of Medicine concluded that hawthorn extracts provide a “significant benefit” as part of treatment plans for chronic heart failure after reviewing eight randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled studies – the gold standard for medical research. These studies tested patients with stage 2 and stage 3 loss of cardiac output. In stage 2, patients can maintain only a moderate amount of physical activity without negative symptoms. In stage 3, even minor exertion results in shortness of breath.

Hawthorn’s history of heart benefit dates back before the days of

Health Matters

Dioscorides, the Greek physician who first documented the plant’s benefits. In the late 1800s, the American Eclectic doctors praised it as a tonic for the heart muscle and counted on it to provide relief from the symptoms of a poorly functioning or tired heart. They thought it gave the heart muscle a bit of rest and, when used regularly, guarded against atherosclerosis. The Germans have long been interested in both heart health and herbal medicine, so it is not surprising that they have led the way in the renewed interest in hawthorn. Dr. Rudolf Fritz Weiss, a famous German herbalist, considered it specific for heart disease.

Hawthorn improves the blood delivery to the heart muscle, which reduces attacks of angina, but it is slow-acting and as such is not used to treat angina attacks. Instead, it improves the delivery of oxygen and other nutrients to the heart muscle over time. When heart function improves, blood pressure tends to go down. While hawthorn is not used to decrease blood pressure as such, when combined with other herbs or antihypertensive prescriptions, it will help to normalize blood pressure. In Germany, it is used as a tonic for hypertensive patients to prevent or treat heart complications that can come with high blood pressure. Hawthorn has also been used to treat mild forms of arrhythmia in elderly patients. Dr. Weiss summarized that

Continued on Page 9

What Is Causing My Pain?

by Dr. Cori Bodily-Goodmansen

Pain in the body can be a complex situation. However, if you are able to clear the interference and give your body a chance to heal on its own, pain can be easily reduced. Your body has an amazing innate ability to heal itself if you know the tools to help.

Chiropractic care can offer these tools. The focus is on getting the spine and joints aligned to allow your body that ability to heal. Chiropractic care offers a different perspective on health. This system of care is not just about eliminating pain, but achieving and preserving overall wellness. Back pain, neck pain, headaches, and extremity pain are the main areas chiropractors diagnose and treat.

So, what is causing this pain? Pain stems from 3 categories: trauma, toxins, and thoughts. Trauma includes injuries to the joints or spine due to repetitive movement. This would include your posture when sitting, standing, and sleeping. Ergonomics and posture while using a computer or cell phone may also create repetitive spinal injuries. Toxins include different sources we come into contact with that our bodies have a reaction to, such as chemicals, molds, and foods. Thoughts include high-stress situations or past stressful events that our body is holding onto.

These 3Ts have the potential to create an inflammatory state in the body that leads to pain and disease, and that can cause misalignments in the spine. Chiropractors refer to these misalignments as “subluxations.” In today’s world, we deal with an increased amount of 3Ts, leading to increased pain signals. Now, more than ever, it is important to keep the spine and joints aligned.

Symptoms are signals our body sends to alert us there is a problem. When pain signals are up, it can be difficult to enjoy life. Bringing the spine into alignment allows the body to heal naturally and reduces inflammation. If we avoid these pain signals, over time it can lead to complex situations that require time to heal and unwind.

Chiropractors align the spine and joints through what is called an adjustment. The main instrument I use to adjust and align the spine and joints is called the activator. The activator technique (low-force adjusting) is one of the most well-researched chiropractic techniques and has been used since 1967. It is the only instrument-adjusting technique with clinical trials to support its efficacy, and is the most widely used low-force chiropractic technique in the world.

For most patients, the solid academic research supporting activator methods takes the fear out of being adjusted. The technique is so gentle it can be used with infants, the elderly, and those who have had spinal surgery. The activator can also be used to adjust all extremities, such

Continued on Page 9

Staying Healthy With the Season

By Emilia Flor

This time of year, many folks eat too much around the holidays. Our eating patterns are erratic, and we have a tendency to overindulge. So, I am sharing some suggestions around eating well and eating strategically to maintain health and wellness.

This is a fun time of year to treat ourselves right. Hopefully, we can do this through the holidays by really showing ourselves the self-love that comes through restraint at the right times, as well as healthy indulgence. There are so many extraordinary dishes that are good for us.

I live/love food, and it is one of the things we have lost in our culture. Our holiday gatherings are an enjoyable time to touch our love of the culture of food. In every culture, we see ancestral recipes coming through the chain, and I would encourage us to think about our family recipes as much more than our moms and grandmas. What happened before grandma was actually a really healthy diet. Our diet started getting a ton (literally) of processed sugar and processed carbs, and we lost the macronutrient content.

What were our ancestral great recipes that tied us into the sense of nurture and sharing and everything else? Can we dial the recipes back a

couple of generations and find those things to connect to, like cranberries? Cranberries are a very cool antioxidant and have some very unique micronutrients. I like to dice up cranberries in a food processor and throw them into a salad, instead of loading them with sugar to make some weird jello content. It is unusual to have a fruit like this come in winter, so it is a good opportunity to create something different.

It is also an amazing time of year to have things like amaranth, quinoa, and one of my favorites, farro. Farro is a gluten-containing grain, but it has this incredible structure and fiber to make it a much different experience than something like white flour.

There are probably at least six different varieties of flour that one could substitute into pie recipes. Our great-great grandmother’s recipes certainly did not have bleached white flour as an option. If we tie back to our ancestral knowledge, we really can prepare some of our favorite foods in a much healthier fashion. Of course, I like maple syrup as a sweetener. It is a good time of year to celebrate those maple trees and to partake. We tend to use maple syrup very sparingly. Because of the cost, it is showing the value of that

Continued on Page 10



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Health Disclaimer

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Poetry for the Light and the Beautiful Dark

Rain Music

The melodies of tree rain
are magical
from the dull, droning
Chinese water torture tunes
to the scintillating syncopation
of penthouse jazz
and back street blues
to the jaunty Harlem tap dance
or the trotting gait of a Gaelic hornpipe
The rain dances of the great trees
are pure, sublime magic

by Carla DeCrona

Snap

The most sweetest of coffee shops on Vashon is Snapdragon
it’s called Snap for short.
it’s really a troika of rooms, all with different vibes.

Behind Door Number One:
Is the coffee shop.
Walk out of the slapping rain
to a warm wave of pastry smells,
jam tarts, boysenberry pie and
voluptuous loaves of bread lining the counter.
Chocolate chip cookies the size of an outstretched hand.

Pssshhhhhht goes the espresso,
Slosh, the rain on the window and Thwup as people
go in and out the front door.
The gracious hosts:
Adam, with chiseled chin and a man bun
Megan looks like Betty Edward’s sister,
jet black bangs and ruby rad lips
They take your order and your money
then whisk you into

Door Number Two:
The Black Cat Cabaret.
You may be seated at old French table,
worn rough wood covered in color or smooth tile.
But that is during the day.
At night, musicians step out at night,
Sometimes poets,
and every Thursday, Trivia night!
full of cacophony, spilled cabernet
and bitter competition.

Door Three is a surprise!
Open the heavy velvet curtain
to a place silly with rugs
and sofas, overstuffed
like Dolly Parton’s bosom
stuffed into a Victorian corset.
Toasty fireplace roars in one corner, opposite
the bar, aptly named Home Sweet Home, and lights
a wall full of gold and green and red jeweled elixirs
to excite any inner alchemist.
Heads bob in exchanging gossip,
or sharing a sweet and binding confidence.

I pass the time in all three
especially fond of the
corner fire with a fine Guinness.

By Jessika Satori
*About the poem ... this was a writing prompt from a songwriting
class taught by Susan Ennis, who co-wrote many songs for the
band Heart.*

Rose Hips and Snowberry – Part 1

December 7, '22

By Jane Valencia
Once upon a time the world changes. On an Island like this one, forest and mist reclaim the land, technology falls away, and certain names disappear. Calling out to her two children to come home, a mother puzzles in mid-holler as she forgets their names. Noticing the two bushes on either side of the front door, one red with rose hips and the other white with snowberries, she realizes that something of the rose is in one of her children, and something of snowberry is in the other.

“Rose Hip! Snowberry!” Mam calls, naming them anew. And to her surprise and relief, they recognize the names in themselves, and come.

The two children must learn their world all over again. They set out on deer trails, a different one each day. Today’s trail leads to the edge of the woods.

“Look at that!” calls Rose Hip. Bordering the trail are two shrubs – one with red-orange rose hips and the other with bright white snowberries. “Our namesakes. Into the woods we go!”

Snowberry hangs back.
“What,” Rose Hip says, impatient.

“In the old tales deep red and bright white colors are signs of the Otherworld. The enchanted lands. The fairies.”

With a laugh, Rose Hip gestures in a circle. “This island? We’re already in Fairyland – or, a ‘no-ferry’-land. What’s a little more magic?” Grabbing Snowberry’s hand, Rose Hip leads the way.

Straight off, Snowberry notices the Red Alder trees. They are mottled gray, and their tall long arms stretch over the trail, creating a forest hallway. Something about these big old trees feels like being in the presence of grandparents, of many watchful elder beings. While Rose Hip

darts ahead, Snowberry gives a timid wave to the trees.

An image unfurls in Snowberry’s mind: Mam, back home, slicing the roots, leaves, and twigs of Red Alder. Words breathe in Snowberry’s ear: Bear Medicine.

“Bear Medicine, what’s that?” Snowberry doesn’t know what Bear Medicine is, but several long scrapes mark a Red Alder trunk. The marks of Bear? The scrapes drip an orange-red substance. Resin.

“Oh–” Rose Hip is back beside Snowberry. Rose Hip touches the resin, then tastes it. “Yow! Super-bitter and super-dry. But ... the flavor is also just the tiniest bit sweet.”

Plucking a zig-zag edged leaf from the Red Alder, Rose Hip smears resin on it, and then marches down the trail, licking away at the leaf.

A chill replaces the warmth of the day. Snowberry’s stomach grows queasy. Snowberry gazes up at all those grandparent Red Alder trees, and senses a sternness in one, disapproval in another, a sadness in a third, and gentle understanding in a fourth. In that moment, the trees seem so much like people that Snowberry stumbles back to the first Alder. Fumbling through the lunch that Mam had packed for them, Snowberry pulls out a chunk of cornbread and places it into a space in the trunk. That hollow is so much like a mouth – a tree mouth.

“For you.” Snowberry whispers. “Thank you for your resin. We both thank you.”

The leaves rustle, a quiet settles, and the chill lifts from Snowberry’s shoulders.

“Come on!” Rose Hip shouts.

With quiet and curiosity, Snowberry follows Rose Hip deeper into the forest.

To be continued.

*For **Magical Nature Field Notes** to this tale, please read on vashonloop.com*


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Hawthorn Berries

Continued from Page 7

hawthorn, “Has rightly been called the drug to care for the ageing heart.”

Hawthorn is called a tonic because it needs to be used regularly over the long term, as it can take many months for full results, especially in the elderly. Fortunately, hawthorn is completely safe and has shown no toxicity in any of many clinical studies. Moreover, many of these studies combined hawthorn with other prescription medications without any negative drug interactions.

The Germans often begin to drink hawthorn tea daily after about age 40. This makes good sense to me. Although the dose will be small, there is every reason to believe the tea will gently but significantly protect the heart from some aspects of aging and

poor lifestyle. If the heart issues are more substantial, a higher dose of the tincture will make more sense than just the tea – but no harm in doing both.

Hawthorn grows worldwide, and while there are many species, they all seem to have pretty much the same constituents. I personally use any hawthorn that is growing in a clean, quiet place where it is relaxing and enjoyable to pick the berries. In the spring, I gather the flowers and leaves, which are also strongly medicinal, and mix them with the berries. Those berries will look a bit shriveled after a freeze, but are said to be better that way, and they do make a pleasant-tasting tea.

I highly recommend taking the time to gather some hawthorn berries now that the winter chill has arrived, so you can get in the habit of drinking hawthorn tea as a tonic. It is a good thing to do for your heart.

Kitchen Medicine

Continued from Page 6

For Lung Congestion

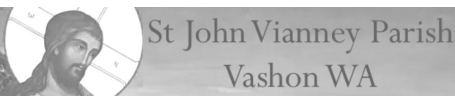
In a quart jar, put:

- 1 tbsp dry sage or the top few leaves of a sage plant (maybe 4 or 5 leaves)
- 2 cloves garlic, pressed
- 1 very generous tbsp of honey

Add boiling water to fill the jar; drink 6-8 oz three times a day.

Remember always to listen to your body and adjust these recipes accordingly; everyone has different tolerances for herbs and spices. One

way to check if something is right for your body is to notice whether you lean toward or away from it. I’m not sure how this works for sugar and other addictive substances, though! Don’t hesitate to call the doctor when needed.



Vashon's Catholic Church
Noon Mass Wed-Fri
Sat. 5:00PM, Sun. 9:30AM
<https://stjohnvianneyvashon.com/>

Pain

Continued from Page 7

as the knees, shoulders, hands, and even toes!

In addition to spinal alignment, chiropractors may use additional modalities. I recommend nutritional support, if needed. Another treatment I often integrate is Neurolink therapy, or NIS. NIS is an integrative process to turn cellular signals that are controlled by the brain, and which can be turned off by 3T stressors, back on. Reconnecting these neuropathways can allow the body to heal and create optimal function. NIS is based on the principles of neuroscience, and has been validated with scientific research.

Everyone has their own pace of healing. Acute chiropractic care requires a concentrated treatment protocol, individualized for each person, to retrain the muscle/joint memory and stabilize and decrease inflammation. A child without a history of injury may take 1-2 treatments to stabilize. An adult with a history of injuries may require 1-2 treatments a week for 4-6 weeks. Once stabilization is achieved and symptoms are down, some patients choose to be on a maintenance program. Chiropractors refer to this as a “spinal check-up.”

I have found that seeking out treatment immediately after injuries

The Vashon Loop, p. 9

can significantly reduce healing time. In winter, there is often an increase in car accidents and falls from the rain, ice, and darkness. Getting adjusted after a fall or accident will allow your body to heal, and can prevent long-term pain. Wellness is a journey, and with proper chiropractic care, along with proper rest, movement, and nutrition, your optimal health can be achieved.

“Even the most thorough change happens one choice at a time”

- Charles Eisenstein

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WA State Parents

Continued from Page 1

parents across Washington state that worked tirelessly for months to educate each other about a gaping hole in state law. RCW 28A, which creates and provides for the public school system in Washington, provides no mention of parents as decision-makers in their children’s education.

Nothing. Nada.

We think that the system gives us a voice through our elected school board, but legally we have no actual standing in the business of what happens to our children once they step onto school property. Our state clearly outlines public school as a business, and only the Washington legislature is recognized as a stakeholder. Not only are parents not acknowledged, but we have been slyly prevented from having a seat at the table by a network of unelected bureaucrats.

We’ve always been this powerless. We just didn’t know it until the assumption of our rights was tested last year through the lockdowns, masks, and mandates. In an effort to regain our legal rights, many parents took classes from the Center for Self-Governance. We learned that we needed to be strategic and willing to execute a plan that might not see fruit at the legislative level for a couple of years.

The plan started (and was successful) in Tonasket County, where CSG students introduced a school board resolution stating that parents are the primary stakeholder

in their children’s upbringing. The word “upbringing” is essential because “parent’s rights” end after a child turns 18. Upbringing is a concept that continues after the age of 18.

Resolutions are easy to pass because they have no legal teeth. They are not policy. Their magic is similar to a corporation’s mission statement. All policy needs to meet the standards of a board’s resolutions; otherwise, it needs to be evaluated, rewritten, and voted on again.

See the magic? If these resolutions had been passed prior to the pandemic, parents would have had a legal leg to stand on when they came to school board meetings in droves and were given the silent treatment. We could have pulled up that resolution and requested our rights as recognized stakeholders.

Last year, my network of mama bears rallied from 20 to 100 parents in each of 60 districts to share letters with their school boards asking that this resolution be considered [Editor’s note – this included Vashon]. The response was unanimous. School board members across the state assumed, just like we had, that parents were already legal stakeholders in the school system. They didn’t see the point of the resolution because they assumed it to be painfully obvious and redundant.

The few school board members who took the time to consider the resolution were met with the opposition CSG had prepared us for. WSSDA-trained lawyers erected roadblocks in every school district where we attempted to introduce the resolution. Fortunately, CSG leaders

had trained us not to be too disappointed by the rejection.

In the 2022 legislative session, Representative Brad Klippert proposed the “Parents are Primary Stakeholders in Their Children’s Upbringing” resolution. He was shot down. The GOP house attorney said it contradicted too much of what was already written into Washington state law.

Please read that last sentence again and let it sink in.

Do you see why I was so shocked when my friend texted me that a resolution acknowledging parents had made it all the way to the WSSDA general assembly?

At the assembly, the resolution was initially met with the same confusion that our school boards experienced. Why does this need to be formally acknowledged? Isn’t it obvious that parents are stakeholders? Then others remembered our letters from last year and piped up, wondering if there was more to this resolution than they realized. My friend said the debate was heated and went on for quite a while.

The weighted votes were cast, and the resolution did not pass. This is where Misipati “Semi” Bird, a

December 7, '22

school board member from Richland, Washington, came in. Semi knows his Roberts Rules of Order and was able to use his strategic “nay” in the weighted vote to call for more discussion and another vote.

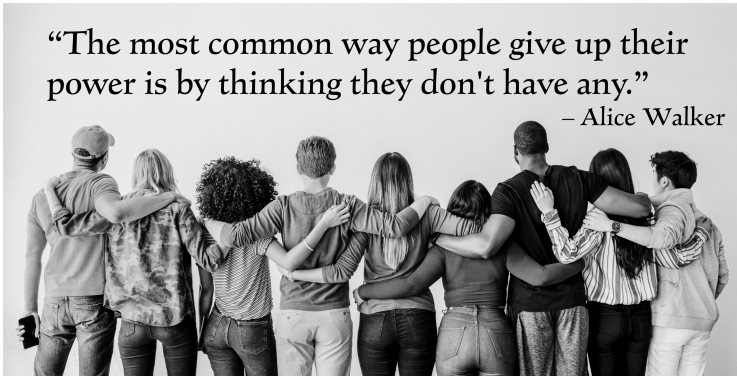
He made an impassioned plea to the general assembly to recognize that voting down this resolution would make them look very bad to parents.

The third vote was called for, and the resolution passed.

Our next step is to introduce the resolution, “Parents are Primary Stakeholders...” in every school board across Washington. Once passed, it can be made policy. And once we have achieved a tipping point of awareness, we can find more support and eventually propose legislation in Olympia.

Patience is a virtue. WSSDA can no longer deny Washington state parents a seat at the table.

** Eryn DeFoort is a former Vashon resident; this article was revised for brevity by Caitlin Rothermel with the author’s permission. For a link to the full article, and to read more of Eryn’s work, go to <https://silverchord.substack.com/p/is-semi-bird-the-tip-of-the-spear>*



School Bond Withdrawal Signals Transformation

By Marc J. Elzenbeck

On November 15, the Vashon school board voted unanimously to rescind the bond request for \$19.5 million slated for 2023. Their decision was somewhat surprising, but in the finest and most refreshing sense, they elected to confront hard realities boiling down to a stew of bad timing.

We should take this decision as a solid sign of leadership choosing its battles wisely. It exhibits an ability to listen, delve into details, make new judgements, and change course appropriately. For example, with fiscal agility, funds for the elementary school fire alarm system update were found. It’s not hard to guess that, going forward, we’re likely to need all those leadership qualities in abundance. As one Vashon High School student opines, “Schools are the highest and most expensive form of government on Vashon.”

Forgetting pain is a priceless tool that helps us move forward, but education no longer has a business as usual. Between August of 2020 and February of 2022, not a single school bond was attempted in Washington State (per VHS Class of 1990 graduate Ryan Swanson of Vashon Island School District’s investment bank Piper Sandler). And if you happened to attend the high school’s 2022 graduation ceremony in June, you would have heard a catchy song by a student band: “Good old days are over, the good old days are gone / As my life fades to grey, people I’ve met have not much to say.” Likewise, the seven VHS co-valedictorians who spoke voiced a common, weary

theme: “This is over.”

Put what our students had to say alongside the board’s decision, and we see processing and follow-through: “We are facing a range of uncertainties related to the general economy, state education funding, interest rates, and inflation,” explained VISD Board President Toby Holmes. “By suspending the bond request, we can more carefully reduce risks until we are in a stronger position to confidently manage such a large undertaking.”

Risk reduction. Yes, and a strong element of “too soon.” Public school hasn’t returned to normal. It can’t. For a lot of kids and parents, the past two and a half years were filled with uncertainty, loneliness, confused and often arbitrary authority, drudgery, and honest dread. Emails to parents exploded in number, kids couldn’t leave their screens without permission in their own homes, and whether sick or not, any child could be quarantined at any moment without warning. Watching kids reduced in remote classes to one of 25 thumbnails occupying a teacher’s screen provoked questions like, “What is public education’s purpose? What is unschooling and its benefits?” Such was the daily reality as the old elephant suffocated in its room.

We are never going to forget this. School board upheavals are this past election cycle’s biggest story, as parents across the country showed determination to take more control over the levers for which our communities pay so much.

This is the new horizon’s

direction, and VISD seems to have found its feet and is traveling the path. It has a new Strategic Plan, one which emphasizes delivering value to students and their families. In Washington’s chief superintendent, Chris Reykdal, we have an educator who publicly acknowledged the disaster of locking down students, successfully fought the governor to re-open, and is setting higher performance standards.

Meantime, a thought keeps returning: Maybe it’s no longer about investing in buildings, but in know-how. Maybe we’ve over-emphasized teaching what to think and impoverished how to think, and the pendulum is swinging away simply because it must. All great change agents know that transformations are far more about resolve than edifice. Witness the Family and Student Link enrollments, which have been ballooning in their outdated pre-fabs and linoleum.

What we want is to move forward to something better, which was already hinted at – to vibrant, thriving schools that harness new winds, mine the knowledge packed into YouTube, and unleash the prowess of 3D printers that let 15-year-olds fabricate fully viable car parts. (Why don’t they already have 3D printers?) We all want what’s best for the kids, and these are the winning issues. We want to help them win in life and the world, and we’ll vote for the capital projects that deliver on those most precious metrics.

The school board listened, and that inspires faith. In return, they can

Healthy With the Season

Continued from Page 7

commodity. Or simply, use the least unprocessed complex cane sugar, and it needs to be organic. There are very few places that are more chemically sprayed than the sugar industry.

Also, the order in which we eat can improve our experience. I recommend this: First course, vegetables – salad, roasted veggies, and all the beautiful fiber we can find. Second course, carbohydrates – we will want less of this because we are already full of veggies!

If we do overindulge (it happens to the best of us), I recommend skipping breakfast the next day (intermittent fasting) and cleaning up our act in the days following, instead of falling into the “leftovers” trap. Our bodies will need time to recover from the fun.

To remind us ... this is the time of year that, ideally, we are gathering with gratitude and abundance. It turns out that, if we eat healthy, we will simply eat less, and our bodies will demand less when they are eating full nutrients.

have faith that Vashon is now far more likely to approve their considered guidance with enthusiasm.

“It Takes a Village” – In Action

“It was the truly international murder case that captivated the world.” This is how People Magazine described the media circus surrounding the 2007 murder of British student Meredith Kercher in the home she shared with Amanda Knox in Perugia, Italy. Across the globe, millions watched, wondered, gossiped, and guessed at what truly happened on that tragic night. But for many Vashon Islanders, the ordeal was far more personal.

In October 2011, Bill Knox, a longtime Vashon resident and grandfather to Amanda Knox, shared with “The Vashon Beachcomber” his reaction to an Italian jury finding Amanda innocent. Saying he was ecstatic, and claiming, “I’m not a real sentimental type,” he nonetheless admitted, “... I found tears running down my cheek.” During the brief phone interview, the doorbell rang, as yet another bouquet of flowers arrived, filling their home with the ambiance of success, relief and joy.

During this extended ordeal, many Islanders (and non-Islanders) chose to step forward, lend a hand,

organize fundraisers, and otherwise hold this family up, when they might have otherwise fallen. One of them was Karen Pruett, and this month she released the paperback version of her book, “Trial By Liar” on Amazon (available on Kindle since 2021).

According to the author, this book “Highlights mass media’s appalling lack of fact-checking while showcasing beneficial crowdsourcing, of which Islanders were a part. From the aisles of Vashon’s grocery stores, to several Italian courtrooms, this research was driven by questions asked by the Knox family and friends on Vashon Island, as well as Meredith Kercher’s family in London.”

The following is an excerpt, printed with Karen’s permission. It reminds us that, in the darkest of moments, we can still find the light, if we seek it with uncompromising focus, will and faith.

“5:00 PST – I happened to be on a ferry at the Vashon Island dock and my car was front and center on the boat, a rare occurrence. I saw a huge plane flying over the city and suddenly realized it was the British Airways jet with Amanda and her family on board. It glided over West Seattle and dropped below the tree tops out of sight as it landed at SeaTac airport. Amanda was home at last!”

Mica’s Kitchen

By Andy Valencia

Welcome to our second interview with a business owner who, despite her geographic location, still seems to lie well outside of Vashon Town, as the tourist walks. Join us in exploring the nooks and crannies of our abundant community.

Past Snapdragon, one driveway beyond Euphorium, hides an eatery that has been serving Vashon for years. I first noticed it during Strawberry Festival when they put out a sign advertising “Epic Cookies.” And they were epic. When Maven Mercantile closed its doors, it soon reopened as Mica’s Kitchen – pronounced “me” and “cah”.

Starting out with buns and a banner out front telling you to “Get Your Buns In Here,” owner Michaela Olavarri quickly responded to all the Maven customers who dropped by in search of savories. With 30 years of restaurant experience, she filled Maven’s shoes without missing a beat. Mica’s Kitchen has offered a variety of sweet and savory dishes ever since.

Getting her start in Alaska, Michaela launched the “Desserts First” restaurant before finding her way to the Culinary Academy in San Francisco. After running cafe and food service for a major bookstore in Capitola, her family connections brought her up to the Seattle area. An opportunity with Camp Burton brought her to Vashon, setting her up to jump in when Maven’s closure gave her a new opportunity.

For Mica’s Kitchen, the COVID story was the familiar upending of everything. Mica’s Kitchen was perfectly configured to serve the takeout market, but every other restaurant on Vashon jumped onto takeout as well. Lots of competition! But (Still,) she took her decades of restaurant experience, plus a spot of luck, and held her business together through it all.

2023 is a promising year for Michaela. While keeping her own kitchen operating, she is becoming

involved in a number of special food offerings in town. If you come across the Basque style “Pinxtos,” it’s almost certainly from the hands of Michaela. Be sure to drop by her kitchen to see her Christmas cookies, and if your dietary choices permit it, explore her smoked meats.

When you feel the need for a home-cooked meal, but you lack the time or energy – drop by Mica’s Kitchen. Everything is made from scratch, using quality ingredients. Experience the dishes of a restaurateur with a lifelong love of the art of creating great food. Mica’s Kitchen is located at 17917 Vashon Hwy, (206) 408-7590.

Llaughing Llamas Chronicles

By Daniel Hooker

The story I want to share this month is a simple one. Do you remember the man, named Carl, who had hearing aids in both ears? He always told the best Dad Jokes ever. One day, he was at the Senior Center telling jokes around the room. But all you could hear was the punch line, and all you could see were the expressions of the ladies. The punch line was “Dam.” The joke was, “What did the fish say when it hit the wall.” The expressions on all the ladies were beyond compare. They all thought Carl had lost it, swearing around the room.

And now, after a pack trip to the North Pole and back again, we’ve got some holiday jokes for you to share around the roaring fire or dinner table with your loved ones. Stay warm!

What do you call someone who doesn’t believe in Christmas or Santa Clause? An egg-nog-stick.

What is Santa’s favorite singer? Elvish Presley.

What is Santa’s daughter’s name? Noel!

How do you tell a male snowman from a female snowman? Snow balls!

What kind of cap does a snowman wear? An ice cap.

The Treasure That is the Vashon Senior Center

By Rich Osborne

If you have been following my letters, you know that I lead the Music Mends Minds sing-along at 1:30 p.m. every Tuesday at the Vashon Senior Center.

You should also know about other programs the Vashon Senior Center offers. Just last month, the Senior Center hosted Monday/Wednesday/Friday lunch service and delivery and Tuesday Meals on Wheels. (For a fraction of what other places are charging.)

Also, Zumba, Mindfulness Café on Zoom, Wild Walkers, Photo Club, Knitting and Crocheting Groups, a Book Group, and a Grief and Loss Peer Support Group.

For games, we have: Mah Jongg, Bridge (Contract and Duplicate),

The Vashon Loop, p. 11

Pinochle and Scrabble. For personal growth, we have: smartphone assistance, Library2Go, JAM (Joy and Movement Fitness), Tai Chi, Spinal Mobility via Zoom, low-vision support, and special program talks on a variety of subjects.

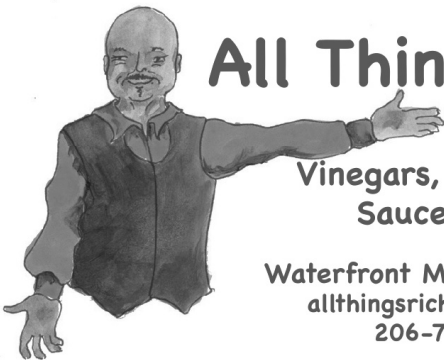
We have taken shopping trips to the Waterfront Market at Ruston and Costco.

But the Senior Center is more than programs. I am running into old friends I have not seen since before COVID. I’m making new friends and learning new things. I have a great time every time I go.

If you have not joined yet, you should join.

Already a member? Come on down. It probably been too long since we’ve seen you. With the Senior Center’s marvelous, welcoming crew; you won’t regret it.

Contact: phone 206-463-5173; online: vashoncenter.org



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- Saturday: January 7th, 12- 3 p.m.
- Wednesday: January 18th, 1-3 p.m.

You can also apply for ORCA LIFT Metro reduced fare program and food stamps.

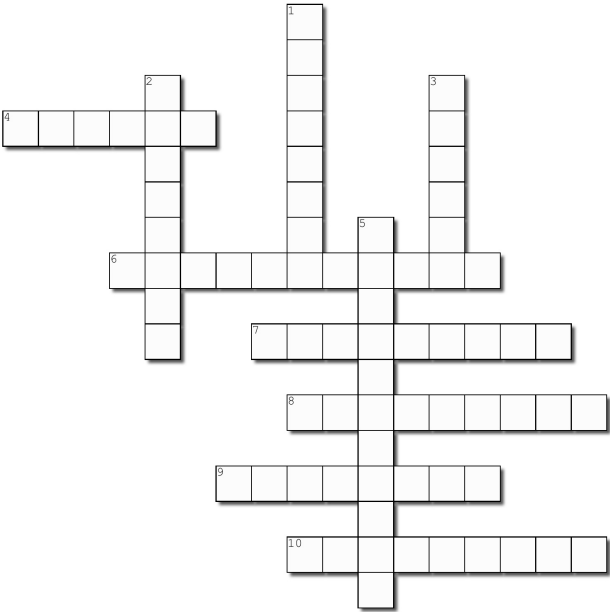
También puede solicitar: ORCA LIFT programa de tarifa reducida de Metro, y cupones de alimentos.



All dates are at the Vashon Library (inside, at the back)
Can't make these dates? Call or email Miguel Urquiza: 206-477-6965
or 206-491-3761, miguel.urquiza@kingcounty.gov

The Light & the Dark

Complete the crossword puzzle below



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

- Long, crystal clear, wet, hard and spiky!
- After the honey, comes a waxy glow.
- A local source of warmth and brightness on dark nights.
- Colorful, creative, decorations for a tree.
- When our tilted planet passes the zenith, light shifts.
- The colder, the clearer, the brighter the nighttime.

Down

- Don't stomp the brakes! Roll on through, praying...
- Who knew bits of white could make it so hard to see?
- A symbol of everlasting life, in the dark of winter.
- A bear of a word, tucked into a ball, sleepily resting.

Find Answer Key at vashonloop.com



Planet Waves

by Eric Francis <http://www.PlanetWaves.net>



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Introduction

Keep your mind not so much on your work but rather on what you want to do with your talent. Doors will open, and you may find yourself in the presence of wholly unexpected opportunities.

Aries (March 20-April 19)

This is one of those truly rare moments when the world is your oyster, as Jupiter re-enters Aries and the Sun lights up the success angle of your chart. Keep your mind not so much on your work but rather on what you want to do with your talent. Doors will open, and you may find yourself in the presence of wholly unexpected opportunities. However, with Mercury about to turn retrograde (Dec. 29 to Jan. 18, with a margin of error on each side), it is not a good idea to sign and fully commit to anything just yet. Any real proposal will allow you some time to negotiate, prepare and adapt. There may be exceptions, of course; sometimes you just have to pounce on an opportunity, but make sure you get the financials and scope of your involvement right, and determine whether something is a good fit. Evaluate carefully whether people are genuine with you (for example, do their words match their deeds?), and notice your own level of sincerity and devotion that comes from the heart and soul more than anywhere else.

Taurus (April 19-May 20)

Take the long-term view, and do your best to sidestep old ideas you have about yourself that you've already figured out are not true. Many of those are based in guilt, which is rarely an accurate metric of anything helpful. Most of that, in turn, has been passed down to you through the generations. In order to truly see your potential, you will need to look at the world through your own eyes and not those of any ancestors whose worldview has been imposed on you. Values are your deepest underlying principles, and your priorities are what you might do about them. You have a rare moment when you can thread the needle and get these into alignment. This crucial factor will increase your focus, your power and your ability to succeed.

Gemini (May 20-June 21)

Mars retrograding further and further back in your birth sign may have you feeling stretched like the elastic on a slingshot, waiting for the moment you're released. However, while you may not be sure who is doing the stretching, you are the one doing the aiming. You are also the thing being aimed. Now is the time to determine what you want to do once you have access to all of the energy that will spring forth when Mars changes directions on January 12th. Maintain your focus until then.

The single most vital message coming from your chart is that your whole spirituality revolves around your talent for moving through the social realm. Place yourself in as many public and private group events as you can. Get out there. Shake hands, meet people and have a little something to offer them, such as an unusually beautiful business card they will want to keep because it's so nice to look at and hold.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your astrology is fully engaged this month, as Jupiter launches a journey clear across the professional and vocational angle of your solar chart. No matter how stuck or stagnant things have seemed the past year or two, you will feel the ground start to vibrate and your energy start to rise. Here is the thing: you must think big – but not too big. Scale or reach in pure numbers is far less important than having contact with the right people, which means those who are interested in what you do. For that to happen, use specific rather than general goals. Maintain a high focus on the quality of your work product, and then place it where people with an interest can find both it and you. Stay close to your intuitive guidance, which means taking the little hints whether to turn left or right when you have no place special to be.

Leo (July 22-Aug. 23)

The Sun and other planets now in your fellow fire sign, Sagittarius, are encouraging you to take a bold, experimental and creative approach to whatever you do. Leo, despite its reputation for being brash, often prefers a conservative and measured approach to most matters. The time has arrived to try something new. There are games of chance and games of skill, and you're best at the kind that combines the two. If you look back at your greatest successes, you are likely to find they all involved taking some type of plunge. Surround yourself with the lively kind of people who are curious about themselves, others and existence.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sep. 22)

You seem to have more alterations coming through your life than a dressmaker during prom season. However, in our world of habits and fixed patterns, you have many possible approaches you can take even to the most ordinary projects. You are close to a breakthrough on a professional matter that involves some kind of integration of two different skill sets, and potentially the merging of two different audiences or client bases. Work with the concept of synergy: the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. This is the formula for life itself (an opera singer, architect or grizzly bear is far more interesting than a pile of carbon and a bucket of water). You have rare abilities, unusual talents and a distinct point of view. Actively use all of these to work for you every day.

Libra (Sep. 22-Oct. 23)

I suggest your theme song for the month ahead be "I Feel the Earth Move" by Carole King. The planet is moving under your feet, and your life is moving, and so is everything around you. Jupiter is about to return to your 7th house of partnerships, which will open up the possibilities and reflect your potential back to you. Yet at the moment, the single most portable, flexible, creative quality described by your solar chart is your mind. Writing is the art of applying the seat of the pants to the chair – then start typing. Right now – in this moment of early Sagittarius – words are the most vital conducting medium

of the mind. So whether you are a painter, musician, insurance salesperson, truck driver or ballet dancer, keep your pencil in your hand and write neatly enough to read it back.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22)

Mars is retrograde in your 8th solar house, Gemini. In the syntax of astrology, this is the most Scorpio-like house in your chart (because Scorpio is the 8th sign of the zodiac). We find in this house the ability to easily converse with others about the intimate details of your life. We see that you crave not just bonding with others, but the principle of the cosmic twin or twin soul as the essence of your relationships. When you have a body-level understanding, you are in a much better position to move with your whole being and take steps that lead to a better life. You are currently working through various levels of denial, self-deception and wishful thinking. One factor to include (which is on the mental spectrum, as it's based on a simple enough fact) is: how long (as in months or years) have you been saying you want to change one particular thing?

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 22)

Confront any lingering insecurities you may have about your plans for your life. Resolve to never let your self-doubts stop you from acting on your own behalf. While it's true that there are no guarantees of success, there is one certain assurance of 'failure': doing nothing when you feel inspired or called to action. The world is changing and changing fast, though many people will not notice because this seems to be just more of the usual. But it is not; keep your ear to the ground and eavesdrop in local establishments to get a sense of what people are thinking, feeling and doing.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

Pace yourself and take it easy for the next couple of weeks. The pace of your life is about to increase rapidly, and it's likely to happen just ahead of

the solstice and Sun's ingress into your birth sign on the 21st. You cannot skimp on asserting yourself and your enterprises, no matter how confident or secure you may feel. Your home life is your foundation and base of operations and you will build everything on that. But build you must, and build you will.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19)

You are about to have many solutions to pending problems available to you. However, you will need to do the mental work to match them up. This, in turn, calls for an inventory of situations that you are facing which need to be addressed. Therefore, be bold about identifying such circumstances, puzzles and various challenges.

It's time to review the past three years of Saturn in your birth sign. This ends in March, and a whole new era begins: that of Pluto in your birth sign for the next 21 years. Pluto will ramp up the energy, the intensity of your affairs and will also raise the stakes on everything you're doing. This review is essential, looking at all the major areas of your life: work, finance, relationships and your mental and physical well-being.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)

The Sun and its friends Mercury and Venus are now crossing your most aspirational angle, encouraging you to aim your sights high and think not just about this year but where you want to be five years from now. One of the next major points of transition, approaching sooner than you think, is Saturn entering your sign in March. This will call for an approach of full-on discipline that I suggest you get into the groove of before this transit begins. Saturn in your sign can serve as a true blessing, especially for Pisces, which has a tendency to take things as they come. Saturn's presence can represent a period of achievement and a relief from living in the midst of so many unknowns. Yet, you must do that old-fashioned thing and apply yourself.

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