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Businesses report hiring struggles

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

Much like the rest of the country, several businesses in Wrangell said hiring has become a greater struggle than in the past.

"I haven't had a full staff in a year and a half," said Josh Young, with J&W's. "I hired my first new employee in over a year four days ago."

J&W's is looking for at least two more people to staff its kitchen, Young said, but he would prefer more.

Normally there's an influx of applications around May, kids looking for summer jobs. That hasn't happened this year.

The odd thing, he said, is while the restaurant is only operating in the afternoons on weekdays due to the staff shortage, it's still doing the same amount of business as always,

though he still would like to add more shifts.

"As far as having a business and being able to get away sometimes ... and I'd love to be able to serve people lunch and dinner, and on the weekends ... but there's only so much we can do," Young said.

Heather Johnson, with the Stikine Inn, said they have several positions available, including at the inn, the restaurant and café. They are looking for a line cook, a dishwasher/prep cook, a server and server assistant, a barista, someone for the front desk, and housekeeping. Applications can be picked up and dropped off at the front desk, Johnson said.

Wrangell's grocery stores are enduring hiring woes too. City Market is looking for three cashiers and two deli workers,

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PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/WRANGELL SENTINEL

Eric Yancey discusses his plans for retirement while pulling Breakaway Adventure's Freedom Chaser out of its slip. He has sold his charter tour business and is looking to sell the Rainforest Islander landing craft.

Yancey ready to sell Rainforest Islander and retire

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

A little over a year after being put back in the water, the Rainforest Islander is for sale again. Owner Eric Yancey has been operating the Islander under Breakaway Ferry and Freight. He has also operated the tour charter company Breakaway Adventures since the late '80s. Now, however, the 61 year old is looking toward retirement.

"Boat's been running great for this past 14 months that I've had it, or whatever it's at now," Yancey said. "The fact that the Rainforest Islander's for sale, I've had a few people kind of go, 'What in the world? You just got that,' and I'll go like, 'The whole thing's about Eric trying to kind of retire and trying to have a semi-normal-ish sort of life.'"

In his year of running Breakaway Ferry and Freight in Wrangell, Yancey said he was kept busy hauling cargo and people all over Southeast. Ketchikan and Juneau were some of his most common stops, he said, as well as Petersburg. The farthest he's traveled was out to Hyder, he said, about 200 miles one way.

Cars were the most common cargo he trans-

ported, which he said the Islander is equipped to carry six to eight at a time. Small boats on trailers were also normal to ship around. While his boat could carry as many as 28 people at a time, Yancey said the most he normally saw on the Islander was about 10 at once. That was fine by him, he said, as it made keeping everyone COVID-safe easier.

Yancey purchased the 65-foot-long landing craft after the North End Ferry Authority failed in its attempt to operate scheduled service between Coffman Cove, Wrangell and Petersburg. The ferry service stopped in 2016, not even a year old.

The boat spent several years in Wrangell's boat yard, where it went in 2016 to repair a crack in its hull.

The Islander was really busy when the Alaska Marine Highway System was not serving Wrangell due to breakdowns in the fleet, Yancey said. Now that ferry service has returned to some level of normalcy, things have slowed down a bit for him.

"I definitely noticed as soon as the ferries started running, it was definitely fewer calls,"

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Sales tax collections better than expected

By LARRY PERSILY
Sentinel writer

Despite the pandemic and its hit to the economy, Wrangell's sales tax collections were higher than expected last year and, though lower this year, still coming in several hundred thousand dollars better than anticipated for the fiscal year that ends June 30.

Some of the better numbers likely are due to the federal pandemic relief aid that went to individuals, who spent much of the money in town, and also to the federal assistance that enabled some businesses to catch up on their bills, including sales taxes, Borough Manager Lisa Van Barga said Tuesday.

The borough distributed much of its 2020 federal CARES

Act money as grants, but required that businesses must be current in their sales taxes to receive the funds, prompting some owners to pay off their arrears, adding a one-time boost to tax collections, the manager said.

Wrangell's biggest source of revenue is its sales tax on goods and services sold in the community.

Many communities statewide collected more than anticipated from sales taxes over the past year, said Nils Andreassen, executive director of the Alaska Municipal League, also pointing to the benefits from local spending of the federal cash sent to individuals in 2020 and 2021.

Continued on page 12

Assembly adopts policy for use of police body cameras

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

The borough assembly on Tuesday evening approved a policy for use of body cameras by the Wrangell Police Department.

Under the policy, "All sworn Wrangell law enforcement employees will be issued a BWC (body worn camera) and trained in the basic operation of the camera and upload procedures. The BWC is to be worn in plain view while performing uniformed law enforcement duties."

The policy describes situations when

officers should or should not have their cameras turned on. For example, cameras must be on during arrests, traffic stops, in-progress investigations and certain other situations. Officers are not allowed to use the cameras for personal use, to record political or religious events without a connection to an investigation, or in shared restroom or locker facilities, among other situations.

"You have leeway when you're wearing the body cam as long as you document it in your report why," Police Chief Tom Radke told the assembly. "The question is going to be, 'OK,

why?' Simply somebody wanting it off is not a reason."

The Axon 3 body cameras and other equipment will cost approximately \$34,000, which the borough will cover with federal CARES Act funding. The department is testing the equipment, Radke told the assembly. He did not provide a date for when the cameras would go into general use.

Assemblymember Patty Gilbert asked if the cameras had a light or anything to indicate it is on, so the public can know if they are being recorded. Radke said a light blinks when the cam-

era is turned on, but it doesn't stay on.

Mayor Steve Prysunka noted that having a light on the camera could be detrimental if officers are trying to be covert.

According to the policy, recordings not scheduled to be used by the police or for court proceedings will be saved for 90 days. Recordings that are deemed "evidentiary" will be saved a minimum of 10 years.

"I think it's a good, positive step forward," Radke said. "It's really important that the guys are really adamant they really want it. That's important."

Birthdays & Anniversaries

The Sentinel extends its best wishes to the following people listed on the Wrangell Chamber of Commerce Community Scholarship Birthday Calendar.

Thursday, June 10: Josephine Lewis, Dan Newport, Aveline Faye Russell; Anniversary: Trevor and Talea Keller, John and Lynn Maxand.

Friday, June 11: Kiara Meissner, Danielle Smith, Kim Stover, Kyler Archie Young.

Saturday, June 12: Leonard Angerman, Cole Appleman.

Sunday, June 13: Stan Campbell, Stan Martin, Aaron Powell, Mark Walker, Alivia Lani Young.

Monday, June 14: Chester Massin, Ryan A. Miller, Michelle Shofstahl.

Tuesday, June 15: Quinn Carey, Kayla Hay, Grover Mathis, Bert Nore, Shayna Schultz, Chris Weber; Anniversary: Phil and Kara Carey.

Wednesday, June 16: Lana Mike, Hollis Montgomery, Louise Smith.

Thursday, June 17: Forest Anasogak, Layla Mill, Frank Rice, Brynlee Wolten.

Senior Center Meals Menu Delivery Only

Friday, June 11

Macaroni and cheese, steamed spinach, salad

Monday, June 14

Salisbury steak, peas, fruit cup, sweet potato

Tuesday, June 15

Sweet 'n' sour pork, broccoli salad, confetti rice

Wednesday, June 16

Baked fish, red cabbage, salad

Thursday, June 17

Turkey sandwich, peas and carrots, potatoes and gravy

Please call Wrangell Senior Center at 874-2066 by 10 a.m. for delivery.

Senior van also available to transport seniors to medical appointments reasonable errands like collecting mail, getting prescriptions at pharmacies or other essential need items.

Ferry Schedule

NORTHBOUND

Friday, June 11

Matanuska, 4:45 p.m.

Friday, June 18

Matanuska, 4 p.m.

Friday, June 25

Matanuska, 3:15 p.m.

Friday, July 2

Matanuska, 4:15 p.m.

Friday, July 9

Matanuska, 3:45 p.m.

SOUTHBOUND

Monday, June 14

Matanuska, 5:30 a.m.

Monday, June 21

Matanuska, 4:45 a.m.

Monday, June 28

Matanuska, 5 a.m.

Monday, July 5

Matanuska, 4:30 a.m.

Monday, July 12

Matanuska, 4:30 a.m.

All times listed are scheduled departure times.

Call the terminal at 874-2021 for information or call 874-3711 or 800-642-0066 for recorded information.



TIDES June 10-June 16

High Tides

Low Tides

	AM		PM		AM		PM	
	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft	Time	Ft
June 10	01:18	16.6	02:19	14.1	07:45	-1.1	07:37	4.0
June 11	01:50	16.4	02:55	13.9	08:17	-1.2	08:10	4.3
June 12	02:22	16.1	03:31	13.7	08:50	-1.0	08:44	4.7
June 13	02:54	15.7	04:08	13.4	09:25	-0.8	09:22	4.9
June 14	03:29	15.3	04:47	13.3	10:03	-0.4	10:05	5.2
June 15	04:09	14.7	05:31	13.2	10:45	0.0	10:58	5.2
June 16	04:57	14.0	06:21	13.4	11:32	0.5	11:59	5.0

Wrangell Roundup: Special Events

TLINGIT & HAIDA HEAD START is enrolling for the 2021-2022 school year. Head Start is a free federal program for preschool children from low-income families. Apply online at www.ccthita-nnsn.gov/services/family/headstart. For more information, contact Head Start at 907-463-7127, or email headstartenrollment@ccthita-nnsn.gov.

COMMUNITY POTLUCK 6 p.m. Fridays through Aug. 31, at the sheltered site on Nemo Point Road. All are welcome.

NOLAN CENTER THEATER presents "Spirit Untamed," rated PG, at 7 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$5 for children under age 12, for the animation, adventure, family film, which runs one hour and 27 minutes. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult.

PATS LAKE FAMILY FISHING DAY 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. June 26. Free. Fishing, games, crafts, lunches and prizes, courtesy of the Stikine Sportsmen's Association. The event is sponsored by the U.S. Forest Service and Wrangell Cooperative Association IGAP. Some fishing gear and life jackets and vests may be available at the event, or bring your own.

WRANGELL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE is seeking talent for the Fourth of July talent show. If you are interested, email stepanie@wrangellchamber.com or call 874-3901 to sign up.

WRANGELL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE is looking for volunteers to chair the Fourth of July parade and big wheel race. Extra helpers needed for the canoe races, crazy craft races, fish derbies and logging show. More food and game booths are needed, especially games. Contact the chamber if you are interested in becoming a volunteer at 874-3901, or stop by the chamber office in the Stikine Inn.

BETA SIGMA PHI FOURTH of JULY PIE SALE will be held again this year with one major change: We will only be selling whole pies and they will have to be picked up upon purchase. We will accept donations of covered pies beginning at 9 a.m. July 4; sales will begin at 10 a.m. For more information, contact Lorraine Kagee 874-3235.

IRENE INGLE PUBLIC LIBRARY summer reading program now open for registration. Open to students entering kindergarten through ninth grade in the fall. Register at the library (open Wednesday through Saturday); the reading program runs through July 31. There will be drawings and a special prize for readers. Call 874-3535 for more information.

Want more attendance at your meeting or event? Send information for Roundup to wrgsent@gmail.com or call 874-2301. Or go to the Sentinel website, click on the Calendar tab, and submit your entry online.

Continuing Events

PARKS and RECREATION www.wrangellrec.com

Pool activities by appointment and reduced capacity, locker rooms are not available:

Arthritis class, 8:30 - 9:30 a.m., Monday, Wednesday, Friday

Lap swim, 6 - 7:30 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, Friday

Lap/tot swim, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m., weekdays, 5:00 - 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, Thursday, and 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday

Open swim, 5:30 - 7 p.m. Monday & Wednesday; 6:30 - 8 p.m. Friday; 1 - 2 p.m. Saturday

Swim Club, 3:15 - 5:15 p.m., weekdays

Water aerobics class, 10 - 11 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, Friday

Weight room available by appointment and at reduced capacity:

6 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 - 7:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 6 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and 3:30 - 8:30 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Saturday

AA Meetings: North Star Group meets from 7 to 8 p.m. Tuesdays and Fridays, St. Philips Episcopal Church.

The Way We Were

In the Sentinel 100, 75, 50 and 25 years ago.

June 9, 1921

A group of mining men are financing an expedition into the Cassiar District in northern British Columbia where, it is believed, they will find a new Eldorado. Stuart Henderson, a lawyer and promoter, heads the enterprise. The morning of June 3, Henderson said his men will be in the field within the next few weeks, and from preliminary prospecting that has already been done, he is confident they will open up a good property in the district east of the Alaska border from Wrangell.

June 7, 1946

Ketchikan's restaurant wage dispute went into its third day yesterday, with negotiations at a standstill. However, the Blue Fox café opened its doors to a crowd after Marge Jensen, Culinary Workers' Union representative, announced that Blue Fox management had accepted the union's demands. The contract signed with the restaurant calls for the following wage scales, Mrs. Jensen said: Cook, \$14 per day; waitress/fountain girl, \$8, waitress/dishwasher, \$9.50; dishwasher, \$8.50; yardman,

\$9.50; pastry cook, \$12; and pantryman, \$9. Employees get one week paid vacation a year.

June 11, 1971

The story around town is that Dave Churchill took a ride on a moose while up the river over the weekend. He got on the moose in the water and the animal carried him cowpoke style before he slid off. It has been done before, one old-timer said. "The moose does not care to have people riding on him. But as far as I know, he has never hurt anyone who has done it. He just runs off, and you gotta get yourself off before he carries you away."

June 13, 1996

Eyes opened wide and mouths gaped in wonder as the sounds of reindeer, birds screeching loudly and other sounds previously unheard as a human vocal production filled the air in a rare and unique performance by the Russian group, Sedje, on Tuesday and Wednesday at the community gym. The group is comprised of 17 musicians from the village of Chersky, in Siberia. They are throat

singers as well as performers of folk music on traditional Siberian instruments. Throat singers produce sounds from the extreme ranges of their voices; they can sing multiple pitches simultaneously, and imitate sounds from nature, such as reindeer and birds. The group is the only professional music ensemble in Russia popularizing this unique art of the Native peoples of the north.



Daylight Hours

Date	Sunrise	Sunset	Hours
June 10	4:00a	9:38p	17:37h
June 11	4:00a	9:38p	17:38h
June 12	3:59a	9:39p	17:39h
June 13	3:59a	9:40p	17:41h
June 14	3:59a	9:41p	17:41h
June 15	3:58a	9:41p	17:42h
June 16	3:58a	9:42p	17:43h

Community gathers for blessing of fleet

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

Community members, local organizations and mariners gathered together at the Wrangell Mariners' Memorial last Sunday afternoon for a blessing of the fleet. The blessing is a tradition in seaside towns around the world, praying for safety and bountiful harvests as fishing fleets begin heading out for the season.

The blessing is a longstanding tradition for Wrangell, said Jenn Miller-Yancey, with the mariners' memorial board, but recent events have become more collaborative.

"I don't know how long a tradition the blessing of the fleet has been, I know different churches took turns in the past," she said. "Wrangell Ministerial Association now has come together, along with the Wrangell Mariners' Memorial board, to bring the blessing of the fleet, hopefully, annually out here at the site."

There was no blessing last year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Miller-Yancey said she was happy to bring the event back this year, and thankful to the community for coming out in support.

The blessing itself only took a few minutes. The ceremony opened with "The

Star-Spangled Banner," sung by Abby Gerald. Pastor Sue Bahleda, with Island of Faith Lutheran Church, gave the blessing. Pastor Brad Traxler, with the Seventh-day Adventist Church, offered a prayer.

The ceremony was brought to a close by Madeline Davies, of Stikine Middle School, who read the poem, "If You've Ever Lived on an Island."

About seven boats pulled out of their slips to line up outside of Heritage Harbor during the blessing.

"May your crafts be strong and stable, may your crews be strong and able, may the seas be good and fair, may your nets be full, may you be safe, may you be abundant," Bahleda said in her blessing.

"We give you thanks for these crafts, and their crews. We remember, too, all other vessels on the sea: The pleasure crafts, the harbor crafts, the cruises and sightseeing crafts. On this day we give particular thanks and blessing for the Coast Guard crafts who continue to guide us, to guard us, to save us and protect us. We give you thanks for all of these things, and we bless these crafts and their crews in their work, in their play, in their days and their nights. Be safe, be strong, be fruitful this day and every day."



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Pastor Sue Bahleda, of Island of Faith Lutheran Church, helped represent the Wrangell Ministerial Association at last Sunday's blessing of the fleet at the Wrangell Mariners' Memorial. "Be safe, be strong, be fruitful this day and every day," she said in her blessing.

Assembly rescinds funding for Sea Level COVID testing

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

The borough assembly on Tuesday night rescinded \$70,000 in funding to cover COVID-19 tests for employees of Sea Level Seafoods, after rejecting an amendment to expand the funding to all seafood processors in Wrangell.

The assembly originally approved a motion on May 25 to use \$70,000 in federal funding to cover the costs of COVID-19 tests for Sea Level employees, which passed on a 4-3 vote. The borough used federal funds to pay for the tests last year.

The item resurfaced Tuesday when Assemblymember Patty

Gilbert offered an amendment to the original funding authorization, expanding the program to cover all seafood processors. Her amendment did not go over well with several assembly members.

"My issue with this is we already have a free testing program in Wrangell, at the airport," Mayor Steve Prysunka

said. The state has contracted with the SouthEast Regional Health Consortium to provide free testing at the airport for anyone, though the state contract expires June 30.

"I don't understand why they have to have us paying for their testing. I appreciate that it's not the city's money, it's the fed's money, but we have to be responsible for the fed's money as well as our own money," the mayor said.

Assembly members Dave Powell and Bob Davis said they

agreed with Prysunka.

After further discussion, the assembly came to a consensus that expanding the appropriation to cover employee testing for all seafood processors was unnecessary and voted down the amendment. Members then decided to rescind the original \$70,000 in funding for Sea Level testing altogether.

Gilbert made the motion to rescind the original appropriation, which passed unanimously. Assemblymember Ryan Howe was absent.

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Fire damages trailer home on Shoemaker Loop

By SENTINEL STAFF

Friends started a GoFundMe campaign Tuesday evening for the Halee Mathis and Darryl Bartlett family after an afternoon fire damaged their trailer home on Shoemaker Loop Road.

No one was home at the time of the fire, Bartlett said, except for the family's pet turtle, Raph, which the fire department saved. This was the second house fire to hit his family in four years, Bartlett said.

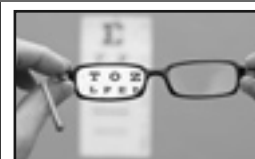
Fire Chief Tim Bunes said

the cause of the fire was uncertain, but they believe it had something to do with the kitchen stove. Several of the trailer's roof supports were damaged in the fire, he said, so while the home is still standing it will not be safe to live in until it is repaired.

The fire was reported about 3:30 p.m. Tuesday.

The GoFundMe campaign has a \$30,000 fundraising goal for the Mathis and Bartlett household and their children.

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Alaska elections will be different next year

By LARRY PERSILY
Publisher

Yeah, I know, it's 14 months from Alaska's 2022 primary election for governor, legislative seats and two of the state's three members of Congress. And who wants to spend the summer of 2021 fretting over potential 2022 candidates. Sadly, it seems many people still haven't gotten over last year's elections.

But 2022 will be different in Alaska — a lot different. Voters last year approved the biggest change in Alaska elections since statehood gave us the right to elect our own governor instead of the president naming a territorial governor.

The big change is intended to lessen the divisive, polarizing partisanship that has overwhelmed elections — and society — of late. Starting with the August 2022 primary in Alaska, voters will no longer choose one Republican and one Democrat in a primary to see which one can drive the biggest wedge between voters to win in the general election.

Instead of party primaries, we will have a bit of a free-for-all primary in which all candidates will compete against each other at the same time, whether Democrat or Republican, Green or Alaskan Independence Party, or whatever new party may emerge between now and then. The top four in the primary will go against each other in the general election.

Then it gets interesting. When you vote in November, you will be asked to rank the primary winners in your order of preference. If one of the candidates is ranked No. 1 by more than 50% of the voters in the general election, game over and the winner is named.

But if no one gets more than 50% — a pretty safe bet these days — the candidate with the fewest

votes gets dropped from the list and ranked-choice kicks in. The vote-counting software will look at the ballots of voters who selected the dropped candidate as No. 1 and shift their votes to their second choice, who will become their new No. 1.

If that does not produce a 50% winner, the bottom candidate again will be dropped from the count and that candidate's supporters' ballots will move into the column of their next choice.

The idea being that while the eventual winner may not be the first choice of 50% of voters, he or she will be a consensus choice among most voters.

The consensus-building voting system, which is gaining interest around the country, will be especially important in Alaska next year. Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy will be up for reelection, if he wants to run again. Sen. Lisa Murkowski also will be up for reelection, if she wants. And while Dunleavy has made a successful and unproductive political career out of pandering and promising to his base of big-PFD supporters and no one else, Murkowski has built a successful and productive career even while angering many of her fellow Republicans.

Assuming both run for reelection and make it out of the primary to the final four, and assuming neither can gain 50% of the votes in a general election with four names on the ballot, the winner will be the candidate who not only tries but actually wins over moderate Alaskans, hoping to be voters' second choice and moving up the ranks as the other candidates are eliminated.

All of which means, maybe, for the first time in years, the winners could be the reasonable candidates who talk honestly with voters and who have the support of most people, not the shrill campaigners who talk only to their supporters and ignore the rest of the state.

EDITORIAL

Borough has good plan for Institute property

It was 25 years ago last month that Wrangell received title to the former Institute property near Shoemaker Bay. The 134 acres have mostly been unused since the Bureau of Indian Affairs shut down the boarding school almost 50 years ago.

There have been plans, proposals, wishes and dreams over the decades of turning the property into tourist lodging, senior citizen housing, a school or training center.

And now the borough is moving closer to the latest plan — subdividing the land into lots for housing and some commercial use.

Good for the borough to take the smart lead, and good for the community.

Then-Sen. Frank Murkowski in May 1996 handed over the deed for the prime piece of property to Wrangell, after an Anchorage-area Native corporation, Cook Inlet Region Inc., gave back the title to the federal government. The corporation had selected the acreage in 1978 from a pool of surplus federal property, but later decided its hopes of commercial development were not going to proceed and better to return it.

Now, a quarter-century later, the borough is moving ahead with plans to subdivide and develop the property with sewer and water lines, gravel roads and culverts, eventually selling 40 lots to the public. The first phase of site development, at 22 lots, could start next year.

The lots will vary in size between 17,000 and 41,000 square feet, and would all be zoned for residential construction. The community needs buildable parcels for new housing, and the site less than a 10-minute drive from downtown is a great spot for people to live.

Commercial zoning will be kept to the southern end of the property.

The development plan still requires final approval by the planning and zoning commission and borough assembly, and a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permit for wetlands fill. The borough also needs to determine a cost for the surveying and site work to prep the lots for sale, and needs an appraisal of the land value so as to figure out how much to charge for the lots and how to pay for the work.

And one more good step: The Wrangell Cooperative Association tribal organization is working on a name for the subdivision "as part of the healing process of past memories (of the boarding school) and the cooperative effort to develop the land," according to the material presented to the planning and zoning commission.

The borough is doing a good job of putting together all the pieces to make this happen. It's been a long time since the Wrangell Institute closed, and it hasn't been easy settling on a use for the land that makes economic sense, but this subdivision looks like the answer.

Wrangell Sentinel

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ortiz supports cautious draw on Permanent Fund

The state budget is currently being negotiated in a House-Senate conference committee, with its final passage through both the House and Senate hopefully occurring this week. When the Alaska Legislature convenes again, its focus will turn to a more daunting task: Redefining the role of the Permanent Fund in how it pays for our annual dividend and state services.

Multiple House committees, including House Finance of which I am the vice chair, have hosted informational hearings on different ideas for the future of our Permanent Fund.

Earlier this month, the Permanent Fund reached \$80 billion for the first time. The fund is our largest and most valuable asset by far, and last year, paid for more than 70% of our state-funded services, as well as our annual dividend.

The goal of many in the Legislature, including Sitka Sen. Bert Stedman and myself, is to continue growing and protecting

the fund; to have it reach \$100 billion in the not-too-distant future would be a milestone that would bring many benefits to every resident in the state.

In order for the fund to continue to grow in real value, we need to be cautious about how much we draw from the fund. This past year during the COVID-19 pandemic, the market fluctuated greatly, affecting the value of the fund. Although it is currently valued at nearly \$81 billion, it was \$20 billion less in March 2020. In order to offset that volatility, I support a cautious percent of market annual draw of 5%, which is the level we currently have in statute.

One idea is House Joint Resolution 1, which would put a constitutional amendment before the voters to combine the principal and the earnings reserve of the Permanent Fund. By combining the principal and the earnings reserve, effectively the entire fund is the principal and protected from excessive legislative appropriation.

The constitutional amendment would limit

appropriations from the fund to 5% of the average of its market value, providing stability for the Alaska Permanent Fund Corp. and allowing them to better manage their assets and earn the best possible return to the benefit of Alaskans.

Other proposals have also come forward, including the governor's proposal — also a constitutional amendment — which would constitutionally guarantee a dividend, cap the draw at 5%, and split the draw 50-50 for dividends and state services. However, this plan leaves a budget deficit of more than a billion dollars that would result in either an additional 22% cut in state services or implementation of significant new broad-based tax(es).

As we continue to make decisions about the Permanent Fund and the future of Alaska, feel free to reach out to my office any time with concerns or preferences. I need to know from you how best to proceed. You can email me at Rep.Dan.Ortiz@AKLeg.gov or call my office at 907-465-3824.

Rep. Dan Ortiz

Juneau petition campaign to restrict cruise ships fails

By SENTINEL STAFF

Advocates who wanted to limit cruise ship visits to Juneau failed to gather enough signatures to place three initiatives on the October municipal election ballot.

The group, Juneau Cruise Control, needed about 3,000 signatures to put the questions on the ballot, but failed to collect the required amount. Instead, they presented letters June 2 addressed to borough assembly members, asking that they impose limits on cruise ships coming to town, and for the cruise ship companies and tour operators to voluntarily limit their impacts on the community.

"We're going to give the city the chance, and the industry, to do the right thing," organizer Karla Hart said at a press conference. "And if they don't, we'll be back. ... We're not going away at all. We'll be around."

Hart declined to say how many signatures the group had gathered.

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Oldest continuously published paper in Alaska



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Lawmakers let tax legislation slide to next year

By SENTINEL STAFF

Not surprisingly in a state that hasn't raised its motor fuel tax rate in 50 years, the Alaska Legislature this session failed to approve a measure to raise the rate, nor did it pass legislation to tax e-cigarettes the same as tobacco products or reinstate the so-called education "head tax" that lawmakers abolished more than 40 years ago.

Bills to adopt a state income tax and raise oil taxes made little

progress this year, despite the fact that Alaska has drained its savings over the years to cover spending.

Legislation that failed to win House and Senate approval in the first year of Alaska's two-year legislative term is alive for further consideration next year.

Though lawmakers are meeting this month in special session, they may only consider measures put on the agenda by the governor when he called the

special session. That is limited to the budget and the size of the Permanent Fund dividend.

The motor fuel tax bill made it as far as the House Finance Committee, where work could resume next year. It would raise the state tax rate — the lowest in the nation — from 8 cents to 16 cents a gallon, which would still be far short of the national average.

A similar bill passed the Senate last year but died in the

House as members hurried to adjourn the session as the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated. The tax increase would raise more than \$30 million a year that could go toward highway maintenance.

Also falling victim to last year's rushed adjournment was legislation to tax for the first time electronic smoking products — e-cigarettes and vaping devices — the same as tobacco products. This year's efforts to impose the tax made it to the Finance Committees in both the House and Senate, where they will age for another year.

Supporters said the e-cigarette tax would help to steer younger people away from e-cigarettes and vape products.

It's not unusual for legislators to pass bills in preliminary committees, only to see them languish in the Finance Committee, which has to make the harder political fiscal decisions.

Also sitting in House Finance is a bill that would bring back the state's per-person tax, intended to raise money for public schools. Rich with oil dollars in 1980, the Alaska Legislature abolished the state's annual \$10-per-person tax that went to help support schools — known as the education head tax.

The proposal this year to restore the tax at a higher rate based on a person's income would bring in an estimated \$65 million a year. The tax on wage earners and self-employed people, residents and non-resident workers alike, would range from \$50 to \$500 per person per year, depending on their income.

None of the other tax legislation this session that would impose a personal income, raise oil production taxes or corporate income taxes even made it as far as the Finance Committee in either chamber.



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/WRANGELL SENTINEL

The Rainforest Islander is docked in Wrangell and is for sale — the next step in its life from Haines to Coffman Cove to Wrangell. Eric Yancey purchased the Islander a little over a year ago, running a freight business alongside his charter company, Breakaway Adventures. Yancey wants to retire and has put the Islander up for sale.

Islander

Continued from page 1

he said.

Separate from the Islander, Yancey sold Breakaway Adventures to one of his employees, Spenser Stavee, about two weeks ago. Under Yancey, Breakaway Adventures operated with four charter boats, according to its website, but Yancey said Stavee only purchased one boat with the company.

The Islander is for sale, and Yancey said he has spoken with some people interested in buy-

ing it, but for now he still runs it.

"I've been working seven days a week, literally, for 20 years, pretty much year-round," Yancey said. "I had bypass surgery here this last December, and just kind of went you know what? I have just had it. ... I love being on a boat, talking to people, and providing a service — whether a sightseeing service or moving their vehicles and stuff — but I just kind of go, 'You know what? It's just time for me to try and chill a little bit.'"



Summer Activities Include Protecting Against COVID-19

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Vaccinations are available to all people ages 12 and up. To learn more and sign up for a vaccine or testing, please visit covid19.searhc.org.

SEARHC | healthy is here.

Juneau cruise petitions —

Continued from page 4

ered since it started the effort May 3.

One of the proposed amendments to the city charter would have banned cruise ships in town between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m., though it would apply only to ships with capacity for more than 250 passengers. Another amendment would have banned ships of that same size all day on Saturdays.

A third measure would have banned all cruise ships over 100,000 gross tonnage, beginning in 2026. That would apply to almost all of the large cruise ships that come to Alaska.

Juneau set a record in 2019 with more than 1.2 million cruise ship passengers coming to town.

The tourism industry spoke out strongly against the petition drive, arguing it would hurt Juneau's economy and cost jobs.

Protect Juneau's Future, which opposed the initiatives, issued a statement that described its "icefield-sized sigh of relief" when the petition drive fell short.

King salmon derby returns after missing past 3 years

By SENTINEL STAFF

Wrangell's first king salmon derby since 2017 is just days away from dropping hooks in the water.

The derby opens Tuesday and will run through June 30, ending in time for the start of the long Fourth of July holiday weekend.

The community's 66th king derby had been on hold the past few years, due to weak salmon runs.

Derby tickets, at \$25 each, and the derby booklet with rules and fishing area map will be available this week at Angerman's, the Totem Bar, Sentry Hardware and the Wrangell Chamber of Commerce office in the Stikine Inn, said Stephanie Cook, of the chamber. The chamber is the derby sponsor.

First place for the largest salmon is \$3,000, with \$1,500 for second place and \$1,000 for third.

The top three kings turned in by contestants 12 and younger will earn \$250, \$100 and \$50.

A special \$500 prize for the largest king turned in on opening day has been donated by Svendsen Marine, Cook said.

The largest salmon turned in on Father's Day, June 20, will win a \$250 prize, and two "hidden weight" prizes of \$250 each, donated by the Totem and Rayme's Bar, will be awarded if entrants land a king at the exact weight required. The hidden weight is a secret until a fish comes in at that poundage, Cook explained.

The derby weigh station will be open 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. seven days a week at the top of the ramp in Reliance Harbor, near the harbor-master office.

In addition to following Alaska Department of Fish and Game area closures and limitations, the derby rules require that people without a derby ticket "may not fish in the same boat with derby entrants — they may come along for the enjoyment of the day, just not fish."

Gary Smart, of Sequim, Washington, won the last derby in 2017, with a 64.1 pounder. It was the largest derby catch in 43 years, the Sentinel reported at the close of the event.

Ketchikan, which also missed its derby the past three years, had planned to try for a return this year, but called off the event last month after the Department of Fish and Game advised against holding the competition, due to poor stocks of wild kings.

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Chamber plans for 4-day 4th celebration

By SENTINEL STAFF
Plans are underway for a four-day Fourth of July celebration in Wrangell, with just a few gaps still to fill.

Chairpersons were needed as of Monday for the July 3 Big Wheels races and July 4 parade, said Stephanie Cook, of the Wrangell Chamber of Commerce, which runs the annual festivities.

Food and game vendors still were needed for the ballpark area during the fireworks the evening of July 3, she said.

The fireworks will go off about 11 p.m. July 3, with a couple of warning shots shortly before the first one goes up.

This year's parade grand marshal and Wrangell's citizen of the year will be announced before the holiday, Cook said.

In addition to family, friends and other visitors, Wrangell will have a cruise ship in town for some of the weekend. The American Constellation, with capacity for 170 passengers and 60 crew, is scheduled to visit Wrangell the evening of July 2 through 9 p.m. July 3, according to the latest cruise ship schedule posted by the Wrangell Convention and Visitor Bureau.

Though schedule changes are always possible, it looks like the holiday celebration will start late morning July 2 with the annual Art Clark Scrap Fish Derby at the city dock summer float. The derby is open to kids ages 6-13.

A talent show is planned for the evening of July 2 at the Nolan Center.

The July 3 calendar includes target shooting competition in the morning, and at 11 a.m. the Crazy Craft Race – "anything that floats, except a boat" – will cast off at the city dock summer float. Canoe races and the Big Wheel races will conclude the July 3 daytime events, with music, food and games planned to start at 9 p.m. at the covered area near the track before the 11 p.m. fireworks.

July 4 events will start with the Independence Day Fun Run/Walk/Bike at 7 a.m., a community worship service at 9 a.m. at the Wrangell IGA parking lot, and the parade at 11 a.m.

The winning royalty tickets will be drawn after the parade, in front of the Nolan Center, with the rest of the day's schedule to include Elks Lodge events, toddler games, junior Olympics, street games, egg toss, logging show and boat races.

The full schedule and details will be printed in the June 24 and July 1 editions of the Wrangell Sentinel.

Wrangell sees first COVID cases in town since May 6

By SENTINEL STAFF
In the first reported cases since May 6, borough officials announced two new COVID-19 infections June 2. Both were Wrangell residents, both initially showed no symptoms when they were tested, and one had recently traveled outside of Alaska.

Both were isolating after their test results came back positive, the borough reported.

The two cases bring to 62 the number reported in town since the pandemic started more than a year ago.

In Ketchikan, the COVID case count has decreased in recent weeks from a high of more than 100 active cases in mid-May to just 14 active cases late last week, with one hospitalized patient.

The rate of tests coming back positive in Ketchikan was down to 2.28% last Friday, a big improvement over the record 6.2% positivity test rate in mid-May.

Ketchikan has recorded more than 660 COVID-19 cases since testing started in the pandemic last year.

And just as the case count has dropped in Ketchikan, so too in Metlakatla, where cases spiked in May and two residents died from COVID-19 between May 25 and June 1, according to news media reports.

As of early May, Metlakatla had reported just 13 cases in the community of about 1,000 residents since the start of the pandemic. But then, between May 10 and June 1, the community counted an additional 29 cases, prompting officials to impose strict travel restrictions, a mask mandate and social-distancing rules.

With the reduction in cases this month, Metlakatla last Friday eased back on its community alert level, the Ketchikan Daily News reported. "We are no longer on lockdown," the Metlakatla Indian Community said. "Continue to work together and follow personal safety precautions to help prevent the spread of the virus."

Torvend, Bacon wed July 3

Todd Torvend and Stacie Bacon will be married at 6 p.m. July 3 on the City Dock. A reception will follow at the Elks Lodge. "Everyone is invited who wants to share our day."

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Serving up this week

PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Warm-ups and learning to pass the ball are part of the instruction as Wrangell Parks and Recreation kicked off its six-day youth volleyball program Monday afternoon. The department's Lucy Moline-Robinson said the program is for kids ages 9 to 11, and will teach them the basics of volleyball. Devyn Johnson, who is leading the program, said about 20 kids signed up.

Police report

Monday, May 31

Intoxicated person.
Traffic stop: Citation issued for speeding.
Noise complaint:
Unfounded.

Tuesday, June 1

Traffic complaint.
Citizen assist.

Wednesday, June 2

Traffic complaint.
Agency assist: Ambulance.
Agency assist: Arrest for probation violation.
Agency assist: Hoonah Police Department
Agency assist: Probation.

Thursday, June 3

Summons service.
Agency assist: U.S. Forest Service.
Civil issue.
Motor vehicle accident.
Agency assist: District attorney.

Friday, June 4

Agency assist: U.S. Forest Service.
Civil dispute.
Agency assist: Department of Transportation, for a road obstruction.
Citizen assist: Vehicle unlock
Hazardous play.
Agency assist: Ambulance.
Found property: Wallet returned to owner.
Subpoena service.
Agency assist: Welfare check.

Saturday, June 5

Subpoena service.
Agency assist: Ambulance.
Traffic stop: Citation issued for speeding.
Subpoena service.
Hazardous play

Sunday, June 6

Agency assist: Alarm.
Assault.
Motor vehicle accident.
Trespass.
Traffic complaint: Speeders.
Agency assist: EMTs.
Intoxicated person.

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Imagination led to fantasy, sci-fi writing for former resident

By CALEB VIERKANT
Sentinel writer

"I always enjoyed reading, I plundered the local library when I was a kid," said Max Florschutz.

Florschutz, 35, lives in Utah but grew up in Wrangell. He moved away to attend college at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, in 2004, and later decided to stay in Utah, he said, but continues to make regular trips back to Wrangell to visit friends, family and the library.

"I do come back and visit Wrangell, I was actually there a few weeks ago," he said. "I was absolutely thrilled during my most recent trip back to be able to go back to the library, and they've got two of my books. ... I was thrilled to be able to go in and sign them!"

He makes his living as a full-time author.

Growing up in Alaska did

wonders for his imagination, Florschutz said. He heard from teachers and friends a lot growing up that he was a good storyteller. In high school, he dabbled in writing with short stories and one or two attempts at novels.

Going into college, he wanted to develop video games with his knack for telling stories. He took several classes to help improve his writing abilities.

While waiting to break into the gaming industry, Florschutz said he started writing again. People then began to say they really enjoyed his work and would be willing to pay for it. He published his first novella, "One Drink" in 2013, and sure enough he discovered that people were willing to pay for his stories.

"Getting into the gaming industry wasn't quite working out for me, and I thought, 'I

could just do this, couldn't I?'" Florschutz said.

He now has seven books to his name, as well as a story included in the fantasy anthology, "A Dragon and Her Girl." His most recent work is a young adult fantasy, "Axtara - Banking and Finance," about a dragon that wants to become a banker.

"I've had people read Axtara in Wrangell go, 'Yeah you know how small towns work,'" he said.

The science-fiction and fantasy genres have been the main focuses of his work, Florschutz said, but added that is a wide domain. Sci-fi and fantasy can cover numerous topics. There are several aspects of the genres he likes. With sci-fi or fantasy, he said you can approach big, serious topics in an easier way. But you can also look into the funny details of "what-if"



Former Wrangell resident Max Florschutz has turned a love of reading into a career of writing science-fiction and fantasy books.

scenarios, such as the problems of a werewolf digging through someone's garbage.

Whether serious or silly, he said people are still people whatever the situation.

Whether the character in a story is going to a wizard or a vet to help their sick pet, he said, they're still just worried about their pet.

"Science fiction and fantasy lets you be really real," Florschutz said. "I enjoy tackling the funny."

Florschutz has several future projects. These include returning to the supernatural mystery world of "One Drink," and also finishing up his sci-fi "Colony" trilogy. He'll also be writing a sequel to "Axtara" in the future, as well.

Anyone interested in Florschutz and his work can find him online at maxonwriting.com. Not only does he share free examples of his work, but he also has a weekly "being a better writer" article where he gives advice to anyone interested in becoming writers of their own.

Petersburg offers cash-prize drawing for vaccinations

By BRIAN VARELA
Petersburg Pilot

The Petersburg borough is offering \$10,000 in prizes during June to encourage residents who are unvaccinated against COVID-19 to get the shot.

The Sleeves Up Petersburg drawing is sponsored by the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, with money distributed through the Alaska Chamber of Commerce. It's part of a campaign to increase the state's vaccination rate by 25%.

"That's the drive from the start, to increase our vaccination rate and get out

of this pandemic," said Petersburg Incident Commander Karl Hagerman. "Let's get back to normal through vaccination."

The drawing is open to permanent residents of Petersburg 12 or older.

Anyone who gets their first dose of a vaccine in June can put their name in the hat for the drawings, Hagerman said.

Three names will be drawn each day on June 4, 11, 18 and 25. Those 12 winners will each receive \$500, and will be entered into another drawing for a chance to win more. On June 28, a \$4,000 grand prize winner will be drawn.

Residents have the option to decide whether or not the borough can release their name to the public if they win one of the cash prizes. Hagerman said the goal of the program is to offer an extra push to residents who are undecided about getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Announcing the name of the winners would add validation to the program and vaccinations.

To sign up for the drawing, visit <http://www.psgcovidinfo.net/raffle>.

As of last Friday, the state reported that 62% of Petersburg residents 12 and older had received at least their first dose

of a vaccine. The rate in Wrangell was 59%. Skagway was among the leaders in the state at 78%, followed by Juneau and Yakutat at 74% each, and Sitka at 70%.

Ketchikan was at 60% as of last Friday.

At the Petersburg Medical Center board of directors meeting May 27, Liz Bacom, infection prevention and quality manager, said 25 people had signed up for vaccinations in just the first couple days of the Sleeves Up program.

"I'm just hoping for 100 new names, but it might get better than that, because these are pretty significant prizes," Bacom said.

Silversea confirms plans for 3 cruise stops in Wrangell

By SENTINEL STAFF

Silversea Cruises, operator of the 600-passenger Silver Muse, last week confirmed its

resumption of cruises to Alaska, with its website listing three sailings that include stops in Wrangell.

The Silver Muse, with capacity for 400 crew members, will be the largest cruise ship to visit Wrangell this summer.

The company on June 1 announced its return to Alaska. It said last month's congressional action that waived a stop in Canada will allow the cruises to resume.

The ship is scheduled to leave Seattle on its first 10-day

cruise on July 29, arriving Wrangell on Aug. 1. The Wrangell Convention and Visitor Bureau calendar shows the Silver Muse returning on Aug. 22 and Sept. 12.

In between those voyages, Silversea will operate two other sailings to Alaska that do not include stops in Wrangell, according to the company's website.

The first two voyages with

scheduled stops in Wrangell appear sold out, with the website reporting a waitlist for those sailings.

Silversea is a luxury cruise operator, with prices for its Alaska voyages this summer starting at more than \$6,000 per person.

The company requires that all of its passengers and crew "have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19."

Feds say Florida lawsuit threatens Alaska cruises

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

U.S. officials said Florida's lawsuit against the federal government over conditions for cruise lines to resume operations could threaten plans to restart cruising in Alaska.

Florida sued the Biden administration to throw out the requirements, called a conditional sailing order, that were imposed on cruise lines before they can sail in U.S. waters for the first time since March 2020. Those requirements say the companies can choose between running a test cruise to show they can effectively stop the spread of COVID-19 on board the ships, or require that 95% of passengers are vaccinated.

A state law signed by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis prohibits companies from requiring that customers, including cruise ship passengers, be vaccinated against COVID-19. The Republican governor later

sued the federal government over its conditions for cruise ships to resume operations, including the vaccination requirement.

Most cruise lines that plan to resume operations in Alaska in July have said they will require passengers to be vaccinated against COVID-19. The state of Alaska has no law similar to Florida that prohibits a business from requiring vaccinations.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Congress effectively ratified the conditional sailing order, and its requirements, when it passed a law last month to let large cruise ships resume trips from Seattle to Alaska this summer.

If Florida wins an injunction blocking the CDC order, it would "end cruising in Alaska for the season," lawyers for the agency said, because the tem-

porary waiver for Alaska cruises hinges on the CDC order being in effect. Several cruise lines have announced plans to sail to Alaska with vaccinated crew members and passengers starting next month.

Alaska and Texas, another state with a sizable cruising industry, have sided with Florida in the lawsuit.

Federal lawyers also said in a filing last week that granting Florida's wish to block the CDC's regulation of the restart of cruising would undermine public confidence in cruising, "particularly in the state of Florida, which is publicly battling with the industry over its own laws."

The federal judge overseeing Florida's lawsuit against the Biden administration ordered both sides into mediation, which has failed to end the standoff.



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Alaska Fish Factor

By LAINE WELCH
Fisheries columnist

Buyers wait for opening of Alaska salmon harvests

Eager buyers are awaiting Alaska salmon from fisheries that are opening across the state, and it's easy to track catches and market trends for every region.

Fishery managers forecast a statewide catch topping 190 million salmon this year, 61% higher than the 2020 take of just over 118 million.

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Run Forecasts and Harvest Projections for 2021 Alaska Salmon Fisheries and Review of the 2020 Season provides breakdowns for all species by region.

And salmon catches are updated daily at ADF&G's Blue Sheet, found at its commercial fisheries web page. They also post weekly summaries of harvests broken out by every region along with comparisons to past years.

Predictions for the 2021 mix of fish call for a catch of 269,000 king salmon, up slightly from 2020, but 25% below the 10-year average.

The projected sockeye harvest of 46.6 million will help replenish low inventories that saw strong export prices early this year and "a continued promising market," said Dan Lesh, a fisheries economist with the McKinley Research Group, who compiles weekly updates during the season for the Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute.

The 2021 coho forecast of 3.8 million is 56% higher than 2020, and similar to the 10-year aver-

age. Coho represent only around 5% of Alaska's salmon harvest value.

A catch this year of 15.3 million chum salmon represents a 23% drop from the 10-year average, but a nearly 80% increase from the dismal 2020 harvest of 8.5 million. Japan is the main destination for chum roe, which saw increased prices to \$17.83 per pound in the third trimester of 2020, up 42% from the previous year.

This year's pink salmon harvest is pegged at 124.2 million, mostly from catches at Prince William Sound, Southeast and Kodiak.

Interestingly, pink salmon have been returning to Norton Sound at record numbers and OBI Seafoods plans to send up to five buyers to those fishing grounds this summer. And the Nome Nugget reports that Icicle Seafoods plans to bring a processing vessel as well as four or five fishing tenders to buy pinks from local fishermen this summer.

Last year's statewide pink salmon catch of 60.7 million fetched an average dock price of 33 cents per pound, the lowest in five years and a drop from 40 cents in 2019.

Salmon saint

Salmon has its own heavenly patron: Saint Kentigern of Scotland. Born in 518, Kentigern was the illegitimate son of a king's daughter. He trained as a priest at a monastery, where his sainthood



PHOTO BY CALEB VIERKANT/ WRANGELL SENTINEL

Summer lunch program

Kindergartener Parker Christopher Mork receives a snack bag and lunch voucher from Lt. Jon Tollerud of the Wrangell Salvation Army on Monday. The Salvation Army has started a new summer snack and lunch program for kids, which will run to the end of July. In addition to the snack bags, children can receive a lunch voucher each day for either J&W's or Nic's Place. As of Monday, Tollerud said the program still had room for 15 more kids to sign up. Call the Wrangell Salvation Army at 874-3753.

evolved around a dangerous love triangle.

Legend has it that the king suspected his wife of having an affair because she had given one of her rings to a court favorite. The king took the ring when the man was sleeping and threw it far out into the River Clyde. When he returned home, the king angrily demanded that his wife show him the missing ring and threatened her with death if she could not produce it.

The queen beseeched Kentigern to help her. He took a

fishing rod to the spot where the ring had been flung into the river and quickly caught a salmon and cut it open. Amazingly, the ring was found in the salmon's belly.

The queen was able to deliver the ring to her doubting husband and peace was restored.

From the time of his death in 603, Kentigern was regarded as Scotland's patron saint and the cathedral at Glasgow was built in his honor. To this day his figure and symbols, including salmon, make up that city's coat of arms.

So who knows, perhaps a quick prayer to the patron saint of salmon will lead more fish to your nets.

Fishing updates

Along with salmon, lots of other fishing activity is ongoing or gearing up across Alaska.

Southeast's Dungeness fishery opens June 15 and crabbers are hoping for another good season. Combined catches for last year's summer and fall fisheries totaled nearly 6.7 million pounds, more than double the 10-year average, and just shy of the record 7.3 million pounds taken in 2002.

Southeast Alaska's summer pot fishery for spot shrimp is pulling up the last of its 546,000-pound catch. Beam trawlers also are on the grounds targeting a 1.8 million pound harvest of pink and sidestripe shrimp.

Southeast divers are still going down in some areas for the remainder of a half-million pound catch limit of Geoduck clams.

Alaska's scallop fishery opens in regions from Southeast to the Bering Sea on July 1. The total catch has not been announced but last year the small fleet of three to four boats dredged up a reduced quota of 277,500 pounds of shucked meats, nearly half from the Yakutat region.

Alaska's halibut catch already has topped 5 million pounds with Homer, Seward and Juneau the leading ports for landings. Prices are still running more than \$2 per pound higher than last

year, ranging from \$5.50 to \$6.75 or more in most major ports, and reaching \$7 a pound at Homer. Alaska halibut fishermen have a nearly 20 million pound catch limit this year.

Black cod (sablefish) catches have topped 13 million pounds, with most deliveries going to Sitka, Seward and Kodiak. That quota this year is 40.5 million pounds.

Mask reminder

The federal mask mandate remains in effect for fishing crews on all U.S. vessels. And while the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has relaxed the rules for fully vaccinated people, fishermen are not included.

Many have pointed out that it's critical on noisy boats to be able to read lips or facial expressions, and Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski pressed that point at a Senate hearing last month.

"This is more a safety hazard than anything else — you're out on a boat, the winds are howling, your mask is soggy wet. Tell me how anyone thinks this is a sane and sound policy," she said.

Murkowski recently co-wrote a letter to the CDC and U.S. Coast Guard asking them to exempt fishermen from the mask requirement, and has been joined by lawmakers from other coastal states.

OBITUARY

Steve Urata excelled in school and in life

Stephen Dale Urata, 69, died May 24 in Anchorage.

Steve was born on Oct. 8, 1951, in Wrangell. He was the second son born to Jack Ichiro and Ann Haruco Urata. He is survived by his older brother Jack and younger sister Angela.

He attended grades K-12 in Wrangell and excelled academically, graduating in 1969 as valedictorian. Steve was a young leader and attended the Alaska Boys State Program. A talented trumpet player, he toured nationwide with the National High School Honor Band. He attended the University of Puget Sound and graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in accounting.

From a very young age, Steve had a strong work ethic. He took over his brother's paper route, delivering the Wrangell Sentinel, published by Lew Williams, to more than 55 subscribers. He walked a route that ranged from Jim Nolan's house to Snob Hill over to Mary Churchill's home and down to Angerman's corner. When he outgrew the route, it went to his sister, Angela.

From eighth grade through high school, both Steve and Jack worked at Benjamin's Supermarket on Front Street.

When Steve returned to Wrangell from Seattle, he worked for Ben Bode, preparing tax returns and kept the books for Kaden



Construction, Wrangell Seafoods and Alaska Pulp Co.

He worked with Ned and Harley Johnson for 22 years. Johnson Construction and Supply became like a second home for Steve. He enjoyed the camaraderie and there were special treats to dispense to the Johnson kids underfoot. Steve loved dark chocolate and made bulging packets of candy for trick-or-treaters on Halloween.

If Steve wasn't an accountant, he could have been a world-class chef. He had a treasure chest of spices and would cook up a meal that would delight the taste buds and fill the belly.

He was skilled at cribbage and liked to win. An avid reader, he loaded his Kindle with science-fiction novels.

He loved watching college basketball and football, especially the purple and gold of the Washington Huskies. Steve spent countless hours fishing at the secret hot spots with his dad and brother. However, he was allergic to all seafood, so there was more for his family and more to give away to friends and neighbors.

"Kind, creative and generous, Steve cared about the world and everyone mattered. May his memory be a blessing," his family wrote.

A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. June 18 at St. Philip's Episcopal Church, with a reception to follow at the Nolan Center.

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Royal Caribbean joins list that will require vaccinations

MIAMI (AP) — Royal Caribbean International said it will require vaccinations for passengers 16 and older on cruises to Alaska, and that crew members on all of its ships will be vaccinated against COVID-19 before it restarts cruise operations next month to Alaska and from ports in Texas and Florida.

The vaccination requirement will be expanded to cover Alaska-bound passengers 12 and over starting Aug. 1.

Royal Caribbean is the latest of most other major cruise operators to Alaska — including Holland America, Carnival, Princess and Norwegian—to announce that passengers will be required to show proof of full vaccination.

Royal Caribbean said last Friday that eight of its ships will resume U.S. voyages in July and August, with trips leaving ports in Florida and Texas, and also leaving Seattle for Alaska.

For voyages other than to Alaska that pass through U.S. waters, Royal Caribbean said that passengers are “strongly recommended” to get vaccinated. Unvaccinated passengers must be tested for the virus and follow other measures that will be announced later, the company said.

Royal Caribbean said its first U.S. sailing since March 2020 will leave Miami on July 2 on the Freedom of the Seas. The company’s first sailing to Alaska will leave Seattle on July 26 for stops in Sitka, Hoonah, Juneau and Ketchikan.

Over the following six weeks, five ships will sail the Caribbean after leaving from Miami, Fort Lauderdale and Port Canaveral, Florida, and Galveston, Texas, and two ships will sail from Seattle to Alaska



PHOTO BY JOE BURBANK/ORLANDO SENTINEL VIA AP

Fans line up to see the new 6,500-passenger Carnival Cruise Line ship Mardi Gras arrive at Port Canaveral, Florida, last Friday. Carnival says it is staffing up the ship and will need to run a test cruise for COVID-19 protocols before it can start its Caribbean cruises later this summer. The billion-dollar ship has 20 decks and is the eighth largest cruise ship in the world. The Mardi Gras, which was built in Finland, is the first ship in North America powered entirely by liquefied natural gas

during the shortened summer season.

Royal Caribbean, which is headquartered in Miami but registers its ships in other countries, plans

to have 12 ships operating worldwide by the end of August. Those include ships sailing from the United Kingdom, Europe and the Bahamas.

State offers free COVID vaccinations for visitors

JUNEAU (AP) — The state of Alaska has begun offering free COVID-19 vaccines at airports, a move that was planned a month ago for the start of the summer travel season as an additional enticement for visitors to come to Alaska.

The state health department said vaccine eligibility was expanded June 1 to include anyone in Alaska who is at least 12 years old, including visitors from other states or countries.

In addition to airport vaccination sites in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau, the state has opened up all its other sites around the state for visitors to get a shot while in Alaska.

“We’ve already received calls from tourists who want to be vaccinated here, and some who plan to stay three to four weeks to receive their second vaccine,” Adam Crum, commissioner of the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, said in a prepared statement June 1.

At the airports, the vaccination stations are set up for public access, outside the areas secured by the federal Transportation Security Administration.

Those interested can pre-register online through the Alaska Safe Travels app, or they just show up at the vaccination stations.

Plans call for the Anchorage airport to have available all three vaccines authorized for emergency use in the U.S., including the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine, the state health department said.

The department also said testing services will be available at the three airports and at airports in Ketchikan, Sitka, Petersburg, Cordova, Gustavus, Wrangell and Yakutat.

Tari O’Connor, with the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, said 70 people stopped by for their COVID-19 shots at the Anchorage airport in the first two days of the program. More than half were international travelers, she told Anchorage TV station KTUU.

Wasilla postal worker saves a wedding

WASILLA (AP) — An Alaska bride-to-be mailed out her wedding invitations last month and eagerly waited for friends and family to respond. And kept waiting.

“We were kind of wondering why we weren’t receiving any RSVPs, but we really didn’t think much of it,” Crystle Lewis, of Wasilla, told news station Anchorage KTUU-TV.

It turns out, they had incorrect postage on their invitations. Their style of invitation, with a wax seal on the back of the envelope, required extra postage.

A notice had been sent to the post office box on the return address for the invitations, advising them of the postage due that was owed before the invitations would be delivered.

Wasilla Post Office window clerk Edward “Lee” Mayton noticed the undelivered invitations and saw that the owner hadn’t checked their mailbox.

“I saw the notice that had been dated for almost two weeks, so I’m like, ‘These have to go out,’ because they looked like wedding invitations,” Lee said.

He didn’t know the date of the wedding. Since

it could be soon, he decided he had to get the invitations out.

Mayton bought the extra postage needed to mail the 50 or so invitations, and with the help of his co-workers got them stamped and in the mail that night.

“That’s just what we do, not just because we’re supposed to do it,” he said. “This is Wasilla. We take care of each other out here.”

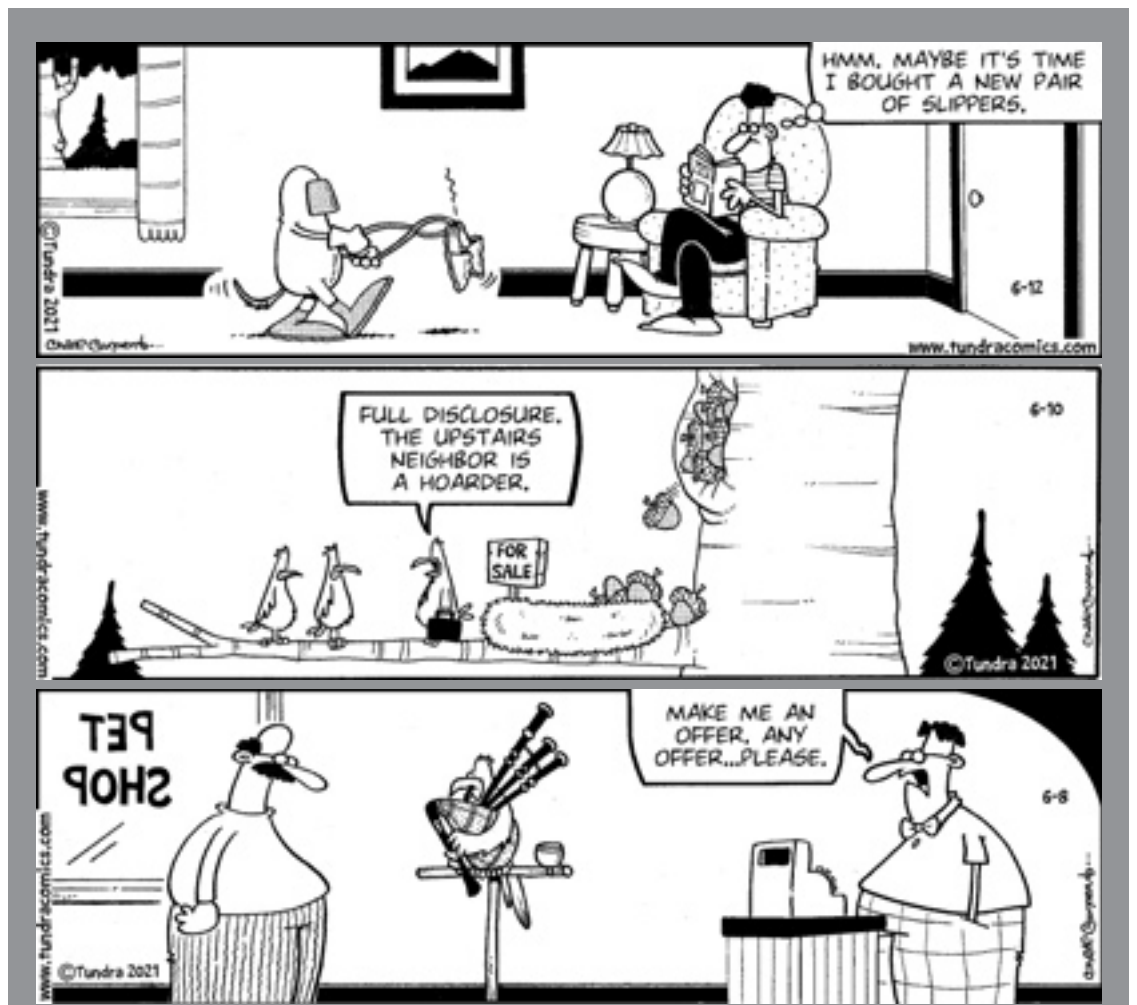
Lewis became emotional when she heard about what Mayton did.

“I couldn’t help but choke up. It was so unexpected. I wasn’t expecting that at all, it was really nice,” she said.

Mayton has been employed at the post office in Wasilla, about 40 miles north of Anchorage, for about three years. Mayton said not only was he was happy to do it, he would do it again.

Lewis and her fiancé tried to repay Lee, but he wouldn’t accept their money.

Even with the postage delay, the invitations were mailed well enough in advance of the September wedding.



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Piano tuner retires after 51 years traveling Alaska

By SANDY POULSON
Sitka Sentinel Writer

Upright pianos in Skagway bars dating from the Gold Rush. Grand pianos worth tens of thousands of dollars in Anchorage and Sitka. Bob Hope's piano while he was on a USO tour in Alaska.

Plus private, church and school pianos in Wrangell.

Virgel Hale has tuned them all in his 51-year career traveling around Alaska.

But now, at age 81, he's retiring, and will be staying home with his wife, Patsy, who has health problems, in Mountain Grove, Missouri, closer to kids and grandkids.

"I hate to call it quits," he said. "I'll miss Alaska."

Can he estimate how many Alaska pianos and piano owners he's met in his travels.

He laughed. "Oh, no," he said. "But it's a lot."

Although he's been blind since contracting meningitis at 14 months old in Arizona, he's traveled by plane (big and small), boat and train throughout the state since 1969.

Hale had been a regular in Wrangell for at least the past 40 years, said Alice Rooney. "Virgel was special because he really liked coming here and spending time in Wrangell."

He used to come to town twice a year, tuning as many as 10 or 11 pianos on some visits, Rooney said.

In Sitka, he would check in at the Sitka Hotel and set up house calls. One Sitka name he couldn't recall was that of a

woman who he said owned one of the oldest pianos he's worked on — it came to Sitka via the Cape of Good Hope at the southern end of Africa in the late 1800s.

Among pianos in the worst shape was one that had arrived at Anchorage's Ft. Richardson Army base with parts destroyed by termites. "The felts had been eaten up, the soundboard had to be repaired, new hammers ... it was in really bad shape."

Another challenging piano was one at a church in Edna Bay, about 60 miles southwest of Wrangell, which had been nibbled at by, well, church mice.

"They had eaten the felt," Hale said. "I got it fixed up, and advised the pastor to get a couple of cats."

Bad weather was another challenge.

"I got weathered in a lot," he said. "Once I went to Kake for the day and wound up there for four days."

Another time a charter plane pilot dropped him off at Teller and told Hale he would pick him up in a couple of hours, after he'd tuned the church piano. But a snowstorm blew up and the pilot couldn't get back until the next day, and then had to land on a lake a few miles from Teller.

"The pilot asked this Native man on a snowmachine to go get me, but the snowmachine broke down halfway on our way back and we had to walk through big drifts of snow the rest of the way. The man said, 'I don't know about these white men's machine — I'm going to get myself some dogs.'"

One of the oldest and most interesting



PHOTO BY JAMES POULSON / SITKA SENTINEL

Virgel Hale has been traveling to Alaska to tune pianos across the state — including Wrangell — since 1959. At age 81, he is retiring. This photo is from a piano assignment in Sitka in 2016.

pianos he worked on wasn't in Alaska but in Shreveport, Louisiana, where he had gone to visit with a friend's aunt and uncle. "They asked me to look at their piano. It was in pretty poor shape, and I took the keys out ... and there were two or three bundles of Confederate money!" Hale said.

Hale is from Springerville, Arizona, in the White Mountains. He attended the Colorado School for the Blind in Colorado Springs, and while he "plays the piano a little bit," his interest at school was in sports such as wrestling and track.

He did learn about piano tuning, though, from a man who had a piano business, and when Hale attended what's now the School of Piano Technology for the Blind in Vancouver, Washington, he needed only one year to graduate because of the mentoring.

He went from there to Alaska, where

he got a job with the Anchorage House of Music. Starting in 1959, he tuned, repaired and rebuilt pianos and at military bases throughout the state. That was when he was a contractor with Bob Hope's show, as it entertained troops at Alaska bases.

He went south for a couple of years, returned in 1969 and stayed. He started his own business, Hale's Piano Services, and continued traveling the state.

He and Patsy have been living in Missouri for the past 16 years, and he'd been flying to Alaska for his piano tours until COVID struck. His last Alaska trek was a year and a half ago.

"I miss it," he said. "I'd like to get back, but ..."

Piano owners miss him too. "I am beginning to notice" the out-of-tune piano tones, Rooney said, adding that she is looking to find another traveling tuner.

Sales tax

Continued from page 1

"We saw significant buying from that," he said. Congress in 2020 and 2021 approved payments of up to \$600, \$1,200 and \$1,400 to most individuals, in addition to enhanced unemployment benefits to help people get

through their income loss during the pandemic.

"When you pump a billion dollars into an economy, it helps," Andreassen said.

Separate from the federal dollars that boosted household spending, some of Wrangell's

better-than-expected sales tax receipts this past year are due to the borough's success in collecting the tax from online sales delivered into the community.

As of Monday, the borough has received almost \$135,000 in sales tax revenues collected by online merchants, about 6% of the community's total sales tax revenues to date this fiscal year.

Wrangell was one of the original 15 members of a statewide collective effort through the Alaska Municipal League to ensure remote retailers collect and remit the tax.

The first collections under the AML program were in February 2020, after a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in June 2018 allowed states and municipalities to enforce their sales tax codes on out-of-town sellers, such as Amazon and other online merchants.

"Quite likely we would be seeing none of this revenue if not for the exchange," Von Barga said of the Municipal League sales tax project.

It cost Wrangell almost \$27,000 in fees this fiscal year to the AML tax program, which handles administration and collection of the money from online merchants. By working together and sharing the costs, the participating cities and boroughs can collect more than they could earn on their own. The additional revenue "has been significant" for Wrangell, Von Barga said.

The Alaska Municipal League now has 36 cities and boroughs signed up for the sales tax effort and expects to be at 40 by the end of this month, with about \$9 million in collections shared among participating communi-

ties this fiscal year, growing to an estimated \$12 million next year, Andreassen said Tuesday.

About 1,100 remote sellers have registered with the AML program to collect and send in sales taxes.

The \$135,000 deposited into the Wrangell treasury so far this year does not include taxes collected and remitted by Amazon on orders it sells or fills itself. Those collections go directly to the borough, and are not part of the Municipal League total, Von Barga said, adding that individual tax returns are confidential and the borough cannot disclose what it receives from Amazon.

The sales tax on orders sold through the Amazon marketplace but fulfilled by other businesses are routed through the Municipal League and are included in this year's \$135,000, Von Barga said.

Amazon is the only online retailer to report and pay some of its tax collections directly to the borough, she said.

Under Wrangell's municipal code, 68% of sales tax collections go to the general fund, 4% to streets, and 28% to health, safety and education spending. In total, the borough had budgeted to collect \$1.888 million in sales taxes in the fiscal year that will end June 30, as the borough was conservative in its revenue projections. But as of Monday, actual collections totaled \$2.386 million, the manager said.

Even with the unexpected boost, this year's sales tax receipts are running behind last year, when the borough collected almost \$3.2 million, though similar to this year, that

number was about \$500,000 better than expected.

"I am a little worried" about next year, Von Barga said, without the massive amounts of federal aid to individuals to boost spending. "I think we'll probably see a dip" in sales tax receipts.

Andreassen shares the same concerned outlook for next year's tax collections by communities statewide.

For the past year, however, though cruise ship-dependent communities like Skagway, Juneau and Seward saw steep drops in sales tax collections, other communities saw minimal losses and even some gains.

Tax collections in Haines are down this year but, like Wrangell, not as much as they had feared. Haines officials credited revenues from online sales tax collections and local spending of federal pandemic aid.

The city of Kenai reported almost a 6% gain in sales tax receipts for 2020 over 2019. Soldotna also reported higher sales tax revenues in 2020.

"It's important to note that when the pandemic first hit, many of us are stuck at home," Mouhcine Guettabi, an associate professor of economics at the University of Alaska Anchorage, told Kenai/Soldotna public radio station KDLL in February.

"When you look at things like retail sales and grocery spending and traffic, or foot traffic in grocery stores, you see that it's been really, really elevated. And to me, that partially explains why sales taxes ... have stayed fairly robust," Guettabi said.

Hiring

Continued from page 1

said Sharon Hale. It has been a struggle to fill the positions, she said.

Part of the struggle, Hale believes, is due to ongoing worries about the pandemic and people not wanting to risk getting sick. "Definitely hard getting cashiers."

John Watts, with Wrangell IGA, said the store is hiring for all positions. Anybody interested just has to stop in and they'll set up an interview. Whether temporary work, part time or full time, "we'll take what we can get," he said.

The state has been using federal funds to pay an additional \$300 a week in jobless benefits to unemployed Alaskans, but Gov. Mike Dunleavy has decided that will end this week. The extra money is dissuading some people from going back to work, the Dunleavy administration said.

The Legislature is considering a one-time payment of \$1,200 as an incentive for any unemployed Alaskan who takes a full-time job, but that new program will depend on budget negotiations currently underway in the Capitol.

Not every business is trying to fill positions at the moment. James Leslie, with 56 Degrees North, said they are doing fairly well manning the store with temporary and seasonal employees right now. However, he said, they will have an opening in the next week.

Traci Davidson, with Angerman's, also said their business is doing fine when it comes to staffing.

Jennifer Ludwigsen, with the Totem Bar, said staffing needs are currently filled, but she agreed with other businesses that hiring has been a struggle lately. It has been hard to find bartenders, she said.

Mya DeLong, with Groundswell, said she is not currently hiring but agreed with other businesses that it has been a struggle to fill positions. Right now, though, her business is doing fine.

"I've had some people flake out," she said. "But you don't know until they're in the structure of the business. ... I think my patience has paid off."