

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Ann Katzenbach with local news and commentary for today, June 3, 2022.

Summer is coming and Washington's remarkable backcountry beckons to hikers and campers. But there are dangers in wilderness settings, and if the reports of boating accidents this spring are any indication, some people are lacking in common sense.

This wouldn't be true of the 9-year-old Stevens County girl who was hospitalized Saturday after being attacked by a cougar. The animal attacked her without warning as she played hide-and-seek with her friends near a children's camp. She screamed and fought with the cougar. Her head was badly damaged but, according to the *Seattle Times*, she is in stable condition. The Department of Fish and Wildlife says that cougar attacks are rare. Cougars are solitary and normally avoid humans. However, they have been known to come into Jefferson County communities. There were rumors of one in the Cappie's Trail area this winter.

If you do encounter a cougar, never turn and run, as that can trigger a chase response. Instead make eye contact with the cougar and back away slowly. If the animal approaches you, try to look as big as possible by standing on a rock and putting your hands above your head. Wildlife experts say to be assertive and yell, throw rocks or other items at it. If it attacks, fight back. Don't play dead with cougars. And pack some bear spray – cougars don't like it either.

Here's another summer consideration. The Washington State Fire Marshal's Office urges residents who enjoy Washington State parks and open areas to use extra caution when camping. In 2021, more than 1,800 wildfires were reported in Washington, burning over 674,000 acres. Annually, 85% of all wildfires are human-caused and, each year, escaped campfires are the leading basis of this cause. Campers are urged to take precautions before, during, and after any intended use of campfires. I won't list the obvious precautions here – they all involve common sense.

According to the Peninsula *Daily News*, Doctor Allison Berry says the rate of rise in COVID-19 cases on the North Olympic Peninsula is beginning to slow, sparking a hope among health officials that the number of new cases will begin to drop in the coming weeks.

Clallam County reported 42 new cases since last Friday, bringing its total since the COVID-19 pandemic began from 12,611 to 12,653 with a case rate of 850 per 100,000 population, that's down from 868 cases.

Jefferson County reported 53 new cases, bringing its total since the pandemic began from 4,029 to 4,082 with a case rate of 857 per 100,000, down from 923.

Dr Berry urged the public to continue to wear masks when in tight spaces or indoors. to continue to prevent the severe spread of the virus. Berry also encouraged area students to finish strong and continue masking at school so the Class of 2022 has a chance to celebrate graduation this year. She is encouraging school district superintendents to conduct graduation ceremonies and other end-of-year events outside when possible.

And, as the school year ends, a high school project that has been going on all year is now on view at the Jefferson County Historical Museum. David Eggers' Photography and Advanced Media class selected historic images from the Jefferson County Historical Museum's collections, then found the location where the photos were taken. Then they worked to recreate the exact framing and angle of view in the present day. The resulting photo essay, in a show that just opened at the museum, visually illustrates some of the ongoing evolution of Port Townsend. The museum is open Thursday through Sunday from 11-4. The exhibit runs through June 26.

The Chimacum Farmer's Market opens on Sunday. Organizers plan a fun day of music, stories, magic tricks, baby pigs, and vendors of cheese, wine, greens, flowers, and other healthy food. Located at Chimacum Corner from 10 -2 – and let's hope for some sunshine.

And that's it for today's news. KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and five pm, Monday through Friday and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us through news at KPTZ.org. Have a great Rhody weekend!