

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker with your local news and commentary for Friday, November 29, 2024.

The State Department of Ecology has granted the Jefferson County Marine Resources Committee \$16,000 to further an effort to support Olympia oyster populations in Discovery Bay. The native oysters are already growing in numbers, thanks to restoration efforts in recent years, according to Neil Harrington, an environmental scientist with the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe who is also a member of the Jefferson County Marine Resources Committee.

Though the oyster populations, both in Sequim Bay and Discovery Bay, were once really plentiful, the numbers had fallen due to overharvesting, land use issues, and sedimentation. But with some estuary restoration, tidal marsh restoration, and stream restoration up stream, the bay is, in many ways, in better shape than it was 20 years ago, according to Harrington. The awarded funds will go toward distributing clean Pacific oyster shells in the bay. The distribution is part of a habitat enhancement project which has taken place over the last 10 years. The intent is to create a substrate of shells, which serve as habitat for Olympia oyster larvae. Grant funds will go to Hood Canal Oyster Company, which will use a 50-foot boat to distribute 1,500 bags with 250-300 oyster shells per bag onto the mudflat at high tide. At low tide, the shells will then be distributed by hand, and the bags will be disposed of. The project is expected to be completed in December.

The Jefferson County Board of Health is seeking county residents who have faced significant health inequities or had experiences with public health-related programs to serve as a non-elected board member in the role of Consumer of Public Health. This appointment is a three-year commitment. The only firm time requirement is the two-hour monthly meeting – the third Thursday of each month from 2:30 to 4:30pm. A \$50 stipend is available for attending each meeting. Application forms may be picked up in person at the JCPH office at 615 Sheridan Street, Port Townsend, or at the Commissioner's Office in the basement of the County Courthouse at 1820 Jefferson Street, between the hours of 9am and 4:30pm, Monday through Friday. Applications are being accepted until Thursday, December 19.

After their long-term leases expired at their Port Hudson and Skookum building locations, Gatheringplace, a 501(c)(3) organization which serves Jefferson County adults living with developmental and disability issues, has been temporarily operating at the Fairgrounds while seeking a new home. Now, thanks to a substantial grant from the Dan Thompson Memorial Fund and other generous donors, Gatheringplace appears to have found the perfect property to purchase. A new building, set for construction in early 2025, has been designed by architect Jim Rozanski, who also designed the Recovery Cafe on Kearney Street. The new sustainable and energy-efficient building will provide improved accessibility and spaces for Gatheringplace programs, including the wildly popular "Yummy" Dog Biscuit Bakery job training program.

Individuals living with autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, and other intellectual and developmental disabilities have traditionally been overlooked in mainstream society. Many are non-verbal, hearing impaired, and struggle to communicate their talents and needs. Though few statistics are available on this population's numbers in Jefferson County, census and other records suggest that the number may be as high as 300. Of that population, less than half are being adequately served. Many are living isolated, lonely, inactive, and unhealthy lifestyles. The new facility will allow the continuation and expanded reach of programs to those who could benefit from participating in programs that promote confidence-building and important social/life/work skills.

And finally, today and tomorrow is the last chance for aspiring gingerbread artists to pick up their free gingerbread kits from the Port Townsend Library for the Library's 30th Annual Uptown Gingerbread Contest. Submissions will be accepted from December 1 to December 8, and winners will be announced by December 20. This year's juror is Mayor David J. Faber.

KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I'm Diane Walker. Thank you for listening.