

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Diane Walker with your local news and commentary for Thursday, May 15, 2025.

This weekend marks the 90th year for the Rhody Festival, which began last night with Trike Races and Strider Races for the little ones on Water Street. Today's event is the pet parade on Lawrence Street between Fillmore and Adams. Registration begins at 4:30 at Harrison and Lawrence Streets.

Friday marks the Kiddies parade, the highly anticipated bed races (beginning at 6:30pm on Water Street), the hair and beard contest, and a community meal at the American Legion. Saturday begins with the Elks Pancake Breakfast and continues with the Grand Parade at 1, a cake picnic at the Pope Marine Park at 3, a spaghetti feed at the Elks Lodge from 5 to 7, and Chautauqua – "The Big Show" at 7 at the American Legion.

On Sunday the annual Rhody Run will begin at the fairgrounds at 9, and the PT Chautauqua Downtown will run from 11 to 4 at the Tyler Plaza: don't miss it! For more information and details on event registration, be sure to visit <https://rhodyfestival.org/>.

Now that the measles epidemic has spread to Washington State, Jefferson County Public Health has expressed concern that immunization rates are low in our county compared to the rest of the State. In order to keep everyone safe, the county needs at least 92% of its population to be immunized, either from having had measles as a child or from the MMR vaccine. The problem is that measles spreads easily – a cough or sneeze can put virus in the air for up to 2 hours, and if there are unvaccinated people in the room, 9 out of 10 of them may well get sick. And, if someone at a Jefferson county school gets measles, anyone near them who is not vaccinated would need to stay home for at least 21 days.

The good news is that the MMR vaccine has been in use since the 1960s and has been incredibly well-studied and proven to be safe. One dose of the vaccine is 93% effective, and 2 doses bring that number to 97%. Vaccination appointments can be made for children at the Jefferson County Public Health Immunization Clinic or at Jefferson Healthcare. Adults can also make vaccination appointments in those two places or do walk-in vaccinations at the QFC and Safeway pharmacies in Port Townsend.

Funding cuts at the federal level continue to plague Washingtonians. Port Townsend's Key City Theater, which had received a Challenge America grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, has learned that the Challenge America program has been cancelled for this fiscal year. The funding cut leaves the theatre with a shortfall of \$10,000 which they had been contractually obligated to spend for their recent production of *Carmelita*, which chronicles the unwritten histories of Mexican immigrants to the United States.

According to the Port Townsend *Leader*, Denise Winter, Key City's executive artistic director, estimated that the Challenge America grant amounted to roughly a quarter of the budget for "*Carmelita*." Apparently the current administration doesn't see "*Carmelita*" as aligning with one of the administration's stated priorities of "celebrating" American history.

In related news, the USDA has canceled the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement, a program which affects the purchase of food from local farmers for food banks and feeding organizations. According to the *Peninsula Daily News*, without the federal funding, food banks will lose access to thousands of pounds of local products they would have otherwise received, and patrons will be affected as a result. In addition, local farms that have received significant purchases through the program will now have one less revenue stream.

And finally, the folks at East Jefferson Fire Rescue want to remind you that even though we are currently at a low fire danger level, grasses and other vegetation can ignite very easily in this dry, warmer weather, and there have already been a number of small fires that quickly got out of hand. So when burning yard debris, stay clear of other combustible materials, keep your fires small, have a charged hose with you, monitor weather conditions, and never leave a fire unattended.

KPTZ 91.9 FM broadcasts your local news Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday at noon and 5pm. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. I'm Diane Walker. Thank you for listening and have a fun festival weekend.