

# WATERWAYS

COOS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY • SPRING 2020 • WWW.COOSHISTORY.ORG

## CHM Organizes a Black History Month Event

By Steve Greif

On February 29th, The Coos History Museum coordinated with the City of Coos Bay and several civil rights organizations during Black History Month in an effort to change the narrative about racial injustice in American history. A memorial event took place at the small city wayside at the south end of Front Street in downtown Coos Bay. A crowd of over 200 people including local citizens, students from Marshfield High, North Bend High, Southwestern Oregon Community College, officials from the City of Coos Bay, and many out-of-town guests were in attendance. Dignitaries in attendance included state senators **Arnie Roblan** and **Lew Fredrick**, state representative **Caddie McKeown**, Coos Bay manager **Joe Benetti**, and Coos Bay School superintendent **Bryan Trendell**.

In September of 1902, **Alonzo Tucker**, an African-American bootblack who also ran a gymnasium in Marshfield, was accused of assaulting a white woman who was the wife of a local coal miner. Tucker was taken into police custody and brought to the Marshfield jail at City Hall which, prior to 1922, was located near the bay at the south end of Front Street. An angry mob of white miners from the Libby area, intent on lynching Mr. Tucker, headed to the jail to abduct him. Tucker managed to escape under the Front Street docks prior to their arrival. But eventually, he was shot several times after being discovered. The mob then decided to take Tucker's body to the scene of the alleged crime, near the 7th Street Bridge, in South Marshfield. Although Mr. Tucker died on the way to the bridge, he was nevertheless hanged from a beam on the bridge as a public spectacle. Tucker never had the chance of



State Senators **Lew Fredrick** from Portland and **Arnie Roblan** from the South Coast added soil to one of the commemorative jars. Photo by Steve Greif

proving his innocence in a public trial.

**Taylor Stewart**, a graduate student from Portland State and member of the non-profit Equal Justice Initiative, was the keynote speaker. The EJI educates citizens about civil rights and provides research and recommendations to assist advocates and policymakers in the critically important work of criminal justice reform. Also giving a short address was **Breana Lamkin** who represented the National Memorial for Peace and Justice located in Montgomery, Alabama. That museum, which opened in 2018, is the nation's first memorial dedicated to the legacy of enslaved black people, people terrorized by lynching, and African-Americans humiliated by racial segregation.

The audience also heard speeches from **Marcia Hart**, CHM director, and **Rodger Craddock**, city manager of Coos Bay. **Lauren Jones**, North Bend High, and **Bella Sperling**, Marshfield High, both read poems from Langston Hughes during the ceremony.

Prior to the event, soil was collected from the old Front Street city hall, the 8th Street Bridge site, and from the Coos Bay estuary. All those in attendance at the event were encouraged to place some of this soil in two decorative jars inscribed with the name of Alonzo Tucker. One jar will be sent to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Alabama for display along with the hundreds of others that commemorate lynching sites in America. The second jar will remain at the Coos History Museum and will be used in a future exhibit about racial injustice in the history of Oregon and the South Coast. In the near future, the City of Coos Bay will also be placing an historical marker at the Front Street site.



**Marcia Hart, Rodger Craddock, Sen. Lew Fredrick, Taylor Stewart, Sen. Arnie Roblan, Joe Benetti, and Breana Lamkin** were some of the dignitaries at the Tucker event. Photo by Steve Greif

# President's Message



**Carol Ventgen**

I write this as the coronavirus pandemic is still unfolding, affecting every person in our region and the world. Our community has been hard hit by this growing crisis, with so many businesses forced to close, jobs and incomes gone, services lost to those who need them the most. Our hearts go out to those tragically affected, and we must all pull together to help in any ways we can.

Your Coos History Museum is affected, too. It is now closed to the public in consideration of the health, safety, and well-being of our staff, volunteers and community, in compliance with the Governor's Executive Order 20-12. Given the seriousness and unpredictability of the coronavirus pandemic, we are uncertain as to when the museum will reopen. But reopen it will. Meanwhile, the museum can continue serving the community in alternative ways while planning for a time when visitors can be

welcomed again, and it needs help from you, the museum's members and supporters.

Any donations you are able to give to maintain limited operations during this challenging time will be crucial, but most importantly, your active membership is needed. Please look at the address label on this issue of *Waterways*. It has your membership expiration date. If your membership has expired, or soon will, please use the form provided and send in your renewal. Your support will truly make a difference!

Everything was going so well. This year started out with a very successful fundraiser at Restaurant O. **Steve Greif's** popular weekly local history class, and the equally well-received monthly First Tuesday Talks, filled the Sprague room. New Education Coordinator, **Ariel Peasley**, began presenting some great children's programs and her new First Saturday Explorer's Club was a hit. A new exhibit, *Coos County Life A to Z*, opened. A great year of events and activities lay ahead.

Now there is a new reality.

Cancellation or postponement of fundraisers, a lack of admissions and rental income, and store closure means there will be little or no revenue for the foreseeable future. Executive Director **Marcia Hart** is exploring opportunities for grants and emergency funding, but the Board has had no choice but to authorize extensive cost-cutting measures, including staff layoffs, in order to weather the crisis.

But the museum is creatively adapting to new service models. Technology is being utilized to share the museum's wonderful resources with the public. See the museum's Facebook page and website for updates, resources, and online content. Marcia Hart describes new offerings in this *Waterways*, along with plans for the future.

Thank you, all, for seeing this through.

## Coos County Historical Society

### Staff

Executive Director: Marcia Hart  
Curator: Debra Semrau  
Education Coordinator & Community Engagement: Ariel Peasley  
Store Manager: Valerie Caskey  
Rentals & Events Coordinator: Karen Quimoyog  
Visitor Services Asst.: Becca Hill  
Bookkeeper: Terri Knight

### Board of Trustees

President: Carol Ventgen  
Vice-President: Kristi Pennington  
Secretary: Anne Guerin  
Treasurer: Jan Hooper  
Trustees: Steve Greif, Ryan Hogan, Don Ivy, Courtney Krossman, David Laird, Bill Mast, Tina Mendizabal, Arlene Roblan

### Museum Admission

Open Tuesday thru Saturday, 10-5  
Adults = \$7, Children 5-17 = \$3  
Family Rate (household) = \$17  
AARP, AAA, and senior discounts.  
Free admission to CCHS members, NARM program members, and active-duty military.

541.756.6320, [www.cooshistory.org](http://www.cooshistory.org)



Some CHM volunteers enjoy viewing the new *Coos County Life A to Z* exhibit on the mezzanine. Photo by Steve Greif

# Executive Director's Note



Marcia Hart

Dear Members,  
Wow, what a whirlwind month!  
I hope you are all

safe and keeping healthy during this very uncertain time. The past month has certainly taxed even the most resilient people I know. We are all feeling the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and working with our community to take strong measures to limit our risk. I want to acknowledge the huge contribution our doctors, nurses, medical professionals and first responders are making on our behalf. I also include teachers, parents, our legislators and community partners among them. They all are on the front lines fighting every day to protect the health, education and well-being of our families, employees, volunteers, and our community. I urge everyone to take care of yourself, your families and communities. I love seeing the random acts of kindness.

So, how will we manage through this crisis?

Though much of our business is curtailed, we continue to conduct business virtually with our furloughed staff and business partners. We have implemented a contingency plan to reduce costs and stabilize our financial health. We are seeking financial relief from federal, state, and additional funders who support businesses like our museum. We are appealing to our community for support.

We are also continuing to pursue our mission and to share our stories of the South Coast. Board member and volunteer **Steve Greif** recently published a great article featured in this issue and *The World* newspaper about the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic. We are updating and improving our social media presence. We are learning how

to put our educational programs online. It was Benjamin Franklin who said, "Out of adversity comes opportunity." We are taking the present threat and looking for every opportunity to stabilize our business and improve the odds of sustainability. We are looking to find opportunities to collaborate with others to share resources. We are adapting, becoming flexible, and using the tools available including the technology that keeps us connected.

Before the COVID-19 crisis, the Board of Trustees identified four strategic priorities to move our organization forward. We continue to build our future programming and action planning using these priorities:

- The development of the Plaza to support new programming initiatives for the community
- Create new interactive, year-round programs
- Collaborate with local tribes in educational and interactive events
- Grow marketing and promotional footprint to include regional tourism initiatives

We will get through this crisis together and despite this difficult situation, we will continue to make plans for the future using our mission and these strategic priorities as our guide. What will the new normal look like? Time will tell. What we do know is that the Coos History Museum will reopen, and it will continue in its mission to create a better understanding of life

in Coos County and Oregon's South Coast, past and present, and our place in that life.

**Remember, It's Your Museum!  
Become a volunteer, be a program sponsor, and renew your membership today!**

## Future Virtual Offerings:

- CHM Explorer's Club-Kids' activities for home
- Virtual tour of our Exhibit Hall
- Expanded online resources for teachers and parents
- Online educational series including offerings from local historian, Steve Greif
- Online Museum Store

## Future Events Upon Reopening

*(date subject to change depending on COVID-19 guidelines)*

- Restart of First Tuesday Talks, ASAP 2020
- Grand Reopening Celebration! July 4, 2020
- CHM Explorer's Club Summer Activities, July & August 2020
- Women's Luncheon - Ratification of the 19th Amendment, August 26, 2020
- Saturday Market in the Plaza, July-September, 8am to 12 noon
- Members Only: After Hours @ the Museum Event, September 2020
- Annual Fundraiser, Saturday, October 3, 2020 @ the Mill Casino
- Heritage Day, October 2020
- Museum Store Day and Annual Artisan Fair, First Saturday, December 2020
- Holiday Lights at the Museum, December 2020

**We are always looking for volunteers to help out at the museum.**

Contact [volunteercoordinator@cooshistory.org](mailto:volunteercoordinator@cooshistory.org) or call **541-756-6320** for more information.

**COOS  
HISTORY  
MUSEUM**



*Local citizens gather at the Marshfield railroad depot to say goodbye to departing troops during World War I. [Coos History Museum 980.250.27]*

## **COVID-19 Not the First Pandemic to Affect the South Coast**

**By Steven Greif**

School closings, social distancing, and cancelled events are making news headlines today – just as they did a century ago in Coos County. The COVID-19 (or coronavirus) crisis brings to mind an influenza pandemic during World War I that also caused major disruptions of life on Oregon’s South Coast.

America joined The Great War (WWI) in the spring of 1917. A year later, the first reports of a fatal new disease were published. In order to avoid bad morale among the troops, wartime censors of both the Allied and Central Powers generally suppressed news of the epidemic that was spreading quickly throughout Europe. Spain, however - a neutral nation - reported on it freely. Once the Spanish King, Alfonso XIII, contracted the disease in May of 1918, the virus took on the popular name “Spanish Flu.”

Spanish Flu, an H1NI virus with genes of avian (bird) origin, spread quickly during the summer of 1918 as military personnel from

countries around the war were engaged in the conflict. By the fall of 1918, Spanish Flu was a pandemic. About one-third of the earth’s population at the time, 500 million people, eventually became infected and, of those, about 50 million died. In the United States, it has been estimated that about 675,000 deaths occurred because of the disease. The U.S. Congress appropriated \$1 million in late September, 1918, for aid to public health service agencies. As the Great War came to an end on November 11, of that year, Congress directed all branches of the military to aid the work of local authorities. Unfortunately, as military personnel were discharged, or sent to the states to help, the disease spread even faster among Americans.

The Surgeon General issued rules and guidelines that sound familiar today: “Avoid needless crowding”, “Smother your coughs and sneezes”, “Choose and chew your food well”, and “Your fate may be in your own hands – wash your hands before eating.”

In October 1918, the chief

health officers of the state, the mayors of both North Bend and Marshfield, along with the superintendents of both school districts, all agreed to shut down the public schools by mid-month to control the spread of the deadly disease. Schools in the Bay Area did not reopen until mid-January of 1919. By that time, the North Bend Board of Education had decided to hire its first-ever school nurse. Ultimately, North Bend High did not schedule graduation ceremonies until July, 1919, because so much school time had been lost to the Spanish Flu quarantine.

A strict quarantine was also enforced in late 1918 that closed other places where crowds congregated: churches, theaters, dance halls, Red Cross rooms, pool halls, soft drink parlors, and even the post office lobby. Club meetings, dances, and social gatherings of all kinds were prohibited. If an individual walked the streets of North Bend or Marshfield, a flu mask had to be worn. Police Chief **Jack Carter** of Marshfield urged all

parents to keep children at home as much as possible.

Sporting events were cancelled for the safety of both the athletes and the spectators. No football games were played that fall in the county. The *Coos Bay Harbor* of January 17, 1919, said: "The basketball schedule has not been arranged as yet as most of the other schools in the county are not certain if they care to play at all this year." The influenza epidemic that affected athletic team competition also hit debate teams. Of the 35 high schools of Oregon that entered the high school debate league in 1918, a dozen withdrew by the spring of 1919 because of the influenza pandemic. North Bend High managed to create a team and win the County championship in the spring of 1919, almost by default. The annual County Track Meet was held at North Bend in May 1919 but Marshfield and Bandon did not participate.

The influenza outbreak and the rationing of supplies for the war effort created short supplies for the Bay Area's main hospital. The Catholic Sisters who ran Mercy Hospital in North Bend asked for help just before Thanksgiving in 1918. An appeal was made for dishes, bed linens, towels, napkins, handkerchiefs, and soap as well as foods such as eggs, fruit, meat, and vegetables. A house-to-house canvas for these goods could not safely be undertaken due to the flu outbreak but South Coast citizens were able to drop off items at a safe location. "Words fail us in trying to express our appreciation," wrote the Sisters in a letter to the *Coos Bay Harbor* after the successful appeal. "If we ever have 'cast our bread upon the waters', it certainly has been returned to us 'a hundred-fold.'"

The March 14, 1919 edition



*At the end of World War I in November, 1918, people in the Bay Area celebrated peace at a parade on Front Street in Marshfield. [Coos History Museum 984.31.4]*

of the *Coos Bay Times* reported that the county basketball championship could not be determined that season owing to war conditions and the influenza epidemic which made it difficult for games to be played. By "war conditions", the paper was referring to the fact that boys had left town for the military during the Great War while others abandoned school to find work in booming local war industries. The Kruse and Banks Shipyards in North Bend employed hundreds of workers to fill orders for wooden ships. A report from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction noted "the inability to hold its boys for graduation may be largely due to economic conditions in the community where the high school is located."

Local reports of Spanish Flu seemed to dissipate by the spring of 1919 but in the fall and winter of 1919-1920, smaller waves of influenza resurfaced causing

cancellation of some events and short school closings. Although diagnosis and reporting about the Spanish Flu were primitive and often inaccurate during WWI era, measures taken to safeguard Oregon citizens were warranted. The population of the state of Oregon was about 750,000 in 1918-1920. About 50,000 people, or 1 in 15 Oregonians, became sick with the Spanish Flu. Estimates suggest that roughly 3,500 Oregonians died from influenza in that time period including hundreds from the South Coast. The prevention methods advocated in 1918 - school closings, social distancing, and cancelled events - might still be the best initial method of prevention today.

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*Steven Greif is a former NBHS history teacher/coach who volunteers with the Coos History Museum. He has written a history of the North Bend School District.*

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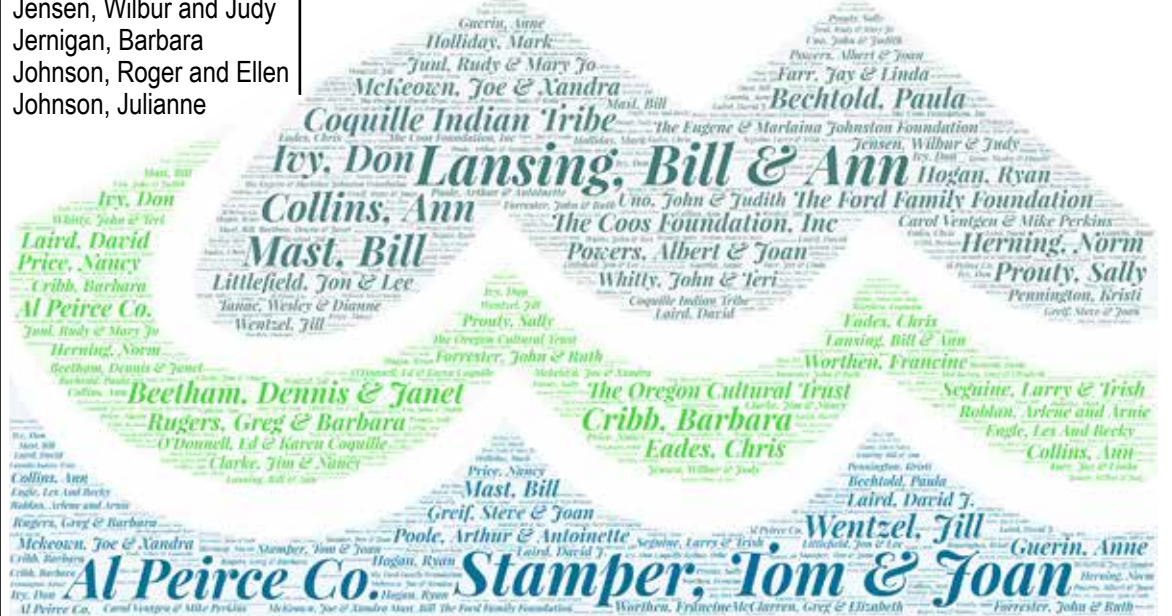
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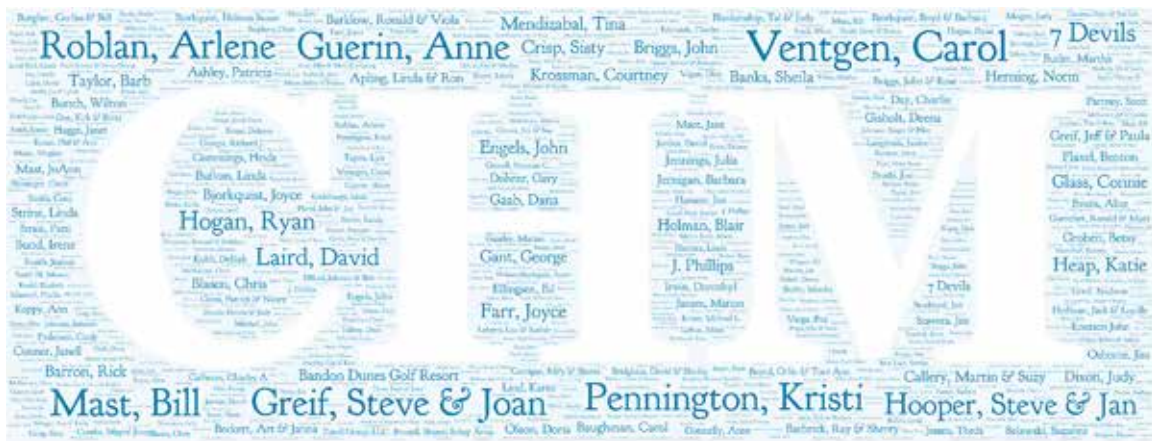
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 Vigue, Dick and Janice  
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 York, Bill  
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## Calendar of Events

With all calendar events postponed due to the temporary closure, please check the museum's Facebook page for updates. We will send out a supplemental calendar once we have reopened. Note that there are now updated on-line resources for [www.cooshistory.org](http://www.cooshistory.org). Select "What We Do", then scroll to the "Research" link and click on it. You will find an updated "Guide to Historical and Genealogical Resources" and a new "Timeline of South Coast History."

# COOS HISTORY MUSEUM

## Museum Adjusts to the COVID-19 Emergency Requirements

Due to recent concerns regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, all museum events through June 2020 have been cancelled or postponed. The Coos County Historical Society's Executive Committee held a Special Meeting on Thursday, April 2, 2020, and passed two motions affecting the membership Annual Meeting.

**Motion—Restricts the June 27, 2020, Elections of Officers and new Board Members to mail-in ballot only.** This resolution affects only the current election as it is a temporary emergency action due to the COVID-19 pandemic guidelines. All ballots will be mailed to current active members at the mailing address on file, on June 1, 2020. All ballots must be mailed in the envelope provided in the ballots and be received no later than Friday, June 26, 2020. Ballots cannot be dropped off at the closed museum.

**Motion—Postpones the 2020 Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony from Saturday, June 27, 2020, to Saturday, September 19, 2020.** Date is subject to change and depending on COVID-19 guidelines.

Please contact Executive Director, Marcia Hart, at 541-756-6320 ext 213 or email [director@cooshistory.org](mailto:director@cooshistory.org) if you have any questions.

# Membership Roll Call January-March 2020

## Renewed Individual

Adams, Allen  
Benetti's Italian  
Restaurant  
Case, George B.  
Collins, Judith  
Duchscherer, Steven  
Edmunds, Charles  
Ellingsen, Myrle  
Ferguson, Susan  
Flaxel, Benton  
Harpole, Joan  
Holmes, Leisha  
Jernigan, Adrienne  
Johnson, Evan  
Johnson, Julianne  
Lee, Hugh  
Lind, Karen  
Luther, Charlotte  
Mace, Trish  
Merchant, John  
Penny, Donna  
Pike, Peter  
Poage, Donald  
Porter, Barbara  
Quilhaugh, Gene  
Schulze, Ward  
Sherr, Jean  
Slover, Charles  
Tracey, Diane  
Vaughan, Mike  
Webb, Lynda

## Renewed Household

Archer, Sam and Sandi

Bartlett, Jolene and  
Carl Granich  
Batdorff, Jim and Alfreda  
Beckett, Arthur and Janna  
Benz, Thomas and Mary  
Boshears, Kenneth and  
Avadna  
Braden, Buck  
Briggs, John and Rose  
Carpani, Debbie and  
Bruce  
Corrigan, Randy and  
Sheree  
Corrigan, Shawn and  
Darcy  
Davenport, Don and Terri  
Davis, Jeff and Carol  
Fernandez, Leo and Mary  
Dean  
Gehrke, Eric and Loree  
Grenell, Norman C  
Hanken, Genelle  
Howard, Chuck and Mary  
Kohler, Eric and Mary  
Lance, Clifford &  
Adrienne  
Lund, Pete and Jane  
Main, David and Susan  
Marshall, Margie and  
George  
Martin, Ruth Marie  
Messlerle, Donald  
Miller, Steve and Linda  
Nelsen, Ray and Barbara

Noffsinger, Gary and  
Virginia  
Rodenkirk, Tim and Holly  
Rosengarden, Maidie and  
William Mrkvicka  
Ross, Gordon and Wilma  
Rudder, Richard  
Salcedo, John Michel Jr.  
and Gary  
Sharman, Kent and  
Andrea  
Snyder, Raymond  
Spona, Elizabeth  
Taylor, Barbara  
Van Over, Mark  
Vernon, Roger and Maren  
Walworth, Clark and  
Catherine  
Wentzel, Rocky & Jill  
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Wright, Will and Doreen

## Renewed Friend

Anderson, Susan  
Backman, Sven and Pat  
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Bechtold, Paula M.  
Champagne-Harris,  
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Poole, Arthur and  
Antoinette

## Renewed Historian

McClarren, Gregory and  
Elizabeth

## New Individual

Bennett, Tom  
Douglas, Pamela  
Fitzwalter, Stephan  
Habopoff, Luba  
Hemperly, Kathryn  
Kamrau, Bob  
Lehrbach, Nick  
Strange, Jennifer  
Warnock, Linda

## New Household

Hale, Doug and Patti  
Kelley, Michael and  
LeaAnne  
Wright, Redgie and  
Debbie

## New Friend

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## New Business

T5 Equities LLC



*A museum fundraising event supporting education programming, held on February 8 at Restaurant O, drew many to the festive evening with the theme: O . . . the Places We've Been and the Places We'll Go! The special buffet dinner prepared by Chef Eoghain O'Neill sent home many happy diners who also enjoyed an opportunity to take home auction items focusing on adventures and experiences. Happily, the event sold out. Photos by Anne Guerin*



NORTH AMERICAN RECIPROCAL MUSEUM




NORTH AMERICAN RECIPROCAL MUSEUM

One of the many benefits of getting a Friend membership or higher is being able to gain free access to the 1,013 museums that are a part of that association.

More information is available at the museum or on the website:

[www.cooshistory.org](http://www.cooshistory.org)



## Is it time to purchase or renew your annual membership? Make a donation?

**Annual Fee:**

Student (\$15)

Individual (\$35)

Household (\$50)

Friend (\$100)

Benefactor (\$250)

Historian (\$500)

Curator (\$1,000)

Business membership (\$100 or above)

**Donation \$** \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership has its rewards** in shopping locally. Show your membership card when you shop at **Tru Furniture, Katrina Kathleen's** and **Benetti's** to receive **10% OFF** regular prices.

At the Friend level and up, you can now receive an additional new benefit – membership in the North American Reciprocal Museums program with free admission to 1,013+ museums across the U.S. A link to the list of NARM members is posted on our website and available for review at our front desk.

*Your annual membership becomes active from date of purchase.*

Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_


Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, send information about events via email.

Send information about volunteering and gifting.

If your VISA/MasterCard/DiscoveryCard is by mail: Card Type: \_\_\_\_\_

Card #: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp Date: \_\_\_\_\_ 3-digit Security Code: \_\_\_\_\_



## New Additions to our Museum Family

**Ariel Peasley** has accepted the offer to be our new Education and Community Engagement Coordinator. Her principal duties will include managing our in-school



*Ariel Peasley*

Ariel comes with a master's degree in anthropology with a museum studies focus and has had various internships in museums, including a paid internship at the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, Montana. She noted what drew her to CHM: "These types of museums have strong morale and community ties and are filled

with passionate people." She is particularly interested in the job's community engagement and working with native tribes.

New Board member **Don Ivy**, Coquille Tribal Council Chief, has rejoined after previously serving on the museum's Board of Trustees in the late 1990s-early



*Don Ivy*

2000s during the "Tootsie Roll" era of early museum visioning and planning. Don has held many historical/cultural heritage positions in the state, receiving the Oregon Heritage Excellence Award in 2013. His knowledge about the archeology and historic landscapes of Oregon's South Coast and his extensive background in collaborative projects with local, state, and federal agencies will be an important contribution to the museum. A long-time Coos Bay area resident, Don is an avid reader, traveler, recreational fisher, and conservationist.



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*The Messner family (Ben, Noah, Tia, Ally, and Riley) enjoyed a First Saturday experience at the Coos History Museum on February 1st. Children worked with CHM Educator Ariel Peasley (center) and Marshfield High student volunteers Mariia and Daryna Semenchuk to create an "Ocean in a Bottle" project. Dozens of families attended this free event and viewed the exhibits. Photo by Steve Greif*

## WATERWAYS

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