

News of the week: Dec. 23, 2022

Dear Reader —

We're coming to the end of the year and to the end of our fundraising campaign, and it's time to wish you happy holidays.

This week's stories leave me with admiration for those in our community who are working to solve some of our most critical and complex problems:

- Kai Uyehara [reports](#) why some of our area's unhoused people prefer "sleeping rough" to spending the night in a shelter, and the efforts of Base Camp staff to assist all who do use their services.
- Gretchen Wing takes a look at an [uncommon model](#) for caring for our oldest family members, one that keeps them close to the community even when they need extra care.
- Nancy DeVaux tells how volunteers from the League of Women Voters of the San Juans are helping to encourage [trust, transparency and accountability](#) in local government, by sitting in on county council meetings and sharing their notes.

These efforts haven't necessarily solved our problems, but they're steps in the right directions. These are the steps that need to be taken to meet the challenges our community faces and these are the kinds of stories we want to bring you every week, along with our local news summaries and Community Voices essays.

I admire the efforts of our skilled and dedicated freelancers, too, for the great reporting they do all year. As this week's stories show, local news is not only vital to maintain democracy, it's what strengthens the links that make us a community.

Salish Current pays our freelance reporters for that work, and we can do that only because of your donation.

Readers who can donate keep *Salish Current* free for all to read and free from advertising and outside

influence. We are not-for-profit and community supported.

We have only a few days left of our [2X fundraising campaign](#) and, thanks to generous local donors, every dollar you donate will be doubled and directly pay for fact-based, community journalism.

We can do this only with your support. [Please donate today](#) — and please share these stories with others. Thank you!

— Amy Nelson, Publisher

Want more environmental news? [Salish Sea News and Weather](#) is a weekday curated compilation of news from Salish Sea news sources. Free via email or on the web.

[Salish Sea News Week in Review Dec. 23, 2022:](#)

Julebukk Friday, Ghost River, biodiversity pact, chicken flu, seaweed farms, Washington zero emissions, Washington aluminum, king tides, nutrient reduction, Salmon People, COP15 promises, Skagit salmon

Salish Current affirms its commitment to work for truth, justice, equity and healing for all people.

#SayTheirNames #BlackLivesMatter

#NoJusticeNoPeace

News from the *Salish Current*

[Why choose to remain unhousted?](#)



Stephan Graves sits on his wheelchair in front of the Bagelry on Railroad Avenue in Bellingham asking for help. Graves, an amputee and dialysis patient, chooses not to stay at Base Camp, and sleeps in front of stores downtown so that someone might be in

earshot if at any time he needs help.

By Kai Uyehara: The Lighthouse Mission Ministries' Base Camp provides shelter, services and support for the houseless hundreds opt to shelter on their own. Why? [Read more](#).

[Hamlet House: keeping seniors in the community](#)



The balance of privacy and opportunities for socialization at Hamlet House suit Phyllis Nansen, who moved from a Lopez Hamlet cottage when the need arose. Hamlet House is a rarity among options for elder care, with a nonprofit, community-oriented model aimed at keeping “generations and families intact.”

By Gretchen K. Wing: Is nonprofit Hamlet House a model for maintaining connections and relationships through lifespans? Read more.

[‘Surprisingly interesting’: local observers do local reporting on local government](#)



Necia Quast and other members of the League of Women Voters of the San Juans Observer Corps attend meetings in person, to make their reporting of ‘surprisingly interesting’ local government meetings more visible.

By Nancy DeVaux: The League of Women Voters of the San Juans has begun observing and reporting on local government. [Read more.](#)

[Letters to the Editor](#)

- **Tony Angell:** Remembering Ken Balcomb

Our policy: Salish Current welcomes letters to the editor from our readers. Letters should be sent with the writer’s name, address and daytime phone number. Those accepted for publication will focus on issues addressed in news articles or commentaries in Salish Current and be factual. No snark or put-downs will be acceptable; general nastiness will be rejected. Letters should not exceed 300 words and may be edited for length and clarity. Salish Current will publish letters sent to the editor at its sole discretion.

News from around the region

(The links found here may have limited access for those who don't subscribe to the source publication. Sorry for any inconvenience!)

Health and Safety

Live long. Where to live in Washington state where life expectancy is the longest? Of the state's 39 counties: San Juan County, #1, 86.3 years; Whatcom County, #8, 81 years; Skagit County, #15, 80.2 years (the state's average). #39? Ferry County. ([Stacker](#))

Education

U union. More than 700 academic student employees at Western Washington University have signed authorization cards to create the Western Academic Workers United through the United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Workers of America, and have filed for recognition with the Washington Public Employment Relations Commission and submitted a letter of intent to the university. ([CDN/paywall](#))

The Border

Gold ship. The company that discovered and will salvage the site of a coal-fired side-wheeler which sank off the tip of the Olympic Peninsula in 1875 with about 350 fatalities has been contacted by British Columbians claiming to be descendants of the deceased and laying claim to any gold found in the salvage. ([Vancouver Sun](#))

Nature

King tide. Christmas morning tides will fill Puget Sound to its highest level all year and increase the size of the sound to more than 1,000 square miles. ([Post Alley](#))

Fish passage. The Skagit River System Cooperative has received at \$1.23 million federal grant to find and repair barriers to fish passage in Martin Slough, a tributary of the Skagit River, and Hatchery and Everett creeks, tributaries of the Sauk River. ([Skaqit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Obit. Kenneth "Ken" Chester Balcomb III ([San Juan Journa/paywall](#))

South Fork. The Whatcom Land Trust purchased an 8-acre parcel off Saxon Road on the South Fork of the Nooksack River for \$350,000, adding 800 feet of shoreline to the Saxon Riparian Corridor. ([CDN/paywall](#))

Business

Skagit salmon. Seattle City Light argues that salmon in significant numbers never accessed the stretches of the river where its dams and reservoirs now stand and the utility should not be required to take on the major infrastructure work of adding fish passage. Many others disagree. ([High County News](#))

Intalco. The effort to open a "green" aluminum plant came to a halt but may get a boost from a new Department of Defense report to Congress that says production of high-purity aluminum may be funded via the Defense Production Act. ([Seattle Times/paywall](#))
See also: "Intalco restart: can 'green' aluminum get 'clean' power?" ([Salish Current July 21, 2022](#))

Mall news. Bellis Fair mall in Bellingham was purchased at auction for \$44 million by 4th Dimension Properties which also purchased about 70 acres of land around the mall which may be sold and developed into multifamily housing or fast food restaurants. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Driving in Canada. A 2021 change to British Columbia auto liability law prevents U.S. drivers who get into an accident while driving in the province from making a claim against the at-fault driver's insurance, leaving Washingtonians at risk financially. Best to make sure to have sufficient and the right [coverage](#) before heading north. ([The Northern Light](#))

Community

Watch Salmon People: When the salmon are running up the Columbia River, Native fishermen are there with them. They live, eat and sleep at the river. Their children grow up at the river. They catch salmon for subsistence, for ceremonies, and for their living. This is the life of the Wy-Kan-Ush-Pum, the Salmon People. ([ProPublica/OPB](#))

Homeless encampment. The City of Bellingham is suing property owner Erwin Rommel for creating a public nuisance by not removing an encampment of about 40

unhoused people on his property. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Townhomes. The Anacortes Housing Authority is opening five new affordable rent townhomes for single and family renters, adding to the Authority's 195 units housing about 370 people. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

Humanity habitat. The Everson City Council approved a Habitat for Humanity project on a 3.5-acre site along Lincoln Street where as many as 38 dwelling units plus some businesses could be built. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

No sit, no lie. The Anacortes City Council banned sitting or lying on sidewalks and blocking foot traffic between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

Arts and Leisure

Arts fest. Allied Arts 43rd Annual Holiday Festival of the Arts is held until Dec. 24 and features over 100 local artisans and craftspeople presenting their holiday goods. [Info.](#)

Lodging largess. The Anacortes City Council approved about \$500,000 in lodging tax grants, the largest of which went to the Anacortes Chamber of Commerce for \$223,000. The Visitor Information Center received \$75,000 with other grants going for maintenance of park restrooms, a downtown handrail project, Race Week, Anacortes Music Project, Anacortes Farmer's Market, Fourth of July fireworks, and the Anacortes Arts Festival. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

Government

San Juan County

San Juan County elected officials will be sworn in at Superior Court on Jan. 5.

City of Bellingham

The city council will hold a [special meeting](#) on Jan. 4 to discuss council reorganization.

The council will meet in regular session on Jan. 9.

Whatcom County

The council will meet on Jan. 10.

Port of Bellingham

The commission will meet on Jan. 10.

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be shared and you can unsubscribe at any time. —
Mike Sato, Managing Editor**

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democratic governance by reporting and curating local
news — freely accessible to all — with independence
and strict journalistic integrity.

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