

Schools: White Pass closes out the year with chicks, scholarships

PAGE 6



Passages: Scripture featuring the delight of the Lord

PAGE 8

Outdoors: Family-friendly bicycle paths and trails may not be plentiful, but can be found in the east end

PAGE 5



# The East County JOURNAL

Dedicated to serving East Lewis County since 1945

June 17, 2026

\$1

Vol. 82 No. 24 • USPS 363-940

## PIC looking for someone to man access to gates

BY AMBER BROWN  
East County Journal

At the regular meeting of the Packwood Improvement Club (PIC) on Monday, June 8, former president Lee Grose announced that he needed to step back from being the person responsible for opening and closing the gate for the Cowlitz River Access Park that the PIC has contracted with Lewis County to maintain.

"Part of it is my problem with letting go of control," Grose said. "I want to travel and figure out who will open and close the gate every time I'm gone is something that I do not want to be in charge of anymore."

Grose said that he had talked with county manager Ryan Barrett and funding has been approved from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

See PIC Page 2

## NAMI addresses local mental health

BY AMBER BROWN  
East County Journal

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is making its way into East Lewis County through the efforts of Ryan Gaylor. He is a substitute teacher at White Pass High School, the owner of the caboose property across from Huff 'N Puff, on the Winlock School District Board and on the board of NAMI.

"NAMI was an organization that was started by people sitting around a kitchen table and trying to figure out how we get the services we need," Gaylor said.

NAMI is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization providing advocacy, education, support and public awareness so that all individuals and families af-

See NAMI Page 2



Chris Johnson | East County Journal

## Having a field day

Morton Elementary School kindergartener Lottie Ankeny, left, enjoys a ride atop some gym mats from Morton High School freshman Kendall Ingalsbe while participating in the annual end-of-the-year field day activities at the school on Wednesday, June 10. See page 10 of today's East County Journal for more images from the field day.

## High Rock Lookout restoration delayed due to vandalism



Sara Osborn courtesy photo | East County Journal

Vandals had to work at removing wood covers before breaking windows at the High Rock lookout, from a photo on Friday, June 12.

BY MARY PROPHIT  
Special to The Journal

Volunteers with a non-profit organization working to restore a historic fire lookout near Mount Rainier returned to the site on Friday, June 12 to find years of hard work undermined by recent vandalism.

The Sand Mountain Society, an Oregon-based historic preservation non-profit has been involved in the restoration of the lookout since 2020, working in partnership with the White Pass Country Historical Society and the U.S. Forest Service. The High Rock fire lookout is federal property, managed by the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. Volunteers worked through the summer and fall of 2025 to restore the historic mountaintop lookout, which offers a truly stunning view of Mount Rainier for those willing to make the 1.6 mile hike.

Operating under a Special Use Permit with the Forest Service, Sand Mountain Society volunteers planned to return to the site to finish the restoration work and begin the staffing of the lookout with volunteers. Now, those plans may be put on hold another year as the non-profit shifts their attention to repairing the recent damage.

Volunteers reported that the damage included most windows broken out, the door smashed in, and tools and supplies thrown over the cliff. Original ceiling materials, meticulously repaired and restored and ready for installation, were broken and scattered over the rocks.

The vandalism at High Rock is a federal offense, and Forest Service law enforcement was quick to respond, initiating an investigation of the incident. Volunteers are disheartened and angry, having devoted hundreds of hours of work to the restoration

of the lookout. It's hard not to be disheartened, they say, when the completion of the project was within sight.

Despite the major setback, all involved are intent on "picking up the pieces" quite literally, and continuing with the restoration, even if it means another year of work at the site. As planned, the White Pass Country Historical Society will manage staffing of the lookout with volunteer stewards once restoration is complete.

High Rock Lookout is a popular day-hiking destination and can often see hundreds of visitors on any given weekend. The U.S. Forest Service asks that anyone with information about the vandalism of the lookout to contact the Cowlitz Valley Ranger Station, in Randle, Washington, at 360-497-1100.

Source: White Pass Country Historical Society

## Notch returns to BCJ Gallery with new show

BY AMBER BROWN  
East County Journal



Nicole Notch

From gallery walls to community workshops to open studio doors, the goal remains the same for mixed-media artist Nicole Notch: encouraging creativity, curiosity and connection through the artistic process.

Notch was featured in The East County Journal in the April 9, 2025 edition. At the time, she was featured at the BCJ Gallery for March and April 2025. Her work returns to the BCJ Gallery, being displayed through the end of June.

"Creativity rarely stays confined to a single canvas. I layer mixed media work combined with paint,

printmaking, texture and collage elements in an intuitive process that values experimentation as much as the finished piece. Rather than following strict rules or traditional techniques, most works evolve through layers, discovery and unexpected combinations," she said.

Between teaching, exhibiting and preparing for fall studio tours, this summer will become a season of connection through art across Lewis County. This summer, Notch will teach Gelli printing classes through Chehalis Parks and Recreation, introducing students to an accessible and play-

See Notch Page 4

## Mossy expanding summer meals program

BY AMBER BROWN  
East County Journal

Mossyrock School District will be offering a free summer meal program for any child 18 and younger. The program will run from June 30 to Aug. 4, offering meal packages that will be offered at four locations.

The Mossyrock Summer Food Service Program is expanding its reach. In addition to the three locations in Morton and informed that they will be delivering to Morton this summer.

"The Summer Food Service Program is a government program that is based on poverty rates," Chambers said. She was contacted by Christina Brischetto in Morton and informed that they currently do not have a program.



Ric Hallock | East County Journal

From left, Mossyrock lunch workers Jen Adams, of Salkum, and Kelsey Harman, of Mossyrock, hand out lunch items at Mossyrock Elementary on Wednesday, June 10.

Chambers is a big believer in the No Kid Hungry platform and is working with Brischetto and the United Methodist Church in Morton to deliver food to that location.

The program is funded

through a grant from No Kid Hungry and the United Way of King County. The funding has been used not only to provide food, but to assist the team with new equipment to make the program more efficient, most-

ly bins and racks as well as more.

Two years ago, they had a different model but now they are doing a non-congregate model which is

See Meals Page 3