

Liberty Tree planted in cemetery for America's 250th

by Swen Carlson
Courtesy of UpLift Local

There's a new tree in White Salmon's Pioneer Cemetery, and it comes with a lot of history. The young tulip poplar is the same breed as a historic "Liberty Tree" – trees that served as gathering spots for American revolutionaries seeking to break away from British rule.

This addition to the Pioneer Cemetery is a gift from White Salmon's Masonic Lodge, with help from members of the White Salmon Tree Board, to honor the 250th anniversary of the United States.

The original Liberty Tree was an elm, planted in Boston, around 1646. On Aug. 14, 1765, it was the site of a protest against the recently passed British Stamp Act, which placed a tax on all printed materials to fund British troops stationed in the colonies. This tax was deeply unpopular among American colonists; the protest included an effigy of the local tax collector hung from the Liberty Tree's branches.

In 1769, another gathering took place at the tree, this time to celebrate the Stamp Act's repeal. Boston's Liberty Tree did not



Kelly Mitchell, left, and Mike Nelson of the White Salmon Freemason Lodge worked with Karen Jenkins, right, a White Salmon Tree Board member, to plant the new Liberty sapling on May 17.

survive the revolution; British allies chopped it down in 1775, the year the political conflict turned into a war.

(A fuller account of the history of the Liberty Tree

can be found in Chapter 14 of Samuel Adams Drake's reference work "Old Landmarks and Historic Personages of Boston.")

But the British axes that took down the original tree

did not kill the idea behind it. The concept remained an important symbol of the Revolution, and many other cities throughout the colonies designated their own local Liberty Trees.

One was a tulip poplar on the campus of St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, already mature at the time of the Revolution, and later surviving

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Assessor's office announces property tax relief

The Skamania County Assessor's Office is encouraging residents to learn about recent changes to Washington State's Property Tax Exemption Program for Senior Citizens, Individuals with Disabilities and Qualifying Veterans. Legislative updates have expanded eligibility and increased tax relief opportunities for many homeowners throughout Skamania County.

The program helps eligible homeowners reduce their property tax burden on their primary residence by freezing or even exempting a portion of the home's value from taxation and reducing or eliminating certain property tax levies. Recent changes to state law have increased the income thresholds used to determine eligibility and benefit levels, allowing more residents to qualify for assistance.

"One of the most rewarding programs administered by the Assessor's Office is the opportunity to help seniors, disabled individuals and qualifying veterans reduce their property tax burden," Gabe Spencer, Skamania County Assessor said in a press statement. "I am proud to have supported these changes through the Washington State Association of

County Assessors (WSACA) and look forward to helping more Skamania County residents remain in their homes and communities."

In 2026, the qualifying income threshold was \$58,000. Beginning in 2027, that threshold will increase to \$76,000, representing an increase of approximately 31 percent and significantly expanding eligibility for the program.

"There are also new income deductions available under state law," Spencer said. "Even if your household income exceeds \$76,000, we encourage you to submit an application so we can review your circumstances and determine whether you may still qualify for benefits."

Residents who believe they may qualify are encouraged to contact the Skamania

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Workers' comp scam targeting Spanish-speakers

Attorney General Nick Brown is warning Washington residents about a scam targeting injured, Spanish-speaking workers across the Pacific Northwest. This scam has not yet been documented in Washington, but Washington workers should be aware that they may be targeted. Scammers contact the injured worker via phone, email, video call, text message, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger or social media apps, and falsely claim to represent government agencies, law firms or courts.

Communications may appear official because they include government agency seals, use government agency addresses, include signatures by government officials or identify the caller as a government representative, attorney or judge, but the communications are fraudulent. The scammers tell the worker that they must pay money to receive workers' compensation benefits

or to receive a settlement. Scammers may request payment in the form of gift cards, wire transfer or cryptocurrency. After the worker pays, the scammers cut off contact and take the injured worker's money. In a variation of this scam, imposters try to convince the worker to appear at a fake online workers' compensation hearing. The hearing may appear official and may include a fake judge, attorney or government representative. The hearing results in an official-looking order in the worker's favor.

The scammers then tell the worker that they must pay money to receive workers' compensation benefits or to receive a settlement. After the worker pays, the scammers cut off contact and the money is gone. You may be dealing with a scam if: You are asked to pay money before you can receive workers' compensation benefits or a settlement; You are contacted



Stevenson Alumni Association courtesy photo | Skamania County Pioneer

SHS Alumni Association's 2026 Scholarship recipients, from left: Reese Gallanger, Ruby Langer, Sarah Zeigenfuss, Tippen Adams, Emma Owens, Trinity Munsch, Cayden Hulsey-Bible and Jewel Waymire.

Alumni Association awards scholarships; meeting June 27

The Stevenson High School Alumni Association awarded a total of \$16,000 worth of scholarships to the class of 2026. Since 2017, the Alumni Association has awarded nearly \$100,000 to deserving graduating students of Stevenson High School.

The Alumni Association's annual meeting and reunion is the primary fundraiser for the Alumni Association's Scholarship Fund. The SHS Alumni As-

sociation will be hosting its 69th annual meeting and reunion at 5:30 p.m., on Saturday, June 27. The event will be hosted in the SHS gymnasium, and doors will open at 4 p.m. to allow time for long visits.

Each year, decades of SHS graduating classes are represented at the reunion. The 50th anniversary graduating class (Class of 1976 this year) receives special recognition, and all classes are encouraged to attend,

as well as teachers, staff and friends of Stevenson High School. The Association hopes to see everyone at this year's reunion and help us maintain the group for the continued support of students graduating from SHS.

The price is \$20 pre-registered, or \$25 at the door, and includes a light meal. For preregistration contact Rena Hollis at 541-490-4007 or email to renahollis@gmail.com.

News Briefs

High temperatures, lowest tides of the year a potential recipe for illness

Recreational shellfish harvesters should be extra careful when collecting oysters this weekend to reduce their risk of illness. High temperatures are expected during the lowest tides of the year, creating conditions that can allow *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* bacteria to grow quickly in oysters and increase the risk of illness from eating them raw or undercooked.

The Three Cs – check, chill and cook – can prevent illness from shellfish.

Check the DOH Shellfish Safety Map before heading out to learn if any beach areas are Harvest shellfish only from open and approved areas and harvest them as the tide goes out.

Chill Bring a cooler with ice. Oysters should be put on ice or refrigerated as soon as possible after harvest.

Cook oysters at 145 degrees F for 15 seconds to destroy *Vibrio*.

Each year, DOH receives reports of vibriosis illnesses from people who ate raw or undercooked oysters they collected. *Vibrio* thrives in warm temperatures.

Vibriosis symptoms include diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting, headache, fever, and chills.

To report a possible shellfish-related illness, contact the local health department or use the Foodborne Illness Reporting System.

Source: Washington State Department of Health

Candidate forum in Stevenson planned for July 10

Candidates for the August primary election will speak at a Candidates Night on Friday, July 10, in the Rock Creek Hegewald Center Auditorium in Stevenson, Washington. Candidates invited to speak are running for Congress, Washington State Legislature and Skamania County elected offices and are on the ballot for the Aug. 4 primary.

All the candidates will be given time to speak about their campaigns and answer a few questions. Before and after, members of the public are encouraged to visit with the candidates at their respective literature tables for questions and discussions. Candidates

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This day in history

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- 1885 Statue of Liberty arrives in New York Harbor.
- 1940 France signals intention to surrender to the Nazis.
- 1943 FDR's secretary of war stifles Truman's inquiry into suspicious defense plant.