

Peninsula Views

Key Pen Parks moving forward with plans

As spring reaches into the summer season and the warmer weather tempts people out of their homes, I'm reminded of our emerging and blossoming community.

Although we are connected to each other by a preference for a quiet lifestyle, Key Peninsula is growing in resident numbers. Many local organizations have been planning for the future growth of our peninsula. Key Pen Parks is also looking toward the future and how we play a role in the enrichment of our community.

Over the past months, we have been busy on several new things. In brief, we launched a new website, which hopefully makes it easier for you to find information you are seeking related to our parks and park business. We also created a brochure that you can find throughout the greater Gig Harbor area.

We started a new event this year, the 360 Trails Poker Pedal. This unique event raised money for the further development of 360 Trails.

If you haven't been lately, there are new trails to enjoy and we have dotted the landscape with information kiosks that show your location, but also have a quick response (QR) code that puts the trail map right on your smart phone.

Looking ahead to this summer, we are excited about a few new youth camps and events coming up. The closest event is the Fourth of July Community Hot Dog Social. With the support of Food Market of the Key Center and Lake Katheryn, residents are invited to come and meet their friends and neighbors for a free hot dog lunch from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Volunteer Park. We will have games and music, and hope you will join the fun.

Scott Gallacher Beyond the Backyard



Of course, the big project that we're working on will be one of Key Pen Park's largest future community enrichment contributions: Gateway Park. In my last column, I talked about the public input process on developing a conceptual plan for the 39-acre park.

A master plan (concept E-1) was approved by the park district's board of commissioners at the March 9 board meeting, as was the motion to move forward with phase 1 of construction. At completion, phase 1 includes redesigning existing entrances with street lighting, paving the west parking lot and adding a toilet structure. We encourage everyone to follow the Gateway Park progress on our website.

We have increased our grant application efforts to enhance and possibly help expedite the Gateway project, one of which is the Pierce County Conservation Futures Program grant. The Key Peninsula Parks and Recreation Foundation also is working on fundraising plans.

I hope by my next column, we'll have good news regarding the Conservation Futures grant and will be well underway with the permitting process for phase 1 construction.

The change of season brings increased energy levels and optimism, and for us at Key Pen Parks, we are very optimistic about the future of recreational opportunities for the Key Peninsula.

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Be responsible with your freedom

A friend of mine once bought some beach-front property and set out to build the largest house he could. He didn't need the space, but was determined to eke out every single square inch allowed, because he said, because it's my right to do so."

He alienated neighbors, destroyed ancient animal trails, lost many friends, and built an unnecessarily extravagant home just to prove he could. As a veteran, he said, "This is the freedom I fought for."

We give a lot of attention to our freedom and the price paid by many to maintain it, but I grow concerned that we increasingly ignore the responsibility freedom brings. Freedom from tyranny, oppression and government interference has too often turned into freedom to misbehave, to be careless with neighbors and to pursue pleasure at any cost.

"But I have my rights" is the cry of obnoxious neighbors. "Freedom of speech" is the defense of the bellicose bully. "Get over it" is the response to requests for more socially acceptable behavior.

In his book "Religious No More," author Mark D. Baker writes, "Freedom is not an autonomous independence that means a person can do as he or she wants... Freedom does not diminish our responsibility to each other."

In other words, freedom is not an excuse for everyone to do whatever is right in their own eyes. Freedom has a twin sister

known as responsibility. Or, in more familial terms, neighborliness.

Freedom gives us choices, and neighborliness asks that we choose responsibly, considering what is best for the community beyond ourselves.

Freedom without a sense of neighborliness isn't healthy. Freedom shouldn't mean we can destroy the Earth just because "I have private property rights." Freedom shouldn't mean corporations can treat employees as medieval serfs, just because they have the right to maximize investor profits.

I was given a lecture when I was handed my first driver's license: "Driving a car gives you a lot of freedom. But it's also a huge responsibility. One false move can hurt a lot of people. So enjoy the freedom, but drive responsibly."

Freedom is not a license to drive like a maniac, to spout off insulting comments toward online neighbors, or to pollute the neighborhood with your choice in bad music. Others share this space around us. With freedom comes responsibility toward them.

Paul wrote this to a cluster of small churches in Asia Minor: "You were called

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Dan Whitmarsh Writing by Faith



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