

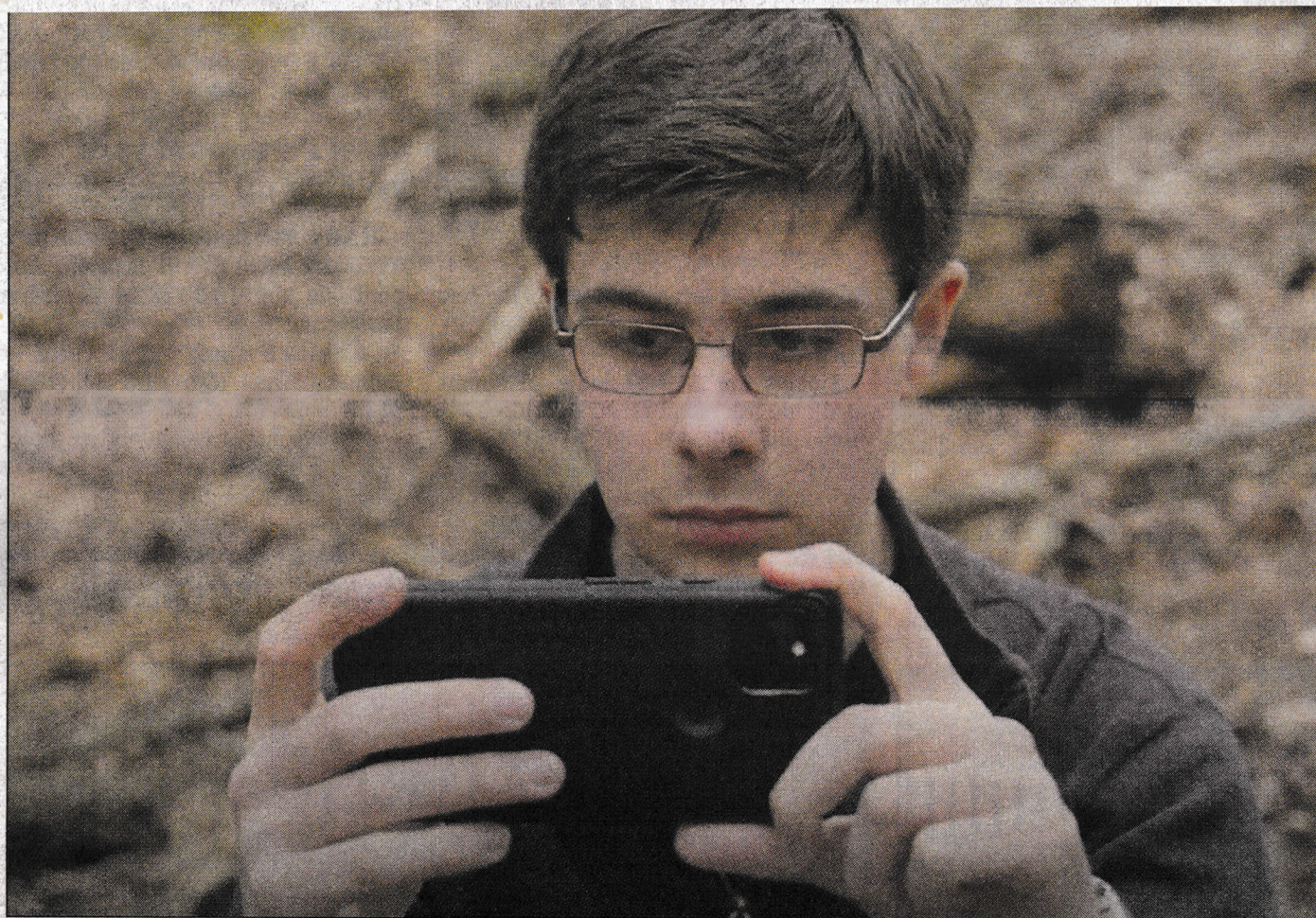


Portland Press Herald

WEATHER:
Lots of sun,
high humidity
High near 88
Details, B6

\$3.00
Friday,
July 28, 2023

pressherald.com



Cape Elizabeth High School student Trevor Oakley snaps a picture of a vernal pool for a photography and documentary project on climate change.

Climate change as seen through youth lenses

By Drew Johnson

A Cape Elizabeth documentarian is giving local high schoolers the opportunity to amplify their voices on climate change through photography.

Jonathan Fisher is leading a student photography project, "My Climate Future," at Cape Elizabeth High School, and he will write and direct a documentary based on the project.

In New York City, Fisher and fellow filmmaker George Carrano produced "Project Lives" in 2015 and most recently "In A Whole New Way," featuring photography from public housing residents and people on probation, respectively. The goal was to elevate

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One of Trevor Oakley's photos for the project is of a vernal pool close to his home in Cape Elizabeth.

ELECTION Local council, school board seats up for grabs this fall

By Drew Johnson

South Portland District 4 City Councilor Linda Cohen is stepping down a year before her term ends because she is moving out of the district, according to the City Clerk's Office.

Cohen's council seat and three others will be on the ballot this fall, along with positions on the South Portland Board of Education.

Cape Elizabeth and Scarborough also will elect council and school board members this fall.

Nomination papers for all candidates will be available next week for the Nov. 7 election.

South Portland

In addition to the one-year remainder of Cohen's term, the City Council District 1 seat now held by Jocelyn Leighton, District 2 seat now held by Mayor Katherine Lewis and District 5 seat now Deqa Dhalac will be on the ballot. Those seats carry three-year terms.

The school board has three available seats, two at-large, three-year seats held by Claire Holman and Jennifer Ryan, and a one-year District 3 seat, currently held by Rosemarie De Angelis.

Nomination papers, available Monday, July 31, at the City Clerk's Office, must be returned by 4:30 p.m. Sept. 8.

For more information, go to southportland.org or call 767-3201.

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INSIDE



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Youth lenses

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marginalized voices.

"My Climate Future" is in the same vein.

"You might think, 'Well, our high school students aren't marginalized in the same sense as public housing residents or folks on probation,'" Fisher told The Forecaster. "In our view, they've been kind of marginalized in the national conversation about climate change."

Last spring, Fisher collaborated with Cape Elizabeth High School on the photography project. As a pilot program, it involves just a handful of students, including Trevor Oakley, who will be a senior this fall. Oakley appreciates the chance to have his voice heard, he said.

"I can't vote," Oakley said. "I'm familiar with the limited political voice that I have."

The project is a way to simply but powerfully connect with the climate change issue "just by going outside," he said. His caption on a photo he took of a vernal pool close to his home says it "is home to hundreds of peepers and insects which benefit the local ecosystem. Global warming threatens to make the pond dry up and disappear."

Oakley said he hopes his photos and the project as a whole can help people "see how their environment is changing daily" and show them that there's "an avenue to share that story with everyone else."

Other students' photos show oceanfront homes that are at the mercy of rising sea levels, and storm damage to dunes at Willard Beach in South Portland.

Sarah Plummer, Student Pathways coordinator at the high school and liaison for the pilot program, said it's important for youth to have a voice in the conversation on climate change.

"It gives kids the opportunity to really explore that interest, but I also think sometimes with environmental issues there's no real outlet for students, and

students are really concerned about climate change," she said.

The students' photographs will be showcased at the Islip Arts Council on Long Island, New York, in September and in November they will be exhibited at Cape Elizabeth's Thomas Memorial Library.

"A public library exists to share information and also give people an opportunity to come together over things that matter to them," said library Director Rachel Davis. "Particularly, young people are affected by climate change more than any of us, and being able to give them a place to show the work that they've done around this issue — to share their own perspectives — is really important."

Fisher and Carrano included the Cape Elizabeth students' photos in an application for a National Endowment for the Arts grant. With that funding, Fisher hopes to continue with the program at Cape Elizabeth High School and Carrano would lead the program at a Long Island, New York, high school, both beginning in 2024.

Oakley would like to see "My Climate Future" take a broader approach outside of Cape Elizabeth and include collaboration with people of different demographics and with different relationships with the environment.

"I would like to see this expand to a lot of different communities," Oakley said. "Cape Elizabeth is just one community and it's just one type of ecosystem. There are plenty that don't look like Cape Elizabeth's that are changing very rapidly. I'd like to get that diversity of representation of communities and ecosystems so everyone can have that personal experience of 'Oh, wait, that looks like where I live,' and see how wildly it's changing."

Fisher said one demographic he would like to work with is Native Americans.

"They were great stewards of this environment before we all got here," he said. "We would love to include them in this effort."

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