

2025

Successful Women

Business | Civic | Non-profit

Celebrating women of the north coast who make a difference in our communities

Aman stewards major projects in Manzanita

Will Chappell

Since arriving in Manzanita four years ago, City Manager Leila Aman has helped guide the city through several major planning updates and internal improvements, while also piloting a project to build a new city hall and police station, set to open August 2.

Aman, who previously worked in private and public planning roles in the Portland metro area, said that she is proud of the city's progress the last few years, though she is quick to credit her staff, saying that she is most proud of their performance and mentality.

"I think things are going really great and I feel really good about what the city has been able to accomplish over the last four years," Aman said, "but I think the thing I'm probably most proud of is the staff and my team and the growth that I have witnessed in the people that work here and their just unwavering commitment to this community and to excellence."

Born and raised in southeast Portland, Aman started down the road toward city management while in college at

Portland State University when she took an urban planning class and was immediately drawn to the field. "I realized that I put words to things that I saw happening all around me having grown up in Portland and witnessing the change through the 80s and 90s," Aman said, "and so that was a sort of transformative moment for me."

After a year spent working as a flower vendor in Pioneer Courthouse Square, which Aman said served to further stoke her passion for getting involved in the community, she completed a master's program at Cornell University with a focus on land planning and geographic information systems in real estate finance.

During her master's program, Aman had an internship with Portland Metro government, but when she graduated, they were not hiring, leading her to take a position at Fregonese Calthorpe Associates, now Fregonese Associates, where she worked as a project manager.

Aman said that in her studies and career, she has always been drawn to the nitty gritty of how the on-the-ground



Leila Aman

implementation of high-level planning documents at regional and municipal governments.

"I was really interested in not only how you plan for a city but how you actually implement those plans," Aman said. "So, having a background in real estate finance helped me understand how zoning codes actually get applied and how you could develop policies that can actually be realized."

Following two years with Fregonese Calthorpe, Aman moved to a position in metro government's transit-oriented development program. In seven years with the group, Aman focused on supporting mixed-use development near transit hubs as part of metro's 2040 growth

plan and helping to develop tools to identify project sites among other responsibilities.

Another stint at Fregonese, consulting on plans and development background work, followed, but after several years, Aman said that she found herself missing work in the public sector.

"When you work in a local government, whether it's regional or state or whatever, you're surrounded by people who are driven by service in the same way that you are," Aman said, "not to say that consultants aren't, it's just a different type of business model, and there was something about the public sector that just really spoke to my heart."

Aman thus took a role with the Portland Development Commission, since renamed Prosper Portland, as program manager for the Lents Urban Renewal District, where she helped to facilitate development of affordable housing and promote new business growth.

From there, Aman moved to the City of Milwaukie, first as their downtown development manager, before being promoted to the role of community development

director halfway through her four-year tenure. In Milwaukie, Aman helped the city finish a comprehensive plan update, create a farmers' market plaza and acquire a building to serve as a new city hall.

Then, in 2020, Aman and her husband purchased a home in north Tillamook County and began coming to the coast on a regular basis. Aman had long-standing ties to Tillamook County, with an aunt living off Highway 53 in Mohler and her grandparents owning a home in Bay City during her childhood, and the regular visits made her start to consider a full-time move as her daughter fell in love with the coast.

Aman was unsure what she would do professionally if her family moved, but when she looked at Manzanita's city website she was surprised to find they were looking for a city manager, with a job description closely fitting her experience.

"I think the thing what really drew me here was that the things that they had advertised in the job description that they were looking for were someone who had my skill set, someone who could help deal with a vision," Aman said. "And so, those are all things that I had spent the last 15 years of my career doing and I thought how neat I can go into this town and do these important things that I've worked on my whole career and be able to contribute to this place that I love so much."

Aman applied for the job and was selected, starting with the city in June 2021. Since then, Aman has stayed busy, helping the city to craft its first capital improvement plan, updating its transportation system plan and beginning work on a comprehensive plan update that will incorporate those. She has also led a largescale shift towards digitization, specifically highlighting moving the payroll to direct deposits from paper checks.

Aman's most visible accomplishment has been helping the city consummate the construction of a new city hall and police station, which are set to open

August 2 at Underhill Plaza.

The project had a rocky history, with city leaders acknowledging the need for a new facility in 1995 and starting a fund to pay for it, but no substantial progress being made until the purchase of the Underhill Plaza site in 2017.

City council sought a bond to pay for construction of a new facility in 2019, but voters did not approve, leading council to pass a resolution declaring their intent to move forward and directing staff to find funding sources in 2020. After an extensive public input process and preparatory work, Aman applied for a loan from Business Oregon in 2023 for up to \$5.1 million on behalf of the city, with the rest of the \$6 million construction budget coming from grants, the sale of the old city hall and city funds.

Construction began in April 2024 with Aman serving as project manager, and was completed by early July 2025, with an official grand opening ceremony set for August 2.

Aman said that she has enjoyed seeing that project come to fruition and is looking forward to an upcoming project to improve water infrastructure on classic street to facilitate the construction of an affordable housing development at Spruce Point.

For Aman, working in Manzanita has been a rewarding experience and she said that it's an engaging challenge to address the same issues as larger cities with less resources.

"Manzanita, it's like a little big city," Aman said. "It's got the same issues that big cities have from the administration standpoint to the social, economic, demographic, all those issues right, it's the same. I'm dealing with housing the same as I was in Portland, the region, in Milwaukee, we're dealing with growth, we're dealing with all of the same things here but we have far more limited resources and so the things that my team are able to accomplish to me is exponential in terms of the impact that it has and so that feels great."

Lauren Sheehan, Songster

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Success in Colors

Eeva Lantela never set out to be an artist, but sometimes the most meaningful things in life happen without a plan

Pierce Baugh V

Residing on Hemlock Street as it has since its first day of business back in 2001, Dragon Fire Gallery has and hasn't undergone changes in more than two decades of operation. The gallery first occupied the building's upstairs, before expanding downstairs, then being expanded once more in 2007, which is how it has remained since. But, in many ways, it's still the same gallery that it was when it opened – bursts of color, a spectrum of artistic expression and pieces with price tags that can accommodate all patrons' budgets. Dragon Fire's tagline is a feast for the senses. "One of the things I like to say, too, is that the sun always shines in Dragon Fire," says owner Eeva Lantela. "Even if it's a dark, gray day outside, you forget all about it when you're in here, because it's, it's a large space, and it's got all this color." Just two years after Lantela and her late partner Mari Rockett moved to Cannon Beach from New Jersey



in 1999, they started working on opening the gallery, something within Rockett's comfort zone and outside of Lantela's. "It was like opening this whole new world for me," Lantela said. Rockett was a painter who came from an artistic family. But Lantela's background was in athletics, having been an athlete and massage therapist when she was younger. Though she didn't have a background in art, she has always been appreciative of it. "I just kind of ran on enthusiasm," Lantela said. Before opening Dragon Fire, Lantela's experience with art had mostly been limited to dabbling in jewelry making. In addition to Rockett, Lantela says her friend Marsha Huss was instrumental in the

creation of Dragon Fire. Huss even worked for the gallery. For Lantela, owning an art gallery on the Oregon Coast is something she never would have imagined for herself. Having visited the Oregon Coast when she was young, she was mesmerized by it, but thought living here would always be a pipe dream. "It's amazing to me that it actually happened," said Lantela. Born in Finland, Lantela immigrated to Canada when she was young, and when she was 35, moved from Vancouver, British Columbia, to New York. In her 20s, she experienced something that would shape her approach to business: her first failure. Having a background in health and fitness, Lantela opened a business focused on helping



people get in shape when she was in her mid-20s. Though she was excited about the endeavor, she admits that she wasn't considering all that could go wrong and was unrealistic in her expectations. Though the business failed, Lantela is grateful for the experience since it allowed her to approach Dragon Fire with a clear view of what could go wrong, but also what could go right. This has involved some trial and error. When Dragon Fire started, Lantela's and Rockett's vision was a type of create-your-own-ceramic shop, but realizing it wasn't a viable business, they shifted to a colorful gallery that features mainly Pacific Northwest artists. After 24 years in business, Lantela has been astounded by the gallery's success.

Being someone who tends to get bored fairly easily by doing the same thing, Lantela is amazed that she's been intrigued with art and her gallery for all these years. Lantela has enjoyed working with a range of artists, who all come from different walks of life. She enjoys seeing who the artists are through their work. By seeing what an artist creates, she's able to see their worldview. And Lantela has her own philosophy on art: "I think that art goes way beyond just making a pretty environment, I think it's creating a sanctuary in your home or your garden." For those chasing their own versions of success, Lantela advises not to be intimidated just because someone might be new to something. "The most important thing is to be passionate about what it is that inspires you,"

she said. But Lantela also urges people to stay grounded while pursuing their goals, keeping in mind what it could take to achieve something. Intuition also plays a part in how Lantela approaches things, helping her be humble when she knows when to make a change, but also be confident when she knows she's right. She also encourages others to be open to possibilities and explore what might be available to someone while remaining true to their vision. And, "don't hold back." Lantela is thankful for how the last 24 years have gone for her while running Dragonfire. "It's just amazing how fast it goes. But you know, when you really love doing something, that's it, that's how it should be."

Local Business Spotlight: Pauseful Massage

Celebrating 15 years of Relaxation and Reconnection

By Chelsea Yarnell

The relentless pace of modern life leaves many people feeling tense and overwhelmed, struggling to unplug, living with persistent pain or with racing thoughts that won't slow down. Sound familiar?

Pauseful Massage &

Botanicals, located in the heart of Manzanita, believes the key to a satisfying life doesn't come from doing more, it comes from slowing down and reconnecting with yourself. "When we slow down and attune to ourselves, we become more receptive," said Pauseful Founder Christina Pyktel. "That's when our experience becomes more dimensional. In the pause, we access not just

our skin, muscles, and bones, but our soul. We come back into a deeper connection with ourselves and with life." For the past 15 years, the studio has stayed true to that mission. From the moment you walk through the door, the space invites you to slow down and breathe. Nature-inspired and thoughtfully designed, it offers a sense of calm and comfort. Pauseful's licensed and experienced massage therapists are deeply caring and genuinely present. Each session is personalized to support you on all levels—physical, emotional and energetic. Christina is joined by massage therapists Jamie Corvus and Steve Johnson, who together have provided over 13,000 massages. The team is dedicated to offering care that goes beyond easing tension—it's about supporting your whole being.

"We all bring a lot of heart and skill to our craft," Christina said. "In each session, our goal is to help you have the most expansive experience. We're holding space for your wholeness and offering a sensory-rich experience for deep relaxation and pain relief. As therapists, we aspire to transmit calm, peaceful and loving energy." Christina has played a central role in the studio's evolution—starting as a massage therapist when



Pauseful Founder Christina Pyktel is celebrating 15 years in business.

it was known as Longevity Massage and later stepping into ownership and rebranding it as Pauseful eight years ago. Massage therapist Jamie Corvus was the originator and continues to bring her warmth and steady presence to the team today. "A couple of things really influenced my journey," Christina recalled. "When I was younger, my mom was sick for a couple of years with chronic fatigue, and

I got really interested in natural healing and how to care for the body. Then in high school, I saw a photo of Oregon, and something in me lit up. I just knew I needed to be somewhere that beautiful. I studied massage and eventually made my way to the Pacific Northwest. I started coming to Manzanita seasonally, and over time, this place became home. Pauseful grew out of that—it's really about living a meaningful life."

Pauseful's offerings include one-hour, 90-minute, and two-hour Pauseful Massage Experiences, as well as two newer services: • Pauseful Circle – A monthly small group gathering to explore presence and connection in community. • Pauseful Mentoring – One-on-one guidance to help integrate Pauseful practices into the rhythm of your life, such as slowing down, listening inward, and living with intention. To explore offerings, book a massage or get an Embodied Bliss Freebie, visit pauseful.com. To celebrate the studio's 15-year anniversary, Pauseful will host a community celebration on Sunday, August 24, 2025, at 3 p.m. Come dance with us and the local band Rhythm Method as we mark this special milestone.

"I feel so inspired to live in such a magical place surrounded by mountains, ocean, rivers, and forests," Christina said, reflecting on her time as a business owner in Manzanita. The community is warmly invited to join the celebration—an afternoon of connection, joy, and reclaiming the right to feel fully alive in a world that's forgotten how. Pauseful Massage & Botanicals is located at 298 Laneda Ave, Suite 6, Manzanita, Oregon.

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Music teachers powerfully impact our community

By Donna Miles

Four successful ladies, long time members and recent Presidents of the Monday Musical Club of Tillamook, have spent their lives sharing their love for music through performance, mentoring, teaching, and directing. Their leadership is largely responsible for keeping this music club, now 104 years old, viable in recent years. Marianne Gienger, Caryn Backman, Jerilee Henderson, and Kathy Gervasi have all made a powerful contribution to the entire Tillamook County music community over many years.

Marianne Gienger, has been teaching piano to many generations of young people and adults for over 60 years, with a special emphasis on classical music. Throughout the years, her students have competed in piano festivals, winning many trophies for exceptional musicianship, a tribute to Marianne's high standards. In addition to being a long time member and past President of the Monday Musical Club, she was also responsible for obtaining a grant to bring professional musicians to Tillamook in the club's Cultural Events Program. For 20 years, Marianne's leadership of this special program made quality professional entertainment available to our small coastal community.

Caryn Backman has also taught and performed music in Tillamook for decades. Through the years, she has taught piano, band



Pictured left to right, Caryn Backman, Mary Ann Gienger, Jerilee Henderson, and Kathy Gervasi

instruments, and voice lessons to countless young musicians. She is also in high demand as a piano tuner. Caryn has shared her instrumental, vocal, drama, and dance talents through Tillamook Association for Performing Arts (T.A.P.A.), dance studio recitals, Tillamook Community Band, and in Monday Musical monthly performance programs. She is the pianist and handbell director for her church, and continues to perform and accompany other musicians. As President of Monday Musical, she lead the club through the difficult year of Covid restrictions and recorded the performance programs when meeting in public was discouraged. She initiated the Youtube

channel for the recorded performances at that time. Since then, all monthly performances are available to view on the Youtube channel, "Monday Musical Club of Tillamook". The public is invited to attend the free live performance programs on the second Monday of the Month from October through June. Look for advanced publicity for details.

Jerilee Henderson, the current and a past President of the Monday Musical Club, has performed vocal, piano, organ, and guitar music in our community for more than 45 years. Born and raised in Tillamook, she and her husband D. Jay owned and operated the Tillamook Music store for several years. She

taught elementary school music for 14 years and then Tillamook Jr. High and HS choirs for an additional 14 years until retirement. She was director for the Tillamook Community Chorus for 7 years, and now sings in the chorus. She was also a member of a local marimba band. She has shared her drama talent and well known solo voice as leading lady in many successful T.A.P.A. Musicals, choir performances of "The Messiah", numerous Monday Musical programs, funerals, weddings, at her church, and many other community events. She continues to share her love of music as an accompanist and as a performer.

Kathy Gervasi has been

serving on the Monday Musical Board and will be the next President of the Monday Musical Club of Tillamook, beginning in October, 2025. After graduating from college, she taught elementary music in Madrid, Iowa from 1975-1979. She also taught piano, participated in community theater, and was her church organist and choir director there. From 1979-1997, she taught elementary music in McMinnville, did community theater, and also served as Principal there for 6 years before moving to Tillamook in 1997 with her husband, Mark. Here she served as the Principal of Liberty Grade School for 4 years and at South

Prairie Grade School for 9 years before retirement in 2010. In Tillamook, she has been a frequent piano accompanist, flutist in the community band, sang with the VOX Jazz Octet, community chorus, and T.A.P.A., and has played in a Marimba band and chimes choir.

Tillamook County is a wonderful place to live, in part because of the contributions of talented community leaders like these four ladies. Their musical success has positively affected more people than they will ever know.

For more information about Monday Musical Club, please visit: <https://mondaymusicalcluboftillamook.blogspot.com>.

The Successful Women of United Paws of Tillamook

Successful women know there is strength in numbers and diversity, and that is the secret to success at United Paws of Tillamook (UP). Dr. Anita Johansson, Karen Schrader, Maureen Michelson, Nina Mills, Shayna Sheldon and Melissa Josie comprise the board of this local nonprofit dedicated to alleviating animal suffering by humanely addressing cat and kitten overpopulation and homelessness.

The women on the UP Board combine their varied professional experiences, including Veterinarian, Airline Pilot, Book Publisher & Editor, Graphics Manager, Service Station Manager, and Juvenile Probation Officer, to address the challenge of managing feline overpopulation in Tillamook county.

Behind the scenes,

additional volunteers from a variety of careers, including a retired judge, hospital nurse, hairdresser and local artist, show up to support free and reduced cost spay/neuter clinics, shuttle cats to veterinarians, and care for rehabilitating kittens and cats recuperating at UP Headquarters. Another army of fosters cares for kittens and cats in their homes with support provided by UP.

Two successful women in our area, Patti Bumgarner and Christine Watt, founded this all-volunteer organization. They and many others provide financial support and keep the litter boxes clean.

Sadly, thousands of cats and kittens in Tillamook county are born homeless and suffer immensely

throughout their brief lives. However, in the 25 years since UP was founded, over 25,000 cats and kittens have been rescued, rehabilitated, vaccinated, spayed/neutered and ultimately placed in loving forever homes.

UP provides sliding scale spay and neuter clinics, wellness clinics, and basic veterinary services for pet guardians who are on limited incomes. They also offer support for Trap Neuter Return efforts to help control feral cat colonies.

UP is always looking for new folks - men & women - to lend a hand in whatever capacity you excel. To learn more, please visit unitedpaws.org or call 503-842-5663.



Pictured left to right are Maureen Michelson, Melissa Josie, Nina Mills, Shayna Sheldon (front), Karen Schrader (back) and Anita Johanson

Carol Weber of Latimer Quilt and Textile Center

I'd like to nominate Carol Weber for one of 2025's Successful Women. Carol has been at the helm of the Latimer Quilt and Textile Center for many years and has overseen its growth from a small, hidden, local treasure to an internationally known quilt and textile center. It's on the "must see" list of numerous tour buses that travel the Oregon Coast. Besides offering classes, the Latimer mounts changing displays from various fiber art groups. It is also home to a world-class fiber art collection of quilts, textiles, weavings, etc. None of this would have occurred without the countless hours that Carol has devoted. She has overseen its growth from a small, unknown idea into the treasure that it is today. And she has done



Carol Weber

all of this by donating her time, talents and good nature to transform an idea into a reality.

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to bring Carol Weber to your attention. She is truly a gem!

Cathie Favret

Rev Dr Lia Shimada, Priest in Charge of St. Alban's in Tillamook

Lia Shimada is a geographer, theologian and mediation specialist, who is passionate about community dialogue. After two decades in the United Kingdom, Lia has returned home to the Pacific Northwest. She attended seminary at St. Augustine's, through the Church of England.

As a mediator, Lia accompanies communities as they navigate conflict and change. She spent formative time in Belfast, Northern Ireland, working with the civic peacebuilding process. In London, Lia served as a researcher and writer for a practical theology think-tank at the University of Roehampton.

Lia shares a home with Jonathan (the local Methodist pastor) and their two young kids. As a family, they enjoy exploring tide pools and eating noodles together. Last August, she relocated to the Oregon coast, to be closer to family in Seattle. Lia completed her seminary training in England, at St. Augustine's College of Theology. She will serve as Priest in Charge of St. Alban's,



Priest in Charge
Rev Dr Lia Shimada

Tillamook. Lia was called to priesthood from the central London parish of St. James's, Piccadilly. In that ancient place, Lia encountered a spacious theology and a community striving to live, joyfully, with questions for which there are no easy answers. As a professional mediator, Lia is fascinated by the ways in which communities navigate conflict

and change. (She particularly enjoys working with churches on the verge of implosion!) She spent formative time in Belfast, Northern Ireland, where she worked with the civic peacebuilding process, on both sides of the divide. From 2016 to 2022, she chaired the working group for Diversity and Inclusive Practice for the U.K.'s National College of Mediators. Lia also served for many years as a researcher and writer for the Susanna Wesley Foundation, a practical theology think-tank at the University of Roehampton. She had the great privilege of convening an extended dialogue between Jewish, Muslim and Christian theologians and practitioners. Her edited book, Mapping Faith: Theologies of Migration and Community, was published in 2020. In memory of her son Rowan, Lia's recent work has focused on improving public conversations around death. Please come and meet Rev. Lia on any given Wednesday or Sunday at St. Albans Episcopal Church in Tillamook.