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## Mount Si closes door on student transfers

By Laura Geggel

For the second consecutive year, Mount Si High School will not be accepting any inter-district transfer students.

Instead, many Snoqualmie Valley students are applying to

transfer to other school districts.

Last year, 81 high school students transferred to schools like Cedarcrest, Lake Sammamish and Eastlake high schools. So far, 37 high school students have applied to transfer to dif-

ferent high schools.

"We'll probably have more (transfers) than last year by the time school starts," said Peggy Richter in the office of the superintendent.

In addition to the 37 applications to other high schools, the

new Eastside Catholic High School is processing about 30 applications from Snoqualmie Valley — about a third more than last year — said Randy Taylor, principal of Mount Si

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Stay Tuned are, from left, Mary Sackmann, Pete Goodall, Alan Ehrlich and Terry O'Brien.

## An Evergreen Feel

*Snoqualmie band has no shortage of musical ideas*

By Ed Farrell

It says a lot about the universal appeal of bluegrass music that a genre born in the backwoods of Appalachia has transplanted so well to the evergreens of the Pacific Northwest.

"The bluegrass scene in Seattle is alive and well," said Terry O'Brien, who, when not teaching video and audio production to students at Robinswood High School in Bellevue, can frequently be found onstage picking out tunes on a

number of stringed instruments as part of the band Stay Tuned.

O'Brien and his wife of 21 years, Mary Sackmann, make up one-half of the band; Pete Goodall of Snohomish and Alan Ehrlich of West Seattle round out the group that gradually evolved after years of playing the local bluegrass circuit.

The band released its first CD in 2006, a 16-

## Cougars on the prowl in the Valley

By Ed Farrell

"The Great Big Cat in the Backyard" was not one of the several names noted wildlife biologist Brian Kertson attributed to the large feline "Puma concolor" May 14 at Issaquah's REI outlet.

But for the more than 50 area residents who attended Kertson's presentation on the all-too-real local presence of the animal known variously as cougar, mountain lion or puma, it very well could be a popular regional identifier.

Using data he has collected over the past eight years, including global position satellite readings, Kertson delivered startling evidence that these big creatures — capable of stalking and killing elk five times their own body weight — are living, breeding and hunting in the same neighborhoods as thousands of area residents.

"We have cougars closer than you probably ever expected," Kertson said, cautioning that these cats "need to be respected, but not necessarily feared."

Kertson, a PhD candidate at the University of Washington,



Kertson

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## Stay Tuned

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song collection of gems that is surprising not only for the quality of material – 15 of the songs are originals – but for the band's ability to take listeners on an audio tour of the Puget Sound area.

Songs such as "Highway 99," a homage to the Alaska Viaduct, or "Going Down to Mel's Hole," a tune about a man with a questionable past and near-bottomless lake near Ellensburg, are delivered with lush four-part harmonies and all of the classic twang and string work that gives bluegrass such appeal.

"The Borderline," however, is a stark contemporary tale of America's struggle with immigration, and stands as a testament to what drives a person to leave their homeland and venture to a land of opportunity.

"It is kind of Northwesty," O'Brien said of the group's sound. "The Northwest has some incredibly talented musicians."

O'Brien and Sackmann call Snoqualmie home. They're fixtures on the local bluegrass scene, and frequently host the North Bend Jam, where musicians from near and far gather to tune up and play in old-style communal tradition.

And while Stay Tuned does honor the customary norms of bluegrass, O'Brien said the band is not, nor does it try to fit, everyone's expectations of bluegrass.

"In the eyes of the traditionalists, this is way out of bounds," O'Brien said of the CD.

Still, he insisted that it was the band's willingness to stray from the lock-step of such bluegrass originators as Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, that gives the band its appeal.

"It's fun for us because we kind of come together with a different view of bluegrass. That's why our music is so organic."

While original in feel, Stay Tuned's music does encompass most of the landscape common to bluegrass – selections range from a gospel base to fast-driving breakdowns, but each contains the hallmarks of the old-time roots, driven by impressive acoustical musicianship and harmonious vocals.

O'Brien picked up his first guitar while in junior high school, played in his first band a couple years later, explored the realms of the electric guitar and the rock scene and finally decided to return home to the comforts of acoustic dreadnaught guitar.

Sackmann's musical career began with the piano as a child. Soon she was playing guitar and, according to the group's



Contributed

Stay Tuned, a bluegrass band that includes two Snoqualmie residents, is scheduled to play in July at the 6th Annual City of Bellevue Street Fair.

bio, "was part of an all-girl band that performed at local pizza parlors." Along the way, she picked up a banjo, and found her place in the band playing the stand-up bass.

Each attribute much of the group's appeal to Ehrlich and Goodall, a pair of songwriters whose depth of material is as boundless as the Mel's Hole of song.

"These guys will just sit down and write, and write and then write some more," O'Brien said. "They're really the contributing force that comes to our music."

The depth of the friendship of the four is evident in "We Grew Up in Different Worlds," a song Ehrlich wrote about Seattle-born O'Brien and country-girl Sackmann.

"Alan wrote that song special for us," O'Brien said. "He wanted to say that not all bluegrass songs end in tragedy."

While all four members of Stay Tuned are accomplished musicians, the band maintains a relatively light schedule of live performances.

They're not slated to play together as a unit again until July when they'll appear at the 6th Annual City of Bellevue Street Fair. The Chilliwack Bluegrass Festival is scheduled for August and a September date is on tap for Pickering Place in Issaquah.

That's not to say, however,



that an appearance at one or another bluegrass jam is out of the question.

Monday, the pair were involved with "Open Mike Night," held each week at the Snoqualmie Falls Brewing Company. And with summer coming on, there are festivals to attend and plenty of opportuni-

ties to play.

There's also the matter of producing a second CD, which should be as filled with original material as the first.

"Alan and Pete probably have 50 songs out there right now," she said. "The hard part is not finding them, it's the weeding."

For more on the band and its

upcoming schedule, go to [www.staytunedbluegrass.com](http://www.staytunedbluegrass.com).

The band's first CD is available online, or can be purchased locally at Isadora's in Snoqualmie.

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