

## Voices From the Crowd: Columbia County at a Crossroads

By Randy Sanders

There was a time in America when partisan politics had limits. Republican President Ronald Reagan lay motionless in his hospital bed after losing half the blood in his body from an assassination attempt that had pierced his lung, leaving the bullet lodged an inch from his heart. The first person the President received was Speaker of the House Tip O'Niell; a Democrat and staunch liberal. Taking the President's withered hand, O'Niell knelt at the bedside and recited the twenty-third Psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," as the President whispered the words along with him. Once finished, the Speaker kissed the President on his forehead and left the room; tears welling up in the big man's eyes. It's sad to admit this, but it's unlikely such an encounter would happen today.

Columbia County is at the crossroads of an issue swept under the rug for almost a decade; public safety. This is an issue that should unite both sides of our partisan divide. Voters have repeatedly denied the funding necessary to operate a safe and effective sheriff's office, including the jail. Each time the levy has failed, no one who voted against it has stepped forward to provide solutions. I respect those arguments claiming money is already in the county coffers to pay for the jail; however, you

must explain "where" and "how."

We all knew this proverbial can was being kicked down the road; now it's reached the dead end. Our jail will close by early summer. What exacerbates the problem are the employees who currently work there, leaving, to seek stable employment. Having to refill those positions by removing patrol officers from the road makes us less safe and creates more issues.

I believe any reasonable tax payer will agree we need a stable public safety program including a jail. I have created a group called Columbia County Works Together do put this issue directly into the hands of us, the citizens. Conservatives and liberals can leave all their personal issues behind and work together on only one problem: funding for the jail. It's high-time we take ownership, and solve this.

Get ready, because without a jail, we will be under a media assault that only advertises to every drug dealer and gang-banger that we are ripe for the taking. This will do nothing for our home values, employment/business opportunities, or our image.

Rural communities all over Oregon are re-focusing their efforts after a devastating recession. It's an exciting time for small tech, internet retail, organic farms, micro brews, wineries and more. Folks like the Carver family in Central Oregon have elevated their little sheep farm into a Ralph Lauren and

Team USA wool supplier. Meanwhile in Columbia County -- with our vast riverfront property and fertile farmland -- we cannot even fund a jail! Certainly any plans of luring business or seeding our current family businesses are out of the question. Giving free passes out to criminals wanting a place to sell drugs, steal or set up illegal operations is not a place successful entrepreneurs can operate.

I am just one guy, one tax payer, one citizen who has seen enough. The recent 100-mph chase of the alleged Florida gang-related folks through the heart of our community are not the kind of customers I had in mind when I imagine bringing business to Columbia County. I can't watch this sad story unfold without a fight.

I am extending a hand, to liberals and conservatives alike to find a solution before it's too late. One issue, one focus point, one goal. Leave issues that divide us at home, just bring your ideas for only this one issue. If you're a liberal, you certainly don't want hate crimes going unpunished. If you're a conservative, you want citizens solving problems, not government; well, here's where we can work together.

You can contact Randy Sanders at [ColumbiaCountyWorksTogether@yahoo.com](mailto:ColumbiaCountyWorksTogether@yahoo.com) or read about the campaign at [columbiacountyworkstogether.blog.com](http://columbiacountyworkstogether.blog.com)

## Loggerbots Get Ready *continued from front page*

lot of help from their volunteer mentors-community members who coach the team and help them figure out design strategies. All the mentors from last year's success have returned and the team has even recruited several new mentors this year, including school liaison Eric Urban.

The Loggerbot squad is made up of fourteen students, including a couple of Middle School students again this year, and meets weeknights and Saturdays to work on their project.

According to Jeff Ely, a parent/mentor, the team is way ahead in the electronics and computer programming aspects of their project, using their past knowledge to speed up that work this year. Ely says the team is still working out the design of how to launch and direct the ball towards their intended targets.

Ely says the team has been able to scavenge parts from their past two robots, which has allowed the team to

"buy" a 3D printer with some of their credits. The 3D printer has been really fun and interesting for the students to work with and learn about. "It's all part of learning technology and science, which is what this program is all about," says Ely.

Ely says fundraising and sponsorship has been very important this year. In past years the team has been required to raise \$5,000 just to compete, plus additional funds for parts. This year the team needs \$5,000 to go to the District competitions and another \$3,000 to go to the Regional competition, plus parts and other ancillary expenses.

Aubrey Leach is a seventh grader, who has recruited her parents and a grandparent to help mentor the team. Leach has been learning to solder and has been working on the electrical components of the project. Leach says she approached the company where her father works, Aamcon, who agreed to sponsor the team with a \$2,000 donation. If the

team qualifies for the Regional competition, Leach says Aamcon has pledged another \$2,000, and has told the team to come back for more funding if they advance to Nationals.

Ely says the team has also been pretty active this past year, marching in

VERNONIA'S  
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reflecting the spirit of our community

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the Christmas Lighted Parade and demonstrating their robots on several other occasions.


## Community Garden to Hold Plant Sale

The Vernonia Community Garden (VCG) is currently planning its first fair and plant sale for May 10th. This will be an annual event providing fresh plants to Vernonia area gardeners. Vendors are currently being recruited to sell farm and garden merchandise. The VCG staff will have 1000 tomato plants for sale, all varieties are hand-picked to thrive in our less than ideal growing conditions.

The Vernonia Community Garden is a non-profit group whose mission is to provide a gardening

experience though education, mentoring and volunteer participation promoting a local source of organic fruits, vegetables and flowers for area residents of all ages, building upon the community's heritage of self-sufficiency and sustainability.

The plant sale will be held at the Vernonia Schools on May 10<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM in the commons area. Space is limited, interested vendors should contact Penny Costley at 503-429-0196 for more information.



**Happy Hour Mon-Fri 4-7**  
**Lady's Night Wed 5-12**

**"STILL BIKER FRIENDLY"**

**Dates to Remember**

**Sunday, Feb. 9**  
2:00 pm  
Lions Club  
Texas Hold Em  
Benefit for  
David Spackman

*Beer & Kegs to go*

- Specialty hamburgers
- Draft beer & mixed drinks
- Pool tables & satellite TV
- Special live music events
- Free Wi-fi

Sun - Thurs 11 AM - Midnight • Fri - Sat 11 AM - 2:30 AM  
733 Bridge St, Vernonia • 503-429-9999

## Cedar Side Inn

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**Open Mic Night**  
Saturday, February 22nd

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**Karaoke**  
Every Friday Night

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**Taco Tuesday**  
from opening until 9pm  
3 hardshell or 1 softshell \$4.25

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*Check our Facebook page for daily specials and upcoming events*  
756 Bridge Street, Vernonia 503-429-5841