

Readers Lend Their Voices...

To the Editor,

Judge Jenefer Grant is an excellent judge. She is smart, fair, and courteous, and she knows the law. I work with her in the Judicial Engagement and Leadership Institute (JELI), an organization that seeks to improve the court's response to cases involving abused and neglected children. She is a valuable member of the JELI workgroup, and she has introduced innovative practices to Columbia Juvenile Court to help at-risk children. She also chairs the Columbia County Family Law Advisory Committee, a group that looks for ways to improve court services for children and families in family law cases.

Judge Grant is presiding judge of Columbia Circuit Court. In this role, she provides leadership and applies her administrative skills to help the court run smoothly. In August of 2013, she led the court in the successful implementation of the new electronic court known as eCourt. When this program is fully developed, it will increase access to justice for all citizens of Columbia County.

I urge you to vote for Judge Grant in the May election. You are lucky to have her.

Paula Brownhill
Astoria, OR

To the Editor,

I see the signs.

If you are now like I was 8 years ago, you will be opening a ballot in about 8 months while shrugging your shoulders, staring ignorantly at the strange names laid before you and then placing a check mark on "the usual party" or "the only candidate available."

Too often, we open up a ballot, unacquainted with who is running for available seats in the county, state and country. In the past, I, myself, have not put forth an educated vote toward someone who will represent my voice. Eight years ago I started to open my eyes and search out the "candidates".

In my journey, I have learned:
1) If you don't get involved in politics, they will get involved with you. 2) WAY too many people don't vote. 3) We need to know with a surety to whom we are giving our vote. 4) There are people out there who still take pride in the political system as it was created by our Forefathers. FIND THEM, assist them, support them and vote for them. 5) There are robotic/disconnected candidates. Get rid of them. 6) Most importantly (with emphasis this time), if you don't get involved with politics, they will get involved with you!

My quest in writing today is to encourage everyone to take this opportunity to search out the candidates. Visit the websites on their signs, visit their town halls, have conversations, and, most importantly, pray for guidance. Ultimately, in about 8 months, you'll be able to vote with confidence this time around.

Katie Cook
Vernonia

To the Editor,

As we approach the voting deadline for the Columbia County Jail Levy, our concern is for voters to have accurate information so they can make informed and responsible

decisions. However, there is one issue that continues to surface and it gives us great pause. There seems to be confusion regarding payments made to the Columbia County Jail from the U.S. Marshals Service regarding bed rentals. Make no mistake, this arrangement has been very beneficial to both parties.

It has been suggested that the Columbia County Jail takes a financial loss by providing these prisoner holds, in fact the arrangement takes a substantial bite out of the Jail's fixed costs. It costs 4.1 million dollars to operate the Jail; the U.S. Marshals prisoner holds contribute slightly more than half of the total operating budget at 2.3 million dollars. Without this arrangement, that revenue would have to be made up by Columbia County's general fund.

An article published by The Portland Mercury on March 19, 2014, summarized the U.S. Marshals holds in the Columbia County Jail as, "...moneymakers, subsidizing jail costs."

Ironically, even though The Portland Mercury story is about the overcrowding problem currently vexing the Multnomah County Jail, they still hope to secure these U.S. Marshals Service prisoner holds -- should the Columbia County Jail levy fail -- because of the payments resulting from those holds. The Portland Mercury continues by making a revealing point: "The reduction places county officials in an odd spot—more or less crossing their fingers that a Columbia County levy will fail in May, forcing our neighbors to the northwest to shutter their own troubled jail."

Multnomah County Deputy Budget Director Mike Jaspin is somewhat more tactful, "I don't want to say 'hoping,'" The Portland Mercury quotes him in the same article. "But if it were to fail, it's reasonable to assume that some of those people might end up here."

The Columbia County Jail currently charges the U.S. Marshals Service \$78 per bed, per day. At 50 to 100 holds per day, this becomes savings against the Jail's fixed costs. It's important to note that if the levy fails -- and if the Jail were to reopen in the future -- this funding mechanism would probably not be available again to the Columbia County Jail. Any additional funding responsibilities would fall directly on the county.

In January, 2014, Sheriff Dickerson asked renowned jail design consultant Dave Hanlon -- he was the design and construction manager of both jail facilities in Tillamook and Columbia

County -- to return to the Columbia County Jail and review its efficiency standards. Hanlon accommodated the Sheriff at no charge to the county and concluded in a written email exchange that the U.S. Marshals holds were instrumental in keeping down costs, "...your cost efficiency is very good." Mr. Hanlon continues, "...if you take into account the income from housing non-county prisoners, you are operating as efficiently as any jail I have ever seen!"

These U.S. Marshals holds are nothing but a gain for the Columbia County Jail and we hope this information is useful when considering how you'll vote on the upcoming Jail levy.

Thank you,
Columbia County Commissioners
Tony Hyde, Earl Fisher and Henry Heimuller

To the Editor,

Jean Martwick is the BEST choice for Circuit Court Judge. I have known Judge Martwick since she first began providing her legal services in Columbia County. At that time I worked as a Court Security Deputy for the Sheriff's Office and had frequent contact with her at the Courthouse. She always arrived for Court timely and treated everyone with the utmost respect and professionalism.

I retired from the Sheriff's Office, got my Private Investigator License and opened my own Private Investigations business in 2008 and have had the privilege of working for and with her on criminal cases on several occasions. I can attest to the fact that she cares deeply about fulfilling her responsibilities to her clients as well as being a hard working individual who seeks to get to the truth in every case.

Judge Martwick has the knowledge, skills, abilities and dedication to the duties of serving as our Elected Judge in Columbia County Circuit Court. Her experience in our Columbia County Circuit Courts far exceeds that of both her challengers combined.

PLEASE JOIN WITH ME IN SUPPORTING JUDGE JEAN MARTWICK AND VOTE TO KEEP HER AS OUR CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE!

James "Jim" Gibson
Clatskanie, OR

To the Editor,

The Jail Bond Levy needs to be supported. Whether we shoulder more

continued on page 20

Upcoming Events

Family Fishing Day - Saturday, May 3, 9:00 AM-2:00 PM at Vernonia Lake. Free for kids 13 and under. License required for all others. Sponsored by ODFW.

Vernonia Volunteer Firefighters Pancake Feed - Saturday, May 3, 8:00 AM-1:00 PM at the Vernonia Fire Station. Regular & Gluten Free. Adults \$6, Kids 12 & under \$4, Seniors 62 & over \$5, Family 6 max \$25.

Benefit Dinner for Terry Schaumburg - Saturday, May 3, 5:00-8:00 PM at Cedar Ridge, 18062 Keasey Rd. Contact: Sheri 503-429-6773 or Dana 503-429-9351

Mobile Mammography - Thursday, May 8 at Vernonia Health Center, 510 Bridge St. Call 503-681-4035 or 503-939-7149 to schedule an appointment.

Vernonia Community Garden Fair & Plant Sale - Saturday, May 10, 9:00 AM-4:00 PM at the Vernonia Schools Commons. 1,000 tomato plants, veggie & flower starts plus many gifts for Mother's Day. Contact Penny Costley 503-429-0196.

OMSI Star Party - Saturday, May 10, 8:30-11:00 PM at Stub Stewart State Park Hilltop Day-use Area. \$5 per vehicle. Call the OMSI Star Parties Hotline at 503-797-4000. Press #3 then #5 or check the OMSI Star Parties web site for possible weather-related cancellations. <http://www.oms.edu/star-parties>

Vernonia Area Chamber of Commerce Meeting - Tuesday, May 13 at 6:30 PM, hosted by Grey Dawn Gallery, 879 Bridge St. Arrive at 6:15 to visit, meeting starts at 6:30.

Potluck and Movie Night - Friday, May 16th, Potluck 6:00 PM, Movie 7:00 PM at the Vernonia Grange, 375 North St. "The Blues Brothers" starring Jim Belushi and Dan Ackroyd. All ages welcome - please note: the movie is Rated R for language.

Country Gospel Music Night with the Buzzell Family - Saturday, May 17th, 6:30 PM at the Scout Cabin.

HOW TO SEND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Vernonia's Voice welcomes and requests your thoughts, opinions and ideas. Please include your name, address and phone number, limit your letters to 300 words or less. Vernonia's Voice reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted. We will print letters space permitting. Deadline is the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month. Email: scott@vernoniasvoice.com or mail to: Letters, PO Box 55, Vernonia, OR 97064.

Fill A Bag. Feed Families.

Donations Stay in Your Community.

Saturday, May 10, 2014

Help Us Stamp Out Hunger, Spread the Word.

Facebook.com/StampOutHunger @StampOutHunger