

Schools Update: Making Progress

By Aaron Miller

Classrooms and hallways are once again filled with the sweet sounds of working and learning. Preparations will soon be made for Homecoming Week (October 13-17). Preliminary enrollment numbers show an 8.9% increase in enrollment with 48 more students attending Vernonia Schools compared to June of last year. Overall it has been a great start for our new school year.

While students are busy making academic progress, the Vernonia School District and its partners are making progress toward long-term financial and facilities' goals.

- The Vernonia City Council recently approved the waiver of all remaining System Development Charges for the school district. This generous decision will provide the schools with over \$111,000 worth of

debt relief over the next three years. Thank you very much to our partners at the City!

- Vernonia Champions, State Representative Brad Witt and State Senator Betsy Johnson combined their legislative efforts to provide another \$212,500 for the District to support our continuing fundraising efforts. A unanimous vote by the Legislative Emergency Board freed up this funding from the Oregon Office of Emergency Management's Local Disaster Assistance Loan and Grant Program. Thank you Representative Witt and Senator Johnson for your continuing efforts on behalf of our schools and our entire community!

- Stimson Lumber Company continued its support of our revitalization campaign, providing the District with a recent \$27,500 donation.

- Construction on the new shop has moved forward with all permits in place and the concrete floor poured. The materials for the shop are on site, and we

anticipate completion in late fall. Another big thank you to the Family of E.T. and Norma Johnson for their donation of \$25,000, to finalize funding for this project!

- Work on Spencer Park is substantially completed, with new ball fields, a monument marking the history of our local schools and flood events, and new grass growing. The park should be ready for use next spring.

Community support and partnerships such as these are what make Vernonia such a great place to live. Our continued, combined and concerted efforts to revitalize our town are paying off, and we appreciate each and every patron, partner and contributor. We hope you will join us in celebrating our successes, and looking forward to the next challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

VHS Fall Sports Report *continued from page 11*

defeat of City Christian.

On Saturday, September 20, the Lady Loggers hosted and won the Vernonia



Alex West runs the ball for the Loggers against Chemawa. Photo courtesy of Tracy Easlon.

Tournament, with a 2-1 win over Catlin Gable and a 2-0 defeat of Harrisburg.

The Lady Loggers will host home matches against Knappa on October 14 and City Christian on October 16 to close out their regular season play.

Football- The Loggers are now 1-3 on the season as they get ready to start league play in the Northwest League.

Vernonia defeated Chemawa at home on September 19 by a score of 40-16.

On September 26, the Loggers traveled to Culver where they lost 52-13. Culver is undefeated this season and currently ranked 5th in the state in 2A football.

On October 3, the Loggers will host Knappa at home in their first league game. Knappa is currently 4-0 on the season and are ranked 1st in the state in 2A.

Moody's Affirms Columbia County's Bond Credit Rating, Removes Negative Outlook

Moody's Investors Service (dated 9-10-14) affirmed Columbia County's general obligation bond rating at Aa3. This credit rating means "high quality and very low credit risk, Prime-1, best ability to repay short term debt." In doing so, they have also removed the "negative" outlook.

Moody's cites Columbia County's strengths as: "Moderate-sized tax base that experienced real market value growth in 2014" and "willingness on the part of management to make expenditure cuts." They further expected the county to experience "positive financial operations moving forward."

Moody's cites challenges as: "Uncertainty regarding receipt of federal revenues" (referring to the historic O&C federal revenues the County has depended on to provide basic services) and an "elevated pension burden."

This positive financial news comes on the heels of Columbia County's Finance Department being given The Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting Award by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) for its comprehensive

annual financial report (CAFR).

This program was initiated in 1945 to encourage and assist local governments in the United States and Canada to "go beyond the minimum requirements of generally accepted accounting principles" and prepare full and comprehensive financial reports that show transparency and full disclosure.

Readers Lend Their Voices... *continued from page 4*

Wayne Mayo responds: Thelma, I remember the conversation that probably signaled to you that I wasn't keen on supporting your idea to use depletion fees on gravel to bolster CCRider. I'm not convinced raising the depletion fee to fund CCRider would gain traction with the voters that raising the fee for jail operations would. People see empty buses going up and down the highway and wonder how that could be cost effective, though they are self supporting.

In three years the operating budget for the jail comes up again. Why not have the two elections needed; first regular election to change the language on how the fees are used and then, providing that passes; 2nd regular election asking to raise the fees for jail operations?

That's just my gut Thelma. You have done great things for Columbia County and I will always remember your many contributions to this county.

To the Editor,

Martwick's recent ads offering a reward to be paid out of her campaign funds for the conviction of the person who "stole" her signs raises more questions about her character.

Why did she wait four months to take out this ad? A victim of a crime shouldn't wait that long to take action. And, is she really a victim? She gave the signs out willingly and left many of her signs up weeks after the primary. The signs were taken down after the election, not during the election. Isn't it her responsibility to remove the signs?

Since she failed to do so, the signs were up illegally. Shouldn't residents be allowed to remove signs in violation of the laws? If she didn't care enough about the signs to remove them after the election, why should anyone care?

Political signs go missing all the time. Offering a reward for a conviction for missing signs is absurd, especially since she left the signs up. As a state employee, Martwick is paid about \$120,000.00 a year, more than enough to replace a few signs.

She is willing to pay a reward and seek conviction of the person who stole signs when in fact there has been no theft. She abandoned these signs all over the county with no concern for the rules or respect for the community. Now she is accusing community members of stealing and offering

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Henry
Heimuller

**for Columbia County
Commissioner, Position 2**

PROVEN • TRUSTED • ACCOUNTABLE

I'm working to build **safe, livable communities** where local families have **good-paying jobs** and **great schools**, and **local businesses thrive**.

Paid for by Henry Heimuller for Columbia County Commissioner