

## County Residents Urged to Attend PCC Forum October 21

Students, parents, employers and community leaders are invited to participate in an open discussion October 21 beginning at 6:00 PM at the Columbia River Receptions & Events at Meriwether Place in St. Helens. The forum is sponsored by Portland Community College. Light refreshments will be available.

"Since early June, we have been meeting with people from St. Helens, Scappoose and Vernonia asking them to share their thoughts related to the PCC center scheduled to open in the county in 2017," said Sandra Fowler-Hill, president of the PCC Rock Creek Campus. "We have studied surveys completed by students and school administrators, we have heard from local employers, and we have heard directly from more than 100 individuals who attended our summer forums. It's time to report back to the community what we heard and discuss next steps."

She added, "The PCC Center will be successful only if Columbia County residents support it. We hope to offer the types of classes, programs and services that will appeal to a broad range of learners. This includes technical training, college

prep, community education and offerings that would make a good employee a great employee."

Through credit and non-credit classes, PCC has had a presence in Columbia County since 1968. One of the most popular and sustaining partnerships is the dual credit program which allows local students to earn free college credit while attending high school. Over the past five years, 490 local students have earned 4,585 college credits for a savings of \$345,012.

"PCC is committed to the people of Columbia County and the response to the dual credit program is one indication of their interest in higher education. The classes we have offered at the high schools, the St. Helens High School welding program in particular, has been successful and going forward, we hope to build on these partnerships."

Registration for first-time students at PCC opens Nov. 18 for the winter term which begins Jan. 5.

Visit these web sites for more information: [www.pcc.edu/ThinkPCCFirst](http://www.pcc.edu/ThinkPCCFirst) and [www.pcc.edu/about/locations/columbia-county](http://www.pcc.edu/about/locations/columbia-county).

## School Enrollment and Funding *Deconstructing the myths and understanding the realities of state funding for Vernonia Schools*

By Scott Laird

When Vernonia School Superintendent Aaron Miller recently announced that enrollment at District 47J was up at the start of the 2014-15 school year, it sounded like good news. And, for the most part, it is.

"This is very good news," stated

Vernonia School District Superintendent Aaron Miller, when asked about the recent, and apparently unexpected surge, in registered students in Kindergarten through grade 12 at the new Vernonia Schools. "This is a huge step in the right direction. It's very exciting for our district to see new students come through the front door."

The reason this is such good news is because School Districts in Oregon receive funding from the state, through the State School Fund (SSF) grant program, based on enrollment.

Enrollment in Vernonia at the start of this school year was counted at 560 students, up from 532 at the end of the 2013-14 school year. The actual number is 589, but kindergarten students only count as a half student each, as far as the state is concerned. So, for funding purposes, that's an increase of twenty-eight students, which equates to a more than 5% increase.

That may not sound like much. But in a school district which has experienced declining enrollment since the flood of 2007, including the last two years following the opening of the newly constructed schools campus, this is extremely encouraging.

"This is the first time we've moved forward since the flood," says Miller, who took over as Superintendent this summer. "In

## 2014 Salmon Festival



For more photos turn to page 23.

## City Postpones Hearing on Lincoln School Zone Change

The Vernonia City Council postponed a Public Hearing scheduled for October 6, 2014.

The Council was scheduled to hear a request by Bud and Sharla Dow to change the zoning designation for the Lincoln School parcel of land on Bridge Street owned by the Dows, from Residential R to General Commercial GC. The announcement that the hearing was being postponed was made at the start of the regular City Council meeting on October 6, at the same meeting the hearing was scheduled to occur.

At the start of the City Council meeting Mayor Josette Mitchell told the audience, which included the Dows and their legal representative Ross Day, that the hearing would be postponed because the City had received new information from the Dow's attorney on Friday, October 3 at noon. Mitchell stated that the City had not received advice from their own legal Counsel about how the City should respond to Day's correspondence.

Day's letter to the City provided history of the Dow's purchase of the property in 2007, history of the Conditional Use Permit they applied for and received from the City in 2007, and history of their current application to change the zoning for the property.

The correspondence then raised several objections to the way City Planner Carole Connell handled the zone change request when it was brought before the Planning

Commission during their hearing in September. Day claimed that City Planning staff made a mistake when they suggested that the Planning Commission consider the option of the Planned Development PD designation.

In addition, Day's correspondence to the City challenges Councilor Kim Tierney's ability to consider the application. The challenge is based on the Dow's perceived bias Tierney must have on the issue due to the fact that her spouse, Jim Tierney, had been a vocal opponent to the Dow's application when it was heard by the Planning Commission. Day's correspondence requested that Tierney recuse herself from participating in any deliberation and/or decision making on the Dow's application.

Mitchell told the audience the Public Hearing would be rescheduled for the City Council meeting on October 20. Public testimony, both for and against the zone change, as well as neutral testimony, will be accepted at that hearing.

The Vernonia Planning Commission had previously ruled on the application by the Dows to change the zoning on the property on September 18, 2014. The Planning Commission's recommendation to Council was to deny the zone change based on findings that the site is not appropriate for General Commercial. The Planning Commission made a second motion to recommend the

continued on page 19

*inside*

8 the good ol' days

9 falling in love with fall

13 another round

14 meet the exchange students

16 vhs fall sports



continued on page 3