

Enhanced Operational Abilities of the County Jail

By Sheriff Jeff Dickerson

On April 26, 2014, the Clatskanie Police Department arrested James M. Bryan on felony and warrant misdemeanor charges, Criminal Mischief First Degree (after he was accused of slashing the police department's car tires), Resisting Arrest and Indecent Exposure.

Bryan's threatening behavior that day called for a SWAT team to take him into custody.

Mr. Bryan was taken to jail where—while in custody—he committed additional crimes.

On December 23, 2014, the jail transported Mr. Bryan to prison after the court sentenced him to 18 months for his crime. Mr. Bryan had remained in custody throughout the eight months between the time of his arrest and his sentence to prison.

Alexander Ross was convicted in the burglary spree that terrorized south county residents for months in 2014. Ross was arrested in August 2014 and held in custody until he was sent to prison in December. Once in custody, the burglary spree came to a screeching halt.

These cases highlight the importance of having a jail in place to hold the offenders who are the biggest threats to our communities. When Mr. Bryan went to jail in April 2014, it was less than a month before the levy passed to keep our jail in business. If the levy had failed, Mr. Bryan would have been released back into the community months before he went to trial, and Mr. Ross would have been given a citation (instead of jail) to appear in court when

he was charged in August. These men might not have ever made it to court if we did not have a jail to hold them.

As many know, we still do not have the operational ability to hold indefinitely everyone that police officers and sheriff's deputies bring to the jail—but we do have a place to bring all offenders for the night, get them booked on their charges and calmed down from their current criminal episodes. And we are also keeping about twice as many people in custody today than we were this time last year.

This is a good sign of things to come, as we continue to work on building up our operational ability to hold more inmates.

While we do that, we continue to use the Forced Release Matrix used all over the state to score inmates on their danger to the community, and to make sure we keep the most dangerous at any one time in custody. More good news is that the total number of inmates being force released since the passage of the levy has dropped remarkably.

The first half of 2014 saw 530 inmates released from January through June, but from July through December, that number fell by almost 25 percent, down to 312 inmates. Another way

of looking at it is that before the levy, we were force-releasing more than 20 inmates per week on average. Since the passage of the jail levy took effect, we are down to force-releasing 12 inmates per week on average. This represents a significant increase in the amount of inmates we can hold longer, and the number of serious offenders who can be held until trial.

In fact, as of this writing, there are: six accused of Rape or other sex crimes; seven accused of Assaults (including attempted murder); two being held on homicide charges; five accused of theft and burglary crimes; and four held on Methamphetamine charges. Most of these would not be in custody right now if not for the viability of the Columbia County Jail.

When the voters sacrificed to keep their jail open, they put the welfare of the community at a premium. I know it was a difficult choice to make—and that it was a close vote. But the benefits are measurable, and, as we continue to hire more staff and upgrade our tools to handle more inmates, I expect to see even better results with more operational capacity for our jail as we go through 2015.

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Make Vernonia Shine Day
Saturday, April 25th
9 to noon
Register at City Hall, 1001 Bridge St.
Transfer station will be open this day. There is the possibility of
HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION this day as well.
For more information: Donna Webb 503-429-5201 or donnatwebb@gmail.com

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2015 Vernonia Sportsman's Banquet
Saturday, April 18th
6:00 pm at Vernonia Christian Church - 410 North Street

Guest Speaker: Rick Barry
Elected into NBA Hall of Fame in 1987. Rick will be talking about his career in the NBA. He would like guests to email him questions; he will pick several to talk about during the banquet.
Email: rb24adventures@aol.com

Antler/Horn Show:
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