

Leaving Office: *continued from page 3*

the most advanced and ergonomically designed plant in the world which will employ around 100 people at competitive wages. In Rainier it's USG and Teevin Brothers that really turned things around. When I started we were looking at the loss of Trojan and everything there was in serious trouble – their schools, their fire department, everything. We formed an Urban Renewal District and installed infrastructure and brought in USG, Conrad and now the expansion of Rightline and now they're talking about the Columbia Crossing Mall being built there, all happening because of the work we did early on. In Clatskanie, it's Port Westward which is still controversial, but it is still an 800 acre industrial site with a self scouring, deep water port and you just can't ignore that because those things just don't exist everywhere. I'm extremely proud that we put together that Urban Renewal District at Port Westward and invested in infrastructure because we turned around a 20 year trend of negative growth in Clatskanie, which is always an indicator of economic blight, that is a fact. We paid a lot of attention to that site. Everything we've done out there hasn't worked out the way we planned because of changes in fuel prices and consumption trends, but we have had ongoing construction and development out there that's actually been more than three quarters of a billion dollars in construction. That means that since 2003 we've had huge crews, sometimes upwards of 2,000 workers – welders, plumbers, pipe fitters, steam fitters, electricians – and a good share of those people are living in this county and they've been busy for 13 years. You can't discount having those people working in our county instead of somewhere else. The retail leakage alone can be huge. What that does for the Clatskanie economy is monumental. They have new hotels, restaurants, and it's vibrant. We've turned that around and added almost a billion dollars in value to the town. I would submit that because of all that growth out there, it is how we as a county have turned the corner with our budget. We have no more furlough days, we're open five days a week, we have a budget surplus and a PERS surplus. We are making double payments on the Urban Renewal District so we can close

that out sooner and get those taxes back on the rolls. I'm very proud of what has happened out there – negative growth rate versus positive growth rate – you just can't argue with those facts.

Another thing I'm really proud of is the development of a very sound Emergency Management System. We're connected hard to the region and to Oregon Emergency Management. In 1996 when Vernonia flooded it was obvious to me that we needed to build and be part of a solid system. In 2007 it was better. Just the piece of being approved and getting FEMA dollars back into the community – you just can't let that not happen; you have to be prepared. 9/11 brought all kinds of new regulations and new funding, but our communities did not have the capacity. By forming the Columbia County Homeland Security Emergency Management Commission we were able to collectively bring capacity and continuity in terms of a level of preparedness to all our communities. That's why we're being used as a model all over the state. We have good people at the helm who are competent and smart. We're really at the top of our game and our system is second to none.

I'm also really proud of our Columbia County Economic Team (CCET) which is a public/private partnership, not a government agency, with Columbia County as a major funder. Our goal has been, should be, and will always be, to become more than 50% private because private business and industry are the real drivers of economic development. A lot of the time what government needs to recognize is that we should get out of the way and just let a new business or industry know that we are friendly and open-minded about bringing them into our community and try to help them and not get in their way. I'm proud that we have developed this partnership that is collectively paying into economic development for the County, and is heavily used and highly effective. That leads into our regional economic development entity, which is COLPAC, which is part of a federal program. As a founding member of that back in the 90s, along with Western Washington County, Tillamook County and Clatsop County that make up our District, we're made up of different stakeholders. And that leads

us to the statewide Regional Solutions, which is something I've had a big hand in. It breaks the state up into five regions and allows each region to dictate what they want to accomplish and then receive assistance from state agencies. Back in the 90s, Oregon state agencies weren't aligned on projects and weren't talking to each other and you would see a project moving along smoothly and then one agency would step in and halt it for one reason or another. Those of us concerned about economic development lobbied the Governor and said, 'This is an issue for us.' So he created Community Solutions, which led to Regional Solutions, which has been very effective at looking at projects that were arising and trying to help develop those projects. That was huge. And what else developed was the change in top down movement of funds – it used to take some type of magic, either through associations, relationships, or capacity, to enter those doors of economic development opportunity. So it was about who knew what, who knew whom, and how much clout you had. Today we have Districts that have Community Economic Development Strategies that identify the most important projects. So now we have a system that is written into policy, that I helped write and have been part of from the ground up, that creates Regional Solutions teams that allows us to tell the state what projects are important to us, not the state deciding what is important. That is a huge paradigm shift that we've been looking for, for a very long time. I'm on the Regional Solutions team. I've been part of state economic development commission for eight years. I've been on the Governor's Budget Committee on the Economy and Jobs, and I'm just now stepping down as the Chair from the federal Economic and Community Development Steering Committee. Economic development has really been one of my main focuses and I'm really proud of that. I've tried to provide leadership in this area as a team builder. I think this county is in the best shape it's ever been in, in terms of being ready and we're in one of the best spots in the state for an economy that is ready to flourish.

VV: Do you have any regrets as you leave office?

TH: To be honest, I haven't really thought about that much. I guess I regret that I won't be here for the finish. I've been involved for a very long time. Everybody knew I wasn't going to run again after this last election and the reason I ran this last time was to see some of these projects completed. That's really my only regret. I went to work every single day excited about getting to work. I never saw it as a job. I saw it as an opportunity, not for me, but for our communities.

Upcoming Events

The Spirit of Christmas in Vernonia - Saturday, December 3. For more info: Facebook page The Spirit of Christmas in Vernonia Oregon.

Christmas in the Country Bazaar - Saturday & Sunday, December 3 & 4 at the Vernonia Schools Commons.

Vernonia Ballet Presents Peter and the Wolf - Friday, December 16, 7:00 pm at the Vernonia Grange. No admission, donations accepted.

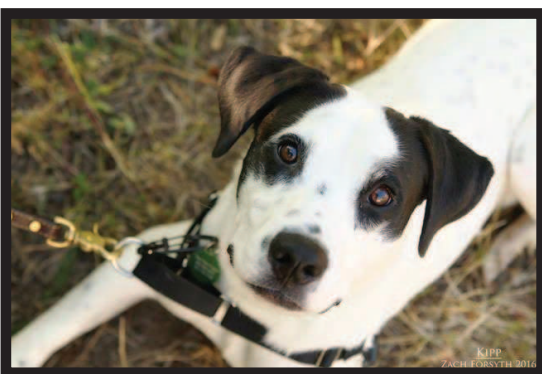
I don't think you could ever explain to someone on the street just how much goes on and all the responsibilities we have as County Commissioners and the myriad of issues that come before us day in and day out. I coined this phrase years ago, "If you're not at the table, you're on the menu." It is absolutely true and it's always been my mantra. It's why I've always sat on so many committees and commissions. You have to be at the table. Our job is to represent the citizens of this community. You don't do that in your office.

VV: What kind of plans do you have for the future?

TH: Well I certainly hope for the best for the Board. I've always been proud of the way we worked together as a team and we had great camaraderie. I hope that continues. That is very heartfelt on my part. I want to see them succeed.

I do have my shingle hanging out, but I haven't really had a chance to think about it much because my focus has been to get ready to turn over this office. As soon as the election was over I realized that I had a lot of projects in play and a lot of it was stuff that only I knew about, or that I had a lot of inside knowledge about. So I had to figure out ways to pass that knowledge on and transition well. I've seen it done wrong and watched it go horribly with outgoing Commissioners, especially ones that were 'deposed' with lots of hostility. For me, I just wanted to double down and work hard to get stuff done in a way that allows for a smooth transition rather than drop off the edge. Because that would not be good for the county and that has always been the bottom line for me, what is good for the county. I get paid until the end of December and I will work until the end. Once I get there, I'll worry about what is next.

Columbia Humane Society Featured Pet



Hi! My name is Kipp. I am a white/black neutered male pointer mix, and weigh approximately 46 lbs. I have a ton of energy and love to hike. I love everyone I meet, am highly food motivated and good with cats. Please stop by and introduce yourself. I would love for you to take me to my forever home.

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Phone: 503-397-4353

Email: animalwelfare@columbiahumane.org

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