

## Giving it Their Best Shot

**Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD takes the lead on regional COVID-19 vaccinations**

By Scott Laird

As the COVID vaccinations first became available earlier this year there was a lot of confusion about who was eligible for



The Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD is holding COVID vaccination clinics at their station, and the Vernonia fire station. Left to right: Mist-Birkenfeld staff paramedic Larry Boxman, Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD Director of Public Health Services Hailey Palmore, and Fire Chief Joe Kaczynski.

the shots, and what the process was to receive them. Information seemed to be changing daily, new manufacturers were quickly testing new versions and getting them approved, supplies were unreliable, and locations and appointments were elusive.

As the vaccine rollout gathered momentum people may have been hesitant to search out the vaccine after hearing about bad

experiences or the stress involved – difficulty scheduling an appointment, the long drive into the metro area where they were available, trouble finding parking, or waiting in line for hours.

But amidst all the chaos and challenging bureaucracy the Mist-Birkenfeld Rural Fire Protection District (RFPD) has stepped forward to develop an innovative program to make sure residents in their rural community have convenient access to the pandemic slowing, and potentially life saving, vaccine.

Word is quickly spreading about the vaccine delivery service Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD employees Larry Boxman and Hailey Palmore have successfully implemented, and this week, they added regular access to vaccines in Vernonia to eligible residents. “Especially in communities we live in out here, like Vernonia or Mist or Jewell, people hear from their neighbors how something goes and that can be a catalyst for them to get it themselves,” says Palmore.

“We initially didn’t think this was a big deal,” says Boxman. “We were just trying to take care of our district. But apparent-

ly we’re pretty unique, being a fire district that is able to provide the service of vaccinating our own residents. We’ve always seen ourselves as more than just a fire district – we see ourselves as an extension of public health. We gave flu shots to members of our district this past fall, and we just thought giving COVID vaccines was the right thing to do.”

Boxman says the Mist-Birkenfeld  
*continued on page 3*

## WOEC Names Kohler Interim GM

**New Board member appointed at March meeting**

By Scott Laird

The West Oregon Electric Cooperative (WOEC) Board of Directors has appointed Billi Kohler as the interim General Manager to replace Bob Perry who is retiring, effective April 2, 2021.

Kohler currently works as the Administrative Services Manager. She is a 2010 graduate of Vernonia High School, who started her career at WOEC working in the office through a school-to-work program while still a high school student. Following graduation she joined WOEC as a part-time employee



as a management assistant. After leaving the co-op she returned in 2016 as a Member Service Representative, working at the front desk, taking payments, handling collections, and other accounts receivable work, along with customer service. Two years ago she was promoted to Administrative Services Manager, managing Board of Director relations, supervising the front desk employees, and assisting the General Manager. She is currently completing a Bachelor of Science Degree in Accounting at Phoenix University. Kohler is married with three sons and lives in Vernonia.

“I am excited,” said Kohler about her new interim position. “I’ll be honest, it did take me by surprise. This has been my goal all along and I knew eventually this was where I wanted to end up. This is a kind of accelerated version of it. I’m stepping into this role to help the co-op right now.”

Kohler and the Board agreed to a six month trial period for her appointment as interim.

“I’m excited to have Billi take this position,” said Board Chair Brett Costley. “Billi is young and doesn’t have the managerial experience someone like Mr. Perry had. But she is extremely smart and very hard working, and Bob had been looking to

*continued on page 9*

## inside

4 Narcan Available in Vernonia

6 Trade-offs in Construction

7 VHS Sports Report



## Vernonia SK8 Project Receives Needed Funding

**Community fundraising to continue in order to add more park features**

By Scott Laird

The City of Vernonia has announced the Vernonia SK8 project has received the funding they need to move forward and break ground for a new skate park facility at Spencer Park.

Local resident and businessman Randy Holce quietly donated \$100,000 to the project in December 2020, and after the City’s community grant application to Oregon State Parks was not awarded for the third year in a row, Mr. Holce stepped forward again last month and donated the remaining \$140,000 the project needed to move forward with construction.

Because of increasing construction costs, the project’s community organizers are now making one final push to raise additional funds so they can build the best park possible for local kids.

“This has always been about the kids,” says resident Wendy Sears who has helped head up the community effort to raise the funds and get the skate park built after decades



of stops and starts, and failed promises to the community’s youth. Sears, along with other members of Vernonia SK8, have been persistent over several years, continually searching out funding sources, applying for grants, encouraging support from the City Council, and holding

*continued on page 4*