

Giving it Their Best Shot *continued from page 3*

agencies in Columbia County. “That worked out great, but at that time, Columbia County was asking residents to use their primary physicians or a pharmacy, along with coordinating with local clinics,” says Boxman. “That was in December and January, but as time went on they figured out that, out here, those services just aren’t available. So we told the County we wanted to take care of and focus on our residents in our district. When they realized just how rural we are, they decided it does serve our residents best if they can stay here, and they gave us permission to have a clinic here at the station.”

Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD sent out a newsletter to all district residents announcing the vaccination program, along with the Columbia County Interest Form which asks some qualifying questions. “We got a tremendous response back from those,” says Boxman. The Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD Board of Directors approved the hire of district EMT volunteer Palmore as a full-time, temporary employee to assist Boxman with the program. Appointments were scheduled for a clinic at the Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD station, which was held beginning March 11 for three days; during that first clinic 108 doses were administered both at the station and in district member’s homes. They have held several more clinics that also served many Vernonia and surrounding community residents.

Both Boxman and Palmore are former employees of Metro West Ambulance; Boxman was an Administrator who recently retired and now works full-time for Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD. Palmore just finished a Masters Degree in Business Administration with an eye on a career in the health care industry. Together Boxman and Palmore have developed an organized and talented team, capable of delivering the program with efficient and professional assistance from their district staff and volunteers.

“Fortunately we’ve had the support of our Board of Directors who allocated the appropriate funds, and our officers and our staff who all helped make this happen so quickly,” says Boxman.

“It was a lot of work that Larry did to get our district qualified from the state to administer vaccines,” adds Palmore. “The fact that

he secured that so early has really put us in a great position, not only for our community, but also for the surrounding ones. If any of these neighboring communities were to try and start this on their own now, it would be weeks before they could start.”

Boxman and Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD were able to tap into their previously created CHIP Program and deliver vaccines to residents in their homes. CHIP (Community Health Integrated Paramedicine) is a free program Boxman helped create last year that brings health care services and other resources to residents who might have difficulty accessing them due to living in a rural setting. Through the CHIP Program EMS providers visit patients in their homes and attend to their health, environmental, and social needs by assisting participants with post-surgery follow-up, managing prescription and over the counter medications, mobility within the home, wound care, and managing chronic illnesses. Because this program was already in place, it made it easy to begin delivering vaccinations to many of those homebound patients, along with other residents. The mobile, in-home vaccinations will now be offered to medically fragile and/or homebound patients in the Vernonia, Jewell, Elsie, and surrounding areas.

Debbie Gray from Vernonia was one of the people who received their first shot on March 25 at the Mist-Birkenfeld station. “This made it so much easier,” she said. “We have been waiting for over a month to get an appointment at the Portland Convention

Center, and then I just gave up. I called on Monday and we were in here three days later. It beats driving 50 miles and then waiting in line.”

Gray was able to get her appointment through the help of Vernonia resident Kim Tierney, who has been working tirelessly to get people registered, scheduled, and vaccinated. “She and some other Vernonia locals basically self-organized and have been helping with so much of the scheduling and logistical coordination regarding transportation to the clinic and home visits, particularly in Vernonia,” says Palmore. “We are going to begin doing home visits in Vernonia, in large part thanks to her identifying these high-risk patients. She came into our picture through a stellar recommendation from Columbia County – she has been helping for weeks out of the kindness of her heart, helping her neighbors and other members of the community get scheduled for shots anywhere she could find them, but now we are able to give her more access to tools and contacts by bringing her on as a volunteer with the Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD. She honestly has been doing this all on her own time – she’s a true saint of the community.”

One surprising thing Mist-Birkenfeld RFPD learned during the initial outreach portion of the program is that a large number of their residents don’t have computer, email, or internet access. “About 30% of the interest forms were returned in-person or by

mail,” explains Boxman. “That showed us that a portion of the population, especially in rural environments would have been forgotten about, because people were being directed to their county’s public health websites.” Boxman says Clatsop County is now doing a similar mail outreach.

“It’s been a learning process,” says Palmore. “You have to take into consideration the population you’re serving. You try things and see what works, and if you feel like you’re not reaching people you try something else.”

Boxman says, while the clinic was being organized, the district began receiving inquiries from people living outside of their boundaries, including residents in the Vernonia, Elsie, and Jewell areas, looking to see if they could schedule appointments. “Even though we were focusing on our district residents, we weren’t saying no,” he says.

Boxman was complimentary toward public health officials in both Columbia and Clatsop counties. “I know there have been a lot of stories in the news about a lack of coordination for vaccine distribution, but the county public health departments we’re working with have really been focused on trying to get as much vaccine out as quickly as possible. That’s been our experience and we’re just fortunate that we get to partner with them and help facilitate that vision.”

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The City of Vernonia is currently looking for qualified individuals to fill a **Facilities Maintenance/ Cemetery Caretaker** position in **Vernonia, Oregon**. This full-time position will work independently, while coordinating with City Staff, to maintain City facilities and Vernonia Memorial Cemetery. Go the www.vernonia-or.gov for full job posting.



Vernonia Police Blotter

March 15-29, 2021

Reports Taken/Arrests

- March 18, 2021 Report of Criminal Trespass I near North Mist Drive
- March 22, 2021 Informational Report taken
- March 23, 2021 Report of Violation of Conditional Release Agreement

Citation/Other

- March 15, 2021 Cited for Speeding 88 mph in a 55 mph and Driving Uninsured near Arctic Way
- March 17, 2021 Cited for Driving While Suspended near Scappoose Vernonia Highway
- March 22, 2021 Cited for Speeding 80 mph in a 55 mph near Nehalem Highway

South

- March 23, 2021 Cited for Speeding 70 mph in a 55 mph, Driving Without Proof of Insurance, and Illegal Display of Plates near Nehalem Highway South
- March 24, 2021 Cited for Speeding 78 mph in a 55 mph near Nehalem Highway South
- March 25, 2021 Cited for Speeding 78 mph in a 55 mph near Nehalem Highway South

Vernonia Police Department responds to calls that do not always end in Arrest, Report, or Citation. 03/01/2021 through 03/29/2021 VPD had 226 calls for service.

NOTICE OF BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

A public meeting of the Budget Committee of the City of Vernonia, Columbia County, State of Oregon, to present the budget for the fiscal year July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022, will be held on April 27, 2021 at 6:30 pm. The purpose of the meeting is to receive the budget message, the budget document and to establish the agenda for future meetings. No deliberation will take place at this meeting and no public comment will be heard.

An additional separate meeting of the Budget Committee will be held to take public comment. Any person may appear to discuss the proposed programs with the Budget Committee. This meeting will be held on May 4, 2021 at 6:30 pm.

Due to ever changing Governor mandated restrictions related to COVID-19 all Budget Committee meetings will be held either online or in person. For attendance instructions, see the meeting agenda for details.

A copy of the budget document will be available after April 26, 2021 at City Hall located at 1001 Bridge St. between the hours of 8 am - 5 pm Monday - Friday.

This notice is also posted on the City's website: vernonia-or.gov

The Transfer Station is scheduled to be open on the 2nd and 4th Saturday January - October

**April 10 & 24
May 8 & 22**

There may be limits on oversized items (mattresses, couches, etc.) and the number of vehicles in the yard at one time.

Dates are subject to change

Vernonia City Council Meetings and Closures

Please check the City’s website for details on upcoming City Council Meetings scheduled for 7:00 pm:

Monday, April 5, 2021
Monday, April 19, 2021

www.vernonia-or.gov

City Closures are scheduled for:
Monday, May 31, 2021
Memorial Day
Dates and times subject to change