

Rainy day pool party



RACK ‘EM UP - A couple of regulars at the Illinois Valley Senior Center enjoy a game of pool on Tuesday, Dec. 2. Jesse Goldtrap takes aim at the cue ball while George Hertel patiently waits his turn. Wet winter weather has made indoor recreation the choice for many valley residents.

October unemployment falls to 7.2 percent

Josephine County’s unemployment rate edged down over the month, falling to 7.2 percent in October. Josephine County’s unemployment rate is little changed over the past year, up by 0.3 percent.

Non-farm payroll employment in Josephine County showed a slight over-the-year increase, up by 140 jobs since October 2002. October payrolls grew by 270, spurred by seasonal increases in local government education employment.

Manufacturing employment remained stable over the month, and has slipped by just 10 jobs over the year, despite a reduction of nearly 200 in wood products manufacturing.

Wholesale trade em-

ployment rose sharply over the month, adding 50 new jobs. This sector has added almost 100 new jobs in Josephine County over the year.

Job growth in the retail trade sector has been another significant contributor to the county’s positive job growth rate.

Employment in retail trade, while falling by 40 in October, has increased by 270 jobs over the year.

Financial activities employment fell by 20 jobs in October. The financial activities sector has been bolstered by low interest rates and a strong real estate market over the past year.

Employment in finance is up by 50 since October 2002.

The leisure and hospi-

tality industries lost 80 jobs over the month and nearly that many over the past year.

In October, seasonal hiring in local education employment, increasing by 370 jobs, accounted for most of the county’s monthly gain.

Along with losses over the year in the wood products sector, government employment has also declined in Josephine County.

Employment in October was below the year-before totals in federal (-30), state (-40), and local government education (-150). Other industries gaining jobs over the year include construction (+20), business services (+30), and health care and social assistance (+80).

Sen. Wyden votes to protect benefits

Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore) has announced his intention to block S. 1896, a bill extending numerous expiring tax provisions, unless it includes an extension of unemployment benefits for the more than 15,000 Oregonians who would otherwise lose their benefits in January.

Wyden said he hopes the hold will pressure Senate leaders to include an extension of benefits in the

bill, the last amendable legislative vehicle the Senate will likely consider before adjournment later this week. Oregon’s 7.6 percent unemployment rate is currently the highest in the nation.

The current federal unemployment benefit program runs out at the end of December.

From the beginning of the current federal unemployment program in

March 2002 until May 2003, two out of every three unemployment insurance recipients ran out of benefits before they found new jobs.

Legislation proposed in Congress would only extend benefits by 13 weeks.

This approach ignores the long-term nature of unemployment in the current sluggish economy and could penalize Oregon by cutting off the states extended benefits after three months.

Wyden also wants to amend the current law -- a provision known as “lookback” -- so that 5,000 additional unemployed Oregonians who would otherwise lose their benefits can continue to receive benefits for 13 more weeks.

Record signatures for tax repeal

The citizen group leading the effort to repeal the tax increases recently passed by the Legislature has turned in a record number of signatures in a record amount of time. More than 145,000 signatures were submitted to the Secretary of State’s office on Nov. 25 by the Taxpayer’s Defense Fund, an Oregon-based group. With the number of signatures provided, the measure will likely qualify for the February election.

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