

A note: Remember to run in the rain

A little girl had been shopping with her Mom in a large department store.

She must have been 6, this beautiful red-haired, freckle-faced image of innocence. It was pouring outside; the kind of rain that gushes over the top of rain gutters, so much in a hurry to hit the Earth that it has no time to flow down the spout.

We all stood there under the awning and just inside the store main entrance. We waited, some patiently, others irritated because Nature messed up their hurried day.

I am always mesmerized by rainfall. I get lost in the sound and sight of the heavens washing away the dirt and dust of the world. Memories of running, splashing, so carefree as a child, came pouring in as a welcome reprieve from all the worries of my day.

The little voice was so sweet as it broke the hypnotic trance that we were all caught in, "Mom, let's run through the rain."

"What?" Mom asked. "Let's run through the rain!" she repeated.

"No, honey. We'll wait until it slows down a bit," Mom replied.

This young child waited about another minute and repeated: "Mom, let's run

through the rain."

"We'll get soaked if we do," Mom said.

"No, we won't, Mom. That's not what you said this morning," the young girl said as she tugged at her Mom's arm.

"This morning? When did I say we could run through the rain and not get wet?"

"Don't you remember? When you were talking to Daddy about his cancer, you said, 'If God can get us through this, He can get us through anything!'"

The entire crowd went dead silent. I swear you couldn't hear anything but the rain. No one came or left in the next few minutes. Mom paused and thought for a moment about what she would say.

Now, some would laugh it off and scold her for being silly. Some might even ignore what was said. But this was a moment of affirmation in a young child's life. A time when innocent trust can be nurtured so that it will bloom into faith.

"Honey, you are absolutely right. Let's run through the rain. If God lets us get wet; well, maybe we just needed washing," Mom said.

Then off they ran.

We all stood watching, smiling and laughing as they darted past the cars and yes, through the puddles. They held their shopping bags over their heads just in case. They got soaked.

But they were followed by a few who screamed and laughed like children all the way to their cars. And yes, I did. I ran. I got wet. I needed washing.

Circumstances or people can take away your material possessions; they can take away your money, and they can take away your health. But no one can ever take away your precious memories.

So, don't forget to make time and take the opportunity to make memories every day.

To everything there is a season, a time to every purpose under Heaven.

They say it takes a minute to find a special person, an hour to appreciate them, a day to love them, but then an entire life to forget them.

So stay in touch with your family and friends -- you never know when you'll need each other.

And don't forget to run in the rain.

(Editor's Note: The preceding appeared in December newsletter of Cave Junction based Life/Lines, a prison outreach ministry. The article was submitted by Ellis Chen, who lives in Vacaville, Calif.)

Energy efficiency can help reduce costs; suggestions offered to aid home owners

Natural gas users can expect to pay an average of \$350 more this winter compared with last year, an increase of 48 percent, according to a recent report for the Energy Information Administration.

And those who heat with oil will pay an estimated \$378, or 32 percent more.

As a solution, the Alliance to Save Energy suggests energy efficiency, and the simplest place to start saving is at home.

The American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy estimates that if each person increases the energy efficiency in major appliances by 10 percent to 30 percent, it will release the demand for electricity by the equivalent of 25 large power plants.

Saving energy also saves money. By using energy-efficient products, the average household can save up to \$400 per year on utility bills.

Here are some ways to save energy at home:

*Weatherize your home. The gaps around the windows and doors in an

average U.S. house are the equivalent of a 3-by-3-foot hole in the wall. Caulk and weather strip to seal these air leaks. This can save as much as 40 percent on heating and cooling costs.

Stop air from escaping under doors with "sweeps" or "shoes" attached to the bottom. Use window putty to seal gaps around loose window panes.

Also, install foam gas-kets behind all the light switches and electrical outlet covers. They help seal the holes caused when the outlets and light switches are built into homes. Use child safety plugs to keep cold air from coming in through the sockets.

*Get a programmable thermostat. Those that have earned the Energy Star label help save money and keep homes comfortable by automatically adjusting temperature settings while you are asleep or away, saving approximately \$100 per year.

*Consider zoning. In a typical two-story home, the upstairs can be up to 10 degrees warmer than downstairs. One solution to help regulate uneven tempera-

tures is a control system that divides houses into separate zones, like those offered by Aprilaire.

These systems use multiple thermostats and dampers in the heating and cooling duct work that control temperature in separate areas to deliver conditioned air only to the part of homes that needs it. The result is greater comfort and convenience, as well as energy savings of up to 30 percent.

For more information, visit aprilair.com.

Install a ceiling fan in the largest room of your house. This will allow you to lower the setting on your air conditioner by 3 to 6 degrees, which will save up to 25 percent of energy costs of home cooling.

Additionally, more than \$125 annually can be saved by replacing three old-style light bulbs with modern fluorescent twisters; setting the heat at 68 degrees in the winter and air conditioners at 78 degrees in summer; and unplugging three appliances -- or switching off a power strip full of plugs -- when not in use.

(NewsUSA)

Holiday parties? Remember to use a designated driver. It's the sane thing to do.

Club & Group News

Breast Cancer Support Group

Illinois Valley Women's Breast Cancer Support Group will meet Tuesday, Dec. 13 at 10:30 a.m. at the I.V. Family Resource Center on E. River Street in Cave Junction.

A representative conducting an outreach survey for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Research Foundation will attend. This survey will be used to plan programs and direction for the foundation for the next two to five years.

Said the club, "This is an opportunity to make your ideas heard. If you can't come to the meeting phone Vici Carlton at 592-6625, as blank survey forms are available.

"Make your voice count. The survey will be collected through December. Any woman may attend."

Forestry Action Committee

The Illinois Basin Interest Group Forestry Action Committee Tree Planting Project is in full swing.

"We have been signing up many land owners who want free trees for riparian areas, and trees are still available," said Suzanne Vautier, coordinator.

She added, "Properties having water, whether it is river, stream, seasonal creek or pond, are eligible, and the land owner should contact the FAC office at the lower compound of the U.S. Forest Service in Cave Junction, or phone 592-4098 for more information.

"The first packing day is Wednesday, Dec. 14. We need volunteers to help with preparing trees for distribution, and we need volunteers to bring food for the tree-packing volunteers. Tree packing will start at 9:30 a.m. and will go until about lunch-time.

"Anyone wishing to participate can phone the FAC office Mondays to Fridays from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. If no one answers the phone we are out prescribing trees for a land owner; just leave a message with information on how to contact you and we will get back with you."



Issue 3
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Josephine County Report



Property Taxes

(Everyone's favorite subject)
By Jim Raffenburg

Actually, this is a subject most people don't spend a lot of time thinking about. That's okay, it's your money government is spending. If you don't care about how it is spent.....but of course you do care, so please read on.

Whether your home is a modest bungalow or a fabulous mansion, no matter what the dollar amount of your property tax check, you are paying a percentage of *each dollar* to the various taxing districts in the County.

Josephine County's Tax Collector collects all of the property taxes due and payable in the county, *not just the taxes for County Government*. Josephine County then distributes those taxes to the various taxing agencies or districts.

Let's take a look at where each penny of an average tax dollar goes (each figure is rounded up to the nearest penny):

- 63 cents to education (District 7, Three Rivers, RCC)
- 21 cents to the cities of Grants Pass and Cave Junction
- 9 cents to the County
- 3 cents to an assortment of Special Assessments
- 3 cents to the various Fire Districts
- 1 cent to the 4-H/Extension Service

Listed below are the total property tax revenues each taxing district will receive this year once property owners pay their taxes:

Grants Pass School District 7	= \$13,072,953.54
Three Rivers School District	= \$11,675,587.04
Rogue Community College	= \$ 2,377,585.95
Southern Oregon ESD	= \$ 1,633,864.79
City of Grants Pass	= \$ 9,171,224.57
<u>Josephine County General Fund</u>	<u>= \$ 2,713,448.72</u>
Josephine County Jail Bond	= \$ 1,119,785.67
Illinois Valley RFPD* #1	= \$ 944,325.68
4H/Extension Service	= \$ 212,995.58
City of Cave Junction	= \$ 146,790.47
Williams RFPD	= \$ 117,842.53
Applegate RFPD #9	= \$ 103,653.39
Wolf Creek RFPD	= \$ 73,893.48
Grants Pass Redevelopment Agency	= \$ 1,680,995.33
Special Assessments**	= <u>\$ 1,247,973.10</u>
Total Taxes assessed for collection	= \$46,338,648.85

(For comparison and perspective, please note that the various RFPD's [Fire Districts] receive a combined annual property tax revenue nearly equal to 50% of the total property tax payments Josephine County general government receives.)

This year, Josephine County will collect more than 46 million dollars in property taxes. However, only \$3,833,234.39 of those tax dollars will be payable to Josephine County and go into the County Treasury.

From that total, the County Treasurer deducts the dedicated taxes of \$1,119,785.67, which go directly towards paying off the long-term bond used to build the new County Jail.

That leaves \$2,713,448.72 in property taxes for the County General Fund.

Since Josephine County's annual budget is over \$100,000,000, it means that *less than 3% percent of the County's total annual operating budget comes from local property taxes.*

Seventy-five percent of the County's annual operating revenue comes from dedicated State and Federal money that must be spent on specific services, such as the various Mental Health programs which receive over \$25,000,000 annually from the State of Oregon. Many people have asked why the County does not move some of that money to the Sheriff's budget to put more deputies on patrol

or operating the jail. The very simple and short answer is that this money cannot be used for anything except the treatment of mental health patients. Using it elsewhere would be a violation of the State of Oregon's requirements and would be unlawful.

So where does Josephine County get the rest (12%) of its money to pay for many of the services most people see and use? The County receives about \$14.5 million dollars annually from the Federal government under the six year appropriations of Public Law 106-393, the O&C Safety-Net money.

That money will stop after the final Federal payment to Josephine County on September 30th, 2006.

The loss of this Safety-Net revenue will be a "watershed event" for our County. It will affect everyone who lives and/or works here. *It will dramatically change County Government.*

If you want to see what this is likely to mean regarding the County's ability to continue to provide certain services, please go the Josephine County Website, www.co.josephine.or.us, click on the "Board of Commissioners" and then click on "Post O&C Report". If you don't have access to a computer, you can purchase a copy of the Report for a modest fee (\$2.50) at the Board of Commissioners Office.

*RFPD= Rural Fire Protection District

**Special Assessments:

- 1) Delinquent Assessments for:
 - City of Grants Pass Sewer
 - Harbeck-Fruitdale Sewer
 - Redwood Sewer
- 2) Ft. Vannoy Irrigation District
- 3) Ombudsman's Fees
- 4) State Fire Patrol

JOSEPHINE COUNTY RANKED AT THE TOP

According to a revenue summary prepared by the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC), Josephine County will be impacted more than any other county in Oregon by the loss of O&C Safety Net funds. The Federal government owns more than 50 percent of the land in Josephine County, having taken the land back from the Oregon and California Railroad in 1916 because the O&C violated the land grant agreement. In 1937 active federal forest management of this land was enacted into law under a new concept called "sustained yield."

Fifty percent of the revenue from the harvested timber was to be returned to the County. The U.S. Department of the Interior was to sell, cut, remove, reforest and maintain a permanent source of timber supply to protect watersheds and stream flows AND to provide for the economic stability of our County. A few years ago when it became obvious that most timber sales were being challenged in court and that counties would only get a fraction of previous payments, congress passed a public law called the O&C Safety Net (PL 106-393). For the past several years, Josephine County has received up to \$12.6 million a year. When timber was actually being harvested we received up to \$18 million a year.

The safety net is coming up before Congress next year for consideration and the chances it will be renewed are slim. County government cannot absorb a \$12.6 million dollar hit on its budget. According to the A.O.C. summary, Josephine County will lose 79% of our discretionary funding. Josephine County ranks first in the state with the lowest permanent tax rate: 58 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. Josephine County ranks first in the state with the lowest property taxes per person: \$33.56.

Out of \$42 million collected in Josephine County, only \$2.6 million is returned by the State to run County government. The rest goes to schools, State police, fire districts, etc. Josephine County cannot run on \$2.6 million. The Sheriff's Office alone requires more than \$7 million to run an efficient but bare bones operation. State and Federal governments require each county to have mandated programs such as a jail, Sheriff, County Clerk, Assessor and Tax Collector.

What will happen if we do not fund our mandated programs? How can we raise the revenue it will take to provide mandated services? What shape are other counties in?

Find out in our next Josephine County Report!

By Dwight F. Ellis

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