

Top service hallmark of JCSO, says peer group

Josephine County Sheriff's Office became the third among the state's 36 such agencies to achieve accreditation by the Oregon Accreditation Alliance (OAA) today, Wednesday, Jan. 6.

Sheriff Dave Daniel attended an accreditation ceremony in Seaside, and credited Undersheriff Brian Anderson and Lt. Howard Banks for their roles in the 2 1/2-year effort.

They wrote and implemented the new policies and procedures that made the official recognition possible, said the sheriff. Deschutes and Washington counties are the two others that have earned the acknowledgement.

"Being accredited tells the citizens of our community that we adhere to the highest of professional standards at the state and national levels," said Daniel.

OAA is comprised of the Association of Chiefs of Police, and the Oregon State Sheriffs Association.

The state's accreditation system establishes a uniform set of "best practices" for police agencies that are consistent, measurable and verifiable by independent inspectors, said Ron Brown, OAA director.

"Every standard is intended to make an agency more professional while at the same time improving its services to the community," Brown stated.

Noted Daniel, "The Josephine County Sheriff's Office was found to be in compliance with all standards.

"They are hiring practices, promotions, law enforcement operations, traffic enforcement, use of force, criminal intelligence, communications, records, property and evidence control, reserve deputies, and administration," he said.

OSU admin certificate available via Asante

Oregon State University (OSU) at Corvallis has added Asante Health System in Medford as a partner to its popular health-care administration certificate program.

In February, OSU will begin offering the program in Southwestern Oregon to Asante staff and others who work or plan careers in the health-care industry.

The six-course program is taught through OSU's College of Health. It offers credit courses covering a wide range of topics, including health-care organization behavior and theory, financial management, information systems, and law.

Coordinated through OSU Extended Campus, the program is offered with a flexible system, with four courses on the Web and two taught on-site in Medford. Completion of the full sequence results in a graduate certificate, or students may apply credits to an undergraduate degree in public health.

More information can be obtained online at ecampus.oregonstate.edu/hca or by phoning (800) 667-1465.

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NIKKO FUJITA

Nikko Fujita chosen as top student by commissioners

Nikko Fujita, a senior at Illinois Valley High School, is November Josephine County Board of Commissioners Student of the Month.

She is the daughter of Leslie Dockwiler and Kimbo Fujita. She has maintained a 4.0 grade-point-average.

Fujita has held the office of ASB vice president, class representative and sergeant-of-arms, secretary of the IVHS Chapter of National Honor Society, and secretary of the Mountain Bike Club.

She is a member of FFA, Fishwatch, Mathletes, Academic Challenge Team, Academic Masters, soil judging team, and the soccer, track, mountain bike, and cross country teams.

Fujita has been awarded the Most Improved Award in track, Skyline Scholar Athlete Award and the Cougar Citation. She has completed her Certificate of Initial Mastery.

After graduation, Fujita plans to attend Oregon State University at Corvallis to major in science.

DEQ views leak safety

Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has begun the final phase of ensuring that owners and operators of underground storage tanks have the financial means necessary to respond quickly when spills, releases or accidents occur.

When petroleum contamination is not cleaned up quickly due to lack of finances, pollution can spread to contaminate groundwater resources on which Oregonians depend, said DEQ.

It added, "Of the nearly 2,000 underground storage tank facilities operating in Oregon, primarily gas stations, approximately 50 fail to show that they have the finances to pay the costs associated with leaking underground storage tanks.

"State and federal regulations require that underground storage tank owners and operators comply with financial responsibility requirements by carrying pollution liability insurance or another financial mechanism.

"The financial responsibility requirements are designed to make sure that someone can pay the costs of cleaning up leaks and compensating third-parties for bodily injury and property damage.

"Financial responsibility also safeguards businesses by protecting their assets."

Leaking tanks in Oregon have contaminated municipal, domestic and irrigation wells, as well as groundwater resources, DEQ added. There have been 6,856 petroleum releases reported from regulated underground storage tank facilities in Oregon since the Tanks Program began in 1988.

Current safeguards greatly reduce leaks and spills, but do not eliminate them.

Oregonians have spent \$5.7 million in state funds, said DEQ, to clean up petroleum contamination from underground storage tanks when the owner could not or would not do so. The regu-

lation requiring insurance or other means should prevent taxpayers from picking up the tab to clean up petroleum spills and leaks, the agency concluded.

AARP outlines its watchdog program to monitor prescription drug pricing

Organization works for legislation to allow imports from Canada

By Jerry Cohen, AARP Oregon State Director

A big winter chill is setting in for consumers in Oregon, as a new AARP study shows that prescription drugs prices continue to skyrocket right as we face higher fuel and energy costs.

With less disposable income, it is simply unsustainable for Oregon consumers to continue footing the bill for endless increases in drug prices.

If price increases by brand-name drug manufacturers are being passed on to consumers, then the typical older American, who takes three prescription drugs a day, paid \$97 more for a year's worth of therapy at the end of June 2005 than he or she paid at the end of June 2004, according to a study by the AARP Public Policy Institute.

The study is part of AARP's continuing Rx Watchdog efforts to scrutinize changes in manufacturer prices for prescription drugs.

The report, one in a continuing series AARP is conducting to focus public attention on prescription drug price changes, found that on an annual basis, from July 2004 to June 2005, the manufacturer prices of 193 brand-name drugs commonly used by older Americans grew at an average rate of 6.1 percent, more than double the general inflation rate of 3 percent during the same period.

Of the 193 brand-name

drugs included in the study, 187 are used to treat chronic conditions. Manufacturers increased their price for these drugs, on average, by \$32.28 during the 12-month period ending in June 2005. Twenty-two of the 25 top selling drugs in the sample had price increases that outpaced inflation.

The highest six-month increase among these top 25 brand-name drugs was 7.5 percent for Procter & Gamble's Actonel 35 mg, used in the prevention and treatment of osteoporosis, a health threat that affects 44 million Americans 50 and older.

The best-selling drug in the sample was Merck's Fosamax 70 mg, which also treats osteoporosis and experienced a 4.5 percent hike.

By contrast, none of the 75 generic drugs most widely used by Americans 50 and older had a change in manufacturer list price during the second quarter of 2005, and only three had an increase during the first quarter of 2005.

In Oregon, AARP continues to fight to lower prescription drugs prices. In partnerships with the state and Oregon Health and Science University, AARP Oregon pioneered the use of evidence-based research to provide unbiased information to consumers on the safety, effectiveness and affordability of specific drugs. The research shows that the most expensive drug is not necessarily the best.

Additionally, AARP

Oregon is supporting expansion of the Oregon Prescription Drug Program, a bulk purchasing pool program, and continues to provide consumer education on how individuals can take charge to minimize the prices they pay for medications.

On a national level, AARP is working to support legislation that would legalize importation of drugs from Canada and certain Western European countries. Although not a final solution to the problem of high drug costs, AARP believes the safe importation of prescription drugs will help put downward pressure on prices and help individuals secure some savings.

Beyond the support of importation legislation, AARP is engaged in a prescription drug cost containment campaign.

The campaign includes promoting the wise use of medications, regular medicine reviews, the use of generics when appropriate, the greater use and availability of comparative effectiveness information, and giving the U.S. Secretary of Health & Human Services the authority to negotiate on behalf of Medicare beneficiaries to lower drug prices.

AARP Rx Watchdog project monitors the drug industry's pricing habits through a series of quarterly reports produced by the AARP Public Policy Institute in conjunction with the PRIME Institute of the University of Minnesota.

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