

How to transport them?

'Silver Threads' program attracts 200 kids



George Allgeier with Bonnie Loving, Kelly Russell and Tiffany Davis

Staff photo

Newest county judge starts work in makeshift courtroom

OREGON CITY — Clackamas County's newest District Court judges started work Monday in a makeshift courtroom.

Attorneys Robert Herndon of Gladstone, John Lowe of Lake Oswego and Roger

Mundorff of Milwaukie will fill the newly created district judge position on a rotating basis.

The judges will handle traffic, small-claims and minor civil cases, said Court Administrator Mike Maier. They will hold court in what used to be the county commission's conference room on the second floor of the courthouse. The judges will sit behind a desk, rather than a bench, and persons scheduled to appear will wait outside in a lobby area until their cases come up.

A tentative schedule has

Herndon and Lowe each serving two days a week in court and Mundorff one day.

"This is a real opportunity for us to get rid of our horrendous backlog," said District Judge Robert Mills. He estimated the backlog could be cleared in four to five months with three judges working in District Court.

Cases now take as long as six months to reach trial, Maier said, noting this is the worst backlog in the state.

Arno Denecke, chief justice of the Oregon Supreme Court, told county officials two weeks ago he could guarantee state funding for a third District Court judge for 90 days.

Denecke will examine the state's pro-tem court budget early next year to see if it can continue to fund the position. Mills said the District Court position has "a very high priority for the first half of next year" with the state. "I don't see this as just a short-term thing," Maier added.

Cases filed in District Court have increased nearly threefold since 1971, from 13,592 to 36,062 in 1977.

However, Clackamas County until this week had only two judges in District Court to handle the caseload, the same number it had in 1971.

by KAYE BARTON

No one knew quite what to expect. "Silver Threads Among the Gold," Sandy's unique program which takes school children into local nursing homes, was kicked off last Wednesday for the third school year.

Judy Sheppard, Sandy Community Schools coordinator and originator of the program, was apprehensive. How would she transport the 190 students who had signed up for Wednesday's trial run? Would the handful of supervising adults be able to deal with the mixed reactions of so many children?

Many in the group of 200 which toured St. Jude's and Orchard Crest nursing homes Oct. 4 had never visited such a facility. Would their response be negative? Potential problems abounded.

Problems did materialize from Wednesday's initial "Silver Threads" visit — but not the ones Sheppard anticipated. Her biggest perplexity now is how to deal with a program that is "too successful."

Sheppard was surprised when nearly 200 elementary students signed up for the Silver Threads project, in which after-school visits are made to elderly and mentally retarded residents of local nursing homes.

"We started Silver Threads in January, 1976, with seven children," she explained. "The program grew almost term by term, but this year it really took off."

The project is supported this year by a grant from the Charles Stewart Mott

Foundation.

Sheppard and her aides Margaret Boyle and Rita Seidel expected Wednesday's visit to eliminate one-half to three-fourths of the children.

"I thought a majority of the students would drop out — the ones who were just curious," Sheppard explained. "I didn't expect most of them to stay on after they'd been through the facilities and realized they'd be helping some who were helpless and really giving of themselves. I estimated that about 75 would remain in the program."

A week later, the Silver Threads roster is at 120, and a few latecomers are still signing up. Sheppard's biggest "problem" is the enthusiasm for the project which prevails among the students who stayed on with the program.

"Many of them have asked to go twice a week," Sheppard said. "I'd love to accommodate them, but I don't have the transportation for such a big group every day."

A Sandy Elementary School bus was loaned for last Wednesday's visit during school hours. This week's after-school trips have been made in the cars of parents and community volunteers.

Both the adults and the kids with the program attribute the widespread enthusiasm to the success of the initial visit.

"It was overwhelming — one of the most memorable days of my life," said Sheppard.

Margaret Boyle, aide to the program, agreed. "I had never been to a nursing home myself, and I'd only worked with troubled adolescents before," she

explained. "I'll admit, I was somewhat afraid of what would take place. I'd been programmed with stereotypes."

To her surprise, Boyle observed a swarm of kids eagerly approaching the residents in each home. "They had a 'what can I do for you?' attitude which was totally unexpected," Boyle commented.

Every participant seems to have retained a favorite memory or two of the day. Aide Rita Seidel recalls one elderly woman who appeared to have difficulty relating to the group. "But a young boy approached her and asked if he could push her wheelchair around," Seidel said. "After that, they were inseparable."

Sheppard's favorite incident involved 95-year-old George Allgeier who was curled up on his bed when the students entered his room.

"He turned toward them, reached out and breathed 'Children!' in such a heartfelt voice," Sheppard said.

On subsequent visits, Allgeier was up and awaiting the children with photo albums and stories to share with them.

Seidel observed the mutual exchange pattern repeatedly. "I saw that it was such an equitable exchange between the old and the young, and it amazed me," she said.

Patty Groombridge, a sixth-grade volunteer with Silver Threads, agrees.

"At first, I was a little bit nervous about hugging and kissing people I didn't know," she explained. "But I got over that before long. One thing that hasn't changed, though — from the very beginning, the seniors have given me just as much as I give them. They're my friends."

Clackamas County must stay with MSD, rules district court judge

by JOHN DEAN

SALEM — Clackamas County's bid to break away from the new Metropolitan Service District lost out last week in Marion County Circuit Court.

Judge Richard Barber handed down a brief eight-paragraph summary judgment Thursday, which stated he agreed with arguments of the defendants, including the MSD and the Columbia Region Association of Governments.

Ralph Groener, chairman of the Board of County Commissioners, said the board will discuss the possibility of an appeal with county attorneys this week.

A vote to appeal the ruling could be taken at tomorrow's commission meeting.

An appeal would be heard by the Oregon Court of Appeals in Salem.

County residents Marvin Reiley and Donald Getner representing the Clackamas County Home and Land Owners Protective Association, filed the suit in June, after tri-county voters approved the new MSD in the May election.

Clackamas County and county officials were originally named as defendants in the suit, but sided with Reiley and Getner late in the summer.

Clackamas County residents voted against the MSD expansion and reorganization in May by 24,428 to 21,569.

Voters in Multnomah and Washington counties approved the MSD expansion.

Damascus, Boring, Sunnyside and Happy Valley will lie within the new MSD

boundary, while the Sandy-Cottrell area, Estacada, Barton, Eagle Creek and Redland will lie outside the boundary.

The county argued in a concluding brief that the law that drew up the new MSD is invalid because it creates a new body of government under a special act.

County attorneys charged that the act made "radical changes" in the MSD, rather than merely amending it, as CRAG and MSD at torneys held.

CRAG is scheduled to merge with MSD Jan. 1, 1979, turning over its land-use planning and grant-allocation functions.

Teachers host forum

The Barlow Rd. Retired Teachers Association will host a forum for all ballot measures on the Nov. 7 ballot, Wednesday, Oct. 18, at 2 p.m. at Hood Chalet Mobile Home Estates, 17655 SE Bluff Rd.

A member of the Portland Speakers Bureau has been invited to address the group. The event will be held in the recreation room of the Estates.

The public is invited to attend.

Keeping Posted

Monday, Oct. 16
A U.S. Department of Energy workshop on the use of fossil fuels will be held at Timberline Lodge. Homecoming Week starts at Sandy High School.

Tuesday, Oct. 17
The energy workshop continues all day at Timberline Lodge. Representative Al Ullman will speak at the Sandy Chamber of Commerce luncheon, at noon at TJ's Restaurant. A kids' arts and crafts

class sponsored by Sandy Recreation Department will be held from 6-7 p.m. The class is designed for children from seven to 11 years of age and will continue on Tuesday evenings for six weeks.

Wednesday, Oct. 18
The energy workshop continues all day at Timberline Lodge. The Sandy Business and Professional Women's Club will hold a fireside meeting at the home of Eula Ten Eyck, 47080 SE Marmot Road.

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