

Utility bills a shock?

There are places to turn

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

After weeks of frigid temperatures – and more winter weather potentially on the way – it's likely that some Keizer residents are in for a surprise when their utility bills arrive.

“For our existing utility customers we provide discounted sewer rates for qualifying senior citizens or disabled heads of households,” said Tim Wood, Keizer finance director.

Sewer rates typically account for more than 50 percent of the standard Keizer utility bill. Roughly three dozen households take advantage of discounted rates. To apply for a discounted rate, city officials require proof of income such as an income tax return or annual social security statement.

While the city can provide discounts for some customers, those needing short term assistance are referred to The Salvation Army or St. Vincent

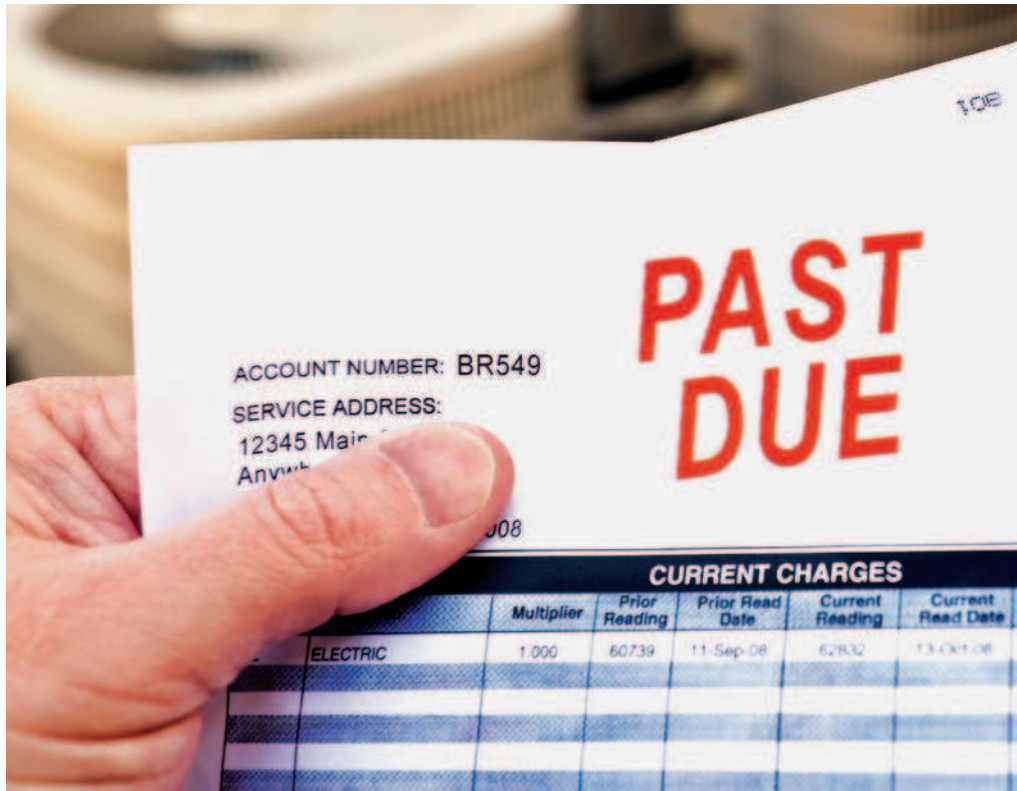


Photo illustration

de Paul for help. To find out more about Salvation Army options, call 503 585-6688 or visit www.salem.kroccenter.org. Information on St. Vincent de Paul programs is available at svdpsalem.org or by calling 503 364-5672. Wood said only a handful of Keizer residents seek such help in a given month.

For homeowners with natural gas bills, Northwest Natural offers several options for alleviating the strain caused by sharp bill increases. Customers can enroll in programs that spread out the cost of the average year's worth of bills or work out payment plans that will keep them from having their gas

shut off. Very low or fixed income customers can apply for assistance through the federally-funded Low Income Energy Assistance program. Visit www.nwnatural.com for more information.

Portland General Electric offers several assistance programs that can help cover

How a parks fee might affect your utility bill

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

As Keizer city officials discuss the options for instituting a dedicated parks fee – and adding the fee to utility bills – Keizertimes asked City Finance Director Tim Wood how such a fee would affect Keizer residents if the fee is instituted.

“Unfortunately, there is not a lot of definitive answers as we are still in the preliminary stages of identifying what our community desires for the park system,” Wood said.

The results of a survey available on keizer.org will likely have a major impact on whether the city proceeds, Wood said attaching the fee to the water and sewer bills would save money on printing, postage and processing costs.

“However, the city council could decide to make it a separate bill with a different billing frequency such as annually or quarterly; or a different funding mechanism altogether,” Wood said.

If a fee is implemented, the city council can also establish the order in which payments are applied to outstanding balances. The council could also establish an opt-out process for specific groups of residents.

“Our current utility payment priority is to apply a customer's payment to the oldest outstanding bill first and proportionately to each of the three utilities (water, sewer and stormwater),” Wood said.

the cost of unexpected bills as well as payment plan and due date options. Some families can also qualify for free weatherization assistance. For more information, visit www.portlandgeneral.com.

Salem Electric customers may qualify for a one-time

payment assistance of \$150 to \$225 per heating season (January to April). Priority is given to seniors and those with disabilities. For more information or to schedule an appointment to talk about option, call 503-362-3601.

The Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency can also offer assistance ranging from bill assistance to weatherization services. Visit www.mwvcaa.org for details.

Wolverines take on Kindness Challenge

By DEREK WILEY
Of the Keizertimes

Whiteaker Middle was one of over eight thousand schools worldwide to participate in the Great Kindness Challenge last year.

This year, Feb. 6-10, Whiteaker counselor Pat Curran would like to see that kindness spread throughout Keizer as Mayor Cathy Clark will declare it Great Kindness Challenge Week at the Monday, Feb. 6 city council meeting.

“We're trying to get the

businesses on River Road that have a reader board to put something up about the Great Kindness Challenge, just to get more people involved because what we'd eventually like this to be is a city-wide thing during that week,” Curran said.

During the week, students will get a checklist of 50 different acts of kindness, like “Smile at 25 people” and “Offer to help your custodian.” At the end of the week, prizes will be given to the kindest classes.

Whiteaker is also raising

money for Assistance League of Salem, which provides school supplies and clothes to students in need. During lunch each day, students will participate in a different kindness activity, like signing a poster for the feeder elementary schools and making thank you cards for staff members. Each day will also have a theme where students are invited to dress up. Monday is super hero day. Thursday is crazy hair day.

Whiteaker started doing the Great Kindness Challenge three

years ago.

“There's a lot of anti-bullying campaigns that are out there. We do anti-bullying curriculum in our classrooms, which is great, but this is kind of flipping it on its head,” Curran said. “We're trying to get kids to do positive things as opposed to just don't do negative things. We're basically just trying to encourage kids to do kind things here at school but also in the community. It's a pretty simple idea but it's a neat thing we'd like to catch on.”

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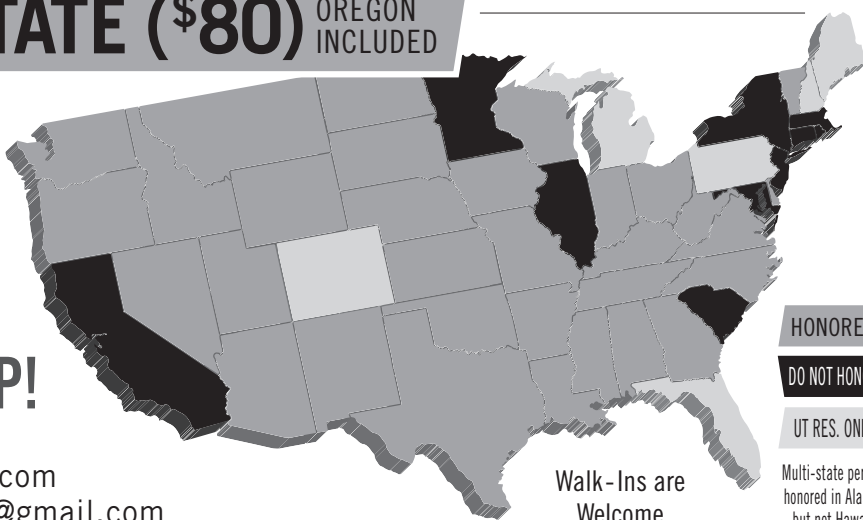
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Town hall on state budget February 10

The Oregon Legislative Assembly's budget-writing Joint Ways and Means Committee will hold a series of public hearings in seven cities across the state beginning February 10.

The town hall events will create opportunities for Oregonians to provide input into the 2017-19 biennial state budget, according to Rep. Nancy Nathanson (D-Eugene) and Sen. Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin), the co-chairs of the committee.

A Salem-based meeting will take place Friday, Feb. 10, at the Oregon State Capitol beginning at 5 p.m.

On January 19, the co-chairs released an “Existing Resources Framework,” recognizing that existing revenues fall \$1.8 billion short of the funding necessary to continue state services at current levels. To view the budget framework and accompanying narrative, visit bit.ly/2kLXL6v.

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393-5323
5303 River Rd. N., Keizer
Father Gary L. Zerr, Pastor
Saturday Vigil Liturgy: 5:30 p.m.
Sundays: 8:15 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.
La Misa en Español: 12:30 p.m.

John Knox Presbyterian Church
452 Cummings Lane North • 393-0404

Rev. Dr. John Neal, Pastor
Worship - 10:30 a.m.
Education Hour - 9:15 a.m.
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www.keizerjpres.org

dayspring fellowship
Celebration Services
Saturday Evening 6:00 pm
Sunday Morning 9:00 am and 10:45 am

Children's Programs, Student and Adult Ministries
1755 Lockhaven Dr. NE Keizer
503-390-3900
www.dayspringfellowship.com

Keizer Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
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