



THE SKANNER

CHALLENGING PEOPLE TO SHAPE A BETTER FUTURE NOW



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Mortgage Payment Program

State still looking for homeowners who need assistance

By Brian Stimson
Of The Skanner News

The state of Oregon wants to pay your mortgage.

It's not a joke or a scheme, but too few people have signed up for the help.

"Maybe they think it's too good to be true," says Catherine Kes, Director of Housing Development at Hacienda CDC, the agency that is administering the program.

The state is prepared to help homeowners who have experienced job loss or a reduction in income, by paying their mortgage for 12 months or \$20,000, whichever comes first. Qualified applicants need to complete an application by Jan. 14 and schedule an appointment by Jan. 16 with Hacienda CDC to enter the lottery for 5,000 slots.

Lisa Joyce, communication manager for Oregon Housing and Community Services, says the agency isn't in the business of deciding which family's need is greater than any others. By establishing guidelines relating to income loss, income, liquid assets, and other criteria, she says they can more fairly administer limited funds.

Right now, Kes says that fewer than 5,000 qualified homeowners across the state have signed up, making it pretty decent odds to receive the money.

"It's a pretty simple process," she said.

Once you've determined your eligibility by asking some simple questions on www.oregonhomeownerhelp.org, you have to meet with a representative and provide documentation to prove your eligibility. If you are awarded the money through the program, eligibility must be established every month or you risk losing the assistance.

Kes wants to assure people that the assistance comes with very few catches. Namely, so long as you don't sell your house and profit from that sale within five years, you won't have to pay back the money. And

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PATRIOTS



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE HILLSBORO FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Patriot Flag flies over Hillsboro Fire Station 3 early Friday morning on its journey across the country. Its destination is the tenth anniversary ceremonies of the 9-11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

Audits Target Corrections Programs

Early Release, juvenile sanctions working mostly as intended

By Brian Stimson
Of The Skanner News

The Oregon Secretary of State's Office released two audits of the state's correctional system this week. Both the Oregon Youth Authority and the Oregon Department of Corrections' Earned Time program were found to be largely following their objectives, with several problems identified by researchers.

The Oregon Youth Authority

was found to be using appropriate sanctions for youth within its custody, although the audit did find some youth who were given inappropriate sanctions for their circumstances. When youth are charged with a crime and referred to the juvenile department in a county, they face a variety of different outcomes based upon their crimes and situation. A youth charged with a Measure 11 crime is automatically referred to a detention facility and will face trial in an adult court. Other

youths are given a variety of sanctions, ranging from probation, detention in a facility, or rehabilitation.

The audit of the Oregon Youth Authority analyzed 3,300 placements in 36 counties around the state for youth who were placed on probation, in residential treatment centers and in Youth Correctional Facilities.

Auditors used a four-pronged system to try to explain the placement of juveniles in a detention facility – offense severity, offense history, risk to

reoffend, and probation violations. The factors explained the placement of about 84 percent of juvenile detainees. In the other 16 percent of placements, auditors studied the cases to determine why those youth were placed on probation or in custody, despite national best practices suggesting that youth placed in detention actually run a greater risk of recidivating than youth placed in a community environment.

After examining 142 individ-

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Washington Takes on State's Problems

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Legislators from both parties joined Washington State Attorney General Rob McKenna this week to announce proposals to save money, protect the vulnerable and make government more accountable.

The legislative session begins on Jan. 10. "People depend on us to solve problems," McKenna said. "We're proud to work with legislators from both sides of the aisle who

are as determined as we are to make our streets safer, and to make state government leaner and more accountable."

The Attorney General's Office and the State Auditor's Office's Open Government Task Force recommend the creation of an administrative board to rule on complaints of violations of the Public Records Act (PRA) and the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA). Legislation sponsored by Rep.

Christopher Hurst, D-Enumclaw, creates the Office of Public Records within the Office of Administrative Hearings.

"It's our hope that this pilot program will expand in the years to come, broadening access to government information," McKenna said. "It will also prevent expensive lawsuits over the denial of records."

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