

THE SKANNER

CHALLENGING PEOPLE TO SHAPE A BETTER FUTURE NOW



Pacific NW

The Skanner News presents our new regional edition, featuring more news and local information.

States Mull Road Fees

Gas taxes down, highway officials look for money sources

By Helen Silvis of *The Skanner News*

Cars of all kinds are getting better mileage now than ever before. That's good news for the environment, but bad news for state transportation budgets, since road repairs have traditionally been funded by gas taxes.

To solve the problem of shrinking gas tax revenues, states are looking at other ways to raise funds for transportation projects. In the Northwest, Oregon and Washington are mulling road use taxes, although the proposals under consideration could look very different if they finally become state law.

The two states are also at different stages. A panel in Washington state is still weighing several alternatives and will present a report to the state legislature in January 2015.

"Now we are getting to the blueprint level where we are starting to do some system design work," said Reema Griffith, executive director of the state transportation commission. "But there has been no testing of anything yet and the Legislature has not authorized that. So we're definitely in the pre-planning stages."

Oregon's Volunteer Program Kicks Off Next Summer

Meanwhile, Oregon is looking for volunteers to test the proposed new road user charge. It is the first state in the nation to authorize a volunteer program, which will start July 1, 2015. Drivers who sign up will pay a road usage fee of 1.8 cents a mile and get a rebate of the gas tax.

"We are looking for volunteers," said James M. Whitty, manager of the Office of Innovative Partnerships and Alternative Funding at Oregon Department of Transportation.

"We will be looking for volunteers from now until we get all 5,000 spots filled, and probably after that too because people will drop out for various reasons."

See ROADS on page 3

ART IN THE PARK

Cherry Sprout Produce celebrates its newly-redesigned greenspace with the 6th Annual "Art in the Park," Saturday, Aug. 9, from 3 to 8 p.m. in Albina Green, the park next to Cherry Sprout Produce, on the corner of N. Albina and N. Sumner. Blank canvases and non-toxic paint are provided free for people of all ages to make their mark, including local artist Johnny Dicile, at right. The musical lineup kicks off with a kids' open mike from 3-4 p.m., for musicians 18 and under. Edna Vasquez, Michael Hurley and an array of special guests make live music until 8 p.m. Find out more at www.cherrysprout.com.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHERRY SPROUT PRODUCE

False Shoplifting Accusations

Local attorneys seek Ross Dress for Less customers on 'theft list'

By Lisa Loving of *The Skanner News*

An East Portland mom who was falsely accused of shoplifting at the Lents Ross Dress for Less store in June is filing a lawsuit and looking for other customers who had the same experience.

In particular her attorneys are interested in any Ross customers who have been told they are listed on a national retail theft database but have no history of shoplifting.

The case is being handled by the same attorneys, Kafoury and McDougal, who in June won a \$105,000 settlement for Portlander Brenda Moaning, falsely accused of shoplifting and held by store security against her will at the H&M store in Clackamas Town Center in 2011.

In the Ross case, Shaquoya Burns, a mother of two young kids, was not held but was refused service and repeatedly accused of being a shoplifter in front of her young child and other patrons.

Burns says she had just arrived in the Eastport Plaza store with her 3-year-old daughter and was heading to the boys' department to shop for her son on June 8.

"I was in there not even three minutes," she said. "I had a shirt in my hand, and the store manager walked up to me and said he was sorry to inform me but I had to leave the store because he was just informed by loss prevention that I was on the national database for shoplifting."

Burns said she spoke with the loss prevention staff at the store and they confirmed she was on a retail theft database, so she went back to the store manager and asked him to prove the allegation.

"First I said, tell me my name because you haven't told me my name," Burns says. "And he said, I don't have to disclose that information to you."

The manager gave her the number of a district official for

See ROSS on page 3

INDEX

- News 1,3,8-10
- Opinion 2
- Calendars 4,5
- A & E 6,7
- Bids/Classifieds 11

Arrest in Community Service Scam

Seattle woman suspected of bogus post-incarceration program

Jennifer Peltz Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A group hawking e-books on the effects of caffeine actually sold another service: a bogus way to satisfy court-ordered community service requirements by doing little more than taking an online quiz, prosecutors said Monday.

Instead of cleaning up a park or scrubbing

toilets, for instance, defendants paid a fee, took a test about caffeine and didn't even have to get the answers right, Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus R. Vance Jr.'s office said as the Caffeine Awareness Association and founder Marina Kushner pleaded not guilty to false filing and other offenses.

A "fast community service" website linked to the caffeine group also has come under scrutiny in Washington State and in

Oregon, where a Portland judge called the community-service caffeine quiz a "scam" in June 2013, according to KATU-TV.

(A web search shows Kushner's business as based in Seattle, and her online social media presence describes her as a Seattle resident.)

Manhattan prosecutors got curious when a

See SCAM on page 3