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Rep. Paul Evans sits at his desk on the floor of the House in Salem on Friday, getting ready to start work on Monday.

ROOKIE REPRESENTATIVE

District 20's Paul Evans gears up for his first legislative session

By Emily Mentzer

SALEM — State Rep. Paul Evans walked into his office at the Salem Capitol on Friday morning and hung an Army Air Corps recruiting poster on his wall.

The poster means a lot to the Monmouth resident, but what it boils down to is one word.

Teamwork. "Sometimes you follow; sometimes you lead," he said. "It's the nature of being a teammate. That poster's always been something that reminded me, whatever your function, we all wear the same dog tags, general to air-

man, we're all part of a big team."

Evans, 44, was elected to the House District 20 seat on Nov. 4. He has had a long career in politics, starting at the age of 18 as a Monmouth city councilor — the youngest the city has ever had.

As part of the Legislature, Evans is ready to get to work. "I'm supposed to feel nervous. I'm supposed to feel butterflies," he said. "Truth is, I feel relieved. For a long time I've wanted the opportunity to serve in this capacity."

After serving as Monmouth's youngest mayor at 28, Evans did some work with Gov. Ted Kulongoski and realized some work

could only be done in the Legislature.

"The hard work of trying to bring some of these ideas and facilitate these conversations from the outside, now I have a chance to do these things," Evans said. "So, win, lose or draw, I'm going to leave everything on the floor."

Being a freshman on the House floor means he may not get to introduce much legislation, and he likely won't get to help make big decisions.

"But I'm going to listen and learn and facilitate conversations, and be true to the things that I told people I would work on," he said.

"Hopefully, in that small way ... maybe I'll make some progress on bringing people together to collaborate again."

Evans has about a dozen bills he'd like to get written, hoping to get maybe half of those on the floor for consideration.

His first priority is introducing a civics test as a condition of receiving an Oregon high school diploma.

"How do you maintain a democracy if you don't understand how the government works?" Evans noted. "I think we build great workers. We don't build as involved citizens as I think we can." See ROOKIE, Page 13A

IN YOUR TOWN

DALLAS NEWS

Two years in the making, the Polk County Folklife Festival is nearly ready to make its debut at the Polk County Fairgrounds & Event Center in Rickreall on March 7.

The one-day festival will explore and celebrate the Willamette Valley's diversity through music, food, performing arts and crafts.

Folklife had been a vision of originator and program director Kurt Dugan of Dallas for a number of years.

His vision is for people to see and experience a variety of cultures in one place.

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FALLS CITY NEWS

Polk County's public safety levy proposal isn't just about patrols.

That was the message both county officials and city residents tried to send at a public hearing in Falls City regarding a possible five-year, 45 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value tax levy to pay for public safety services. That comes down to about \$90 per year on properties with an assessed value of \$200,000.

"I think that sometimes we don't think about that piece when we are thinking about this levy," said Falls City resident Amy Houghtaling.

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INDEPENDENCE NEWS

Norman Scott remembers the days when he worked as a trap boy at the Independence Elks Gun Club.

Now, he is a regular participant of the club, which was formed in the mid-1940s. The range is shotgun-only, and open to the public.

For people on the north side of Monmouth and Independence, shotguns going off on Sunday mornings is old hat, but the club was briefly in jeopardy of silencing those sounds, said Scott, 83.

"There was a funding issue," said Rusty Poage, president of the gun club. "We got it all straightened out."

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MONMOUTH NEWS

Medical marijuana dispensaries will be allowed in Monmouth once the moratorium placed on March 4, 2014, lapses in May.

Exactly what a dispensary will look like — where it will be allowed to locate — remains undetermined.

The Monmouth City Council discussed the marijuana issue at its Jan. 6 work session. Four councilors spoke in favor of letting dispensaries — and potential recreational marijuana sellers next year — operate based on state law, with little city code attached.

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PERRYDALE NEWS

The whole process took only a few minutes, but the dental screenings that took place at Perrydale School on Thursday afternoon are something some families simply can't afford.

In some cases, they don't have dental insurance or fall among the ranks of the "underinsured." Serving children and community members who fall into those categories was what drove Perrydale School Board member Trina Comerford to organize a dental screening at the school.

She said the issue emerged for her earlier this school year.

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Flu bug has been hit and miss

Number of cases increasing locally; still below national average

By Jolene Guzman

DALLAS — Polk County and Oregon as a whole have been relatively lucky so far, largely avoiding the brunt of flu season that has run rampant in other regions of the country.

But local health officials warn that we are not out of the woods just yet as flu season is far from over.

"We really are at some of the lowest numbers in the country," said Kirk Hillebrand, Polk County's communicable disease nurse. "It's trending like much of the rest of the country, but our numbers are so much lower."

Oregon Health Authority's weekly flu activity report, "Flu Bites," published Friday classifies the state's "influenza-like illness" level at minimal for the week ending Jan. 3.

The geographic spread of the activity was upgraded from "regional" to "widespread" from the week before.

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Even though this year's vaccine might not be as effective, public health officials still recommend getting a flu shot to prevent contracting the illness.

Weather forecast grid for the next 7 days (Wed to Tue) including temperature ranges and weather icons.