

**EDITORIALS**

**Volunteer numbers at an all-time low**

West Valley Hospital's staff of volunteers is at critically low numbers. Just 24 people give of their time each week to the hospital, down from 70 a few years ago.

Volunteer Services Coordinator Jennifer Best would like to grow those numbers to at least 50.

Part of the problem for the hospital — and for other organizations who rely on volunteer hours — is people wait until they retire to donate their time.

On one hand, it is wonderful to see people redefining their time once they no longer have to punch a clock. On the other hand, they seem to have a time limit for their volunteerism. As people get older, their health may decline to the point where they can no longer commit to donating their time to an organization.

Volunteering isn't just for the retired.

But when you work a full week, are trying to finish school and get good grades, or raising a family, when do you have time to volunteer?

It is more difficult to block out time for something that isn't necessary for paying bills or raising a family or completing school.

Everyone has the same 24 hours each day. It is not easy, but it is possible — and rewarding — to give back to the community, and not to delay volunteering until your twilight years.

The hospital asks for one three-hour block of time each week and can use you during the day or evening.

Other programs seriously needing volunteers ask even less. The Start Making A Reader Today program asks for one hour a week.

Both Polk Fire No. 1 and Dallas Fire & EMS need volunteers for a variety of tasks, not just fighting fires.

Even our city governments, boards and commissions are volunteer driven. Aside from the county commissioners, local government leaders — school board members, city councilors, mayors — aren't paid positions.

The list of organizations needing manpower in Polk County goes on.

As the holiday season quickly approaches, it is easy to turn our minds to those needing help with food and gifts and other material goods. But this year, take a hard look at your busy schedule and see if you can find time to donate in addition to cans of food or unwrapped gifts.

The *Itemizer-ObsERVER* prints a list of volunteer opportunities on a semi-regular basis. To find it, go to polkio.com and search for "volunteer calendar."

**PUBLIC AGENDA**

Public Agenda is a listing of upcoming meetings for governmental and nongovernmental agencies in Polk County. To submit a meeting, send it at least two weeks before the actual meeting date to the *Itemizer-ObsERVER* via fax (503-623-2395) or email (ionews@polkio.com).

**WEDNESDAY, OCT. 28**

• **Polk County Board of Commissioners** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.

• **Western Oregon University Board of Trustees** — 2 to 6 p.m., Western Oregon University, Werner University Center, Columbia Room, 345 Monmouth Ave. N., Monmouth. 503-838-8888.

**MONDAY, NOV. 2**

• **Central School District Board of Directors** — 6:30 p.m., Henry Hill Education Support Center, 750 S. Fifth St., Independence. 503-838-0030.

• **Dallas City Council** — 7 p.m., City Hall, 187 SE Court St., Dallas. 503-831-3502.

• **Independence Planning Commission** — 7 p.m., Independence Civic Center, 555 S. Main St., Independence. 503-838-1212.

**TUESDAY, NOV. 3**

• **Polk County Board of Commissioners** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.

• **Dallas Urban Renewal District Advisory Committee** — 5:30 p.m., City Hall, 187 SE Court St., Dallas. 503-831-3502.

• **Monmouth City Council** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-838-0722.

**WEDNESDAY, NOV. 4**

• **Polk County Board of Commissioners** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.

• **Monmouth Historic Commission** — 6 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-838-0722.

• **Monmouth Planning Commission** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-838-0722.



**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**Battle Buddies has good turnout**

On Oct. 19, Polk County Battle Buddies had our first support group meeting. We had close to 20 veterans show up for a good hot meal and good conversation. Members of the committee as well as special guest Beth Jones brought food; nobody went home hungry.

The veterans that attend were made up of veterans of Vietnam all the way to the Global War on Terror. Progress was made in both the caring and openness of those attending. Thanks to all those who have served and are supporting this program. The next meeting will be the third Monday, Nov. 16.

If you have any questions, or would like to donate or be involved, or for more information, you can contact Wayne Crowder at 503-510-1015, Beth Lillibridge at 503-480-6254, or Mary Smith at 503-580-8001.

Beth Lillibridge  
Dallas

**Time to restructure county government**

My September letter invited readers to question why our Polk County Commissioners pay themselves salaries and retirement benefits with our property tax dollars that could be used elsewhere. Readers expressed agreement with my questions but wanted to know what voters could do to change this practice.

For starters, we need to collect about 1,250 signatures from registered voters to start a review process. That is certainly doable if citizens are willing to become involved. Polk County citizens have done it in the past.

Four years ago Polk County signature gatherers put a referendum on the ballot changing the election of county commissioners from partisan to a nonpartisan election.

We did it last spring when a small group of dedicated Polk County voters successfully worked to secure approval of the public safety levy.

The citizen restructuring of Polk County government by establishing a county charter committee offers an opportunity for voters to increase representation and to better utilize Polk County's limited resources.

**What's on your mind? Send a letter**

Letters to the editor are due at 10 a.m. on Monday and are limited to 300 words. To see the entire letters policy, go to polkio.com.

We can do it with your participation. Join in the revitalization of Polk County by supporting the Polk County charter initiative. Need more information; want to become involved? Contact me at emeasterly@comcast.net.

E.M. Easterly  
West Salem

**Wage increases have consequences**

Minimum wage wars. Why does everyone think raising minimum wage will help the economy? Don't they realize someone has to pay those wages? Prices for most things will go up, taking up that extra income people will be getting. Anyone who has employees will raise costs to compensate for the inflation.

So, our everyday purchases are going to rise: grocery stores, gas stations, fast food, etc. Businesses will be strained and may have to let people go to afford to pay the ones who are lucky to keep their jobs. This will not solve any problems; it will create more.

Sherry Garcia  
Rickreall

**Thankful for story, in spite of error**

A belated thank you to Emily Mentzer's coverage of the Western Compass (campus ministry club) vigil held at Western Oregon University on Oct. 3. Her sensitive presence and lovely photographs captured the quiet concern of those attending. One correction — I was listed as "a pastor at WOU"; actually, Jill Mayer is the Program Director of Western Compass.

I am a pastor in Monmouth and Falls City, and a member of the ecumenical Advisory Board of the United Methodist, Presbyterian (USA), and Episcopal-sponsored ministry at WOU.

We will continue to endeavor to be a "safe place" for college students in the area.

Thank you again for your responsive coverage of our

local news!

Rebecca Strader  
Pastor, Christ's Church  
Methodist and Presbyterian  
United Falls City United  
Methodist Church

**Valuation soars at 86 percent increase**

My mother, a resident of Meadow Creek Village, just received her property tax bill. She anticipated an increase in her real market valuation of approximately 56 percent due to the information recently received from the assessor. Instead, her real market valuation went up 86 percent.

She was told the increase was due to the sale of seven properties in Meadow Creek in a 15-month window of time where the sale prices far exceeded what the assessor had identified as their real market value.

Because of the increase in sale prices, the assessor separated out Meadow Creek from all the other manufactured home parks in Polk County. The higher sale prices are largely the result of the appearance of the park as a whole and the curb appeal of the manufactured homes being sold, not the value of the manufactured home itself.

Those living in Meadow Creek do not own the lot their manufactured home sits on, but residents are required to maintain the lot per the CC&R's.

I can't help but wonder what the staff in the assessor's office has been doing that all of a sudden they discovered this issue.

The assessor indicated that no other property in Polk County experienced this increase in real market value. Good thing, because folks would be screaming at the top of their lungs and Meadow Creek residents shouldn't sit quietly either.

Residents of Meadow Creek are predominately senior citizens living on fixed incomes trying to juggle how to pay for their medication, food and heating bills.

Now they also get to worry about this substantial increase in their property values and how it impacts their taxes. I encourage all the residents of Meadow Creek to demand a review of their taxes.

Taxes go up, but not 86 percent in one year?

Theresa VanDusen  
Dallas

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