

Business Notes

New GTE switching device will allow full use of new technology

Updated telecommunications technology from GTE will make Caller ID, Voice Mail and other advanced, optional calling features available in Vernonia starting this fall.

It happens Sept. 18, when GTE will replace its existing digital telephone switching system in Vernonia with a newer generation of digital technology. The updated system will serve all of the company's 1,600 customer lines in the 429 prefix.

A switching system is the heart of a community's telecommunications network. It routes local and long-distance calls, fares and data transmissions to their proper destinations. Digital technology is the most modern available in the public network.

In addition to the advanced features, the modern system will provide greater capacity. That's significant because in-

creased call volumes are expected when Vernonia customers receive toll-free access to the Portland metro area starting Oct. 2.

"This newer generation of digital technology will improve the quality of life for Vernonia customers and strengthen the area's potential for economic growth," said Jim McFarland, customer operations manager based in Beaverton. "Better yet, even though we'll invest \$850,000 in the new system, basic customer rates will not change."

The optional features will be available in early October, about two weeks after the advanced switching system is activated. They will offer convenience, security and control to those customers who order them. Here's a partial list:

Caller ID: Allows customers

to see the name and number of the person calling before the phone is answered. Caller ID can be an effective deterrent to obscene, harassing or threatening calls. (Customers needing privacy will have options to prevent their number from displaying.)

Anonymous Call Rejection: Any caller who has blocked his or her number from appearing on a Caller ID box will be intercepted by a recording. The message announces that the called party will not accept calls from people who prevent display of their phone number.

Call Tracing Service: This is another service that deters obscene, threatening and harassing calls. It allows the customer to trace the last incoming call received from the local service area by dialing *57. Law enforcement officials can subsequently retrieve the number. The cost is \$1.00 for each successful trace.

Voice Mail: Calls to a customer with Voice Mail never get a busy signal or no answer — they are automatically stored in a voice messaging system where they are retrievable 24 hours a day from any tone dialing phone in the world.

Smart Ring: Provides a customer with two separate phone numbers on the same primary line. Calls placed to each number have a different ring, enabling the customer to know which number is being called.

Automatic Busy Redial: Keeps trying a busy number for up to 30 minutes. When the number becomes available, the person trying to call is alerted with a ring.

Automatic Call Return: Entering *69 on the phone automatically dials the number of the last call received, whether it was answered or not.

GTE is one of the largest publicly held telecommunications companies in the world.

In the Northwest, the company serves 1.5 million customer access lines, including about 490,000 in Oregon.

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Stewardship considers the future

As we close out the twentieth century and second millennium, we must think about what we are passing on to future generations, according to organizers of the 1999 Soil & Water Stewardship Week observance, set for April 25th to May 2nd. The event theme, "In the Children's Hands", reminds us that children of the new millennium will need both roots and wings — roots anchored in the legacy of sound natural resource conservation and wings to strike out, to innovate and make the world a better place to live.

Local sponsor of the observance, the Columbia Soil & Water Conservation District is inviting youth leaders and parents to take the time to help young people better understand their role in caring for the natural resources in our environment.

"Our ability to maintain a healthy, productive land is dependent on how seriously our

children take their stewardship responsibility," said Kay C. VanNatta, CSWCD Chairman. Employees and volunteers at the local conservation office can help identify conservation practices and activities that are best suited for your neighborhood or your backyard.

To learn more about conservation practices and activities that benefit children, contact the Columbia Soil & Water Conservation District during business hours at 2514 Sykes Rd., St. Helens, 397-4555.

Farm building permits change

State Law (ORS 455.315) exempts "farm agricultural buildings" from the requirement to obtain a building permit and comply with the Oregon Structural Specialty Code.

Effective June 1, 1999, the Columbia County Land Development

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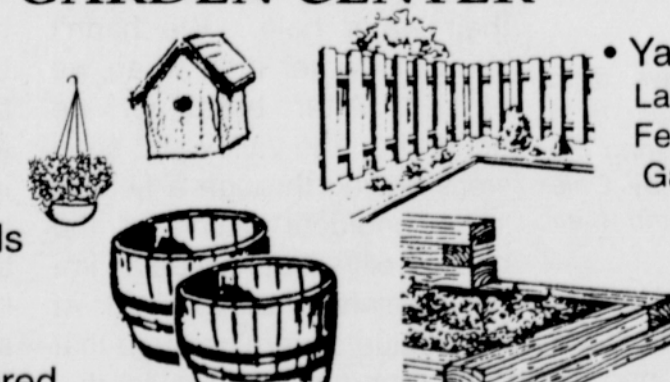
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