

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### New jail programs will help inmates

Columbia County finally has the new jail it has needed for many years. More than that, however, is the focus that the Sheriff's Department is putting on what happens inside the facility.

There will be a very strict behavioral code, with inmates having to earn privileges such as television time, phone usage (all inmate calls will be collect), commissary privileges and more. But real excitement can be heard from corrections officers when they talk about some special program additions.

For the first time, Columbia County will be able to have classes for inmates. At this time, classes are planned in landscaping, baking, computer basics, resumé writing and job interview techniques. Because the jail and community corrections will be sharing the facility, it may also be possible to include GED classes for inmates who lack a high school diploma, even if they are not in the jail long enough to complete the course (The average length of stay is four months.).

Also planned are church services, Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. Columbia County doesn't have sufficient funds to add more teachers and counselors to its workforce so qualified people interested in lending a hand would be greatly appreciated.

Everyone who has the interest and the opportunity is urged to take a little drive over to St. Helens this Saturday to tour the new facility. It is located at the corner of Old Portland Road and Port Road.

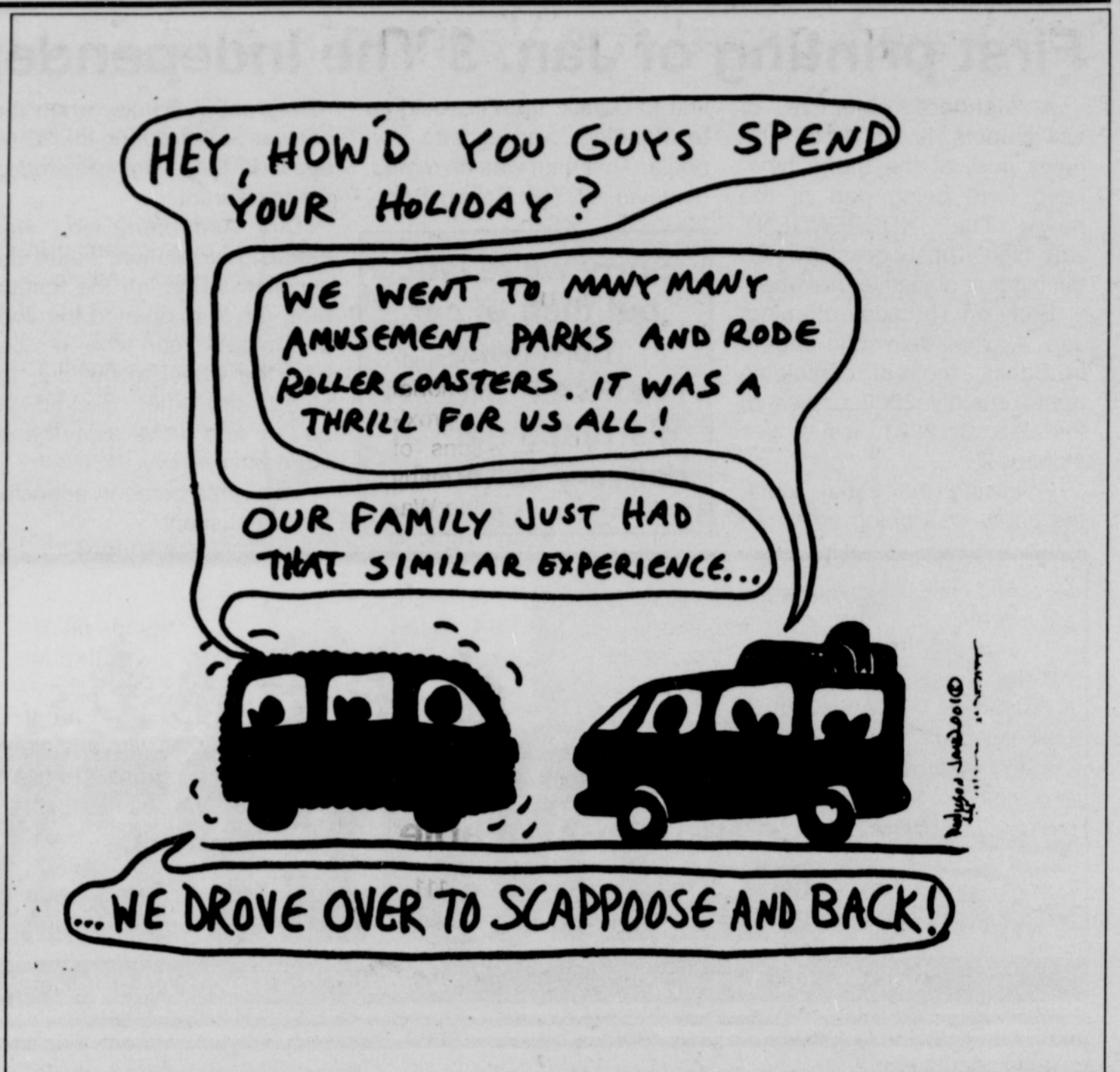
### Sen. Wyden's visit a good opportunity for questions

Unless they're running for re-election, when politicians come to Columbia County, they rarely get off Hwy. 30. Trying to recall Congressional representatives who have spent much time in Vernonia, only two come to mind: Many years ago, Rep. Les AuCoin was often seen in Vernonia, and Rep. Elizabeth Furse was here frequently, particularly after the '96 flood, but not for publicity purposes. Governor Kitzhaber has been in Vernonia a couple of times and Rep. David Wu has visited only once, while campaigning.

So it's good to see Sen. Ron Wyden hold his town hall meeting here. This is the time to put your questions together. If you want to know what's happening in any area of federal government, ask the senator, after all, he has a few years before he has to campaign again. See the date and time on page 1.

### Prompt removal of tree lights appropriate and appreciated

It was surprising to see the Christmas lights being removed from the trees on Bridge Street on the first working day of the year. It was also reassuring to know that they weren't going to be left until Valentines Day. That has been known to happen here...or was it nearly St. Patrick's Day when they finally came down?



### Ike Says...

By Dale Webb, member, Izaak Walton League, Nehalem Valley Chapter

Happy new year, everybody. A new year has dawned and, like many prior years, there will be new hopes and challenges. Unfortunately, the welfare of our outdoor treasures is influenced not only by the weather, but by the people who use or abuse them and the people who hold the positions of influence over them.

With a new president in office (one that I voted for because of gun control), we will definitely see new changes in how our natural resources will be utilized. Hopefully the new consciousness that our country has found in protecting our natural resources will be strong enough to overcome the pressures to resume the "business as usual" mentality that has gotten us into the messes we have today.

Unfortunately for Oregonians, there has not been a change in how fish and wildlife in Oregon are managed. We are still stuck with the same management style that has been here for years - and that is selling our resources for a buck. We have the classic "fox guarding the hen house" structure where the agency that is in charge of making management decisions is almost solely dependent on exploiting the resources it is designed to protect, for its own financial well being. For the most part, the constituents of this agency also push for more harvests, even in the face of severely depleted resources. It is said that humans are very intelligent creatures, yet we must have a void in our brains that keeps us from learning from our past. Have we not learned from the ancestors who stood before us and exclaimed, "We will never be able to shoot all these buffalo", "We will never be able to log all these old growth trees", "We will never be able to catch all these fish" and, finally, "The ocean is boundless"? Even in the face of all these failures of our past, we continue to act as though man does not have an impact on our natural resources. Even while our rivers run with the blood (mud) of human impacts on our surrounding forests, we deny the obvious. Even the people in charge of our resources are in denial as they lobby for increased catches of endangered fish and continue to propagate genetically altered fish by the millions, without adequate knowledge about the impact of their actions.

History is, again, repeating itself as the agency in charge of our fish and wildlife continues to expand the commercialization of wildlife. In a very short time, the commissioners that govern have moved us all closer to privatization of

our public resources. With the advent of controlled hunts and landowner tags, they have created a whole new industry in selling wildlife to a captive audience. Game farming is expanding even though there are serious concerns about the health and safety of surrounding wildlife that, if infected with some of these diseases, will have to be destroyed. Tag auctions and raffles, again, commercialize our natural resources and make it obvious that if you have money, you can hunt in Oregon. Hunting will soon become the sport of Kings and poachers, with nobody in between.

Locally, we have our own battles with the people in charge of our wildlife. In the face of overwhelming reports of dead and dying deer, our district biologist makes light of the situation. Even with declining deer trend counts and increasing age structure, we continue to harvest the very heart of future herds in the form of antlerless deer. In analyzing the age structure data that has been gathered since the early nineties, it is obvious that our deer herds have been severely depressed and impacted by antlerless hunting. Deer younger than two years of age composed more than 66 percent of hunter harvest, with around a 52 percent drop from yearling to two-year-old animals. This is the perfect picture of an over-exploited resource and hunting having a severe impact.

At the end of the moratorium, with deer trends from three monitoring groups (ODF&W, Izaak Walton League and North Coast Game Association) all showing increases in deer numbers, the overall harvest of deer less than two years of age had declined to about 55 percent, with a pick-up in deer three and four years of age. The drop between yearlings and two-year-olds was down to 28 percent, and to three-year-olds, which now compose around 16 percent of the harvest, the drop was an amazing 10 percent. These data definitely show that not harvesting antlerless deer has a beneficial impact that includes more mature does in the herd.

The harvest data for 1999 is another picture. With the increase in antlerless harvest, abnormally wet winters in '97 and '98, and the introduction of hair-loss syndrome, the picture has turned grim, at best. Spotlight trend counts are down; deer less than two years of age have declined to around 44 percent of harvest and the average age of deer has increased to 3.92 from 3.46 in the early nineties. While this may actually sound good to most sportsmen, it is important to understand how age structure works. In a healthy deer herd that has been severely depressed by over-hunting and is then protected,