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The INDEPENDENT

Vol. 16, No 21

"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

November 7, 2001

Reasons to smile...



The life savers and the two whose lives were saved: From left are Darren Berg, Jared Busch, Joe Poetter and Bill Jaworski. Please see story at right.

Public Health provides biological info

Although Columbia County is not a likely target, Columbia County Public Health has sent every physician and health care provider in the county a complete description of all bacteria and viruses that could be used for biological terrorism.

The descriptions should help health provider identify if a client becomes infected.

The descriptions are designed to help providers identify the possible presence of these agents with detailed information on clinical effects, incubation periods, where the agent is found (livestock, rodents, etc.), occurrence locations, preferred treatment and other measures to take, i.e. notifying Oregon Health Services with phone numbers.

Included in the list of bacte-

ria is anthrax, as well as cholera, bubonic plague, etc. The list of viruses includes smallpox, an encephalitis agent and a hemorrhagic fever agent.

There is very little likelihood of anyone in Columbia County coming in contact with these agents, according to Public Health Administrator Karen Ladd, but it is important from a public health standpoint to be on top of even a remote possibility. Information is crucial to relieving fears, and preparedness is the best defense. Public Health is one of the responders of the Columbia County Emergency Response Plan.

If you think you may have received a letter with anthrax, do not open it. If you have opened it already, wash your hands with soap and warm water, cov-

er the envelope and immediate area with plastic wrap and call the police department. Ladd reports that several people have followed these procedures. They did not open suspicious letters, but called the police, who took care of the items.

For more information, call Public Health at 503-397-4651.

Measure 50 kicks in with tax reductions

Though death and taxes remain inevitable, Measure 50 has taken a bite out of the property taxes Oregonians pay.

The market value of all taxable property in Columbia County has declined by 2.18 percent (due primarily to a reduction in the assessed value of the defunct Trojan Nuclear Power Plant) and the value of

Life savers honored by state, community

Darren Berg and Bill Jaworski, both of Birkenfeld, received medals awarded by the state Emergency Medical Services System, at a ceremony October 18 in Mist.

As Mist-Birkenfeld Rural Fire Protection District Chief David Crawford said, the awards, which recognized life-saving efforts after a motor vehicle crash, were a "joyous occasion."

The crash occurred July 23, 2000, on Hwy. 202 near Vesper, when a pick-up truck driven by Joe Poetter of Vernonia, who was blinded by the sun, smashed into the back of Berg's heavily loaded hay wagon. The impact forced the pickup's engine into the passenger compartment and sheared off the top of the carburetor, throwing gas on the hot manifold and causing both vehicles to erupt in flames.

Jaworski, a near-by resident and volunteer M-BRFPD Emergency Medical Technician, called 9-1-1 for help, then rushed to the scene. He first moved Poetter, who was partially thrown from the truck but unable to move, to safety.

He then attempted to remove the passenger, Jared Busch of Mist, who was trapped in the already burning vehicle. Jaworski was unable to open the passenger side door, and ran for a fire extinguisher in

an attempt to control the flames until emergency equipment arrived.

Berg left his truck and, ignoring his own safety, forced open the pickup door and removed Busch as the flames were literally brushing his legs.

Busch and Poetter both had broken legs and required hospitalization. Berg suffered minor burns to his hands.

The Civilian Service Medal was awarded to Berg for risking his own safety in order to save another person. It is the highest award the state gives to an individual who is not part of an EMS system, but who provides extraordinary service in the course of an EMS emergency.

The Life Saver Medal awarded to Jaworski recognizes a volunteer EMT who makes a noteworthy contribution to efforts which result in the saving of a life.

"Thank God for this community," said Jared Busch. "There are not many who would have done that to save another's life."

Steve Poetter, Joe's father and a Washington County Deputy Sheriff, agreed. In his nearly 30 years in emergency services, an emotional Poetter said, he "had seen very few miracles, but this was one. We bless you from the bottom of our

residential properties in the county is mostly unchanged. Two major exceptions are inside the City of Vernonia, where residential market values increased by six percent, and rural Clatskanie, where market value has increased by eight percent.

However, property taxes are not based on market values,

but on assessed values, and in 1997-98, Measure 50 reduced assessed values to the 1995-96 value less 10 percent, and capped the annual increase at three percent, with certain exceptions, one of which is bonded debt.

Good news or bad, the first installment on property taxes is due November 15.