

The INDEPENDENT

Serving the upper Nehalem River valley. Published twice monthly, on the first and third Wednesdays of each month, by Public Opinion Laboratory Ltd., 725 Bridge Street, Vernonia, OR 97064, as a free newspaper. Editors and Publishers, Dirk & Noni Andersen. Phone/Fax: 503-429-9410, e-mail: noni@vernonia.com

Opinion

You can help a child

There will always be debates about child welfare issues. When is it prudent to remove a child from home? When is it best to provide services to help to family overcome their problems?

In many instances, it is a judge who makes the critical decision. Increasingly, judges are receiving help in making an informed decision. That help is coming from Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteers who are trained to speak for the best interests of abused and neglected children.

CASA of Columbia County currently has 14 volunteers representing 37 children; the need for more volunteers is great.

Being a CASA volunteer is challenging, but no particular background is required. If you are you looking for a way to get involved in your community, consider CASA.

Spring training for new CASA volunteers will start March 9th. For more information, call CASA Director Jan Martin at 503-366-7644

It's not broke; don't fix it!

An article on page one tells of a recommendation by Columbia County Commissioner Joe Corsiglia that the Regional Strategies/Rural Investment program be eliminated and the money sent directly to each county. Corsiglia thinks this would save the state money by eliminating regional administrative costs.

The partial list of funds that have benefited Columbia County and Vernonia show that most of the grants and loans are relatively small. That is exactly the reason the program works well. When a small town needs a small amount of money, such a request gets lost when compared to the amounts needed for large projects.

This program is geared to the needs of Vernonia and Garibaldi, Rainier and Manzanita, Astoria and Tillamook. This region works well together. A change might not hurt but, when something works well, it's foolish to change it.

Would you rather use the current system, or go to the Board of Commissioners whenever there is a need for financial assistance?

Correction:

One of the West Oregon Electric Cooperative people who helped when I rolled my car, was Ahron Barton. Apologies, Ahron, for using the wrong name.



Salem Scene

By Betsy Johnson, Rep., District 31

I voted no on SJR 50 despite my longstanding support of a stabilization fund for our public school system. I have several reasons for my decision and none of them include opposition to the concept of a fund to help our public schools deal with periodic downturns in the economy.

The proposal contained in SJR 50 failed on several counts:

Amendments to our state Constitution deserve more than a few minutes of thought and a closed process before being sent to voters.

This measure does not appear to meet basic constitutional tests of the single subject rule and should have been presented to the body as a revision rather than an amendment.

It failed to meet even the threshold requirements for an open, deliberative process aimed at developing the best possible plan for a stabilization fund. The bill was made available to me at

the very last minute and there were no hearings allowing the public or interested parties to participate.

The measure includes a one-time borrowing scheme that does not fit with the long-term nature of a stabilization fund.

The funding source contemplated in the measure, the lottery, is under judicial review and is itself unstable.

I look forward to future Special Sessions where we can have a full and open discussion, debate and vote on this very important issue and then go to our voters with a measure we can be proud of and truly point to as an opportunity to stabilize our school funding system.

Rep. Betsy Johnson
Salem: 900 Court Street NE
H-373 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301
Phone: Salem 503-986-1401
Scappoose 503-543-4046

Letters to the Editor

County needs better controls

To the Editor:

It's getting close to county budget time and we keep hearing about the potential revenue shortfall and possible reduction in personnel/services because of this lack of revenue. I'd like to offer some suggestions for cost reductions and wise use of our money.

1) The County Commissioners need to spend more time in the office. Even though they are not

required to have a 9 to 5 job like the rest of the world and make \$58,500...oh, lest I forget, plus benefits, they are required per state law to officially be in the office on Wednesday (meeting day), but sometimes they can't even manage that! They are running around the state (and country), supposedly "taking care of county business," but when's the last time we received a benefit of some degree because of all this running around? In addition, if the commissioners stayed in the office more, they wouldn't need to

Please see page 3