

Letters to the Editor, continued

very seriously and is actively seeking solutions. I applaud our Superintendent Mike Funderburg for immediately taking action when concerns were brought to his attention, but he cannot do this alone. As a community, and as parents, we have an obligation to our children to provide them with a safe learning environment. Health risks, environmental safety risks, and structural instability are never acceptable and must be corrected.

I certainly don't have immediate answers — that is what the School District is searching for — but, to our most recent surprise, while reading the Voter's Pamphlet, Measure 15 can very well be the solution we have hoped for. It provides state funding to educational facilities to bring them up to seismic code. I encourage all of you to VOTE YES ON MEASURE 15!

When the time comes, and with the combined involvement of parents, teachers, staff, board members, and the administration, a reasonable solution can be found.

Be aware! Be informed!

Marie Botchie
Vernonia

Anti-drug group says vote YES on 5-109

To the Editor:

The Columbia County Local Alcohol and Drug Planning Commission (LADPC) urges you to vote yes on the Sheriff's Levy, 5-109.

LADPC is an advisory committee set up by state statute to advise the County Commission on drug and alcohol issues.

We have a serious drug and alcohol problem in our county. This leads to other crimes, such as burglary, domestic abuse and child abuse. It hurts families, small businesses and the community.

We urgently need more Sheriff patrol deputies to deal with this increasing county crime rates. In particular, we have a high number of methamphetamine labs in our county. We also have a serious heroin problem.

Because we are a rural county, nestled between the more populous Multnomah, Washington and Cowlitz (WA) counties, we have far too many methamphetamine dealers hiding in the back woods. The dealers know we have limited patrol and take advantage of us.

We must do something about this urgent problem. We can either pay a little now for increased patrol or pay a lot later.

Measure 5-109 is a very modest proposal. It will cost the average property owner about \$7.75 per month. It is a small price to pay to make our communities safe.

Please vote yes on the Sheriff's Levy, 5-109.

Sincerely,

Dick Jacobus
Co-Chair, LADPC
Mark Lesowske
Co-Chair, LADPC

Mold is not greatest problem in schools

To the Editor:

My blood pressure has doubled since the "Mold Investigation" article in the October 3 issue of *The Independent*.

Have you been asleep since May 2001? Did you not read and digest the study a group of us made about the condition of your schools? We did not just worry about seismic safety, we worried about our (your) children. We studied sewer, furnace (heat), power (all lighting and computer bank use), water, mildew, mold, ventilation, communication between all rooms, walls, floors, ceiling joists (are they anchored to even stand alone?). Probably much more I've forgotten. But,

for your information, you can't close off or scrub out mold. I know, I live with it 24-365.

The town did not wish to correct all our findings with new, up-to-code, plus more schools. We advised against jury-rigging the problems at hand by spending almost half the cost of brand new buildings, so now, this new group is in a sweat to get up to code by putting money down the sewer.

Opening windows for air is dumb. How many people inhale all kinds of airborne junk that sends them into gasps for clean air to breathe?

I'm sorry I didn't know of your meeting or I'd have been there. The taxpayers will get hit with a bill that won't solve anything, really.

One that knew this would come up one day and it has — and you've three other schools to consider.

Jacqueline Ramsay
Vernonia

Sheriff's levy needed for public safety

To the Editor:

Columbia County Measure 5-109 for County Law Enforcement is a measure that will make a difference for all of us in the Columbia County. For the cost of less than a case of beer, three packs of cigarettes, ten candy bars, or a tank of gasoline a month, we will get a safer community. For my own home, it will mean less than \$10 a month.

What will I get for sacrificing that \$10 a month? Law enforcement personnel who are ready to protect my home, my family, and my community.

In the thirty plus years I have lived here, our population has grown, but the number of law enforcement available has steadily decreased. I no longer can plan on having coverage 24 hours per day, seven days a week.

I worry that my husband is not safe traveling our roadways because there is not adequate coverage to get impaired drivers off the road.

I am concerned that the caseload for our courts and District Attorney's office is so large that it takes months and sometimes years to process alleged criminals in the system.

I am concerned that our trained law enforcement personnel are burning out on the job because of lack of sleep, little time for their families and just the normal stress of the job.

Our Sheriff's Department has done a great job protecting us with limited resources. They have managed to keep vehicles on the road that most of us would have traded in years ago.

They personally respond whenever possible. Sometimes only one deputy is on duty and unable to respond immediately, especially if they are at the other end of the county. But sometimes there is no one on duty at all and deputies who are finishing already long shifts are called back on duty without rest and a chance to eat.

When you receive your ballot soon, think about your own safety and what a small sacrifice of just \$10 or less a month can do for the livability of Columbia County. Return your ballot on time and vote YES on 5-109 to support our local Law Enforcement.

Lynn Chiotti
St. Helens

Appreciates work of Dukes and Johnson

To the Editor:

During the most recent special session of the Oregon Legislature, many truly awful options were on the table for bringing Oregon's budget back into balance. We all know that the cut

lists included deep cuts to schools, laying off about a third of the state police, releasing thousands of prisoners and cutting nursing home and assisted living beds for thousands of the elderly. You may not be aware that among the list of cuts proposed for Columbia County was also the complete closure of Riverside Training Centers, including all of our vocational training programs in St. Helens and all of our group homes county-wide.

During the two-week period that the legislature was in session, I had an opportunity to work closely with both Representative Betsy Johnson and Senator Joan Dukes as they struggled to forge a compromise that would prevent the worst of these cuts from happening. Although this legislative session can best be described as a complete zoo, I must share how impressed I was with our local people. Both Representative Johnson and Senator Dukes have risen to key leadership positions in the budgeting process. Their grasp of the issues and their concern for the people of northwest Oregon is apparent to anyone who works closely with them.

As Director of Riverside, I received several calls from each of them during the session at critical junctures, seeking guidance or information as to the local impact of their decisions. It is so nice to have elected representatives who see themselves beholden first to the needs and wishes of the people of their district rather than to the high-power lobbyists in Salem or the obtuse political agendas at work down there.

We are not out of the woods yet on this crisis. On January 28, we all get to vote on a temporary tax surcharge to keep our

Continued on page 20

VALLEY VETERINARY CLINIC



RABIES SPECIAL

\$8⁵⁰

Thursdays 10 am - 5 pm

58376 Nehalem Hwy. S. Vernonia (Near Sunnyside Cafe)

Halloween Bash

Spooktacular Buffet!

SATURDAY, NOV. 2 • 9 PM - 2 AM
\$15 SINGLES • \$25 COUPLES

Rock Out with
Rock Creek
Band!

Prizes for Best
Homemade
Costumes!

at **J's Eatery & Pub**
in Beautiful Downtown Birkenfeld • 503-755-0900