

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Opportunity is here to extend linear trail

It has been many years since this newspaper advocated for development of the Banks-Vernonia Linear Park. We were told passionately and vociferously how local people and property would be harmed by strangers using the trail, and already depressed property values would go even lower.

But the small local group supporting the rail-to-trail conversion had done their homework, including a nationwide survey of similar trails. Among the findings were the following:

— People unfamiliar with this type of park tend to oppose it because they are afraid of having strangers in the area.

— After becoming accustomed to the trail, most people enjoy it and even encourage others to use it.

— Rather than having a negative result on property values, recreation trails tend to attract people who like a healthy lifestyle and will buy property in the vicinity, gradually increasing property values.

All of these findings from the survey of other trails in the U.S. have been repeated here.

After a few years of a few people talking about it, it now appears that an extension of the trail from Vernonia to Scappoose is a very real possibility. The Columbia Mainline, which was developed by Crown-Zellerbach along the former railroad right-of-way from Pittsburg to Scappoose, is now owned by Hancock, which is amenable to the idea. The Port of St. Helens will participate with property at Scappoose Landing, which would be the trail's end at Multnomah Channel.

Columbia County, the City of Vernonia and the Scappoose Park and Recreation District are all on board and working with the Oregon Park and Recreation Department to arrange financing.

This isn't a "done deal" yet, but all of the pieces are coming together and real progress should be made by the middle of 2003. If you're wondering where the money will come from, then you've probably forgotten Measure 66, which voters approved to provide funds for the development and improvement of parks — local, regional and state. Those funds can't be used for any other purpose.

Vernonia's economic future relies heavily on outdoor recreation. This may lead to a very bright 2003.



Letters to the Editor

Seniors rely on you Remember military to retain modest aid during Christmas

To the Editor:

As a young state representative back in 1975, I was proud to co-chair the committee that sponsored the legislation that created Oregon Project Independence (OPI).

The concept was to provide a modest amount of in-home service to people over the age of 60. We believed that providing a small amount of services would help to prevent, or at least delay, very expensive nursing home care.

The program has proven itself in 27 years of effective local services, which include housekeeping, bathing assistance, meal preparation and so on. In a state budget of roughly \$12 billion, OPI is a bargain at \$13.7 million, serving about 3,800 seniors, statewide.

Please don't let a vital, cost-effective program like Oregon Project Independence become a memory. Thousands of seniors depend on your "Yes" vote on January 28.

Ralph Groener
Former State Representative
Oregon City

To the Editor:

Remember the year you spent Christmas overseas? The smell of the barracks, the heat, the loneliness? You spent the day thinking about those friends and loved ones at home. Wishing that Christmas were a normal workday so you could at least do something.

Our military for all its greatness, has never really found an answer for that old Christmas standby I'll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams.

As Americans we can tend to take for granted our freedom. The realities that right now other countries are working, other Marine Corps are working other armies are working. And as we sleep tonight a young Marine is guarding a wall. A young sailor is manning his station; soldiers and airmen are keeping the wolf from the door. They'll do it on Christmas and most of us won't even think about them.

This is the reality they live with every day so that we might not even think about our own safety. Sacrifice? You bet.

If you know a serviceman or woman, Call his or her parents and ask if they'll be home for Christmas.

They don't want gifts, what do you buy a guy who lives out of a sea bag? They want a letter from home. Not E-mail, the smell of a letter smells like that friend. Hand write the letter, "don't type it" and if you really want to make Christmas, Christmas, a cassette tape recording from friends or family is better than gold, pure gold.

If you have a friend in the military this year don't take for granted that their family can provide for them, and the military won't do it, believe me. But if you take the time to send a piece of your life by communicating, that friend will remember you for life.

Joe Cason
St. Helens

WRC says thanks to many kind people

To the Editor:

The Board, Staff, Volunteers and Clients of Columbia County Women's Resource Center would like to thank the many
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