

The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

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Winter Beauty



Falling like a silvery curtain, icicles formed a man-sized cave by hanging from a rock ledge on the south side of the Nehalem River, at the confluence of Rock Creek.

Blood donors swamp Red Cross

Joel Glass, still pale after recovering from major injuries received in a hunting accident this past fall, couldn't hide his elation or his gratitude at yesterday's turnout for a community blood drive in his honor.

"Giving of yourself is the most personal and blessed of gifts. It has been the most humbling experience of my life to receive such a gift from so many people," Glass said, as he expressed thanks on behalf of his family, the Red Cross volunteers and himself.

With a turnout of 50 people, not only was the goal of 30 units reached, but another 15 people were referred to the February 25 blood drive that will be held at Vernonia High School.

Marguerite Nice, El Donna Williams and Angie Budge organized the drive.



American Red Cross blood drive coordinator Koren Karlovic and Joel Glass make the message loud and clear.

Public test of vote counting equipment

The public certification test of Columbia County's vote counting equipment will be on Tuesday, January 27, for the February 3, special election.

Testing will begin at 2:00 p.m. in the county Elections Department at the courthouse in St. Helens.

Ballot drop sites for area voters who do not mail their ballots will be as follows:

- Vernonia Library during regular hours, plus extended hours February 3 from noon to 8:00 p.m.
- Mist-Birkenfeld Rural Fire Dist. Main Station during regular office hours. Hours for February 3 will be 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Microwave system for 9-1-1 nears completion

Major "blind" spots in radio communications for Columbia County emergency services will soon be part of history. Bad weather and a couple of snags have caused some delays, but the county-wide microwave communications system is nearing completion.

After waiting for the osprey to fledge from their nest atop the AT&T tower on Corey Hill, excessive lease demands from AT&T to share tower space resulted in a decision to build a new tower adjacent to theirs on the city-owned property. AT&T has a \$400 monthly lease with the City of Vernonia, but asked Columbia 9-1-1 for \$960 a month.

Until construction of the tower can be completed, Day Wireless is loaning a single-pole tower to serve Vernonia and a large part of the upper Nehalem Valley. The building, equipment and electrical installations are all in place, but the unusually severe weather has delayed installation of the temporary tower. The site is now expected to be operational by mid-February, at the latest. If there are no further delays,

Vernonia and Mist-Birkenfeld fire districts will be connected in late January. Vernonia Police Department is scheduled for connection in early February.

"The City [of Vernonia] has been absolutely wonderful to work with," said Sally Smith, director of the Columbia Emergency Communications District, "and we have been fortunate with the grants we've received, or we wouldn't be able to do what we're doing." Most sites are locally owned by governments or local companies who see the value of public safety, she added, noting that Evenson Timber, which owns Benson Point, is charging nothing for use by the 9-1-1 district.

The Benson Point site, in the northern end of the county, was complicated by trees blocking the microwave path between Benson and Columbia Heights, leaving a choice of harvesting the trees over the next couple of years or having them immediately removed at much greater cost. For now, the microwave dish serving that path is temporarily located on a Verizon Wireless tower in order to make the site operational.



A building needed for the microwave communications system was delivered to Corey Hill in December, before ice and snow temporarily halted progress.