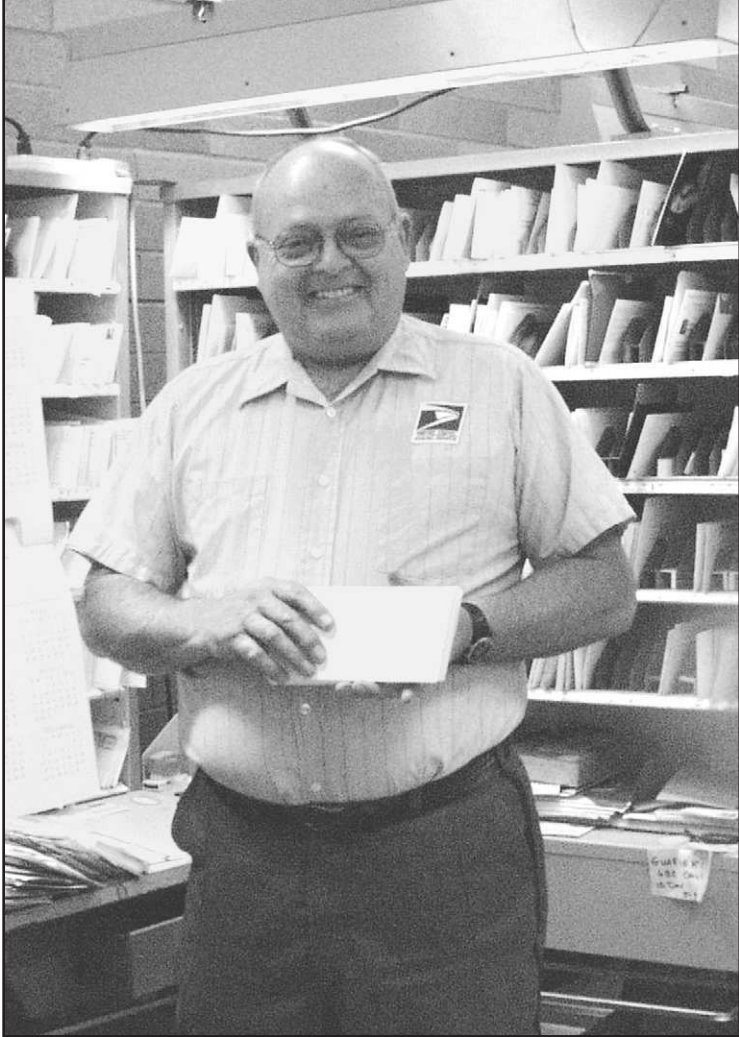


Mr. Reliable takes a rest...



After nearly 30 years of delivering mail to the residents and businesses of Vernonia, Dick Aldrich has taken a well-earned retirement. During a brief ceremony on his last working day, retired Vernonia Postmaster Dan Fletcher, a long-time co-worker, presented Aldrich with a plaque for his years of reliable service. He will be missed not only by his human clients, but by every dog in town because they all knew there were treats in those pockets.

Update on Lewis & Clark Bridge

The full weekend closure of the Lewis and Clark Bridge originally scheduled for January 16 – 19 has been rescheduled for January 30-February 2. Rescheduling is required because last week's winter storm made it impossible to complete necessary preparation work. The rescheduled closure will begin at 11 p.m. on Friday, January 30, and remain until the bridge reopens to traffic at 5:30 a.m. on Monday, February 2.

Please note that I-5 in both directions between NE 134th Street and NE 99th Street in Clark County will also be closed to all traffic during this same weekend as part of an interstate widening project in that area. The Washington Department of Transportation offers three suggestions for motorists

wishing to cross the Columbia River:

- The Puget Island/Cathlamet ferry, which will operate 24-hours-a-day without charge during the bridge closure hours.
- The U.S. 101/Astoria-Megler Bridge

Contact numbers for Lewis & Clark Bridge

- Toll Free Lewis & Clark Bridge Deck Replacement Project Hotline: 1-866-427-4630
- Project Web Page: (Follow the Project Update link to the monthly calendar) www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/lewisclarkbridge
- Lewis & Clark Bridge Deck Replacement Project E-mail: lewisclarkbridge@wsdot.wa.gov
- Highway Advisory Radios:
 - Kelso, WA AM 1580
 - Rainier, OR AM 530

Remember to check family tax credits

Oregonians missed out on nearly \$30 million in federal tax credits last year because they didn't claim them, according to the Oregon Child Care Resource & Referral Network, a statewide association of 17 programs helping families find child care.

This year, significant increases in federal and state tax credits can put thousands of dollars in the pockets of Oregonians. That's why the Oregon Child Care Resource & Referral Network is working in partnership with the National Women's Law Center to urge working parents to file for these credits to lower their taxes or increase their refunds.

As a result of the federal increases, families may be eligible for:

- The federal Child and Dependent Care Credit, designed

to offset some of the child or dependent care costs that families incur in order to work. The maximum value of the credit is \$2,100.

- The federal Child Tax Credit has increased from \$600 to \$1,000 per child.

- The federal Earned Income Tax Credit, which helps provide a wage supplement for low-income families (those earning less than \$34,692 annually), has increased slightly, from \$4,140 to \$4,204.

Oregon child care credits have also increased:

- The state Child and Dependent Care Credit increased from a maximum of \$1,440 to a maximum of \$1,800.

- For the first time the state Working Family Child Care Credit, which is worth up to 40 percent of qualifying child care expenses, is refundable, giving

more tax assistance to low-income filers.

- The state Earned Income Credit may be as much as \$210.

In an attempt to reach thousands of Oregon families with information about tax credits, the Network is also working with the Association of Oregon Broadcasters and its member television and radio stations to air public service announcements during February and March 2004. The tax credit campaign will also distribute user-friendly materials in English and Spanish to local child care providers, day care centers and other area organizations.

In addition, free tax help is available on the Network's web site <www.OregonChildCare.org> or by calling toll-free 1-800-342-6712.

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