

Michael Duce, of Mist, before and after his head was shaved to raise funds to help cure children's cancer. He raised about \$3,000 from people who wanted to see him bald on St. Baldrick's Day.

## 9-1-1 District again seeks levy renewal

Voters will be asked to renew a five-year operating levy for the Columbia 9-1-1 Communications District on the May 18 ballot. If that sounds familiar, it is. You voted on it last November.

In November the measure was approved by 69.8 percent of the ballots cast, but those votes were invalidated because voter turnout was one percent less than the 50 percent required. The May election also requires a 50 percent voter turnout, along with majority approval, for the measure to pass.

The operating fund for Columbia 9-1-1 was approved by voters in 1998 and expires on June 30 of this year. The district is seeking renewal at a slightly lower rate than the current levy. In filing the renewal measure, Columbia 9-1-1 cited the importance of renewing the Operating Fund now, before it expires.

Dee Wooley, President of the Board for Columbia 9-1-1 Communications District, points out, "The overwhelming vote of support in the November election clearly demonstrated that voters recognize, want and need essential 9-1-1 service. It is essential that voters send in their ballots. People throughout the county rely on

this vital emergency communication service. This is simply a renewal of the Operating Fund, not a new tax." He adds, "The 9-1-1 district is committed to providing a good value to our citizens and communities. The District has been efficient while improving services, and as a result, the rate will decrease slightly for the renewal."

The District has accomplished what is said it would do by improving essential equipment while at the same time increasing its service. The number of calls to the District has doubled in the last ten years. Plus, the county-wide microwave/radio "backbone" that was completed this winter now connects all agencies in Columbia County through an upgraded, uninterrupted network that no longer relies on telephone lines. The microwave radio upgrade was made possible by federal funding brought to our communities by the 9-1-1 District.

As the county's population has grown, so has its use of emergency communications. "District 9-1-1 dispatchers handle more than 10 calls an hour, 240 calls a day, or about 90,000 phone calls answered per year," says District Adminis-

trator Sally Jones. "That's more than double what the Call Center handled only 10 years ago. We successfully connect 16 different agencies with people who need their services. We're a vital link for the safety and livability that our citizens deserve - and get."

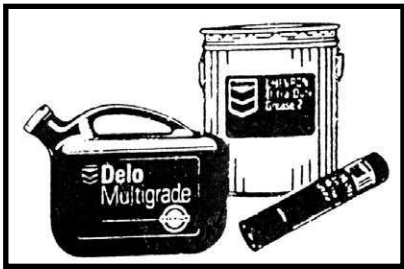
Numerous individuals, organizations, local city councils and district boards have endorsed the renewal of the five-year Operating Fund. A campaign organization, The Renew Columbia 9-1-1 Committee, has formed with Rob Anderson acting as treasurer.

The five-year Operating Fund supports all ongoing functions of the 9-1-1 Call Center, such as maintaining emergency communications service for all communities and unincorporated areas throughout the county; 24-hour staffing and training; coordination and dispatching for 16 public safety agencies in Columbia County, including all fire, emergency medical and police in each community, and related support services for State Police and State Forestry Departments. The five-year renewal will maintain the level of service citizens throughout Columbia County now receive.

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