

The INDEPENDENT

Serving the upper Nehalem River valley. Published on the first and third Thursdays of each month, by Public Opinion Laboratory Ltd., 725 Bridge Street, Vernonia, OR 97064, as a free newspaper. Publishers, Dirk & Noni Andersen. Editor, Noni Andersen. Phone/Fax: 503-429-9410, e-mail: noni@vernonia.com Display Advertising, Clark McGaugh, e-mail: clark@vernonia.com Classified Advertising, Rebecca McGaugh, e-mail: rebecca@vernonia.com

Opinion

Cutbacks in rent aid will harm low income families of all ages

Let's start with some uncomfortable numbers:

- Nearly 35 million Americans live below the poverty line. (U.S. Census Bureau)
- About 12 million families last year worried that they did not have enough money for food. In nearly 3.8 million families someone in the household skipped meals because the family could not afford them. (USDA)

Health care and housing are necessities priced out of the reach of many families, particularly the working poor, so why is the Bush administration focused on cutting back a program that reduces the number of homeless families in this country?

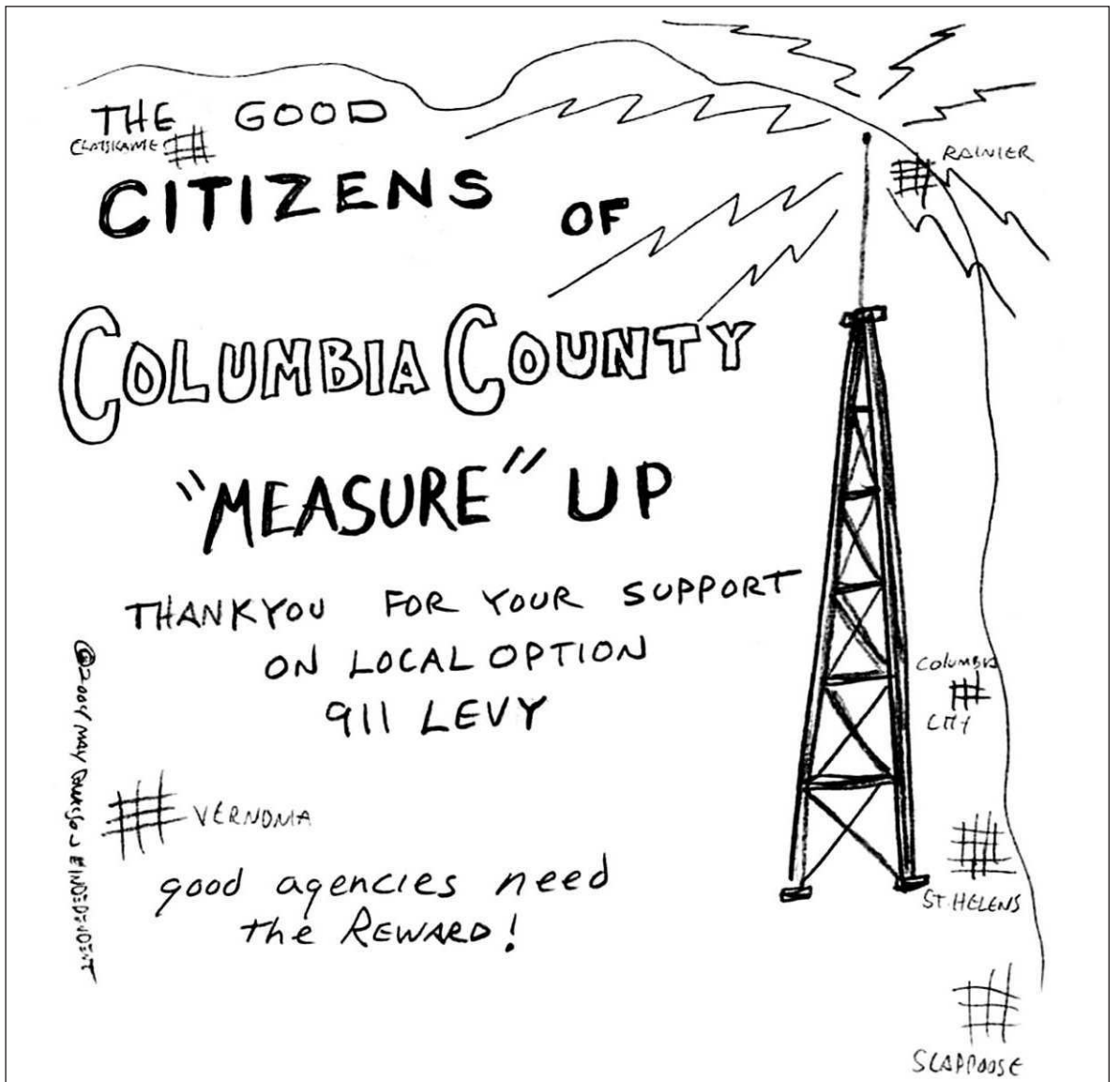
With record budget deficits assisted by tax cuts for the rich, this administration is trying to make up some of the difference by cutting desperately needed programs aimed at the poor. One targeted program is Section 8, the federal rent-subsidy program intended to help prevent low-income families from becoming homeless.

According to the Northwest Housing Authority (NOHA), rental assistance for 20 Columbia County families was terminated on May 1, with another 47 families (including 18 disabled) will be cut off on June 1. May 1 was also the termination date for 40 Clatsop County families and 46 families in Tillamook County.

How does the Bush budget proposal affect NOHA's tri-county jurisdiction from 2005-2009? In 2005 an additional 130 families would be terminated, plus 313 more by 2009.

Oregon is number one among the states with high hunger rates. Reducing rent subsidies, as NOHA has had to do in order to stretch available funds, will make it harder to feed families and, without rent subsidies, more families will become homeless.

In the next issue, The INDEPENDENT will talk with some of the "targeted budget cuts." These are real people whose needs are minimal when balanced against tax cuts for the super rich.



Police develop programs to help youth

Police Chief Matthew Workman introduced three programs to Vernonia City Council, May 17, that will be operated by the police department in the next few months. All the programs are directed toward youth.

One will provide safety materials regarding bicycle use, drug and alcohol awareness, etc., to youth. The materials will be delivered via the schools. Another program, called "Village Kids," will provide locally made quilts for children during times of trauma or distress. Officers already hand out teddy bears, but feel the quilts will be a more lasting reminder of comfort.

The last program, Parent Aid, is designed to help parents confronted by the possibility that their kids may be using drugs. This program will allow the police department to provide confidential, voluntary urine tests without charge.

City Administrator Mike Sykes reminded Council that the budget process starts May 24 at 6:30 p.m., followed at 7:30 by a Public Hearing on vacating an alleyway adjacent to the old city hall. There will be

another budget meeting on June 1, and a meeting regarding a proposed sign ordinance has been scheduled for June 7. These meetings will all be at city hall.

- In other business Council:
- Approved the use of a stor-

age trailer by Vernonia Cares.

- Reviewed information from the Business Marketing meeting that was held May 13.

- Heard an overview of Urban Renewal District usage and agreed to set a special meeting to learn more.

Letters

Postal workers help Stamp Out Hunger

To the Editor:

Through the efforts of the Letter Carriers Food Drive on May 8, the Vernonia postal employees picked up 694 pounds of canned food. This total number of pounds exceeded last year's total by 35 pounds! Special thanks to Peter O'Leary and Kate Laird who coordinated and delivered the food to Vernonia Cares.

Thank you, letter carriers and people of Vernonia. Your generosity shows, once again, that Vernonia Cares.

Sandy Welch, Director
Vernonia Cares Food Bank

Thank you for votes to keep 9-1-1 healthy

To the Editor:

Thank you, Columbia County voters, for making the system work; for your overwhelming support of the 9-1-1 levy renewal, and, most spectacularly, for returning those ballots to surpass the 50 percent turnout requirement. We are elated!

And thank you for your faith that we will continue to do our utmost to provide the best service possible.

On behalf of Columbia 911 staff, directors and volunteers, THANK YOU!

Kathy Denckla
Vernonia-Mist Director
Columbia 911