

Skills Park ground breaking held

The official ground breaking was held Saturday, June 30, for the Bicycle Skills Park project at the 60 acre O-A mill site. Those in attendance were Mayor Sally Harrison, Parks and Budget Committee president Scott Laird, Planning Commission president Dan Brown, business owner Rietta Behnke and Ric Balfour of Ric Balfour & Associates.

The Bicycle Skills Park received an initial conditional use permit at a planning commission meeting (later confirmed by the city council) and public hearing on May 17. The proposed uses for the 60 acre mill site include the bicycle skills park, a senior center including Vernonia Cares Food Bank, an event center (privately owned and operated), an interpretive center, skate park, R.V. parking

and supporting facilities (such as restrooms, loading ramps, picnic areas, concessions and parking lots - 42 parking places for the Senior Center, plus another 100 paved and 150 gravelled overflow). Each project proponent appeared before the Planning Commission on March 15. The Planning Commission asked for a conditional use application from each proponent.

The planning commission was told that public sewer, water and power are available at the site but are unimproved and that each proposed user will have to address installation as development takes place. The bicycle skills park will initially use portable sanitary facilities and a compacted gravel parking lot (estimated cost to **Please see page 15**

Bits & Bites

By Jacqueline Ramsay



Everybody, sit down, put your feet up, loosen your tie or unbutton your shirt, take a deep breath, now exhale. Ok, I forgot to tell you before you sat down – get a tall glass of whatever – now you're to take a gulp of whatever and pass out or just relax, but don't sleep too long or you might miss the 4th of July. I think I'm going to stay in bed all that day. I'm getting too old for the mouse race. Think I'll retire.

Perhaps you readers didn't

think me serious last paper when I said Vernonia Cares Food Bank needs muscle power. This past week, five women and one man had to keep us on our feet. It shocks me to think every able-bodied male in Vernonia has a job with a pay check. I know I'm putting my face on the line, but read it how you will. Facts are showing.

Now to the lighter side of life in our town – I've heard lots of "kudos" for the way things went for KUPL's day. Also, the Cycle Oregon folks enjoyed our hospitality, sun and our showers. Quite a sight was Tent Town and all the flags along Bridge St. I was tied up so didn't get to "Stub" Park. I hear the view from the top is awesome.

Due to the weather – a

question. If I want to swim in the river, what do I wear?? Rubber suit? 1920's swim wear? Cut off jeans and fur-lined T-shirt? Or, just forget it. Do you believe the weather reports anymore?

I haven't been able to stroll Main Street yet, either, but lots of new looks are catching my curiosity button. Some places I'd like to look in don't fit my hours, but I'll keep trying. No money to spend but I do love to "look shop."

Well, it's time to roll up the streets, turn out the lights and go to bed, so – Good night till next time.

PS. These thoughts are my own.

Free help for those about to make Medicare choices

A state program that uses volunteers to offer free, unbiased help to people making Medicare decisions has received a \$417,631 federal grant to continue outreach to Oregonians in 2007.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) grant goes to the Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance (SHIBA) network and will allow the program to expand its volunteer network into several underserved rural areas of Oregon. This year's amount is six percent larger than the grant SHIBA received in 2006.

The grant money pays for a state SHIBA office, 22 local program sponsors, and approximately 250 volunteers who counsel Medicare beneficiaries and their family members.

Here's how the program works:

1. People with Medicare questions call Oregon's toll-free number (1-800-722-4134) and enter their ZIP code using the telephone dial pad.

2. The caller is routed to a SHIBA sponsor volunteer coordinator in their county service area or to the state SHIBA staff if no local program is available.

3. The volunteer answers the caller's questions and then offers to set up a one-on-one meeting. It may be at a local program office, such as an Area Agency on Aging (AAA) or Seniors and People w/Disabilities field office, other community centers, or the home of the client.

Certified volunteers are trained to answer questions

about all aspects of Medicare, from supplemental policies to help fill "gaps" in coverage, to how to obtain and enroll in prescription drug plans.

This year, SHIBA will provide one-on-one counseling to a minimum of 15,000 Medicare beneficiaries. It will also increase the number of volunteer counselors; provide training and outreach assistance to volunteers and other program partners; and establish SHIBA sponsors in counties that do not have a local SHIBA sponsor organization, including Umatilla, Morrow, Grant, and Malheur counties and some areas on the Oregon coast.

In 2006, SHIBA provided free counseling services to more than 20,000 Medicare beneficiaries and others. The

large number of contacts was due mainly to Medicare's open enrollment for Part D prescription drug coverage.

For more information on how to get help with Medicare or become a SHIBA volunteer and help others: Visit www.oregonshiba.org or call toll-free in Oregon: 1-800-722-4134.

In Oregon, SHIBA is part of the Department of Consumer and Business Services. The department is Oregon's largest business regulatory and consumer protection agency. For more information, visit www.dcbcs.oregon.gov.

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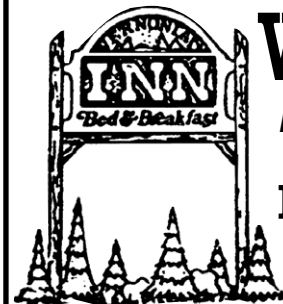
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