

Power of the People

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Budget Billing Available to Help

We are headed into the high energy usage months of winter with an additional dark cloud hanging above us. The housing market is the worst it has been in years, which translates to a significant downturn in lumber prices. The bottom dropping out of the lumber prices means timber prices also drop dramatically, resulting in many of the local mills which provide employment and our largest industrial member to cease operations until the market rebounds. The possible loss of our largest revenue account will certainly have a negative impact on us and we will have to adjust our expenses accordingly. The other concern we have is for our members, who will also be severely impacted by the mills being down. For them and all of our members, we want to communicate the following three options we have available for assistance.

First, we have been offering a program called Budget Billing, or what some of our members like to refer

to as an Equal Pay Program. This program allows our members to average out their monthly bills, making it easier to budget a set amount each month. It eliminates the ups and downs of electric bills by taking the last 12 months usage and averaging it out over the next twelve months, which is especially helpful during the high bill winter months. This program is available to our members who have been a member for at least one year, and can be done either by stopping in at our office, or by phone to sign up. To qualify, a member must have their current balance paid in full prior to being placed on Budget Billing. This also must be done before an account has received a shut off or disconnect notice.

This leads into the second assistance we offer, and that is to work with our members in making a signed payment arrangement. In the event one of our members finds themselves in a position of not being able to meet their current balance, but would like to have the past due amount averaged over a six month time period, this program allows it to be added on to the current monthly bill. If a member has been offered a payment arrangement in the past and failed to follow through, they will not be eligible for a new payment arrangement.

The third way we offer assistance is in

working with several outside agencies that offer financial help to our members in need. These programs include Oregon Heat, Community Action, Care to Share, and St. Vincent de Paul. Oregon Heat and Care to Share have a maximum assistance amount of \$150, St. Vincent \$50, and Community Action is a variable amount based on criteria they have established. We refer our member to these agencies based on need and the ability to qualify for funding.

Our staff implemented a program we call "Care to Share" last year and we raised over \$1,500. We reached our goal this year to raise over \$2,000. Anyone wishing to donate to our Care to Share program can do so by stopping in our office to make their donation. Every donated amount helps to keep our friends, neighbors, and fellow members warm and bright.

ODFW has 2 representative openings

The application deadline for persons interested in serving on the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife Access and Habitat Board as landowner representatives has been extended to November 2. Two positions are currently available.

The Access and Habitat Program was created by the 1993 Oregon Legislature to form partnerships with private landowners to improve wildlife habitat and increase hunting access on private lands by awarding grants for projects that accomplish these goals.

The Access and Habitat Board is made up of seven citi-

zen volunteers – three landowner representatives, three hunter representatives and one public-at-large representative – who review and recommend wildlife habitat improvement and hunter access projects for funding to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission. The program is funded by a \$2 surcharge included in hunting license fees.

Board members, who are appointed to four-year terms by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission, meet three or four times each year in various communities throughout the state to review project funding

applications, hear public testimony and act as liaisons between the program and the public.

Those with an interest and experience in hunting, forestry, farming, ranching and/or wildlife conservation are encouraged to apply.

To request an application and instructions for applying, contact Access and Habitat Program coordinator Matt Keenan, 503-947-6087. Applications may also be downloaded from the ODFW Website at www.dfw.state.or.us/AH/get_involved.asp.

Still time to attend Oral History seminar

Registration is now underway for an Oral History seminar on Saturday, November 3, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The class is sponsored by the Clatskanie Historical Society and the Columbia County Cultural Trust. Many of our county museums – including the Vernonia Pioneer Museum – are using video, audio and written records to capture the stories of the people who grew up in and built our communities. Oral histories are also a valuable addition to family genealogical records. This training is open to

all who would like to learn the best methods to obtain information from our elder generations and preserve these personal histories.

To register for the class, bring a check for \$35 payable to L.D. Cole, President, Clatskanie Historical Society, the morning of the class. The class fee includes lunch. The training will be held at the Clatskanie Community Education Center; if you are traveling west on Highway 30, turn left two blocks after the traffic light onto Bryant Street and head up the hill. If

you have questions, please email vpma@agalis.net or call Tobie at 503-705-2173.

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