

New Columbia County Commissioner heads for County College

An former landscaping consultant, a computer technician and a former owner of a septic tank servicing company are some of the approximately 20 new county commissioners who are packing their bags for an educational boot camp that kicks off this month.

During classes that span 13 days between January and September, in what is known as County College, they'll learn everything from how to run a public meeting to how to maintain county roads cost-effectively.

The Oregon State University Extension Service and the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) are sponsoring the voluntary classes, which will be held around Oregon and have taken place every year since the program's inception in 2006.

The program was started as a way to educate newly elected county officials who had little, if any, political experience. So far, 40 individuals representing 25 of Oregon's 36 counties have completed the training, said

Deborah Maddy, associate director of the Extension Service. The classes are taught by employees of Extension and the AOC, as well as experts from county and state governments.

Each session will focus on different topics. In the first one, participants will learn about the state's changing demographics; the history of Oregon's county government system; the legislative process; and how counties interact with other governmental entities. Additionally, they'll tour OSU's campus while they learn how some of its buildings were financed and built. The aim is to give them ideas about how public infrastructure in their counties might be funded.

Giving participants ideas to take back to their counties and possibly implement is one of the goals of the training, said Laura Cleland, the coordinator of County College and communications manager for the AOC.

For example, participants will have the option to visit a

courtroom in Salem and watch how a judge conducts what is called "drug court," which allows drug offenders to forgo time behind bars if they complete requirements such as getting a job and passing random urinalyses. They'll also learn about topics like probation and juvenile justice and will visit a jail to hear about issues it faces and how it handles them.

The training also aims to increase officials' awareness of certain issues so they'll be better informed when making decisions about funding for programs related to those areas, Cleland said. For example, they'll learn about the many services provided by the public health system, such as vaccinations and inspections of restaurants, wells and swimming pools.

County College is not just for newcomers. Hood River County Commissioner Barbara Briggs signed up for last year's training after having been in office for a year and having held

positions on a county budget committee and a school district board. She said she came away with a network of contacts and new knowledge about issues such as the threat that invasive species pose to Oregon's environment.

And the training isn't only for commissioners; it's also for county staff in key positions. This year's class will include an economic development director and Pat Robertson Anderson, the human resources manager for Yamhill County.

Jessica Bates was only a few months into her job as the economic development director for Gilliam County when she signed up for last year's training. Prior to that, she did marketing for a beef company.

"It wasn't until I sat in the classes that I really understood the full scope of the services the county provides," Bates said. "One of the most valuable parts was getting to know commissioners. I now have connections around the state with peo-

ple who are in positions to give me information. Networking opportunities have just popped up all over the place. I just can't imagine a new commissioner starting a job without having the knowledge that I gained at County College."

Twenty-four new county commissioners took office this month; at least 16 of them have signed up for County College so far. At least two incumbents have also enrolled.

Commissioners who have registered for this year's training are Earl Fisher, Columbia County; Bob Austin, Clackamas County; Sandi Cassanelli, Josephine County; Ken Fahlgren, Crook County; Wayne Fording, Jefferson County; Bob Main, Coos County; Charlotte Lehan, Clackamas County; John Raichl, Clatsop County; Leann Rea, Morrow County; George Rhodes, Curry County; Patricia Roberts, Clatsop County; Susan Roberts, Wallowa County; Will Tucker, Linn County; and Bill Waddle, Curry County.

Tickets available now for Ducks Unlimited 5th dinner and auction

Sunset Chapter of Washington County Ducks Unlimited (DU) will host its fifth anniversary fundraiser dinner/auction on Saturday, January 24, at the Verboort Parish Hall. This is one of DU's finest events and an opportunity for everyone to assist with the protection of wetlands and waterfowl habitat.

What is DU?: Ducks Unlimit-

ed is one of the world's largest non-profit Wetland Conservation Organizations. Founded in 1937 at the height of the Great Depression, DU founders were determined to do something about the loss of wetlands and continue today to be the leader in the venture. Today, Ducks Unlimited ranks in the top 200 of the nation's largest charities

and receives high marks for efficiently using members' contributions toward fulfilling their mission. Last year 88 cents of every dollar raised at events such as the one sponsored by Sunset DU went towards conservation. For more information, go to www.ducks.org.

Everyone is going through tough economic times, and that is no different for non-profit fundraisers. DU Sunset committee has been working long and hard to put together an event that will give families an opportunity to get together for

an evening of fun and relaxation with opportunities to stretch your dollars in the protection of the loss of wetlands and waterfowl habitats.

DU hopes you will put January 24, on your list of must-do events and enjoy a great meal catered by Claey's Catering and opportunities to win a variety of prizes from Southwest Airline Tickets (valued \$900.00), BBQs, Gift Cards, Gardening Packages, Hunting/Fishing packages and supplies, Bronze Statues, Art Work such as the New Migration

Maps (limited to 5,000), and too much more to mention.

Registration is available by calling Robbi at 503-628-0463 or 503-333-0171. Costs to attend the event begin at \$30.00 for an individual. Couples, Youth and Sponsorship prices are also available. If you wish to get involved on the committee and/or cannot make the event but want to help save our Wetlands and Waterfowl Habitat with a donation please contact Robbi via phone or at zacrobbi@aol.com.

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Learn fly tying and beat winter blahs

Tired of winter? Learning how to tie flies may be just your answer for the winter blahs.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has scheduled fly tying workshops in

John Day on Saturday, February 21 and in Pendleton on February 28.

"It's an activity you do indoors where it's warm and cozy and come spring, you'll have the flies you need to go fishing," said Mary Hoverson, ODFW Northeast Region education coordinator.

At these workshops, participants will learn the basics of fly tying by actually tying wet and dry flies such as the Wooly

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