

Letters

Help pick Vernonia's Yard of the Month

To The Editor:
 Vernonia Pride will be awarding their Yard of the Month starting May 15. Ballot boxes will be placed at City Hall and Vernonia Sentry Market by April 16, to deposit your yard nomination. A panel of judges will pick the winning yard, and the owners will be notified.

Please help pick the winners by getting your nominations in the ballot box before the 14th of each month. September will be the last month for Yard of the Month this year.

Janelle Thomas Cedergreen
Vernonia Pride

Policy on Letters

The INDEPENDENT will not publish letters that include personal attacks on private citizens. Because of space limitations, preference will be given to brief letters, 300 words or less.

All letters must be signed and include a verifiable address or phone number.

Personnel changes at local fire district

To The Editor:
 To the citizens of Vernonia: As you know, Paul Epler, Chief of the Fire Dept. is no longer with us. The board of directors and the volunteer staff have had to restructure personnel. In saying that, we have taken Dean Smith and put him in a temporary full-time Duty Officer position at the Fire Hall. He is our Volunteer Deputy Chief so he will be able to answer your questions during the day and will be running things up there.

We also have hired Tom Ramsey for a part-time position to do some maintenance around the District, such as driveway inspection and building maintenance duties around the station.

As for the rest of the station, volunteer morale is up and spirits are high. As board members we would like to thank the volunteers for the outstanding job they do and we will back them 100% so let's keep it safe because safety doesn't end at the front door.

VRFPD Board of Directors Vernonia

WGS students will Run for the Arts

To The Editor:
 Washington Grade School is participating in Young Audiences' Run For The Arts, a project that will help our school raise funding for artists' performances, classroom workshops and residencies and even field trips for the next school year. Last year Washington Grade School raised

\$5,127.65 from Run For The Arts. We are hoping to raise \$5000 again this year. With the money raised last year, Washington Grade School students have had two assemblies; Obo Addy African Drums & Dance, and Tears of Joy Puppet Show Stellaluna, based on a popular children's book. Incorporating the arts into all subjects has allowed students a chance to shine in areas where they may otherwise struggle.

Young Audiences is a non-profit arts in education organization that is dedicated to help-

ing Washington Grade School enrich the curricula we offer to our students. During the past school year, Young Audiences has brought artists to over 100,000 students at participating schools. Funds raised at each school pay for community arts programming at that school.

This year's Run will be on Thursday, April 15. During the pledge period in early April, members of the community are encouraged to support Washington Grade School's Run For

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An Oregon Perspective

By Senator Jeff Merkley



Navigating the Recovery Act

Everyone in America knows that we're currently facing a major economic challenge. The nation lost 650,000 jobs in February alone and almost 50,000 Americans are losing their homes to foreclosure each week. In Oregon, our unemployment rate is at almost 11 percent.

Working families are being hit hard by the combined lending, jobs, and mortgage crises. Now is the time to work on the solutions that will put people back to work and keep families in their homes.

In response to this dire situation, I have worked with President Obama and my colleagues in Congress to pass the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, a recovery package that will create or save 3.5 million jobs for American workers, including 44,000 jobs in Oregon. This legislation is a commitment to creating and maintaining American jobs through targeted funding of job-intensive projects and broad-based tax relief. As we invest in jobs to build infrastructure and develop renewable energy, we're investing in the future of our economy.

Already, money has arrived in Oregon to fund valuable projects that are creating jobs. This month, the U.S. Forest Service announced that six Oregon counties – Curry, Crook, Douglas, Josephine, Jefferson and Deschutes – would receive \$10 million to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire and improve forest health. Counties and cities across the state have been notified that they will receive additional funds for highway improvements. And Oregon is set to receive \$22 million for policing and violence prevention programs through the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant program. Many more projects, including transportation, public safety, and renewable energy projects, will be announced in the coming weeks.

Also included in the Recovery Act is a \$3.25 billion dollar increase in the Bonneville Power Administration's borrowing authority that will allow BPA to complete a major transmission ex-

pansion that will take advantage of renewable energy sources and create hundreds of new jobs.

Recently, I spoke with local officials, including Oregon mayors and county commissioners, about the need to put people to work in their towns. These leaders told me that they are ready to put recovery funding to use in shovel-ready projects that will strengthen their communities.

To assist Oregonians in understanding which projects are eligible for funding and how this recovery plan will benefit our state, Senator Wyden and I have put together an Oregon Resource Guide to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The guide includes information on many federal programs and funding opportunities available to individuals, communities and businesses in Oregon through the economic recovery package. You can access the guide on my web site at merkley.senate.gov.

From the Recovery Act, Oregon will receive \$1.62 billion in direct aid and over \$800 million in additional Medicaid assistance over the next two years. In addition, the State, Oregon localities, and Oregon's private sector will compete for millions of dollars in competitive grants. We want to get this information to those who need it so these funds can begin helping Oregonians as quickly as possible.

For more information about how recovery funding will be used in Oregon, please visit Governor Kulongoski's economic recovery web site at recovery.oregon.gov. The governor has created an Economic Recovery Executive Team, which will coordinate and track the funding from the Recovery Act that comes to Oregon. It's important that throughout this process we ensure that funds are being used wisely for programs that are not only shovel-ready, but shovel-worthy.

The Recovery Act is our first step in putting America's economy back on track, but there's still more work to be done. In the coming weeks, I will fight to provide assistance to families facing foreclosure, and restore oversight and accountability to Wall Street and our financial system to ensure that we don't repeat the mistakes that got us into this mess.

I invite you to contact my office with any questions about how the Recovery Act will benefit Oregon. Please call my office at (503) 326-3386 or by e-mail at merkley.senate.gov.

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