

Help Vernonia Health Board move forward

The Vernonia Health Center Board of Directors has contracted with Providence Health & Services for the last decade on behalf of the community to provide health care to the town and surrounding areas. Many of you may not be aware that the Board has quietly provided this service to the community. Even prior to the contract with Providence, the Board (a non-profit organization) has diligently sought to make affordable, convenient and accessible health care for this community a priority for over 30 years.

The building currently occupied by the clinic is owned by The Vernonia Health Center; medical services and staff are provided by Providence. The flood raised several issues as to the safety and accessibility

of the building should another event occur. After thorough study of resources available, The Board has determined that flood-proofing or raising the building is not a viable option. In order for medical services to be accessible during any event, The Board is currently reviewing options to move the clinic.

Providence, likewise, has begun an assessment of how they can best participate in continuing to provide quality care to the region. In order to become a more invested partner with Providence, the Board will be restructuring its organization and business model.

To maintain compliance with new regulations regarding floodway management, the Board has set a deadline for moving by fall 2011. Reorgani-

zation of the business model will be done concurrently with consideration to providing a seamless transition for the community. As a first step of this restructure, the Vernonia Health Center Board of Directors would like to invite applications for new board member positions from any person currently living in the service area. This is an exciting time for members of the community to participate in designing how health care services are provided here in the Upper Nehalem Valley.

To apply, please submit a written summary of experience and why you would like to participate in this process to: Carolyn Keasey, 14426 Keasey Rd., Vernonia, OR 97064.

Update on hospital in Columbia County

The Columbia Health District Board of Directors voted unanimously May 14 to proceed with basic land improvements allowed by law on the property purchased for a 12-bed hospital.

The District has received State clearance to make improvements to the site, located on Millard Road near Division. The work planned is not specific to the hospital but would take advantage of the summer season to do some site work.

Jana Fussell, Certificate of Need Coordinator, said in a letter to board attorney Peter Stoloff, that she had gotten advice from the state Assistant Attorney General, and concluded that the activities are allowable under Oregon law, before a Certificate of Need for the hospital is granted.

Fussell cautioned, however, that the CN process was ongoing, and approval is not guaranteed. The District submitted an application for a Certificate of Need to the Department of Human Resources in November 2008 for a small hospital on 8.3 acres of land. The District has received two sets of clarifying questions from the CN office and is waiting for the application to be deemed complete. When that happens, public hearings will be set.

Work planned includes gravel to protect the site during the rainy season, repair and replacement of the culvert between two existing wetlands, construction of a sewer line off site to connect the property with city sewer, street improvements along Millard, utility access and bioswales for managing storm water runoff.

Tary Carlson, project manager of Inici Group, said the decision allows better use of the public's funds. If the gravel and rock are not placed before the

wet weather, winter work will be difficult. Additionally, he said, this work will provide an opportunity to capture some of the lower costs that currently exist in the construction market, as well as a chance for providing or maintaining jobs in Columbia County.

Other work Carlson said is underway:

- Clark/Kjos Architects are working with the Columbia County Land Development Services to confirm the file for plan review;

- The wetlands and Department of Environmental Quality permitting is expected to be complete by mid-July, allowing site work to proceed;

- Anderson Construction is preparing documents to be put out for bid;

- Work on the site is expected to start after permits have been received.

More information on the hospital is available at columbia.rivercommunityhospital.com.

Seniors may qualify for eye care

Imagine not being able to read the newspaper, watch television, or drive your car. These are a few of the things many seniors have trouble doing due to various eye diseases. In fact, by the age of 65, one in three Americans has some form of vision impairing eye disease. However, with the U.S. economy experiencing a major downturn, senior communities on fixed incomes are struggling to pay for health care.

In light of this, EyeCare America is reminding seniors, "Don't Lose Sight of Your Independence." The national health campaign is intended to remind the senior community about the value of eyesight and encourage seniors 65 and older to call EyeCare America's Seniors EyeCare Program to see if they qualify for an eye exam and care, often at no-cost.

"I had excellent care and I now have 20/20 vision and it is so very good," said Melva Rayles, an EyeCare America patient from Warner, Oklahoma. "Now I can do all of my crocheting and knitting. Thank you all so very much for giving me my eyesight back so that I can do the things I love most, seeing my husband, children, grandchildren and my great-grandchildren. They are not a blur anymore."

EyeCare America's 3-month promotional campaign runs June 1 through August 31. The program provides a comprehensive eye exam and care for any disease detected in the ini-

tial visit for up to one year, at no out-of-pocket cost, for seniors who are without an ophthalmologist (a medical eye doctor). To see if you, a loved one or a friend, 65 and older, is eligible to receive a referral for an eye exam and care, call 1-800-222-EYES (3937), available 24 hours, 7 days a week, year-round.

EyeCare America, a public service program of the Foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, operates one of the largest programs of its kind in American medicine. All eligible callers receive a referral to one of 7,000 volunteer ophthalmologists. Volunteer physicians agree to accept Medicare or other insurance as payment in full, resulting in no out-of-pocket cost to the patient. Individuals without insurance are seen at no charge.

EyeCare America's Seniors EyeCare Program is designed for people who:

- Are U.S. citizens or legal residents
- Are age 65 and older
- Have not seen an ophthalmologist in three or more years
- Do not belong to an HMO or the VA

For a Seniors EyeCare Program referral, those interested may call the toll-free help line 1.800.222.EYES (3937). The Seniors EyeCare Program help line operates all day, every day, year-round.


The Seniors EyeCare Program is co-sponsored by the Knights Templar Eye Foundation, Inc.

Money available for EMS training

Intel recently sent a grant of \$3895.00 to Vernonia Volunteer Ambulance Association in accordance with the Intel In-

volved Employee Matching Grant Program. The Ambulance Association would like to thank Intel Corporation for its generous grant. The grant is a result of Intel Employees volunteering 389.5 hours with the Volunteer Ambulance Association during 2008. The Ambulance Association has earmarked the funds to provide EMT training to new volunteers.

If you would be interested in making a commitment to the Vernonia Volunteer Ambulance Association and receiving EMT training, please contact Randy Carlton or Kristina McCord at 503-429-4600.



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