

The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

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Vibrant fall colors are a beautiful backdrop for travelers on Hwy. 47, like these near Tophill.

Conviction may affect Sgt. Kay's certification

by Clark McGaugh

The City of Vernonia was recently informed of Vernonia Police Sergeant Michael Kay's criminal conviction for Contempt of Court in January of 2000, for violating a restraining



Sgt. Michael Kay

order (related to charges of domestic abuse) while in uniform and on duty as a police officer in Newport.

After receiving this information, the City of Vernonia is continuing its plan to promote Kay to the position of Captain, said Vernonia Mayor Sally Harrison at the October 5 meeting of the City Council (see Council article on page 4).

According to court records obtained by *The Independent*, within a week after Kay was acquitted on charges of assaulting his former fiancée, he chose to frighten and intimidate her while he was on patrol, in defiance of a restraining order.

The question of Kay's veracity was a factor in the trial. When Newport Police Officer Nelson Massey was asked

about Kay's reputation for truthfulness in the police community, he testified, "There are doubts about his truthfulness." Newport Police Officer Jason Mallory was also asked about Kay's reputation in the police community as to his character for truthfulness. Mallory testified "It's less than honest." He gave the same answer when asked about his personal opinion of Kay's truthfulness.

"The State looks at this as an aggravated case," said Special Prosecuting Attorney Elizabeth Carle, "because the defendant used and abused his power and the trust of his job as a police officer to accomplish this intimidation." She went on to say "...the defendant's willingness to use his role as a police officer

See Kay on page 5

Future of Vernonia schools now relies on district voters

Ballots will be mailed October 16 for the Vernonia School District Bond Measure 5-197. The measure asks district voters to approve the sale of up to \$13 million in bonds to be used only for construction of new schools in a location that won't flood.

Once the bonds are sold, the \$13 million will be repaid by district property owners at approximately \$1.90 per each \$1,000 of assessed property value. Originally the bond was to have taken an estimated 26 years to repay, but a federal stimulus grant will now pay the interest, bringing the repayment period down to an expected 15 years.

The School Board recently approved the hiring of the Metropolitan Group to help secure funds for the additional \$24 million needed to complete the \$37 million new school project. Superintendent Ken Cox, at the last bond town hall, assured the audience that, if the bond measure passes, the district, "will not dig a \$13 million hole in the ground." Cox stated that the district can't begin construction until more than the \$13 million is raised, in order to obtain a construction loan for the total needed to complete the project. The \$37 million price tag includes roads and all other needed infrastructure, in addition to the actual building that will house students from Kindergarten through 12th grade. The additional funds are

See Bond on Page 5

End of Fire Season

The Oregon Department of Forestry has declared the end of Fire Season.

Before you start burning, check with your local Fire District regarding burn permits and regulations.

Banks voters asked to approve Fire Department Operating Levy

SEE PAGE 13

Public may watch ballot counting test

The public certification test Columbia County's vote counting equipment will be on Tuesday, October 27, for the November 3, special election.

Testing will be at 2:00 p.m. in the county Election Department at the courthouse, 230 Strand St., St. Helens. The public is welcome to attend.

Ballot drop sites for area voters who do not mail their ballots will be as follows:

- Vernonia Library during regular hours, plus extended hours November 3 from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.
- Mist-Birkenfeld Rural Fire Dist. Main Station during regular hours. Hours on November 3 will be 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Enjoy evening of Music for Mushatt

Don't miss some of Vernonia's local musical talent at the Benefit Concert 4 Darrold Mushatt, October 17, starting at 6:00 p.m. at the Vernonia Community Church on State Avenue, Vernonia.

All performers are donating their services so all funds donated at the door will go to the Northwest Kidney Transplant Fund for Mushatt. Donations of non-perishable food items will also be accepted.

Mushatt, a longtime Vernonian needs to raise \$8,000 before he can get on the transplant list to receive the kidney he needs.