



THE INDEPENDENT

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Vernonia school marching band was a welcome addition to the St. Patrick's Day Parade.

White named to head county Emergency Management

The Columbia County Board of Commissioners has appointed Derek White to the position of Emergency Management Director for the Columbia County's Emergency Management Department.

White began working in the Emergency Management Department as a temporary exercise and training grant employee in October 2008, and was then hired as Emergency Management Coordinator in December of 2008. While at Columbia County, White has been involved in a number of projects, from holding training exercises around the county to reaching out to citizens and businesses through the department's blog, Facebook and

Twitter accounts.

Derek has also been involved in a number of major emergencies, including three presidentially-declared disasters in the course of his current and previous emergency management career.

White's experience includes working as emergency management director for Carroll County, Iowa, and prior to that, in state park law enforcement and hospital public safety, also in Iowa. He has a Bachelor's degree in criminal justice/political science from Buena Vista University and a Master of Public Administration (MPA) from Iowa State University. He and his wife, Samantha, live in St. Helens.

Scope of tunnel repair is decided

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) announced March 16 that they have decided to remove the vertical clearance component from the needed repairs to the Dennis L. Edwards Tunnel on Hwy 26.

The agency had not planned to make a decision on the project until mid-April. However, after a strong, consistent outpouring of public input at a series of public meetings, ODOT recognized concerns about the fragile economic conditions along the coast, and potential impacts to tourism-dependent communities from a public perception of a lengthy road closure.

"While we must ensure that the structure is safe and beneficial for all users," Region 1 Manager Jason Tell said, "we also understand and appreciate the concerns of all who have contributed to this conversation. This decision allows us to move forward with the relining work, which must take place soon."

Construction needed for the reline is expected to begin at the end of this year. ODOT has

decided to design a specific public awareness campaign, incorporating the tourism industry, to remind the public that the coast is open for business.

"We thank the public for the time and effort to share its views, comments, feedback and suggestions in helping ODOT make this decision," Tell concluded.

For more information on the project, go to www.Dennisedwardstunnel.org and www.GetToTheCoast.org.

Most state offices will close on Friday

Oregon's state government sent out this reminder that due to budget reductions, most state agencies will be closed on Friday, March 19, for an unpaid furlough day. This closure day will save the state about \$2 million.

The closure does not affect the state court system, universities, corrections, or public safety agencies.

A complete list of open and closed agencies is available online, at Oregon.gov.

Schorzman fourth in Hearst college journalism awards

Ben Schorzman of Vernonia was recently named as the fourth place winner in college sports writing in the 50th annual William Randolph Hearst Foundation Journalism Awards Program. Fifty-six universities participated in the sports writing competition.

Schorzman, who attends the University of Oregon and is sports editor for the school paper, was named fourth out of 97 entries in the sports writing division. He will receive a \$750 scholarship, and the university received a matching grant for the journalism department. Schorzman started his sports reporting career with *The Independent* while attending Vernonia High School.

The first place winner was Andrew Astleford from the University of Missouri, who received a \$2,000 scholarship. Another University of Oregon sports reporter, Patrick Malee, won fifth place and a \$600 scholarship.

Town Hall tonight for update on schools

Vernonia Schools will hold a Town Hall tonight, March 18, at 7:00 p.m. to discuss the latest on the new schools project, including the newest cost estimates.

The Town Hall will be held in the Vernonia Middle School cafeteria (the green building).

Be sure Census representative is an actual government employee

Better Business Bureau warns that law enforcement in several states has issued warnings that scammers are posing as Census Bureau employees and knocking on doors asking for donations and Social Security numbers.

"Scam artists know the public needs to share information for the 2010 Census and will try to take advantage of the situation," said Robert W.G. Andrew, CEO of BBB serving Alaska, Oregon and Western Washington. "Education about the Census process can help protect your identity and finances."

Participating in the 2010 Census is required by law, but to learn how to identify legitimate Census workers and

avoid con artists, BBB offers the following tips:

Avoid e-mail scams. Census workers may contact individuals by telephone, mail or in person at a home. However, they will not solicit personal information by e-mail. Never click links or open attachments in an e-mail supposedly from the U.S. Census Bureau. Forward fraudulent messages to the Census Bureau at [itso.fraud.reporting@census.gov](mailto:itso.fraud.reporting@ census.gov).

Know what questions to expect. The U.S. Census Bureau will ask questions concerning household residents including name, date of birth, gender, race, phone number, household relationship, and owner or

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