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Letters

Words can't express thanks for VRFPD

To the Editor:

There are circumstances in a person's life when the words "Thank You" seem so inadequate. My wife and I feel this way as we express our gratitude to the volunteer firefighting team that responded to our house fire on E. Bridge St. last February 21st.

It was frightening and heart breaking to see our home burning and stand by helpless to stop the fire.

The response to our call was quick and your performance of duty was professional and compassionate. Our community is very blessed to have such a dedicated team of firefighters and rapid response emergency teams.

Thank you more than we can say for saving our home and caring for our personal safety.

Whenever we hear the fire siren alarms we will be praying for your safety as you respond

to the urgent needs of others.

You truly are our heroes. God bless you all.

**Greg and Phyllis Thornburg
Vernonia**

Moon's actions belie his fiscal promises

To the Editor:

In recent campaign ads, Russ Moon, one of four Democratic candidates for the Columbia County Board of Commissioners, promises voters that he will ensure that taxpayers' dollars are spent wisely. His behavior in Rainier, however, belies his promise. Soon after his appointment to the City Council he launched a clandestine campaign to harass, intimidate, and discredit the city administrator, Chad Olsen, by spreading rumors alleging mismanagement, incompetence, and dishonesty.

As Moon's stalking escalated, Olsen responded in the only ethical way possible. Through his lawyer, he told city officials of Moon's misbehavior,

alleging civil torts amounting to defamation, and violations of Oregon statutes, such as unlawful interference with a public employee in the conduct of his duties.

Olsen offered to refrain from suing Moon and the City of Rainier and resign if the city would agree to pay his full salary, insurance benefits, and Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) contributions for one year. On May 1, 2007 the city council approved the deal and Olsen resigned effective May 4. He subsequently was hired as interim city administrator in St. Helens.

Following Olsen's sacking a source close to the case reported that Moon threatened the city's public works director, Dwayne Barnes, telling him "You're next."

Several weeks passed before a replacement administrator was hired and only after an extensive and expensive executive search. The replacement lasted just a few weeks before resigning. The search process

was repeated and weeks later the current administrator, Lars Gare, was hired.

Somewhere along the way the public works director resigned, taking a better job in a larger community.

No one has revealed how much Moon's vigorous vendetta against Olsen and Barnes cost the city in dollars and wasted time. Some estimate that paying for executive searches, floundering for weeks without an administrator or public works director, and cashing out Olsen, the city's costs might have been a quarter million dollars, or more.

So much for spending taxpayers' dollars wisely!

As a Rainier resident, I am troubled by Moon's run for the County Board of Commissioners. It would be fine if he were no longer part of our city government – but would it be fair to palm him off on the unsuspecting citizens of Columbia County?

**Hank Bartholomew
Rainier**

Salem Scene

By Representative Brad Witt
Oregon District 31



The first in a series of three town hall meetings was dedicated to the topic of health care. I was joined by a panel of experts representing all aspects of health care, and as you can imagine, the discussions were lively.

In holding these town halls, my intent is to provide a forum that will allow the panel to comment on the topic from their perspectives and then respond to questions from the audience. I'd like to share some of the observations that come out of those meetings. Certainly, you will associate with many of them:

Drivers of Health Care Costs

- *Emergency Room-based care for the uninsured*
- *Pre-existing conditions not covered by insurance*
- *Lifelong health issues including diabetes and obesity*
- *High cost of medical technology and drugs*
- *Administrative costs (billing/insurance)*
- *Defensive medicine*

Possible "Cures"

- *Purchasing insurance across state lines*
- *Preventive medicine including improved access to primary care*
- *Personal responsibility for better nutrition and exercise*
- *Disclosures regarding cost prior to hospital*

admissions

- *Tax incentives to encourage employer covered insurance*
- *Tort reform*

Education was the topic of the second in the series of town halls. (*Ed. note: These were held April 100.*)

The third round of town halls will concentrate on the economy. Oregon has been hit hard by the global economic crisis. Come hear what we are doing to try and reinvigorate Oregon's economy. Participate in a far ranging discussion of what we can do right here to get our neighbors back to work.

May 1st - Jobs & Economic Development

Port of Astoria, 11 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

St. Helens Library – Columbia Learning

Center, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Events around the district...

On Saturday, April 3rd, I was honored to be able to attend the Columbia County mEGGa Easter Egg Hunt at the Columbia County Fairgrounds. Under the direction of Evelyn Hudson, and with the support of 100 volunteers, this event celebrated its 10th anniversary with over 1400 children searching for 28,000 plastic eggs! I had a blast!

I also got to attend one of my favorite events, Empty Bowls, which is a soup dinner benefit for the Columbia Pacific Food Bank. Many of our local restaurants go all out to provide a variety of delicious soups to fill bowls hand-made by St. Helens and Scappoose High School Ceramics classes. It's a great joint venture for a great cause.

Lost jobs is real cost of reductions in mail

To the Editor:

As we all know these are hard and difficult times. On top of all this the entity that controls the US Postal System is now apparently proposing to start laying off local delivery people, closing some local post offices, and eliminating mail delivery on Saturday. The people who do this work are our brothers and sisters in our communities and I for one strongly object to them being forced out of their jobs especially in these times. At the least we need to call our senators and congressman on this. Sen. Wyden 503-326-7525; Sen. Merkley 503-326-3386; Congressman Wu 503-326-2901.

**Mike Sheehan
Scappoose**

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Policy on Letters

The INDEPENDENT will not publish letters with personal attacks on private citizens. Preference will be given to brief letters, 300 words or less.

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