

## Where to Find Them

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## Letters

### July 4th parade time changed to 3:00 p.m.

To the Editor:  
 Due to the many activities planned for the 4th of July, and the concerts starting at 4:00 p.m., the time of the parade has been changed to 3:00 p.m.

The parade route will be the same – forming on Weed Ave. and disbanding on State Ave.

As in the past, no ATVs will be allowed in the parade.

**DeLoris Webb  
 Vernonia Pride**

### Addiction treatment smarter than prison

To the Editor:  
 Here are a couple of additions to Noni Andersen's wonderful commentary on the War On People Who Use Drugs. The state of Oregon spends more money to fund the prison system than it spends on higher education. This is more than just an interesting statistic. Fewer than 2% of state prisoners have a Master's degree or a Ph.D. while fully 68% are high school dropouts. There is a direct cause and effect relationship between how much education one has and one's propensity to engage in criminal behavior. Every additional

dollar spent on prisons is one less dollar available to make proven, positive, long-term improvements to the problem: education and treatment.

Albert Einstein defined insanity as doing the same thing over and over again while expecting a different result. Despite a decades-long war on people who use drugs, usage rates among teens is roughly the same today as it was in the 1960s. The reason is simple: addiction is a medical problem, not a criminal problem. Attempting to solve a medical problem with a criminal solution is like trying to improve the flavor of pizza by reading poetry to it.

Marijuana is illegal today because citizens in the 1930s and 40s were duped into believing outrageous lies that had been cut from whole cloth. Aren't you tired of being manipulated? Manipulated by special interest groups like Big Pharma, who want us to believe the only good medicines are the ones to which they hold the patents. Manipulated by the prison industrial complex that claims to keep us safe while profiting from the suffering of harmless people. Manipulated by law enforcement interests who continually recycle the same tired,

self-serving, discredited and scientifically unsupported clap-trap they've spewed for seven decades.

Legalize now!

**Miles R. Wickstrom  
 Vernonia**

### Candidate expresses thanks to supporters

To the Editor:

A special thank you to those Columbia County residents who supported my candidacy in the May primary for Columbia County Commissioner. It was a close race and in the end, I fell short by 107 votes, less than 2% of the total votes cast; a respectable showing. I sincerely appreciate your help.

I'd like to thank the county's department heads, who made time to meet with me and discuss their programs, goals, and challenges. In my interviews with the county's staff, I found that we have a lot of caring and professional people who have been doing more with less nearly every budget cycle. A lot of positive things are being done at the county that the public never hears about, and that's unfortunate.

I'd like to thank my fellow candidates for challenging me to learn more and strive more

to be a better candidate, and the county's citizens who attended the public forums, contacted me personally with their concerns, and spent some time researching the candidates in this race. It takes informed voters to have a successful democratic process. Still, less than half of all the county's registered voters exercised their right to vote in this election and I find that disheartening.

Finally, I'd like to thank my friends and especially my family for allowing me this opportunity to run for office. They have been supportive and understanding as I sacrificed my job and neglected their needs to focus on this campaign. I've missed the girls' softball games, family meals, neglected housework, and been unavailable much of the past 2-1/2 months and still they've stood by me and supported me. It hasn't been easy.

There are a lot of challenges for the county ahead and none of the county's leaders will have it easy. This isn't a job that someone applies for because of the paycheck. It's a job that you apply for because you want to make a difference. I learned a lot from this experience and I think it's important that we all try to BE THE CHANGE that we'd like to see in our leadership. What will YOU do for Columbia County today? Support a local business? Volunteer in a service organization? Help your neighbor? Donate to a local charity? Run for office? It is not a duty of just the County Commissioners to make a difference in our county's future. It's up to each of us. I hope you'll join me in continuing to make our county a better place to live, work, and play. LEAD FROM WHERE YOU ARE. Together, we can make a difference.

Sincerely,

**Shawna Sykes  
 Scappoose**

## Salem Scene

By Representative Brad Witt  
 Oregon District 31



We completed the last of three town halls on May 1st, this one centered on Job Creation and the Economy. They were held in Astoria and St. Helens, and we enjoyed a great response in both locations.

Once again, our panelists were extraordinary! Here's who came to help us out:

- ≈ Brig. General Mike Caldwell, Deputy Director State Defense Force
- ≈ Tom Byerley, Administrator Oregon Employment Division
- ≈ Nick Beleickis, Senior Analyst, OR Workforce Division
- ≈ Mark Elsworth, Regional Director, Governor's Office
- ≈ Ryan Fischer, Portland & Western Railroad
- ≈ Jack Crider, Port of Astoria
- ≈ Paula Miranda, Port of St. Helens
- ≈ John Lansing, Seaport Airlines

I was really impressed with the depth of knowledge displayed by these representatives of both the public and private sectors, but I particu-

larly valued the input from you, our resident experts. You know the things that work in your area. And since Oregon is staring down the barrel of another budgetary shortfall, these discussions were especially timely. They help me to know where I should focus my energies should opportunities arise to obtain whatever limited funding will be available. Here are some of the ideas that were distilled from the comments:

- ◇ Preserve "Heritage Industries" i.e., Fishing, Hatcheries, Timber, Longshoring, Exports, Trucking
- ◇ Create an unloading fee for Tuna
- ◇ Remove barriers to investments
- ◇ Develop a full complement of transportation options
- ◇ Hi-speed internet availability (Broadband) in rural areas
- ◇ Streamline the permitting process; create a one-stop permit process
- ◇ Access to capital (lending & lenders)
- ◇ New economic opportunities – attract new employers
- ◇ Highway 30 – major access to northwest region

Thanks again for making these town halls such a success...but don't stop there. Please

**Please see page 22**

### 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.