

OSU Extension Service to offer canning classes starting in June

Have you thought about learning to can fruits, vegetables, jams, jellies or fish or game this summer? Are you an experienced canner who would like an update on the latest USDA recommendations?

Then plan to attend one or more of the canning classes offered by the Columbia County Extension Service. Classes will be held at the First Lutheran

Church, 360 Wyeth St., St. Helens (on the corner of N. 4th St. and Wyeth St.). Each class will cost \$20.00 or \$70.00 for all four. A small number of scholarships are available. Payment must be made in advance to hold your spot. Class size is limited.

Classes offered will be:
 Tuesday, June 15, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. - Canning

Jams and Jellies.

Tuesday, July 20, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. – Canning Fruits and Pie Fillings.

Tuesday, August 10, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. – Pressure Canning Vegetables and Meats.

Tuesday, August 31, 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. - Canning Tomatoes and Salsa

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For more information and to register for classes, please visit the OSU Extension Service office at 505 N. Columbia River Highway in St. Helens, or call 503-397-3462.

Hospital idea gets another review

The Oregon Public Health Division has begun a review of an amended application for a new hospital in St. Helens, which was submitted by the Columbia Health District. A proposed decision on whether or not to issue a certificate of need to approve the hospital will be issued no later than Aug. 25, 2010.

The decision is called a "proposed" decision because an affected party or the applicant may request a hearing if that party is dissatisfied with the decision.

The application is for a 12-bed hospital to be located at 35311 Millard Road in St. Helens, near the intersection of Millard Road and U.S. Highway 30. Columbia Health District was issued a proposed order on October 22, 2009, denying its previous application because the applicant failed to justify the need for and viability of the hospital. The proposed order has been withdrawn while the amended application is under review.

A public meeting on the ap-

plication will be announced within the next few weeks.

Anyone who has a vested interest in the outcome of the decision may request to have an affected party status. Anyone designated as an affected person under the legal guidelines will receive copies of relevant correspondence, may testify at or request a public meeting on the issue prior to a decision if the request is made at a reasonable time, and may be a party to any future contested case hearing.

State law charges Oregon Public Health officials with reviewing proposals for new hospitals and nursing facilities to ensure health care consumers don't pay for facilities not justified by community needs.

Oregon Public Health will make a copy of the application available for inspection during normal business hours at 800 NE Oregon St., Suite 930, Portland. For more information, or for information about becoming an affected person, please contact Jana Fussell at 971-673-1108.

Algae blooms can be a health hazard

"As folks head out for the summer, we want people who use Oregon's lakes, reservoirs and other fresh waters for recreation to enjoy these areas, but to take precautions if they see an algae bloom," said Jennifer Ketterman, coordinator of the Oregon Public Health Harmful Algae Bloom Surveillance (HABS) program. "We advise people to avoid swallowing or inhaling water droplets from algae-affected water and to avoid skin contact."

Last year Oregon Public Health issued 21 health advisories due to cyanobacteria, or blue-green algae, because of the potential for exposure to toxins. This was an increase over 2008, when 14 health advisories were issued for harmful algae blooms. Also, in 2009 Oregon recorded its first confirmed dog death due to algae toxin in water near the confluence of Elk Creek and the Umpqua River in Douglas County.

Not all algae are dangerous, but some species can produce toxins that pose a health threat to people and animals that come in contact with them, according to Ketterman.

Skin irritation or rash is the most commonly reported health effect. Symptoms could also include diarrhea, cramps,

vomiting, fainting, numbness, dizziness and paralysis.

Children and pets are most vulnerable, and dogs can fall ill almost immediately after ingesting waters affected by toxic algae.

The HABS program relies on agencies that manage water bodies – such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Forest Service, along with other federal and state agencies – to alert it when a potentially toxic bloom has been detected. When water tests confirm that a toxic species is present in a lake at a magnitude that constitutes a health threat, Oregon Public Health issues a health advisory and various community and state partners post signs at the affected water body.

"Because only a fraction of Oregon's waters are routinely monitored for algae blooms, we advise people to be watchful when they are exploring the great outdoors," Ketterman said. "If waters are scummy or cloudy and blue-green, bright green, white or brownish-colored, treat them as potentially contaminated and stay out. It is especially important to keep children and pets from going into questionable water."

Ketterman reminds people that if they arrive at a lake and find an algae bloom in progress, they can still enjoy activities that don't involve water contact, such as camping, picnicking, hiking and bird watching.

Blooms are most prevalent during the summer months, but

they can occur any time of the year. In 2009, Oregon Public Health issued the first algae bloom health advisory of the season on May 21 and lifted the final advisory on Nov. 30.

The HABS program is funded through a federal grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Program objectives include collecting reports of harmful algae bloom occurrences, as well as human and animal sickness; notifying the public when a harmful bloom is underway; and increasing public awareness through education and outreach activities.

More information on harmful algae blooms can be found at www.oregon.gov/DHS or by calling 971-673-0440.

Columbia County Mental Health
800-294-5211

Suicide Hotline
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 or
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