

## Where to Find Them

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 Washington, D.C. 20510-0001  
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**U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley (Dem.)**  
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**Representative Deborah Boone (Dem) House District 32**  
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## Letters

### Pet Party helps pets of people in need

To the Editor:  
 My sincerest thanks to all who made the Pet Party during the First Friday of August a success. I would especially like to thank Ken and Helen Bateman for the use of the grassy area next to the Realty office. What a perfect place to have it!

Thanks to Erika, Tobie, Kathy, Sailor and all who made it a success even though I wasn't able to attend. They pulled it all together and made it a fun, successful event.

And especially thanks to those who enjoyed the party and donated to Bailey's Pantry – the animal division of Vernonia Cares. I'm sure the 4-legged critters appreciate it too. Thank you for opening your hearts to those less fortunate, no matter how many legs they have!

**Carol Davis  
 Vernonia**

### Health Center seeks funds for relocation

To the Editor:  
 As you all know, we were flooded in 2007 and, in previous articles, informed you that the Vernonia Health Center

building is mandated to move out of the flood plain by Dec. 2011.

In the pursuit of that mission, we have found that, unfortunately, there are no funding opportunities available given our current operating partnership.

In order to maintain the level of services this community needs, we have had to pursue other sources of funding available to us, including the basic primary business partnership.

In looking at the opportunities available, we requested the aid of the Governor's Office, Oregon Solutions, O.P.C.A. (Oregon Primary Care Associates), Oregon Office of Rural Health, State Senator Betsy Johnson, U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, U.S. Representative David Wu, State Representative Brad Witt, and Columbia County Commissioner Tony Hyde.

Senator Johnson graciously made introductions to the Coastal Family Health Center, which has been a successful medical clinic practicing the past eight years under the guidance of CEO Jim Coffee, MPA. After meeting with Mr. Coffee and looking at all available opportunities, the Vernonia Health Center Board of Directors

weighed pros and cons, and it was obvious that it would be in the community's best interest to apply for approval of our new partnership with Coastal Family Health Center.

The partnership with Coastal Family Health Center brings with it the following:

- New funding opportunities to move the clinic out of the flood plain.
- Expansion of clinic hours to meet the needs of the workforce, to include the potential for evenings, weekends.
- Continued quality services to the insured, under-insured, and non-insured.
- Expanded dental and mental health services.
- Acceptances of all major insurance carriers.
- Transportation to and from appointments.
- Expanded opportunity for physician recruitment and long term retainment.
- Employment opportunities for qualified local residents.

We will be notified of the approval or denial of this application by the end of this year, 2010. We look forward to keeping you informed. Look for our questionnaire to be included with the school district survey being mailed to your home, and

for updates in local publications as we become aware of new information.

"The mission of the Vernonia Health Center is to participate, as far as circumstances may warrant, in any activity designed and carried on to promote the general health of the community with highly qualified primary and preventive health care services and a professional medical staff; to do so without concern of individual's financial situations."

**Vernonia Health Center  
 Board of Directors  
 President Carolyn Keasey,  
 Ralph Keasey, Darlene McLeod, Marie Krahn, Barb Ervin, Bob Wagner, Cynthia Watts, Wendy Sears, Phillip Darrah, Rebecca McGaugh,  
 and Heather Lewis**

### 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.

## Salem Scene

*By Representative Brad Witt  
 Oregon District 31*



It's hard to believe that we are already two thirds of the way through the summer break... summer took so long getting here! But now that it has arrived, it's so nice to spend time in the sun, especially at all of the summer functions throughout the district. Traditions like these sustain us through the tough times. And speaking of tough times, here is an update on what has been going on to try and get us through those...

### Emergency Board Restores Cuts to Senior and Disabled Budget

You may remember that in my last newsletter, I reviewed various proposals by Governor Kulongoski and his "Reset Cabinet" to address the \$577 million shortfall in the 2009-11 biennium budget. Basically, these recommendations added up to a 9% across-the-board reduction for all General Fund expenditures.

Although the Legislature agreed with this recommendation in concept, many of us could not accept cuts to programs that protect seniors and those with disabilities. These are our most vulnerable citizens. Consequently, the Legislative Emergency Board unanimously voted to restore \$17.1 million in critical services for over 16,000 Oregonians. Included in the restored cuts list are:

- Oregon Project Independence, offering in-home assistance to seniors and those diagnosed with Alzheimer's (2,000 people served last year).
- Medicaid In-Home Care programs for seniors, people with disabilities and mental health issues (over 11,000 clients in three different programs).
- Community Mental Health programs for people without Medicaid assistance (1,462 clients).
- Developmental Disabilities Family Support Program offering assistance with extraordinary costs associated with raising a child with developmental disabilities (1,140 families).

Many of us know friends and family who depend upon these services. We know that, even though they cost money, they are far and away the most cost-effective

way to deliver services. We will continue to analyze other cuts scheduled to go into effect later this year to see if we can mitigate the worst of those reductions while continuing to carefully rebalance the state's budget.

### Unemployment Benefits Extended

As of June, the Oregon Dept. of Employment reported that we now have over 203,000 unemployed Oregonians, down from over 229,000 in June of last year. We are moving in the right direction, but not nearly fast enough. As we recover from this global recession, many are hanging on by their fingernails. On July 22nd, Congress passed an extension of Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC). No individual action needs to be taken. The Department of Employment will automatically move affected individuals back to this program, and those eligible to receive benefits will be notified by mail.

### Federal Assistance for Schools and Medicare

Finally, some sorely needed good news from Washington, D.C. Last week, Congress passed funding for assistance to

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