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Letters

Christmas dinner was very enjoyable for all

To the Editor:

The James Family would like to thank all the volunteers and supporters of the Christmas Dinner held at the Vernonia Senior Center on December 25th. We had a great turnout with over 100 meals served and delivered.

Special thanks to Connie, Art and Georgia for bringing the diabetic desserts, Wes Lubbes who helped in the kitchen and with delivery, Jen and the Wagner family for serving and, of course, Pauline, who always pitches in for worthy causes.

There were many more who helped make this event happen so thank you from all of us and from those who enjoyed the Christmas Dinner in 2010. Have a Happy New Year!

**The James Gang
 Vernonia**

Mortgage program is designed to help

To the Editor:

As the new MORTGAGE PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM begins I would like to remind all homeowners who are unemployed or underemployed and/or finding it difficult to make their mortgage payment to

check out www.oregonhomeownerhelp.org. The Mortgage Payment Assistance Program will be making 12 months of mortgage payments or up to \$20,000, whichever comes first, for those eligible applicants who have applications submitted to the State of Oregon's Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS) department.

Community Action Team, Inc. (CAT) is the agency selected by OHCS to assist homeowners in Tillamook, Columbia and Clatsop Counties with the application process. The online application process started December 10, 2010, and will

run for approximately one month, allowing homeowners the opportunity to do their online application. Homeowners will then receive a call from a CAT intake staff member for an appointment to review their application for submission to the state.

The state will do a random drawing in late January of the eligible applicants to determine those homeowners who receive assistance. CAT has offices in Tillamook, St. Helens, Astoria and Vernonia to better assist homeowners. I encourage everyone to check out this site, whether you are a homeowner or may have family or friends who could be helped with this information.

For more information call Cindy at 503-325-8098, ext. 2303 or e-mail me at cindkp@cat-team.org.

**Cindy Peake
 Housing Center Manager
 Community Action Team,
 Inc.**

Salem Scene

By Representative Brad Witt
 Oregon District 31



Some of you may have heard about the Oregon Homeownership Stabilization Initiative (OHSI), but here is a little more information so we can get the word out to anyone who has been trying to negotiate the mine fields associated

with foreclosure.

Oregon's new foreclosure prevention program is funded by the U.S. Treasury Department, which provided 17 states – including Oregon – with funds for states hit hardest by the recession. Oregon is on the list because of its high unemployment rate. Our state's Housing and Community Services created OHSI to deliver programs throughout the state to help stem the continuing onslaught of foreclosures.

Foremost among these programs is the Mortgage Payment Assistance Program (MPA). MPA will help at least 5,000 Oregon homeowners pay their mortgages for up to one year, or up to \$20,000, whichever comes first. It is the largest of OHSI's programs, funded at \$100 million. I know that many of you will be anxious to learn more, so I am going to direct you to the OHSI website for answers to all of your questions regarding eligibility, etc. The website is: www.oregonhomeownerhelp.org.

Last month, the Oregon Department of Transportation and the Columbia County Safety Commission held a public information meeting regarding the traffic challenges along Highway 30. This route, which is heavily traveled especially during commuting hours, is a major public safety concern. In fact, the section between Scappoose and St. Helens is in the state's top five percent for accidents.

The purpose of the meeting, attended by well over 30 people, was to discuss alternatives for making this stretch of highway safer. ODOT's approach is multi-faceted, including installing rumble strips, lane reflectors, and making the five

miles between Scappoose-Vernonia Road and Achilles Road a Safety Corridor. Under this designation, speed limits would not change but enforcement would increase, and traffic fines would double for those stopped for exceeding the speed limit.

Public testimony was mixed, with some expressing the opinion that speed has nothing to do with the accidents that occur, but rather it is the existence of intersections that allow motorists to turn left with no opportunity to wait in a center lane until the traffic clears. This applies to a particularly deadly intersection, Bennett Road, which has seen three fatalities in the last couple of years. No decisions were made, but a Road Safety Audit is scheduled for early next year, which will lead to a project design in 2012 and implementation in 2014. Why so long? Because Bennett Road is one of 220 safety projects across the state that have been waiting for funding.

I was honored to host a meeting with Governor-elect John Kitzhaber and several other rural State Representatives in December. The focus of the meeting was to discuss issues important to those of us who represent largely rural districts. As Mr. Kitzhaber embarks upon the daunting task of setting his agenda for the next four years, we wanted to impress upon him the importance of supporting Oregon's "heritage" industries of fishing, farming and timber. Each of these industries has something to offer in our economic recovery. Having grown up in Roseburg, the Governor-elect knows how important jobs are to the very existence of rural communities. I am encouraged by our exchange of ideas and look forward to working with him to improve the economic outlook for District 31 and all of Oregon.

When the Legislature meets next in regular session, on January 10, 2011, the situation will be different from every possible perspective. Not only will Democrats and Republicans be sharing leadership in the House of Representatives because of the 30/30 split in election results, but our fiscal condition is unparalleled in its gravity and complexity. In spite of this, I have every confidence that the leadership both parties have chosen is up to the task.

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.

About those New Year Resolutions

Good resolutions are simply checks that men draw on a bank where they have no account.

— Oscar Wilde

May all your troubles last as long as your New Year's resolutions!

— Joey Adams

Now there are more overweight people in America than average-weight people. So overweight people are now average...which means, you have met your New Year's resolution.

— Jay Leno

A New Year's resolution is something that goes in one Year and out the other.

— Anonymous