

Certification of skills is a new tool for job seekers

A skills-based certification is now available across Oregon to help job applicants prove that they are ready to work. Oregon's National Career Readiness Certificate was formally launched on January 25 by Governor Kitzhaber at an event that included presentations by leaders in the effort to make the NCRC available to all Oregonians.

Governor Kitzhaber has included the NCRC as a key element in his workforce development platform, citing the important contribution that skilled workers make to a company's success. He noted that the foundational skills proven by the NCRC, "are the skills and abilities that all of Oregon's recovering companies need now, more than ever, to become and remain competitive, regardless of whether they are in our rural communities or urban centers."

During 2011, an anticipated 55,000 jobs will open in Ore-

gon, and competition for each job vacancy will be fierce. It will be even more important for employers to have tools that help them select and hire new employees. The Governor concluded that, "building the economy is essential to all we wish to achieve for our state. As we work our way out of this recession, we will need every tool to rebuild our competitiveness. The Oregon NCRC provides us one more of tool, and I hope that more Oregon employers will ask for it."

During his remarks, Governor Kitzhaber recognized the tremendous work of the local stakeholders who made it possible to bring the program to statewide scale. Oregon's NCRC has the hallmark of a strong public and private partnership that includes the Oregon Employment Department, Local Workforce Investment Boards, community colleges,

economic development representatives and other community partners.

To earn an NCRC, available at no cost, individuals complete

See No cost on page 16

Jobless rate stays mostly unchanged

Columbia County's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 12.2 percent in December, essentially unchanged from the previous month (12.3%) but lower than the year before (13.4%). The rate was above the statewide rate (10.6%) and the national rate (9.4%). Total employment dropped by 104 to 21,990 and the number of unemployed people increased by 62 to 2,934. Total employment this December was 799 more than one year before and there were 204 fewer people unemployed this year.

Grant will help fund Council training

The City of Vernonia has obtained a grant from CityCounty Insurance Service (CIS), the city's risk management insurer, to help fund training for new council members.

In January, the city council asked Interim City Administrator Bill Haack to arrange training through the League of Oregon Cities.

Haack and city staff identi-

fied CIS as a potential funding source and, on January 20, made the case to CIS requesting the grant. CIS agreed to the unusual request, and made an exception to provide the \$1500 grant to partially fund the training.

The additional \$6,000 needed for the training will come from the city budget and was an anticipated expense.

Merkley meets in every county yearly

From page 1

gon's 36 counties every year. He upheld his pledge in 2009 and 2010 and is continuing that commitment in 2011. Lincoln, Tillamook, Clatsop and Columbia will be his 78th, 79th, 80th and 81st town halls since becoming U.S. Senator.

There will be a town hall in

Clatsop County on Saturday, February 5, at 5:30 p.m. at the Warrenton Grade School cafeteria, 820 SW Cedar Ave., Warrenton.

The town hall in Columbia County will be on Sunday, February 6, starting at 1:30 p.m. at St. Helens Senior Center, 375 South 15th St., St. Helens.

Remember Valentine's Day

Community Calendar

VERNONIA

| | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Alcoholics Anonymous | Mondays | 6:30 p.m., 410 North Street |
| Alcoholics Anonymous | Thursdays (Big Book Study) | 7:00 p.m., 410 North Street |
| American Legion Post #119 | 2nd Thursday | 7:00 p.m., 627 Adams Avenue |
| Booster Club | 2nd Wednesday | 7:00 p.m., VHS Library |
| Boy Scout Troop 201 | Tuesdays | 7:00 p.m., Scout Cabin |
| Boy Scout Troop 860 | Wednesdays | 7:00 p.m., LDS Church |
| Cemetery Beautification Comm. | 2nd Thursday | 6:30 p.m., Library |
| CERT | 4th Wednesday | For Info Call 503-429-3018 |
| Chamber of Commerce | 2nd Wednesday | For Info Call 503-429-6081 |
| Community Coalition | 2nd Monday | 12:30 p.m. School District Ofc. |
| Cub Scout Pack 201 | Scout Cabin | For Info Call 503-429-4250 |
| Friends of the Library | 1st Tuesday | 7:00 p.m., Vernonia Library |
| Girl Scouts, Neighborhood 4-2 | | For Info Call 503-819-0143 |
| Izaak Walton League | 3rd Thursday | For location call 503-429-7193 |
| Kiwanis Club | 2nd & 4th Wednesday | 6:30 p.m., New Hong Kong |
| Lions Club | 1st & 3rd Tuesdays | 6:30 p.m., New Hong Kong |
| Municipal Airport Committee | 1t Wednesday | 6:30 p.m., City Hall |
| Pioneer Museum | | For Info Call 503-429-3713 |
| Public Works Committee | 4th Tuesday | 7:00 p.m., City Hall |
| Vernonia Cares Directors | | For Info call 503-429-1414 |
| Vernonia City Council | 1st & 3rd Mondays | 7:00 p.m., City Hall |
| Vernonia Community PTA | 2nd Wednesday | 7:00 p.m., WGS Library |
| Vernonia Garden Club | 2nd Tuesday | 1:30 p.m., Vernonia Library |
| Vernonia Grange | 3rd Monday | 7:00 p.m., Grange Hall |
| Vernonia Health Center | 3rd Thursday | 6:30 p.m., 510 Bridge St. |
| Vernonia Learning Center | 1st Wednesday | 6:00 p.m., VLC |
| Vernonia Parks Committee | 3rd Wednesday | 6:30 p.m., City Hall |
| Vernonia Planning Comm. | 1st & 3rd Thursdays | 7:00 p.m., City Hall |
| Vernonia Pride | 2nd Thursday | 1:00 p.m., City Hall |
| Vernonia Ridge Riders | Last Thursday | 7:00 p.m., Senior Center |
| Vernonia RFPD Board | 2nd Tuesday | 6:00 p.m., Fire Station |
| Vernonia School Board | 2nd Thursday | 6:00 p.m., District Office |
| Vernonia Sr. Center Board | 2nd Friday | 10:00 a.m., Senior Center |
| Vernonia Transfer Station | 2nd & 4th Saturdays, 8 a.m.-2 p.m. | Behind VHS |
| Vern. Volunteer Ambulance Assoc. | 1st Tuesday | 7:00 p.m., Fire Station |
| Vernonia Volunteer Firefighters | 2nd Monday | 7:00 p.m., Fire Station |
| WOEC Directors | 3rd Tuesday | 7:00 p.m., WOEC |

MIST-BIRKENFELD

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|-------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| M-BRFPD Board Business Mtg. | 2nd Tuesday | 7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station |
| M-BRFPD Board Workshop | 4th Tuesday | 7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station |
| M-B Ambulance Drill | 1st & 2nd Thursdays | 7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station |
| M-B Fire Drill | 1st & 2nd Wednesdays | 7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station |
| M-B Helping Circle | 2nd Monday | 7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station |
| M-B SAR Drill | 3rd Wednesday | 7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station |
| M-B Volunteer Assoc. | 1st Tuesday | 7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station |
| Natal Grange | 2nd Wednesday | 7:30 p.m., Natal Grange Hall |
| T.O.P.S. | Mondays | 9:00 a.m., Main Fire Station |
| Upr Nehalem Watershed Council | For date call 429-0869 | 7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station |

BANKS

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|---------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Alcoholics Anonymous | Friday | 7:30 p.m., Methodist Church |
| Alcoholics Anonymous | Wednesday | 7:30 p.m., Methodist Church |
| American Legion Post #90 | 2nd Tuesday | 7:30 p.m., Main Street Post |
| Banks City Council | 2nd Tuesday | 7:30 p.m., City Hall |
| Banks Fire District #13 | 2nd Wednesday | 7:00 p.m., Station 13 |
| Banks Library Commission | 3rd Tuesday | 7:00 p.m., City Library |
| Banks Planning Commission | Last Tuesday | 7:00 p.m., City Hall |
| Banks School Board | 2nd Monday | 7:30 p.m., Jr. High Library |
| Banks Youth Group | Sunday, Wednesday | 7:00 p.m., UMC Youth Bldg. |
| Chamber of Commerce | 1st Thursday | 12:30 p.m., Fire District Office |
| CPO 14 | 3rd Monday | 7:00 p.m., City Library |
| Everybody's Hometown Band | Tuesdays | 7:00 p.m., BHS Music Room |
| Friends of the Library | 2nd Tuesday | 7:00 p.m., City Library |
| Lions Club | 1st & 3rd Mondays | 7:00 p.m., Brown Derby |
| Sunset Park Assoc. | 3rd Wednesday | 8:00 p.m., Gun Club |
| T.O.P.S. | Wednesday | 7:00 p.m., Administration Bldg. |

COLUMBIA COUNTY (All meet in St. Helens unless otherwise noted.)

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| Board of Commissioners | Wednesday | 10:00 a.m., Courthouse |
| Citizens for Senior Justice | 2nd Tuesday | 7:00 p.m., Sunset Park Church |
| Columbia Comm Mental Health | 1st Tuesday | 5:30 p.m., 58646 McNulty Way |
| Columbia Soil & Water District | 3rd Wednesday | 7:30 p.m., NRCS, 2514 Sykes |
| County Fair Board | 2nd Monday | 6:00 p.m., Fairgrounds 4-H Bldg. |
| County Parks Commission | 3rd Tuesday | Times vary, 1054 Oregon St. |
| Mental Health Advisory Comm. | Quarterly | For Info call 503-397-7211 |
| Comm. on Children & Families | 3rd Thursday | 5:30 p.m. OSU Ext., 505 N. Hwy. 30 |
| Local Alcohol & Drug Plann. Comm. | Quarterly | For Info call 503-397-7211 |