

ODJ's new Top 10 complaint list

Oregon Attorney General John Kroger, in mid-March, recognized National Consumer Protection Week by announcing the Oregon Department of Justice's Top 10 Consumer Complaint List for 2010.

"Scammers and crooked companies continue to target seniors, people who have lost their homes and other vulnerable Oregon consumers," Attorney General Kroger said. "We will continue to aggressively pursue malefactors in and out of court."

The Top 10 Consumer Complaints include telecommunications, international money transfer schemes, homeownership issues, collection agencies, financial institutions, motor vehicle sales, health products, internet retailers, telemarketers and construction contractors.

Attorney General Kroger also announced enhancements to Be Informed, the Oregon Department of Justice's Consumer Complaint search feature introduced last year. Be Informed now allows users to conduct searches by zip code or geographical area, so they can search for complaints against businesses in their neighborhood. Be Informed

can be found at <https://justice.oregon.gov/complaints/>.

The raw data from Be Informed has also been made available at <http://data.oregon.gov/> in a format that private sector software developers can use to create applications, mashups and visualizations.

Oregon has one of the most innovative consumer protection programs in the country. The program operates exclusively on funds recovered from companies that break the law. DOJ in 2010 recovered more than \$22 million for Oregon workers, consumers and investors without spending a single taxpayer dollar.

The Attorney General's Consumer Hotline, at 1-877-877-9392, is staffed by a team of volunteers who fielded 33,529 calls in 2010. The Department of Justice last year also received 12,963 written complaints.

Attorney General John Kroger leads the Oregon Department of Justice. The Department's mission is to fight crime and fraud, protect the environment, improve child welfare, promote a positive business climate and defend the rights of all Oregonians.

ARRA funds Courthouse upgrades

Energy-efficient retrofitting is set to start on two projects awarded a total of \$758,073 in federal funds by the Oregon Department of Energy. The Columbia County Courthouse and the Columbia County Rider Transit Facility received funding for installation of new energy efficient heating and ventilation systems and weatherization. The projects are funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and awarded through the State Energy Program (SEP) and Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program. These funds are designated for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects in public buildings. The U.S. Department of Energy administers the funds, approves the projects and reviews the state's progress.

Expected annual energy savings for each facility from the energy efficiency improvements are:

- Columbia County Court-

house: \$57,000

- Columbia County Rider Transit Facility: \$1,000

Tony Hyde, Chair of the Columbia County Board of Commissioners commented, "As a county, we are facing significant revenue shortfalls. The energy savings from these efficiency improvements will not only help us mitigate some of the shortfall, but provide long term savings."

"We are pleased to have made these awards to the Columbia County Courthouse and Rider Transit Center," said Paul Egbert, manager of the Oregon Department of Energy ARRA team. "These facilities have high public use, and these improvements will save energy each month and provide a more comfortable environment for occupants."

The Oregon Department of Energy received more than 1,100 letters of interest, representing requests of over \$2 billion in Recovery Act funding.

Come learn how to refinish furniture

Spring finally has arrived and so has Murphy Furniture's free finishing clinic. Join owner Mary Murphy-Holub on Saturday, April 30, at 10:00 a.m. for two fun filled hours, as she demonstrates the latest in do-it-yourself finishing and restoring techniques. If you have a refinishing adventure you've been hesitant to tackle, Mary is just the cheerleader you've needed to conquer that perplexing project.

First time finishers will discover easy to use finishes with low VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) and quick dry time. Mary will show the ease of working with glaze effects, milk paints and other decorative finishes. Also to be demonstrated is a simple wipe on, wipe off product called Restore A Finish. Many finished wood surfaces that seem to need a complete refinishing job can be restored in a few minutes, instead of being stripped and refinished. All clinic attendees will receive special values on everything needed to complete their task.

If you are unable to make the clinic, stop by Murphy's any time for expert advice on common stripping and staining questions.

To reserve a spot at the clinic, call Murphy's Furniture at 503-640-1124, email mary@murphysfurniture.net or stop by the store at 2962 Baseline (T.V Highway) in Cornelius.

Bridge work set on Highway 26

The Oregon Department of Transportation is currently removing and replacing the Volmer Creek and Johnson Creek Bridges on U.S. 26 just east of U.S. 101.

There is 24-hour flagging between midnight on Sundays and 3:00 p.m. on Fridays at Milepost 2 and 3, with single lane alternating traffic during the demolition of the existing bridges and construction of the new bridges. Delays are not anticipated to be over 20 minutes.

The majority of the work is anticipated to occur in the months of April through July, with completion expected in October of this year.

For more information on the t project, visit our web site at http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION2/US26_VolmerandJohnsonCreek.shtml.

Larger Open Air Market approved

At the April 18 Vernonia City Council meeting, Mayor Josette Mitchell reported that League of Oregon Cities Member Services Director Jennie Messmer is working through the applications received for the city administrator position and has asked for a meeting with council in two weeks. Council agreed to a special meeting on May 9 for this purpose.

Council heard, and approved, a request to expand the Open Air Market this year. The Open Air Market is being moved to Saturday (from Friday evening) from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., and will run from June 4 through October 1. The market will continue using space in the Vernonia Community Learning Center courtyard, but will also use part Madison Avenue, from Bridge Street to the driveway of Grey Dawn Gallery (with the street closed to traffic).

In other business, the council:

• Heard a presentation on rave parties, given by DeAnna Pearl of the Vernonia Prevention Coalition;

• approved, and the Mayor appointed, Mitch Seibert to the Vernonia Economic Development Committee;

• approved an agreement with Columbia 9-1-1 Communications District for operation and maintenance of the radio site on Corey Hill;

• agreed that Councilor Marilyn Nicks and Interim City Administrator Bill Haack should act as an Ad Hoc committee on the scope of a project on "improving communications" that was requested by Nicks;

• approved resolutions 12-11 and 13-11 for the next two flood acquisition projects.

The next regularly scheduled council meeting will be May 2, at 7:00 p.m. in city hall.

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