

## CASA gets new volunteer coordinator

Debi Sakamoto of Portland has joined the staff of Columbia County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) for Kids as its new part-time volunteer coordinator.

Sakamoto had volunteered as an advocate for two years with the CASA program serving Multnomah and Washington counties. She previously was a regional vice president for public affairs with Key Bank. "We are so excited to have someone with Debi's diverse experience as a CASA, a volunteer coordinator and in the corporate world," said executive director Kathryn Bourn.

Hiring a part-time volunteer coordinator was made possible by a grant from the Oregon Community Foundation.

Sakamoto will enable the program to support more Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs), Bourn said. CASAs are trained volunteers assigned to advocate for one foster child or siblings. In order to comply with National CASA Association standards, local programs have to provide the equivalent of one full-time coordinator for every 30 CASAs, Bourn explained. The program currently has 21 CASAs serving 57 children.

"While we have doubled our number of CASAs in the past year, we are still struggling to keep up with the need to pro-

vide advocates to foster children," Bourn said. The number of Columbia County children entering foster care skyrocketed in the last half of 2011, Bourn noted.

"We have so many children coming into foster care that the Department of Human Services is having to place them in foster homes outside the county. That's unusual. Columbia County used to have enough non-relative foster homes to take care of all of its children coming into foster care and even take foster children from surrounding counties," she added. The increased number of foster children also resulted in Columbia County Circuit Court adding additional hearing days for its juvenile-dependency cases.

Columbia County DHS currently has more than 150 open cases affecting 250 abused and neglected children.

"Foster children who have a CASA have the best chance for a successful life," Bourn said. She cited studies showing that children with a CASA are more

likely to experience stability if they return home to their parents and more likely to be adopted if they aren't able to safely return home.

CASA for Kids is currently recruiting new advocates for its upcoming training. The 30-hour training begins Tuesday, February 28, in St. Helens and Wednesday, February 29, in Rainier. The free training continues on Monday and Wednesday evenings and on Saturdays through March 12 at the Riverside Community Church in Rainier.

Bourn emphasized that CASAs come from all walks of life and no special education or career experience is required to become an advocate. "We currently have CASAs who have been mechanics, EMTs, educators, nurses, realtors, homemakers, and business persons," she said.

For more information or to apply to become a CASA, visit the program's website at [www.casaforkidsinc.org](http://www.casaforkidsinc.org), email info@casaforkidsinc.org or call 503-366-4133.

## Turn in fish tag for chance to win

Anglers who turn in their 2011 combined angling tag before May 18, 2012, could win one of 100 outdoor products, including a complete drift boat package.

Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODFW) is sponsoring the promotion to try to increase the number of returned tags. Currently, the department

**See Fish on page 19**

## Bits & Bites

By Jacqueline Ramsay



Gee Whiz, here it is Feb. 1st, 2012. Just think of all the folks that will be able to have a REAL birthday this year. I've never met anyone with their birthday on the 29th, but I do know a couple of girls born on April Fools day, both are quite smart. I suppose I am getting better now because my surgeon gave me my freedom papers the other day, but I seem to have a problem with my tongue. Jim asked me, "What's for dinner" last night, and without the blink of the eye I said, "Thumbstick and Dries." Okay we both heard it and Jim says, "What?" I started laughing and answered (though my brain registered correctly) again, "Thumbstick and dries." Haven't figured out yet what language it is, but it's not even close to pig Latin. I am now checking my brain wave oftener before I speak. (I ate the thigh and my granddaughter ate the drumstick.) That was more than a trip of the tongue.

Took my walk by the forsythia bushes recently and they are full of buds of all sizes, so a word for you folks that are lucky enough to live where the pussywillow grow, run out and see how they are coming along. I'd sure love to tromp out in the woods to see them and maybe cut a few for a vase full of them.

It's now 2/8/12 and I'm just home from Vernonia. The Golden Oldies (all 13 of them) sure thrilled my soul. So here I go again on a "sing me a story trip."

Have You Ever Been Lonely? Well take a trip and Sail Along Silvery Moon for Just a Little Lovin' in Your White Sport Coat, but if you are worried about Your Cheating Heart and the Devil Woman, well relax and listen to La Bella Roma, then you can start worrying about the Blues, Stay Away From My Door, Don't Think Twice about Ridin, Hidden Tear Drops in My Heart. Now you can reminisce with Maggie, When You and I Were Young and just being Five Foot Two, Eyes of Blue, while sitting beside Cool Water. You may be Crazy to think about Will The Circle Be Unbroken while visiting with Mexicali Rose and The Rose of San Antonio while you are walking the Country Roads down to meet The Robert E. Lee and you and a friend are harmonizing to You Are My Sunshine and listening to the Alley Cat cry as you Walk Across Texas to the Milk Cow Blues. I got to thinking you're Nobody's Darling But Mine As Far As I'm Concerned. It's Night Time in Nevada with my Heart Over Mind. In the distance we heard the Cattle Call, along with the strains of Bonaparte's Retreat and the Sheik of Araby. It got us to thinking of the Blue Moon of Kentucky and Randy, The Rodeo Clown while we Were Gathering Flowers For The Masters Bouquet. The Swiss Miss was singing Chime Bells, after which every one got up and did the Sugar Foot Blues.

Good Night Ladies, Til We Meet Again.

## 50 Years Ago This Month

The February 25, 1988, issue of *The Independent* included the following news story on page 7:

Howard Hopkins was appointed by Mayor Wally Vaughn to fill the vacancy created on the Vernonia City Council by the resignation of Tom Buffington in January.

A commercial tree farm manager, Hopkins was also given his first assignment for the city – assess the city's timber and determine where the city can log in order to raise \$10,000 toward the addition to the fire hall. The addition will house the city's ambulance.

The non-profit corporation that operates the Vernonia Medical Center asked permission to use a city owned lot behind city hall, either by lease or donation, to build a new facility.

After discussion, council members declined on the basis that the lot is too small for a medical center and that the space is needed for city hall parking. Long-term plans to move the police department into the space now occupied by ambulances, when the ambulances are moved, will also create a need for more parking space, the council agreed.

City Recorder Don Dunaway was instructed to inquire whether the city could lease property given to them by the state, for construction of a new city hall, to the medical center.

In other business, the council:

Approved increasing the fee for a building permit to \$10;

Approved payment of \$11,048.75 to C-Com for ambulance and fire department dispatching;

Agreed to donate fencing to the Cemetery Committee for use at Pioneer Cemetery;

Directed Dunaway to send a letter to Rep. Les Aucoin expressing concern over the FCC ruling that removed control of cable rates from local government.

## President's Day is February 20

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