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Letters

Great support for the Roberts' benefit

To the Editor:

I want to take this opportunity to thank a lot of people for the success of the spaghetti feast on Saturday, March 24th, for the benefit of Ryan Roberts' kidney transplant.

First, to all who bought tickets and to those who came to the dinner with their hearts and pocket books open so generously, thank you.

We were able to raise \$1600 – much more than expected, but I shouldn't have been surprised knowing this community as long as I have. Whenever the alarm is raised for one of our own, we Vernonians rise to the occasion.

A special thanks goes out to Mario and Leatha, Pat, Gayle, The Free Wheelers and all the helpers.

Last but not least, a grateful shout out to all who donated to the silent auction. Great job, well done!

Once again, thank you all!

**Sally Harrison
Shirlee Daughtry
Vernonia**

Donations needed for ongoing benefit

To the Editor:

The sale up at Lincoln Grade School will be open every weekend through May 1, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

I need donations!

Two quality items per family and then spread the word. Plus, come up and spend your money.

All money will go to the Ryan Roberts' Kidney Fund at US Bank.

Thank you,

**Sunny Suppes
Vernonia Free Wheelers**

Continuing conflicts roil CHD waters

To the Editor:

Jim Huffman is the attorney working to get to the bottom of the fraudulent conveyances perpetrated by the old CHD [Columbia Health District] board, the county commissioners and the City of St. Helens. He is working pro bono. Michael Clarke is the attorney working with him. He is working pro bono.

Mr. Huffman has filed a law-

suit in order to stop the further transfer of assets from the taxpayers to the county, a private foundation, and the City of St. Helens. My name is Nancy Whitney. I am Mr. Huffman's and Mr. Clarke's litigation assistant and I also work without pay.

Being in this position I am privy to all the information gathered by the attorneys (as you can be by logging on to nohospitalthtax.info). I am frankly appalled with how far back this deception reaches.

Christopher Armstrong-Stevenson is a retired gentleman now living in St. Helens. He retired after 17 years with the State of Oregon as the person in charge of the Certificate of Need program and the Rate and Budget Review program. His additional credentials are impeccable. In October 2004, after retirement, he wrote in opposition to implementing a tax to build a hospital. He states "In my opinion, the C/N is HIGHLY UNLIKELY to be issued". He further states under "Who benefits from a hospital in St. Helens?" – "LEGACY SYSTEMS – will benefit substantially from the "gift" of a brand-new hospital facility".

He further states under this heading "BOISE CASCADE – having a hospital at St. Helens will enable Boise to discontinue or reduce the healthcare services it currently provides at its plants in the area and will allow the Company to pass on those costs to a publicly funded facility". Mr. Armstrong-Stevenson's entire report may be viewed at nohospitalthtax.info.

It was in Boise's interest to support the new hospital by passing on its health care costs. Boise Cascade has been very successful in lobbying for a great many expenditures, including: 1) the six million dollar CRFR [Columbia River Fire & Rescue] practice facility which was implemented without the vote of the people; 2) a \$250,000 gift from the Columbia County Board of Commissioners as an inducement to stay in St. Helens, gifted shortly before the pulp plant was closed permanently; and 3) bankrupting the St. Helens city sewer system by stopping payments for treatment when they closed the plant (thus the big hike in rates passed on to the taxpayers). In contrast,

Scappoose required Steinfelds to provide capital for its sewer plant expansion instead of paying it out of rates, so that when Steinfelds closed, the taxpayers weren't left holding the bag.

OK – let's see who the players were when all of this history was happening. First we have the county commissioners who, by the way, were responsible for getting the "hospital" tax measure on the ballot without having to collect signatures: Tony Hyde (now claiming to be both a commissioner and a trustee for the CHD and who is fighting to get the Millard Road property given to the City of St. Helens free of charge); Rita Bernhardt (sic) (retired commissioner who now sits on the board of the public foundation which is the recipient of hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayer money); and Joe Corsiglia (who lost in his second bid for a commissioner's seat).

Second, we have the Columbia Health District Board members at that time: Jay Tapan, who was later hired by Diane Dillard (employee of Boise Cascade) as "fire chief"; Gary Heidi who was a vocal member of the CHD board right from the beginning, through all the poor decision making, and ended up on the board of the private foundation for a time; Laura Tomanka who was a board member of the private foundation since 1999 and who re-

signed when opposition to the "hospital" became a hotly disputed issue; Karen Punch and Paula Becks who resigned many years ago.

The further we research the more we uncover. I don't know whether the "good ol' boy system" or nepotism is a better description for what has happened in our county. What it boils down to is that I, along with most of the people, have just sat back and let it happen. Well, it's time to stop doing that. You all did great on your votes for Measure 5-209 and in electing a new CHD board who have stopped the 38 cent tax. Now it is time to replace those commissioners who have participated in this irresponsible plunder of our county. YOU NEED TO VOTE FOR A CHANGE.

**Nancy Whitney
St. Helens**

Ed. note: The Columbia Health District does not include Vernonia, Mist and Birkenfeld.

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.

Ike Says . . .

From page 2

much water is flowing down Rock Creek on a daily mean, but how much water do Vernonians use? This answer is actually quite easy since the water plant records daily water plant production numbers, which are metered. These records tell us that, over the last ten years, we have produced an average of 87.6 million gallons of water per year. This is an average of 240,000 gallons per day and, when divided by the gallons represented in 245.36 cubic feet per second per day, we come up with a total impact upon the aquatic resources of .00151, yes folks slightly more than 1/10 of 1%. A quick Wikipedia search found a report from the City of Portland stating that their yearly impact on the Bull Run Creek watershed is around 23%, so folks, we Vernonians have nothing to be ashamed of, we have a nearly immeasurable impact on local stream resources, and when we do, we do our part and reduce usage under the curtailment ordinance.

What I finally came to realize, is that some people are caught up in what I now term Pseudo-Conservationism (false-conservationism), it is a trendy tool for making people believe it is the right thing to do. It is hip to be "green" these days, but it really isn't hip to base decisions on false assumptions. Let the facts speak for themselves and then make a decision. My column next month will include some ways a household can be truly conservative with water, while maintaining our accustomed standards for quality of life.