

Vernonia Cares Food Bank announces higher income guidelines for help

Vernonia Cares Food Bank has announced increased income guidelines for USDA foods which are included in the emergency food boxes given by their organization. USDA foods include 10-20 different types of foods included in the monthly emergency food boxes which also contain other foods purchased through the Oregon Food Bank. The typical emergency grocery order is provided to registered applicants once a month. It contains about three to five days worth of food and is available for residents living in the Vernonia, Buxton and Timber area.

"Our target population is listed below," said Executive Director Sandy Welch. "However, we are aware that what your income was last month might look very different this month if you just became unemployed. You need help this month; you didn't need help last month. That is taken into consideration. We also have DHS applications on hand and can help by faxing completed forms to St Helens for clients who may qualify for SNAP Cards (formerly called food stamps). In a time when people are discouraged by so many things, we are thankful for our generous donors," Welch concluded.

Vernonia Cares currently helps about 400 people per month. Anyone already receiving food stamps is eligible for an emergency grocery box once they are registered.

USDA/TEFAP 2012 ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

GROSS INCOME PER MONTH	
1 person household	\$1,722
2 person household	\$2,333
3 person household	\$2,944
For each additional member, add \$611 gross income per month.	
(Gross income is for all members of the same household.)	

Registration requires listing an address and the names of all residents in that household. Age categories are asked for statistical purposes, but are not required and will not affect whether a household receives groceries. ID is required to prove applicants live within the Vernonia, Timber or Buxton area. By signing the application, the applicant verifies their eligibility due to income or being a SNAP (food stamp) recip-

ient. USDA commodity foods are for home consumption only and may not be sold, traded, bartered or exchanged for services. Vernonia Cares Food Bank does not discriminate on the basis of race or color, gender, national origin or ethnicity, religion, disability, familial status, marital status, military status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or age.

Bread products are available to both clients and the public at Vernonia Cares Food Bank once a week. The food bank makes the same bread products available to the public at the Vernonia Senior Center (446 Bridge Street), Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m., and at Vernonia Community Church (957 State Street) on Sunday from noon-1:00 p.m. Please enter the church by way of the gym door off A Street.

Donations are accepted to help pay transportation to bring the bread daily from Forest Grove Safeway to Vernonia. The food bank pays for the service, and Welch is asking those who can afford it, to donate \$1 when they pick up the bread products. "We don't look to make a profit," Welch said, "just to break even." The daily trips are necessary to keep the supply coming.

For more information, call 503-429-1414. The food bank is supported by grocery donations, food drives, a financial grant from United Way of Columbia County, individual and business donations, and various fundraisers run by volunteers. Donations are tax deductible.

Vernonia Cares Food Bank is open Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. It is located in the American Legion Building at 627 Adams Avenue. Donations may be mailed to Vernonia Cares, P.O. Box 126, Vernonia, OR 97064-0126.

Jobs bill could help small towns

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ment of Agriculture.

The legislation has also received support from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

The bill creating the Rural Energy Savings Program will

After discussion of a possible sewer fee increase (see story on page 1), the Vernonia City Council, at their April 2 meeting, discussed a Parks Committee recommendation to use up to \$15,000 from the System Development Charges (SDC) in the Parks Fund of the budget. SDC funds can be used only for improvements, not for regular operating expenses. The improvement in this case would be an automated Pay Station at Vernonia Lake to take day use fees. The non-resident day use fee is \$5.00 per day. The current system requires visitors to take an envelope, fill out information, add \$5.00 cash or check, and place the envelope in a locked box. The envelope stub then goes on the car dashboard to show payment.

The automated system would save staff time now spent keeping the envelopes stocked, picking up the envelopes, and counting the money (and some come back empty). The automated system would print out a daily receipt that could be easily reconciled with the money in the machine. If the city finds significant savings from the new machine, additional machines may be purchased for use in other parks. Council approved the expenditure, but asked City Administrator Bill Haack to include some type of performance criteria when selecting a vendor for this purpose.

Council also approved an initial expenditure of up to \$15,000 to replace water meters. Some water meters in the city are 40 to 50 years old, even though anticipated meter life is only 20 years. The city wants to start a program of replacements that may run for two or more years. They will monitor the change in water flow to those meters that are replaced to see how accurately the older meters are reporting

water use.

A perpetual utility easement through Anderson Park was approved that will allow West Oregon Electric Cooperative (and other utilities) to underground the utility service from Anderson Park to their pole yard.

Aaron Miller, Principal of Washington and Mist grade schools, told council about a project scheduled for April 19 when a number of students will help remove invasive species near the new wetlands, replace them with native species, and do some cleanup work near the Anderson Park bridge to help some already planted trees compete with canary grass.

In other business, council:

- gave Mayor Josette Mitchell consensus to appoint Nick Galaday to the Public Works Committee,

- accepted DeDe Webb's resignation from the Parks Committee, with appreciation for her 16+ years of volunteer service,

- accepted resignations from the Economic Development Committee of Bud Dow, Tim Bero, Chris Scheuerman, Jeff Hopkins, Karin Davenport and Sally Harrison. Some of these resignations were made neces-

sary by ordinance changes in the number of members allowed to serve on a committee. There is now one open position on this committee.

- gave permission for the Keasey family to place a memorial stone on their plots at the Pioneer Cemetery.

The next regular council meeting will be April 16, at 7:00 p.m. at city hall.

No change in Feb. job rates

Columbia County's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 9.4 percent in February essentially unchanged from the previous month (9.6%) but lower than the year before (11.5%). The rate was higher than the statewide rate (8.8%) and the national rate (8.3%). Total employment rose by 29 to 22,339 and the number of unemployed people rose by 109 to 2,656. Total employment this February was 399 more than one year before and there were 299 fewer people unemployed this year.

By comparison, the rate in Portland was 8.1 percent in February.

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