

# NEWS from BENTON COUNTY

At Your Service...Every Day since 1847



December 2014

Benton County, Oregon

Volume 6, Issue 4

## Modrell leaves record of service



*Linda Modrell,  
Benton County Commissioner*

Over the past 16 years, Linda Modrell has held her dream job as a Benton County Commissioner. And this January, she will be stepping down after announcing about one year ago her plans to retire, not seeking a fifth term in office.

Modrell will leave behind a county government that no longer relies upon rented office space, opened three parks in the past decade and continues to find ways to help weather the ongoing reduction of the now nearly non-existent federal timber dollars that helped support counties and schools.

During Modrell's tenure as part of a three-member board, the county consolidated its administrative services at the Sunset Building on Research Way, which also houses the Juvenile Department, Assessor's Office and OSU Benton County Extension Service office. The board looked to future rail needs and purchased the right-of-way

along the Bailey Branch rail corridor. It also found ways to operate more efficiently, providing the most bang for the buck on public projects, including by recycling small bridges and implementing biennial budgeting, which Benton County is the only Oregon county to do.

First elected in 1999, Modrell came into office with a background in health policy - having served on three of the teams that developed the innovative segments of the Oregon Health Plan. She also worked at Oregon State University primarily for the Extension Service and the College of Agricultural Sciences. There, she managed business services for Extension and moved on to develop an administrative computing system for the College of Agriculture.

Once in office, Modrell and her colleagues proved to be ahead of their time in 2004 by voting to allow equal access to marriage for same-sex couples. This came several

years before the Supreme Court found it unconstitutional to deny marriage to same-sex couples. As a result, she and her colleague Commissioner Annabelle Jaramillo jointly received the Human Rights Campaign 2004 Equality Award and in 2005 Modrell delivered a paper at Oxford University in England regarding the same-sex marriage issue in Oregon.

Her interests were wide-ranging but she made major time commitments on transportation, health, water and governance issues. In addition, it is of note that she is the first commissioner from Benton County in more than 50 years to serve as president of the Association of Oregon Counties.

Modrell holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Oregon State University and is 2005 Distinguished Alumna for Linn-Benton Community College. She currently serves on the LBCC Foundation Board of Trustees.

## There's a new Benton County commissioner coming on board

For the first time in about 14 years, Benton County will have a new commissioner. Anne Schuster, a long-time Corvallis School District School Board member, was elected in November 2014 to fill the position to be vacated by Linda Modrell, who retires at the end of the year after 16 years of service.

Beginning her career as a research plant scientist, after the birth of her children Schuster turned her attention to volunteer efforts locally and statewide. Her focus was directed toward education and sustainability, merging the two when possible.

Locally she started on the Corvallis School Board, where she reached the position of Chair, and the Corvallis Sustainability Committee. Regionally and statewide, Schuster held positions on the Oregon School Board Association, Benton County Solid Waste Advisory Committee, Oregon

Green Schools and the Sustainable Oregon Schools Initiative.

As a program host and on the board of Leadership Corvallis, she experienced the ins and outs of Corvallis and Benton County and said she felt fortunate to become familiar with the community's up-and-coming community leaders. Participating in the Local Benton Advisory Committee for the InterCommunity Health Network Coordinated Care Organization has acquainted her with the new local health system.

Schuster has been an active member of many political action committees - including the Health and Public Safety Levy that funds many Benton County services in those arenas. In her spare time she gardens 5 acres, growing much of her own food. Her watercolor art reflects her property and the Willamette Valley.



*Anne Schuster,  
Benton County Commissioner Elect*

### Meeting Information Online

The Benton County Board of Commissioners Office is posting meeting minutes, agendas and packets containing information about discussion topics online.

To find it, go online to [http://www.co.benton.or.us/boc/meeting\\_documents\\_page.php](http://www.co.benton.or.us/boc/meeting_documents_page.php) and select the meeting date for which information is desired. For packet information, the latest version of Adobe Reader may be required.



Visit Us Online! [www.co.benton.or.us](http://www.co.benton.or.us)

## Driving safety is paramount during winter weather

Even in the mild climate of the Willamette Valley, the area can be subject to difficult driving conditions due to snow, ice, flooding and other issues. Careful driving is of the utmost importance when navigating these situations.

When driving conditions are treacherous, unless it is necessary to travel, people are advised to stay home or, if it is available, use mass transit such as the city bus service. But if it is necessary to drive, make sure vehicles are ready for the driving conditions.

Benton County has a snow and ice policy that guides the prioritization of clearing county roads of snow and ice based on the amount of traffic and access concerns for emergency vehicles. That plan, complete with a prioritization map, is available online at [http://www.co.benton.or.us/pw/documents/snow\\_04.pdf](http://www.co.benton.or.us/pw/documents/snow_04.pdf). Following are ways to prepare and safely travel in adverse weather conditions:

### Plan Ahead

- Check road conditions, whenever possible, on [www.TripCheck.com](http://www.TripCheck.com) or during adverse weather conditions impacting county roads, at <http://www.co.benton.or.us/pw/>;
- Check weather forecasts and adjust travel plans accordingly;

- Let someone know travel plans and check in when arriving at the destination; and
- Allow plenty of extra time to reach the destination.

### Prepare the Vehicle

- Keep fuel tank at least half full;
- Clear snow, ice or frost from windows, wipers, lights, hood and mirrors;
- Clean and check headlights, brake lights and turn signals;
- Be sure tires are properly inflated and in good condition;
- Carry tire chains and know how to use them; and
- Keep an emergency kit in the vehicle.

### On the Road

- Drive rested, alert and sober;
- Always buckle safety belt and make sure passengers do, as well;
- Slow down and don't drive faster than vision permits. Posted speed limits are set for clear and dry conditions, so a slower speed likely is safest;
- Increase following distance to ensure stopping distance and reaction time. Be prepared for emergency stops by other vehicles. Keep at least three times the normal following distance from traveling on snow and ice;

- Use windshield wipers and the defroster, as needed, to maximize vision;
- Drive with low-beam headlights on so other drivers can see;
- Turn off cruise control;
- Signal early and brake gently before making turns and approaching intersections;
- Do not change lanes or pass other vehicles unless absolutely necessary; and
- Watch out for snowplows, sanders and de-icing equipment.

### In Case of Trouble

- Treat traffic signals that are not working as an all-way stop;
- Stay away from downed power lines;
- Don't drive through standing or moving water;
- In low visibility conditions, use the right edge of the road or roadside reflectors as the guide;
- During heavy rain, use center lanes as a guide, without straddling the yellow line;
- During a skid, ease the foot off the accelerator and turn the steering wheel in the desired direction of travel;
- When deer or other animals are spotted, slow down and be ready to stop until safely past them;
- Don't blaze new trails in unplowed roads or through snowdrifts; and
- Respect road closures.

## Partnership yields stormwater facility

Benton County, Oregon State University, Oregon Water Resources Department and other partners have collaborated to build a Green Stormwater Infrastructure Research Facility - an Oregon BEST Lab - at the county's Avery Complex.

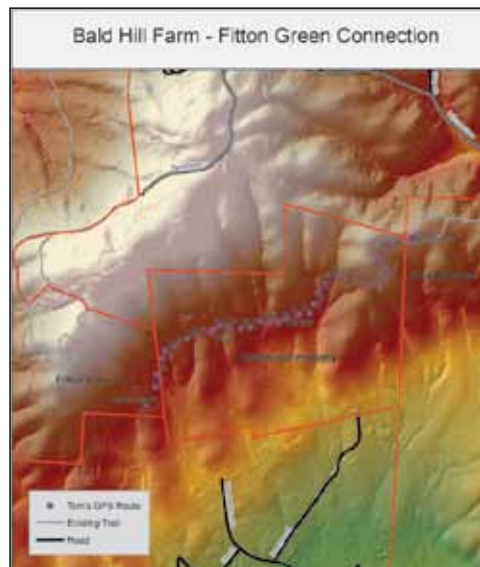


The county and its partners unveiled the facility at a community event in October at the facility, which is located outside the Benton County Avery Facility, 360 SW Avery Ave., in Corvallis. The event included a tour and demonstration of the completed project.



Those in attendance learned about the partnership project to enhance water quality, provide long-term research and support stormwater and water quality education and outreach. Partners in the project include Benton County, Oregon State University, Oregon BEST, State of Oregon Water Resources Department and the Pacific Northwest Transportation Consortium.

## Partnership benefits trail connectivity



A partnership between Benton County Natural Areas and Parks Department, Greenbelt Land Trust, Community Services Consortium and the City of Corvallis Parks and Recreation Department is creating greater trail connectivity for hiking in the Bald Hill area near Corvallis.

With the 2013 acquisition of Bald Hill Farm by the Greenbelt Land Trust, the appeal and benefits of a trail connecting Bald Hill Farm and Bald Hill Park with Fitton Green Natural Area became even more apparent. This has been discussed as a potential connection by trail advocates at various levels ever since Fitton Green was considered for public open space purposes more than 20 years ago.

Local resident Andrew Martin purchased the parcel of land between Fitton Green and the farm. He also allowed Benton County to establish an easement over the property, thereby making the long-sought connector trail possible. The trail was constructed over the past summer and a dedication ceremony took place in September. Sections of the trail still need surface gravel and this work will be completed over the next several months as weather allows.

Partnership made this project possible. Greenbelt Land Trust sponsored a project manager and construction staffing, sponsored a Northwest Youth Corps group that helped with construction and organized several volunteer trail construction days, with dozens of volunteers aiding in construction.

Benton County Natural Areas and Parks Department provided staff, equipment and materials for construction of the trail and the bridge located along the trail; provided for County Corrections Work Crew assistance with construction; and arranged trail construction work days from Oregon State University students.

City of Corvallis Parks and Recreation provided equipment for the project and Community Services Consortium sponsored two youth to work on the trail for four weeks.

## News from Benton County

Published quarterly and distributed in The Gazette-Times, The Democrat-Herald and other mailer publications, as well as at Benton County office locations and events. Publication is created by Public Information Officer Rick Osborn. To subscribe for an electronic copy via e-mail, please contact us at [pioinfo@co.benton.or.us](mailto:pioinfo@co.benton.or.us).

Board of Commissioners	766-6800	Human Resources	766-6081
Chief Operating Officer	766-6800	Community Health Centers	766-6835
Public Information Officer	766-6082	Juvenile Department	766-6810
Assessment	766-6855	Natural Areas and Parks	766-6871
Community Development	766-6819	OSU Extension Service	766-6750
District Attorney	766-6815	Public Works	766-6821
Elections	766-6756	County Clerk/Records	766-6831
Fairgrounds	766-6521	Sheriff's Office	766-6858
Health Department	766-6835	Tax Collection	766-6808



# Connecting with your environment

## Local classrooms gathering data for Oregon climate scientists

Four area schools are working with OSU Extension Benton County 4-H to connect students with real-world scientists at HJ Andrews Experimental Forest in Blue River, Ore., and beyond.

In Benton County, Muddy Creek Charter School third- through fifth-graders and high school biology students at Kings Valley Charter School are participating. They are joined by Lebanon High School biology students and fourth- and fifth-grade students attending Central Elementary School in Albany.

Teachers from these four schools attended a two-day professional development workshop at HJ Andrews Forest in August. They received training in citizen science programs, Nature's Notebook and the Community Collaborative, Rain Hail and Snow Network (CoCoRaHS) to use with their students. The teachers spent two full days working with researchers and educators learning ways to connect their students with on-the-ground science research focused on weather and plant phenology (seasonal changes in plants).

The teachers also experienced hands-on



lessons to use with their students, as well as interacting with researchers in the forest learning real-world applications to meet Next Generation Science Standards with their students.

Starting this fall, students at these schools have become scientists, making observations and gathering and reporting data. They are monitoring seasonal plant changes in eight target plant species and gathering daily precipitation data with the CoCoRaHS project. Weather data is used by the National Weather Service, the Prism Climate Group and the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute. Plant data is reported to the USA National Phenology Network and used by HJ Andrews researchers as well as Green Wave

Northwest, which is tracking the leafing out of maple, oak and cottonwoods by satellite imaging.

Over the course of the year, students will hone their science inquiry skills and formulate science questions of their own. At the end of this project students will report their findings back to the researchers, as well as showcase their project in the community at age-appropriate venues. OSU Extension will work to facilitate a two-way flow of information between citizen scientists (the students) and researchers as they work through the logistics of the project. This innovative pilot project is made possible by a Gray Family Foundation grant.

Community volunteers can participate in this program by signing up for the OSU

Extension Oregon Season Tracker program. For more information and training opportunities, those interested can watch the OSU Extension Service website at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/> or call Jody at 541-766-6311.



## County honors local physician for stewardship

Dr. Clifford Hall and wife Gay Hall purchased 80 acres of land just north of Kings Valley Charter School intending to create a nature preserve for future generations.

Their vision has exploded into a 160-acre parcel in that area where the Halls are stewards of nearly 2 miles of Luckiamute River frontage. That and other accomplishments caused the Benton County Board of Commissioners and Environmental Issues Advisory Committee to select the couple for the 2014 Benton County Environmental Award.

Clifford and Gay have created a place where native wildlife and plant life can thrive through their tireless efforts and collaborations with various government, non-profit and community groups. The couple has worked over the years to create and sustain fish habitat in streambeds, seasonal ponds for migratory waterfowl, eradicate invasive species, plant trees,

release rehabilitated wildlife, provide educational opportunities and much more. The fruits of their labors are evident in the wildlife that now thrives on their land.

The Benton County Environmental Issues Advisory Committee announced the award at its annual Fall Forum on Oct. 9 in Corvallis. The Benton County Board of Commissioners and EIAC created the Environmental Award to recognize outstanding environmental contributions in the community.

The Environmental Issues Advisory Committee is appointed by the Board of Commissioners to assist county staff members with implementing recommendations, advise the commissioners on specific environmental impact situations, provide a forum for community comment on environmental issues and gather technical input on legislative and regulatory changes applicable to the natural environment.

## County closes rural bridge for public safety

Benton County closed the Hubbard Bridge, crossing the Long Tom River in South Benton County, effective Dec. 1.

The bridge has been posted as closed and barricades placed on each side to prevent traffic from passing. The bridge, located on Hubbard Road near Monroe, was placed on a 5-ton emergency weight limit in mid-October after the county was notified by inspectors of structural issues caused by age-related deterioration.

After further reviewing those findings, the Oregon Department of Transportation's engineers recommended closing the bridge completely by the end of the year.

The Benton County Board of Commissioners voted to close the bridge at its Nov. 25 meeting. Benton County Public Works officials recommended the bridge be closed as of Dec. 1.



The county anticipates seeking grant funding from the state to replace the bridge. The next bridge grant cycle opens in April 2015. Nearby alternate route options are available by using Old River Road and Stow Pit Road.

For more information, those interested can contact Benton County Public Works at 541-766-6821.

## County proceeds on roundabout project

Benton County Public Works is making progress leading up to construction of a roundabout at the intersection of West Hills Road and SW 53<sup>rd</sup> Street in Corvallis.

Right-of-way acquisition was completed in the fall and currently utility companies are relocating facilities to outside the construction impact area. Fill on the west side of the project is expected to start in the spring, depending on weather, with major construction to occur in the coming summer.

West Hills Road will be closed at the intersection with SW 53<sup>rd</sup> Street during

construction. SW 53<sup>rd</sup> Street will remain open to traffic at all times, but limited to one lane of traffic through the construction area. Temporary traffic delays should be expected. Those who use West Hills Road at that intersection will need to find alternate routes, and the county may post a detour route, if necessary.

The project, in the works for many years, was approved for a \$648,000 budget by the Corvallis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization. Construction currently is estimated under that budget, at a cost between \$375,000 and \$425,000.

# Dental Voucher Program gives people a reason to smile

There is no pain quite like a toothache.  
You can't sleep.  
You can't eat.

It even hurts to smile.

It's the kind of pain Navy veteran Lamont Tucker found himself in recently when he had a deep cavity in one of his molars. A newcomer to Corvallis, Tucker didn't have dental insurance. He tried to find affordable care at several dental clinics, but after paying for an initial consult he would be presented with forms and other paperwork about setting up a payment plan before they would treat his tooth.

"I was going in with a lot of pain, and coming out with a lot of pain," Tucker recalled.

He was so desperate that he went to the dollar store and bought some dental putty and fashioned his own temporary crown.

Finally, someone told him about Benton County's Emergency Adult Dental Voucher Program, which serves all county residents 19 years and older who have no dental insurance coverage.

Tucker came for an initial screening at the Benton County Health Department on a Tuesday, and was seen by a dentist who was able to restore his tooth the very next day. Patients are asked only if they can make a contribution of \$10 to help with program costs. During the intake screening, Tucker was relieved to learn that he could afford to have his tooth treated.

"This is a wonderful program," Tucker said.

Dental pain is one of the leading causes of time off from work and school. Due



to circumstances such as job changes, unemployment or poverty, many people find themselves without dental insurance coverage, said Cindy Fisher, Oral Health Program Manager with the Community Health Centers of Benton and Linn Counties, the agency that oversees the Voucher Program.

Vouchers are paid to participating dentists with a grant from the Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center Social Accountability Program, which is aimed at reducing emergency room use for dental pain. Since the Voucher Program started in 2012, the number of dental pain patients seen at Good Samaritan dropped from a high of 350 cases in 2011 to 136 cases in 2013. Many local dentists participate and donate care above the \$100 voucher they receive. Gregory Mann, DDS, of Corvallis Dental Group, has been a dentist for 33 years and is always looking for a good cause to assist.

"I like to help people," he said.

For dentists, that often means taking time away from their busy office practices for community screening events or volunteering with the dental van program, which Dr. Mann also does. Each month, Dr. Mann has time to treat two clients from the Voucher Program in his office.

"I can do my job better when I'm working in my office with my staff," he said.

Dr. Mann tries to restore teeth if he possibly can for every patient, but sometimes an extraction is the only option. Dr. Mann treated Tucker and said the case was tough and go, but he was able to restore the tooth.

Some patients who are referred have not only a toothache, but also an infection. In those cases, he does an initial exam and prescribes medicine to first treat the infection. Then after the infection has cleared, he sees them to do the restorative work.

Dr. Mann knows that dental concerns can come up any time. Because so many local dentists participate in the Voucher Program, same-day or next-day scheduling for emergencies is almost always available so people don't have to wait in pain or use the emergency room.

"The emergency room is not set up to take care of dental problems," Dr. Mann said. "It's always best if they can see a dentist first."

## At a glance

**What:** Benton County Oral health Coalition's Emergency Adult Dental

Voucher Program

**Who:** People can apply for one dental voucher every three months. To qualify for the treatment voucher program, an interested person must meet the qualifying criteria:

- Experience pain;
- Be a Benton County resident;
- Be 19 years or older; and
- Have no dental insurance coverage, including Oregon Health Plan.

To verify income eligibility for the voucher program, clients can provide one of the following items:

- Letter of eligibility from Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Oregon Trail, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF);
- A Medicare card;
- One month (last 4 weeks) documentation of unemployment, housing assistance, Social Security, disability, pension or veteran's benefits; or
- Self-declaration of income at 200 percent of poverty level.

**Cost:** A \$10 contribution at the time of application is requested to help support the program. No one is turned away for inability to pay.

**When:** Screenings for voucher eligibility are scheduled from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the first and third Tuesdays of each month.

**Where:** Benton Health Center, 530 NW 27th St., in Corvallis

**Information:** 541-766-6361

# Vaccination is best way to protect against illness

As the cooler weather of winter has set in, it is important to prepare for the indoor season, and that includes getting vaccinated.

As people begin to congregate indoors, travel for the holidays, return to the classrooms filled with people and so many other activities that place numerous people in confined spaces, the flu begins to spread. The best way to protect oneself and loved ones from illness is to get vaccinated. Vaccination also is important for spotting other forms of illness because when fewer individuals are being seen by physicians because of vaccinations, it is easier to spot other forms of illness that may initially look like the flu.

Flu vaccinations are available as injection or nasal spray. Many health care providers and commercial pharmacies still have flu vaccine available and most health insurance pays for flu vaccination. Flu vaccination is

recommended for everyone older than 6 months, and those at highest risk of serious illness are especially encouraged to get vaccinated. Risk factors include:

- Age 5 or younger;
- Age 50 or older;
- Pregnancy;
- Diabetes;
- Obesity;
- Asthma;
- Compromised immune system;
- Cancer;
- HIV;
- Heart, lung and kidney disease; and
- Being a healthcare worker.

Oregon's flu season typically peaks in early- to mid-February and case counts typically remain high through March. Besides vaccination, there are other simple things people should do to prevent the flu, colds and other diseases, including:

- Stay home with a cough, sore throat or fever;
- Cover your nose and mouth with tissue when sneezing, coughing or blowing the nose; and
- Wash hands often, using waterless hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available.

Vaccinating parents, care-givers, health-care workers and social contacts is the most effective way of protecting newborn infants, the elderly and those with chronic illnesses that put them at high risk of complications. It is important to recognize when a person is at increased risk for complications for flu. For example, obesity is determined by a Body Mass Index based on weight versus height. Many individuals are surprised to find out, when calculating BMI, that they are overweight or obese.

High rate of vaccination protects

the entire community by preventing transmission and creates "herd" immunity. Vaccination is a socially responsible act that demonstrates care for families, co-workers and neighbors. The Centers for Disease Control standard for herd immunity is 90 percent vaccination. In the 2008-09 flu season, 53 percent of healthcare workers and 70 percent of Oregonians 65 and older were vaccinated against flu. In the 2009-10 season, 61 percent of healthcare workers and 70 percent of Oregonians 65 and older were vaccinated.

"When we choose to get a vaccination, it isn't just for our own personal health," Benton County Health Department Deputy Director Charlie Fautin said. "It also helps to protect the people around us - some of whom are most vulnerable to severe complications - from the threat of illness."