

# NEWS from BENTON COUNTY

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Benton County, Oregon

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## Levy funds county services

Benton County voters approved renewal of a Health and Safety Local Option Levy on Nov. 6 that funds public safety and health services in the county.

The levy, originally approved in 2007, will continue for another five years beginning in 2013, with a maximum rate of 90 cents per thousand dollars of assessed value on properties in the county. The levy – which accounts for approximately \$6 million of the county's annual budget – funds the following services:

- 40 jail bed rentals in surrounding counties to supplement the 40 beds available in the Benton County jail;
- 24-7 Benton County Sheriff's Office patrols and the School Resource Deputy Program;
- Substance abuse treatment programs

for juveniles and adults;

- Juvenile outreach and counseling;
- Juvenile detention capacity;
- Street crimes and child abuse prosecution;
- Preventing infectious disease outbreaks; and
- Mental health, addiction and children's health services.

"As commissioners it is our job to provide the opportunity for the community to decide what they want to pay for," Commissioner Linda Modrell said. "Support helps to keep our communities healthy and safe."

### You can get involved in county government

Have you ever wanted to get involved in your local government and learn more about county services? Here's your chance!

The Benton County Board of Commissioners is seeking community members to fill vacancies on a variety of advisory boards and committees. Members are appointed by the Board of Commissioners to fill vacancies, which have set terms. Positions exist on groups that cover everything from elections to fairgrounds to public safety and health.

For more information about Benton County committees, advisory boards or the application process, those interested can contact Teresa Farley at 541-766-6890 or by email at [teresa.farley@co.benton.or.us](mailto:teresa.farley@co.benton.or.us) or go online to <http://www.co.benton.or.us/volunteers.php>.



## Pertussis is back; get vaccinated!

As you may have heard in the news, several states reported alarming increases in pertussis (whooping cough) this spring and summer.

In 2004 and 2005 Benton County was hit hard by whooping cough with 297 confirmed cases while hundreds more people were ill but were not tested. Dozens of students missed classes, sports and other activities and their parents lost work time caring for their sick children or getting sick themselves.

All of this can be prevented by getting vaccinated against pertussis, as well as flu and other illnesses. Unfortunately pertussis is again on the rise and the United States is on track to have the highest case count since 1959, with more than 33,000 people reported to have gotten this disease nationally so far this year. As of Oct. 29, there were 836 reported pertussis cases reported in Oregon, compared with 280 cases during the same timeframe in 2011 (a three-fold increase). Benton County has not been hit quite as hard as other parts of the state, with 18 cases so far in 2012 compared to 11 in all of 2011.

Symptoms of pertussis can differ according to age, but for adults and older children it generally starts with a week or two of

cold-like symptoms and then develops into a long-lasting, annoying and deep cough. But for newborns and infants, pertussis often comes on suddenly and can be life-threatening.

The disease gets its name from the "whooping" sound made when a child struggles to catch its breath after severe coughing fits. The coughing spells make it hard for children to eat, drink and breathe – sometimes turning them blue for lack of oxygen.

Nationwide this year, more than half of infants under 1 year old with pertussis have needed hospitalization. There have been 23 infants hospitalized for pertussis in Oregon so far during 2012 and over 90 percent of infants who have required hospitalization are 3 months of age or younger. Tragically there have been 16 deaths reported nationwide this year due to pertussis, almost all infants. Fortunately there have been no pertussis deaths reported in Oregon during 2012.

The top priority for pertussis prevention and control is protection of infants. Data from Oregon cases clearly shows that the most common sources of pertussis infection in infants are their own household members. Benton County Health Department strongly encourages a "cocooning strategy"



District Attorney John Haroldson gets his flu vaccination.

aimed at vaccinating everyone who has – or may have – contact with an infant.

Vaccination remains the single most effective means of preventing pertussis. It's important to have as many people as possible vaccinated against pertussis, but especially pregnant women, siblings, parents, daycare providers, health-care personnel and everyone likely to come into contact with infants.

Although pertussis vaccination appears to lose some of its effectiveness faster than

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# Historic house returns home



In October, the Benton County Natural Areas and Parks Department - thanks to community support - was able to have the historic Commander's House returned to its original location at Fort Hoskins.

The Natural Areas and Parks Department and community volunteers spearheaded the fund-raising effort to return the home from its long-time location in Pedee.

Located in the Coast Range in Benton County near Kings Valley, Fort Hoskins was a pre-Civil War-era military post built



by the United States Army to protect the Coastal Indian Reservation in Oregon. During the Civil War it was tasked with monitoring Confederate sympathizer activity in the Willamette Valley. The fort was abandoned in 1865. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.

The house is in "remarkably good condition," according to Oregon State University Archaeologist David Brauner and aside from a kitchen and dining room wing added several decades ago, the original structure remains largely intact. Constructed in 1857 by Lt. Philip Sheridan (later a famous



Union general in the Civil War), the house is one of the oldest and most historic structures in western Oregon.

"The house gives us insight into Sheridan's mind," Brauner said. "What we're starting with is a house that looked just like this. If you woke Phil Sheridan from the dead for 10 minutes and walked him up there, he would recognize that house."

The cost to acquire the house includes returning it to Fort Hoskins. First Oregon Volunteer Infantry, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and the Northwest Civil War Council combined to give \$11,000 and individual community members donated

a combined \$2,455. The Kinsman Foundation contributed \$10,000 and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department allotted \$20,000 for the project. A foundation was poured for the house in November and it was returned to its original location.

"The house was returned to the footprint where it was originally," Benton County Natural Areas and Parks Department Jeff Powers said. "We are grateful to the new Friends of Benton County Natural Areas and Parks group that worked hard to raise awareness. It was really an outpouring of community support that helped save that historic resource."

## County Budget Process Underway

Benton County is well into the process to develop a budget for the 2013-15 biennium which begins July 1, 2013, and ends June 30, 2015. The target date for presentation of the proposed budget for formal review by the Budget Committee is the first week of April 2013.

In September departments wrote outcome statements describing what they want to accomplish in the coming biennium. The statements will be combined with action plans and requested budgets by the end of January.

Departments also are in the process of developing capital improvement project requests. Those also are due in January.

In February the Chief Operating Officer and Budget Manager will review requested budgets and recommend a proposed budget. The Board of Commissioners has set an initial goal that the proposed budget will not draw on reserves to fund operating services.

Renewal of the Local Option Levy will mean the county can avoid large service reductions. However, to achieve a budget balanced to operating income not drawing on reserve, means there likely will be some reductions in positions and services as the cost of doing business increases. There is also concern about the level of state and federal

support that will be available in 2013-15.

Benton County is the only county in Oregon which adopts a two-year budget. The state adopts its budget on a biennial basis. About seven cities, including Medford and Bend along with several large special purpose utility districts, also exercise the biennial option allowed by state law.

The Board of Commissioners is the governing body by law of county service districts. The Benton Library Services District budget also is adopted on a biennial basis. The district contracts with the city of Corvallis to provide library service in the county, except for a portion within the city of Albany.

Five other service districts in Benton County adopt annual budgets. All service district budgets will be up for discussion and adoption. Those budgets will be considered by the respective budget committees in May 2013.

Watch for announcements of Budget Committee meetings which will be published around the first or second week of March. All budgets must be adopted by June 30, 2013.

Information on the current budget and budget process can found on the county website at <http://www.co.benton.or.us/budget/>.

## Governor appoints Dixon to youth council



Jay Dixon

Benton County Commissioner Jay Dixon has been tapped to serve as Vice Chair of the Oregon Youth Development Council.

Gov. John Kitzhaber notified Dixon this year that he had been chosen to serve on the new council, which was formed by an act of the Oregon Legislature in 2012. The council's purpose is to assist the Oregon Education Investment Board in overseeing a seamless education system that supports academic success and reduces criminal involvement in an integrated, measurable and accountable way.

The council, specifically, carries the following functions:

- Prioritizes funding for prevention and intervention services related to gang violence and involvement;

### **Pertussis** *Continued from Page 1*

previously thought and some vaccinated people still get ill, state and national statistics indicate that those who are not vaccinated can have up to 54 times greater risk of catching pertussis than vaccinated people.

You can do your part to help prevent pertussis, colds and the flu by taking the following steps:

- Get vaccinated (against flu and pertussis);

- Determines ways services to children and youth are provided most effectively and efficiently to improve academic and social outcomes;
- Assesses state programs and services related to youth development and training; and
- Identifies methods by which programs and services can be coordinated or consolidated.

Dixon's service on the Council helps to bolster local input into statewide decision-making in terms of helping children gain the educational and social proficiencies they need to grow into well-adjusted and productive adults.

"Investing appropriately in the development of our youth is among the most significant ways we can improve society both now and for the next generations," Dixon said. "It is an honor to be appointed to this important committee and I am looking forward to bringing Benton County's voice in these matters to the state level."

- Practice "cough etiquette" (cover your cough);
- Wash hands frequently (with soap and warm water if you have it, or with hand sanitizer if you don't); and
- Stay home from school, work, worship and public places when ill.

By following these steps we all can have a healthier winter.

# Kids Day for Conservation hits decade mark



The 10th-Annual Kids Day for Conservation was a fun-filled day featuring natural resource activities for all ages.

Children and families had a chance to explore renewable energy sources, to learn how a wind turbine works and how solar cells are powered by the sun. They learned about local amphibians, birds, fish and

other wildlife that live in our farms, forests and urban areas.

The lines were long for the build-a-birdhouse activity and the always popular archery shoot. Many crept through the dark "soil tunnel" using flashlights to explore what goes on underground, while others watched the flames of the wildfire spread uphill to consume a model home. Eager participants joined in the Oregon Forest Scavenger Hunt and learned about farm and forest products that are produced locally. More than 1,500 youth and families arrived on bike or by carpool to enjoy this educational event. More than 100 youth and adults volunteered to teach activities and greet the public.

Many thanks go to the Benton County Board of Commissioners which supports the use of the Benton County Fairgrounds Arena for this event; OSU Folk Club for

supporting the event with a grant; and the Benton County Fairgrounds staff for being so helpful.

Thank you, also, to all the educational activity presenters: Allied Waste, Corvallis Audubon Society, Avery House Nature Center, OSU Extension Service Benton County (4-H, Neighborhood Sustainability Stewards, Well Water Protection, Master Gardeners, 4-H Wildlife Stewards programs); Benton County Community Development, Benton County Sherriff, Search and Rescue, Benton Soil and Water Conservation District, Benton County Small Woodlands Association, Consumer Power, Corvallis Public Works, Greenbelt Land Trust, Isaac Walton League, Marys River Watershed Council, Institute for Applied Ecology, Pacific Power Blue Sky Program, NRCS, Philomath High School Forestry, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Talk About Trees, Agriculture in the Classroom, USDA Forest Service, Oregon Department of Fish and



Wildlife, Oregon Forest Resources Institute, Oregon Department of Forestry and Noreen Collins Food Vendor.

## Benton County names 2013 Fair and Rodeo Queen



Alyssa Chart

For as long as she can remember Alyssa Chart has loved the county fair.

And now the 19-year-old from Albany is going to be living a long-time dream as the 2013 Benton County Fair and

Rodeo Queen. Chart was tops among three contestants – Amanda Rumreich, of Corvallis, and Heather Look, of Philomath, also turned in strong performances during the competition – to earn the honor.

Chart officially becomes queen on Jan. 1 during a banner year for the Benton County Fair and Rodeo. The event will be celebrating its 100th year in August. With her passion for fairs and enthusiasm for serving as a traveling ambassador for one of Benton County's signature summer events, Chart appears eager to take over.

"I have loved going to fairs and rodeos for as long as I can remember," she said. "I've always been drawn to the atmosphere, crowd and, of course, watching the rodeo events."

A graduate of West Albany High School, Chart is dual-enrolled in Linn-Benton Community College and Oregon State University, studying animal science. She plans to obtain a bachelor's degree in that field and find a career in some aspect of the veteri-

nary medicine. Her ultimate goal is to one day own an equine boarding facility.

Chart was a two-year member of National Honor Society and graduated with an honors diploma. Her hobbies include riding horses, hiking and camping, singing and playing with her dogs. She even earned scholarship money showing dogs, and was named Junior Handler of the Year in 2008. Chart also is a member of Rock 'n' Roll Cowgirls Professional Drill Team.

As the Fair and Rodeo Queen, Chart will be promoting and participating in the event. She also will represent Benton County as a goodwill ambassador in about 15 fairs, rodeos and parades over the next year as the Benton County Fair and Rodeo Queen including the Super Bulls, Broncs and Barrels Rough Stock Rodeo, Spring Stampede Rough Stock Rodeo, Benton County Fair and Rodeo, October Rough Stock Rodeo and Christmas Parade in Corvallis; the Philomath Frolic Rodeo and Parade; the Monroe Holiday Light Parade; the Harrisburg Parade; the Veteran's Day Parade in Albany; the Strawberry Festival parade in Lebanon; the Pioneer Days Parade in Brownsville; the Sweet Home Rodeo; the Lincoln County Fair and Rodeo in Newport; and the Eugene Pro Rodeo.

"Ever since I was on the Benton County 4-H Horse Court, I knew I would eventually love to be queen," Chart said. "I work well with others and will do everything it takes and more to make this year as successful as it can possibly be."

## OSU Extension Benton County 4-H Program hosts delegates from Tanzania



Eight Benton County families hosted a 10-member delegation from Tanzania in the Corvallis area in early November.

The students and one adult delegate were here on an Oregon State University 4-H Youth Leadership Program to enhance their learning related to leadership development, engaged citizenship and community service. The delegation also learned about the concept of youth/adult partnerships to help them develop and implement plans for follow-on projects and activities when they return to Tanzania. The delegates were selected through the United

States Embassy in Tanzania.

While in Benton County the delegates have learned about city government with Corvallis Mayor Julie Manning and City Councilor Biff Traber and county government with Benton County Commissioner Jay Dixon. The group also traveled to Salem to tour the State Capitol and meet with state legislators.

The Tanzanian students participated in community service projects both at Stone Soup and Linn Benton Food Share. Students attended two days of high school with their host brother or sister, met many community members and have enjoyed a variety of experiences with their host families and the 4-H Youth Leadership Program.

This Program is supported by a grant from the United States Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and administered by states' 4-H International Exchange Programs and partner states Oregon, Kansas and Wisconsin.

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# Storm impacts can be long-lasting

Heavy rains and melting snow from a winter storm last January created a soggy situation in Benton County that did \$4 million in damage through landslides and flooding.

Benton County still is picking up the pieces for some of the most major damage that came from the flooding as well as shifting soils, falling trees and other hazards. Federal Emergency Management Agency allotted Benton County around \$1 million for repairs in response to that damage and crews have been fixing roads and bridges as they can.

One of those, the Harris Bridge near Wren, was destroyed by a fallen tree and is expected to be repaired in the coming year, if plans come together. But even as the county picks up after last year, it is important to remember some key facts in case similar circumstances occur again this winter.

During heavy rain, winter storm and flooding scenarios, people should:

- Avoid high water areas of Benton County;



- Check the Benton County Public Works website at [www.co.benton.or.us/pw/index.php](http://www.co.benton.or.us/pw/index.php) or call 541-766-6821 for the latest information about road closures and high water areas. Oregon Department of Transportation information can also be found at [www.tripcheck.com](http://www.tripcheck.com) for state highways;
- Continue to check the non-emergency information line at 541-766-6120 for the most recent updates;

- Do not attempt to navigate high water. It is impossible to accurately gauge the depth and vehicles easily can be swept away in only 2 feet of water;
- Drive only when absolutely necessary;
- Exercise caution when driving on streets and highways and be on the look-out for police and flaggers directing traffic, especially in the dark;
- Take precautions for falling trees that can cause damage and increase the risk of power outages;
- Assume you will lose power. Have alternate lighting on hand (headlamps, flashlights, candles or similar supplies);
- Never heat your home with camping stoves, outdoor barbecues or other propane heaters intended for outdoor use only; and
- Have food, water and other necessary supplies available.

A little bit of preparedness can go a long way toward keeping Benton County safe during winter storms.

## Non-profit group forms to aid disaster victims

Last year when a combination of melted snow followed by heavy rains converged on Benton County it caused flooding and slides in certain parts of the county.

One of the hardest hit was the area of Northeast Corvallis near Cheldelin Middle School. Community members began looking for ways to help those impacted by flooding. Many people did not receive federal government assistance, leaving the responsibility in the hands of the community. Neighbors stepped up to help meet people's needs.

Kristen Wambach, pastor of the local Heart of the Valley Community Church, and the congregation formed the non-profit Benton County Flood Relief to connect local resources with community needs created by the disaster. Those who wish to donate can deposit money in the group's account at any Citizen's Bank location. To be ready in case disaster strikes again, the group has maintained itself for future disaster relief projects.

During the January 2012 aftermath, the group furnished beds and new mattresses to one mother who needed them for herself and her children and assisted many other people. Now that the groundwork is set and the organization formed, Wambach said the group is ready and willing to step in when it is needed next.

"Pastor Wambach contacted us about ways that the church could assist with relief," Benton County Emergency Services Program Manager Mary King said. "Since there really wasn't a mechanism to focus locally we suggested that this was a way she could help and she really sprang into action. We are grateful for her efforts on behalf of the community."

Volunteers with the organization take requests for aid and work with local businesses to purchase supplies with the allotted amount of funding. Volunteers also help do the repair work that is needed. Supplies for these projects are purchased from local businesses. Individuals, businesses and public places impacted by flooding and other events all are eligible for assistance. All types of relief requests are considered, and money is distributed to victims as it is available and appropriate.

For more information, those interested can access the group's website at <https://sites.google.com/site/bentoncountyfloodrelief/>, email the organization at [benton-countyfloodrelief@gmail.com](mailto:benton-countyfloodrelief@gmail.com) or call Benton County Food Relief President Kristen Wambach at 541-602-2141.

## Clean Energy Works Oregon matches homeowners with cash incentives, financing and expert help



Clean Energy Works Oregon (CEWO) recently launched its home energy remodel program to homeowners living in Benton County

as well as the city of Albany.

The program will make it easy and affordable for participants to improve their homes' comfort and reduce energy waste. CEWO also will help generate family-supporting construction jobs in the region. Working with local contractors certified in energy efficiency, the nonprofit is targeting the completion of at least 120 home energy

efficiency remodels in the first year.

"Clean Energy Works Oregon is dedicated to creating jobs and reducing energy waste by making energy efficiency easy for Oregon's homeowners. We bring together certified contractors, lenders and utilities to offer homeowners a great one-stop shop for transforming the comfort and efficiency of homes," said Derek Smith, CEO of CEWO. "We have completed nearly 2,000 energy efficiency remodels and created or sustained more than 250 jobs statewide. We are eager to bring the program and its benefits to the region."

Participants are paired with carefully selected Certified Contractors trained in

whole home energy efficiency. Every CEWO remodel begins with a free Home Energy Assessment and ends with a thorough inspection to ensure upgrades perform as promised.

"We have been working on energy efficiency and conservation programs for years and are dedicated to helping this region become one of the most energy-efficient in the nation," said Carly Lettero, Program Director of Energize Corvallis, Corvallis Environmental Center. "For many homeowners, it is daunting to decide which efficiency upgrades their homes need and how to pay for them. That's why we are excited to partner with Clean Energy Works Oregon. They really do make the whole process easy and affordable."

"Benton County strongly supports moving in a direction that is fiscally, environmentally and socially sustainable," Benton County Commissioner Linda Modrell said. "This is a great program that helps homeowners save resources through greater energy efficiency while also saving money on their monthly bills and living better lives because of it all. We believe in partnering with other agencies wherever possible to provide services and programs."

For more information those interested can contact Energize Corvallis at 541-758-6749 or [info@EnergizeCorvallis.org](mailto:info@EnergizeCorvallis.org).

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