

NEWS from BENTON COUNTY

At Your Service...Every Day since 1847



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Benton County, Oregon

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Commissioners wear many hats Extension celebrates 100 years of service



Linda Modrell



Jay Dixon



Annabelle Jaramillo

Commissioners' duties extend beyond the executive, legislative and quasi-judicial functions. In fact, in organizations where the county is a "co-owner" or "sole proprietor", commissioner presence is required on the governing board.

Oregon law allows local governments to come together formally to deliver needed services. The aggregation of services, such as those of the Cascades West Council of Governments (COG), creates efficiencies and pools expertise that could not be afforded by a single community. An example is the Medicaid Brokerage for rides to health services. Commissioner Jay Dixon represents Benton County on the COG board.

Benton County representation on a number of boards is required. The following organizations serve Benton County residents by complementing county services and community needs:

- The Benton County Commissioners are voting members of the Community Services Consortium (CSC) Governing Board. The CSC develops, manages and provides services and support to individuals and families in Benton, Lincoln and Linn counties who lack sufficient financial resources to meet their basic needs. For example, Linn Benton Food Share is a CSC agency. County commissioners from Lincoln and Linn counties serve with the Benton County Commissioners on the CSC board.

- The Benton County Commissioners are the governing authority for five county ser-

vice districts that are separate legal and taxing authorities. County Service Districts are commonly used in Oregon to provide and finance a variety of services including, but not limited to: water, sewer, library, public safety, fire and extension services.

- o Alpine Service District provides wastewater treatment facilities for Alpine residents;

- o Alsea County Service District provides water and wastewater treatment facilities for Alsea residents;

- o Cascade View County Service District provides residents with a water system;

- o South Third County Service District provides access to city of Corvallis sewage treatment facilities; and

- o Benton County Library Services District provides library services to most Benton County residents. North Albany has opted out of this service district.

- Accountable Behavioral Healthcare Alliance (ABHA) receives Oregon Health Plan Medicaid dollars for residents in five counties needing mental health services. A commissioner from each county serves on the governing board.

- Corvallis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a federal designation for areas exceeding 50,000 in population. Philomath, Corvallis, Adair Village and some parts of Benton County are part of the MPO designation. The MPO does transportation planning and its five-member policy board requires a county commissioner.

The Board of Commissioners is also the local Health Authority and the Mental Health Authority by statute.

Commissioners constantly work with state and federal officials advocating for the interests of the local community and local government. Additionally, they have collegial working relationships with local city governments to address common concerns.

Commissioners individually participate on various committees and task forces that could have long-term policy impacts on county government. Commissioner Jay Dixon participates in policy development regarding public safety and youth; Commissioner Annabelle Jaramillo is involved with natural resources and long-term state budgeting that could affect county operations; and Commissioner Linda Modrell is involved with health care transformation initiatives in Oregon.



For the past 100 years, the Oregon State University Extension Service has been reaching out to counties throughout the state by making experts in agriculture, natural resources and many other fields available at the county level.

The Extension Service faculty, staff and volunteers offer objective, research-based information to help Benton County youth and adults solve problems, develop life skills and manage resources wisely. Extension does this by coordinating educational tours, conferences, short courses, workshops and demonstrations. Benton County program areas include:

- 4-H Youth and Development;
- Natural Resource Education;
- Forestry;
- Family and Community Development;
- Community Horticulture;
- Small Farms;
- Groundwater Education; and
- Field Crops, Livestock, Dairy and irrigated crops.

As a cooperative partnership between the state of Oregon, the United States Depart-



ment of Agriculture and Benton County, Extension operates with a variety of resources. Grants also help fund specific projects, services and materials.

As the geographic location of Oregon State University, Benton County has a strong connection with its local OSU Extension Service.



Benton County joined Extension's 100 years of service celebration in 2011 by donating and assisting with booth space at the Benton County Fair and Rodeo in August, and the local Extension Service director serves on the Benton County Management Team of executive leaders. Benton County recognizes Extension's importance to children, adults and families of diverse backgrounds and walks of life.

There are different areas where trained volunteers are actively working with staff and faculty. Please call 541-766-6750 or 800-365-0201 for more information or to find out when the next trainings will be held.

- 4-H Youth Development
- Master Gardeners
- Master Woodland Managers
- Master Food Preservers
- Groundwater Education

Extension is funded by a partnership between the State of Oregon, the US Department of Agriculture and Benton County.

State and Federal funds provide for Extension positions on campus, at regional experiment stations and in counties, including Benton County.

The county provides office space and supports staff services.

User fees and grant funds are obtained for specific projects, services and materials provided to individuals.

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County Government: Where the rubber meets the road

Many people are unfamiliar with county government. Based on frequently asked questions, this article provides a general summary of the purpose and role of county government in Oregon.

Oregon's 36 counties are political subdivisions of the state, as described in the Oregon Constitution. The Oregon Revised Statutes prescribe the scope and limits of county government authority and define the physical boundaries of each county. County governments operate within this statutory framework to provide public services to residents.

In 1958 the Oregon Constitution was amended allowing counties to establish their own charters to address issues of county, rather than state concern and organize themselves and their operations to best meet local needs. Counties that have adopted local charters under the 1958 amendment are called home-rule counties. Counties that have not adopted local charters are called general-law counties. Benton County is one of nine home-rule counties in Oregon. Its charter gives it broad flexibility to operate through a voter-approved home-rule charter, as allowed by the 1958 amendment. A key example is the number of locally elected officials. Citizens of Benton County have elected to reduce the number of elected officials to four: three commissioners and the sheriff. General-law counties also have elected assessors, treasurers and clerks, and some even have an elected county surveyor. The District Attorney, also elected, is a state employee. General law counties are permitted flexibility in the size of their governing boards.

County commissioners function in three areas – executive, legislative and judicial. Unlike the state and federal governments, there is no structural separation of power at the county level. The Board of Commissioners, as the county's executive and governing body, adopts a budget recommended by a Budget Committee. The Board is empowered through the Charter to enact policy to deliver services and approve labor contracts and agreements for materials and services. As legislators, the Board of Commissioners enacts ordinances that have the force of law countywide. And in making land use decisions, the Board renders judgments as a quasi-judicial panel.

The role of a county commissioner is complex and requires a great deal of attention to many different matters that touch on all three functions of government. As an agent of the state, they offer many state-sanctioned and other services.

SHARED STATE-COUNTY SERVICES				
SERVING THE CITIZENS OF OREGON				
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	PUBLIC SAFETY	NATURAL RESOURCES & RECREATION	TRANSPORTATION, LAND USE & ECONOMIC DEV.	OTHER COMMUNITY SERVICES
Child Protection	Appellate Court	State Parks	State Highways	Administrative Services
Housing	State Police	State Lands	State Fair	Assessment & Taxation
Mental Health Hospital	State Prison	Water Regulation	Land Use Planning & Coord.	PERS
Aging/Senior Services	Attorney General	Wildlife Regulation	Land Use Permitting	Employee/Labor Relations
Alcohol/Drug Treatment	Trial Courts	County Forest Trust Lands/ State Forest Management	Highway & Road System	Elections
Alcohol/Drug Prevention	District Attorney	Habitat Restoration	Senior & Disabled Transport.	Extension Service
Children & Families Svcs.	911/Emerg. Communications	Wildlife/Predator Control	Energy Development	Telecommunications
Dev. Disabled Services	Emergency Management	Federal Land Policy	Engineering	Administrative Services
Mental Health Services	Homeland Security	Noxious Weed Control	Building Permits & Inspection	Procurement
Oregon Health Plan Svcs.	Community Corrections	Watermaster	Economic Development	Recording Public Documents
Veterans Services	Court Security	County Forest Management	County Fair	County Library
Public Health Services	Juvenile Services	County Parks	Infrastructure Development	County Museums
Environmental Health	Marine Patrol	Vector Control	Surveying	County Service Districts
Housing Services	Drug Courts	Soil & Water Conservation	County Transportation System	
Medical Examiner	County Law Library			
Emergency Planning and Response	Sheriff Patrol			
Solid Waste Management	Animal Control			
Recycling Programs	Justice Courts			
	Search and Rescue			
	County Jail			

Green = State-Provided Services Magenta = State/County-Shared Services Blue = County-Provided Services

 

Accountable Behavioral Health Alliance

The Accountable Behavioral Health Alliance (ABHA) serves a five-county area – which includes Benton County – providing mental health services.

A commissioner from each of the five counties serves on the governing board for ABHA. That organization's mission is to facilitate recovery-focused, community-based, cost-effective behavioral health care for members.

ABHA Focuses on behavioral and mental health services for clients in Benton, Crook, Deschutes, Jefferson and Lincoln counties. The intergovernmental organization manages behavioral health care needs of Oregon Health Plan members as a Mental Health Organization, contracted by the state. Commissioner Linda Modrell represents Benton County on the ABHA Governing Board.

The organization focuses on the key core values of:

- Protection and respect for the rights of all individuals;
- Consumer-centered, community-based services;
- Cost effective managed care operations and service delivery;
- Prevention, early identification and

early intervention;

- Active participation of consumers, families and key stakeholders in service delivery, planning and monitoring;
- Outcome-focused quality improvement; and
- Prudent financial management.

Services offered by ABHA vary from county to county and include drop-in centers where clients can meet and interact socially to provide each other with support, encouragement and information about resources. Through participation, clients can reduce isolation and loneliness, which can improve mental health. Participants own and operate the center, giving them a source of pride, and a newsletter provides information about mental health to the general public, reducing the stigma around mental illness. These kinds of community-based programs are tremendously effective in helping clients.

ABHA Governing Board meets at least quarterly in one of the five member counties. Each meeting is open to the public and advertised in advance in at least one newspaper. More information about ABHA can be found online at <http://abhabho.org>.

News from Benton County

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Board of Commissioners	766-6800
Public Information Officer	766-6082
Assessment Department	766-6855
Commission on Children and Families	766-6751
Development Department	766-6819
District Attorney	766-6815
Elections	766-6756/766-6277
Fairgrounds	766-6521
Health Department	766-6835
Human Resources	766-6081
Community Health Centers	766-6835
Juvenile Department	766-6810
Natural Areas and Parks	766-6871
OSU Extension Service	766-6750
Public Works	766-6821
County Clerk/Records	766-6831
Sheriff's Office	766-6858
Tax Collection	766-6808

CSC: Providing education and workforce solutions



In any economy it is difficult to find a good job without specialized skills, and with a demand for jobs and high supply of workers in a struggling economy, it can be even more difficult.

The Community Services Consortium Workforce and Education Department provides programs to help young people and adults get the training and education they need to obtain their best job. Services can range from helping people navigate the employment process to specific on-the-job and classroom training programs.

“For some of our clients it’s going to be a very quick process; they just need a little help,” Workforce and Education Director Clay Martin said. “For others it’s a little more involved and intensive.”

Programs for youth include charter and alternative schools, as well as YouthBuild, a program in the Lebanon area where youth learn building and construction skills as well as other more general on-the-job traits like showing up on time and teamwork. They work with Habitat for Humanity on construction projects while they study for high school diplomas or GEDs. A community garden program teaches young people to garden, build greenhouses and other equipment and business skills through growing flowers, plants and fruits and vegetables that are sold at Farmer’s Market.

“We’re always excited about our youth program,” Martin said. “I think there are a lot of different things we are doing for youth.”

Providing assistance in an economy where unemployment is high and jobs are scarce has been challenging. And, of course, there are fewer resources with which to work. The dilemma becomes offering fewer resources to more people or offering the same resources to fewer potential clients.

“I think the increase in the need for our

services is dramatic,” Martin said. “There just isn’t enough support for all of the folks who need it.”

Most of the resources for education and workforce assistance, as a result, are allocated through scholarship programs. The application process forces participants to take ownership in their training plans, which includes researching growth jobs and how their skills and interests match up, as well as necessary training to break into the field.

A \$5,000 scholarship is available for people pursuing a certificate or some other professional training with getting a job as the expected outcome. CSC has been working with community colleges and other training providers to make the program work. For those who benefit from on-the-job training, there is a reimbursement program offering up to \$5,000 to employers for training and employing a client.

In some cases, CSC offers the workforce training on its own. The Weatherization Project allows participants to gain skills and nationally recognized certifications to work for contractors, utilities and other agencies to improve energy efficiency in homes and businesses. A training center in Corvallis is where workers are trained in HVAC and heating systems and energy efficiency under the tutelage of Weatherization Project Instructor Dennis Feeney. Students also learn about insulation, air sealing and other ways to create efficiency.

Students learn to do energy audits and other work to earn the Building Performance Institute National Credential and other industry-recognized certifications. So far CSC has trained more than 500 workers since July 2009.

“We are hearing back from people who are getting great jobs,” Feeney said. “People are finding work and it’s really exciting.”

Benton County Calendar of Events

November 9

- 4-H Archers, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Auditorium.
- Mid-Valley Gamers, 7 to 9 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.
- Free Dog Heeling Classes, 6 to 7 p.m. in Guerber Hall at the Fairgrounds.
- Fair Committee, 5 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Conference Room.
- November 10 – January 26 – Every Thursday except Thanksgiving
- Benton County Gaming Club, 7 to 9 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena
- November 10, 17, December 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29.
- Cowboy Church, 7 p.m. in Guerber Hall at the Fairgrounds.

November 11

- Benton County offices closed in observance of Veteran’s Day.

November 12

- WAG Dog Agility Trial, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.
- Holiday Bazaar, 9 a.m.- 4 p.m. Fairgrounds Auditorium & Conference Room.

November 12 – 22

- Holiday Food Drive, Guerber Hall at the Fairgrounds.

November 13

- WAG Dog Agility Trial, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.
- 4-H Livestock Judging Club, 6 to 9 p.m., Fairgrounds Conference Room.

November 14

- Benton County Mounted Posse, 6 to 10 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.
- 4-H Large Animal Project Leaders Meeting, 6 to 8 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Conference Room.
- 4-H Eyerisers Guide Dog Puppy Club, 6 to 8 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Auditorium.
- 4-H 4 Paws, 7 to 8:15 p.m., at the concrete area of the Fairgrounds Arena.

November 15

- Benton County Search and Rescue Council Meeting, 5:30 to 7 p.m. at Emergency Management.

- 4-H Young Riders, 6 to 8 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.
- Property Tax payments due to Benton County Finance Office.

November 16

- Benton County Fair Board, 7 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Conference Room.
- 4-H Archers, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Fairgrounds Auditorium.
- Mid-Valley Gamers, 7 to 9 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.
- 4-H 4 Paws II, 7 to 8 p.m. on the Fairgrounds Arena concrete area.

November 19

- Thanksgiving Thunder Rough Stock Rodeo, 7 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.
- Game Day Shuttle, runs 3 hours prior to kickoff and 1 hour post-game. Cost is \$2 per rider to the game, and the ride back is free.

November 21

- Benton County Mounted Posse, 6 to 10 p.m., Fairgrounds Arena.
- Eyerisers Guide Dog Puppy Club, 6 to 8 p.m., Fairgrounds Auditorium.
- Mid-Valley Gamers, 7 to 9 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.
- 4-H 4 Paws, 7 to 8:15 p.m. on the Fairgrounds Arena concrete area.

November 22

- Benton County Board of Commissioners Work Session, 9 to 11 a.m. in the Large Meeting Room of the Benton Plaza, 408 SW Monroe Ave., in Corvallis.
- 4-H Benton Rabbits, 7 to 9 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Conference Room.
- 4-H Young Riders, 6 to 8 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.

November 23

- Free Dog Heeling Classes, 6 to 7 p.m. in Guerber Hall at the Fairgrounds.
- 4-H 4 Paws II, 7 to 8 p.m. in Guerber Hall at the Fairgrounds.

November 24

- Benton County offices closed in observance of Thanksgiving.

November 25

- Corvallis Holiday Parade, 7 p.m. in downtown Corvallis.

November 28

- Benton County Mounted Posse, 6 to 10 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.

November 29

- Benton County Board of Commissioners Work Session, 9 to 11 a.m. in the Large Meeting Room of the Benton Plaza, 408 SW Monroe Ave.

November 30

- 4-H Archers, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Auditorium.
- Mid-Valley Gamers, 7 to 9 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.
- 4-H 4 Paws II, 7 to 8 p.m. in Guerber Hall at the Fairgrounds.
- 4-H Horse Leaders Advisory, 7 p.m. at Carriage House at the Fairgrounds.

December 2

- 4-H Young Riders, 6 to 8 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.

December 4

- 4-H Young Riders, 6 to 8 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.

December 5

- Benton County Mounted Posse, 6-10 p.m. at the Carriage House
- 4-H Open Ride, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Fairgrounds Arena.
- 4-H Eyerisers Guide Dog Puppy Club, 6 to 8 p.m., Fairgrounds Auditorium.
- 4-H 4 Paws, 7 to 8:15 p.m. in Guerber Hall at the Fairgrounds.

December 6

- Master Gardeners Greens Party, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Guerber Hall
- 4-H Archers, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Auditorium.
- Benton Bowmen, 8 to 9 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.
- 4-H Got Rabbits Club, 6:15 to 8:30 p.m., Fairgrounds Conference Room.

December 10

- 4-H Young Riders, 6 to 8 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.
- 4-H Regional Judging, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.

December 11

- 4-H Livestock Judging Club, 6 to 9 p.m., Fairgrounds Conference Room.

December 12

- Benton County Mounted Posse, 6 to 10 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.
- 4-H Eyerisers Guide Dog Puppy Club, 5:30 to 8 p.m., Carriage House.
- 4-H 4 Paws, 7 to 8:15 p.m. in Guerber Hall at the Fairgrounds.

December 13

- Benton County Board of Commissioners Work Session, 9 to 11 a.m. in the Large Meeting Room of the Benton Plaza, 408 SW Monroe Ave., in Corvallis.

December 14

- 4-H Archers, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Auditorium.
- Benton Bowmen, 8 to 9 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.
- 4-H 4 Paws II, 7 to 8 p.m. in Guerber Hall at the Fairgrounds.
- Mid-Valley Gamers, 7 to 9 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.

December 16

- 4-H Young Riders, 6 to 8 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.

December 19

- Benton County Mounted Posse, 6 to 10 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.
- 4-H 4 Paws, 7 to 8:15 p.m. in Guerber Hall at the Fairgrounds.

December 20

- Benton County Board of Commissioners Work Session, 9 to 11 a.m. in the Large Meeting Room of the Benton Plaza, 408 SW Monroe Ave., in Corvallis.
- Audubon Bird Count, 4 to 8 p.m. at Fairgrounds Carriage House.
- 4-H Benton Rabbits, 7 to 9 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Conference Room.

December 21

- Benton County Fair Board Meeting, 7 p.m. in Fairgrounds Conference Room.
- 4-H 4 Paws II, 7 to 8 p.m. in Guerber Hall at the Fairgrounds.
- Mid-Valley Gamers, 7 to 9 p.m. at Fairgrounds Arena.
- 4-H Archers, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. in Fairgrounds Auditorium.
- Benton Bowmen, 8 to 9 p.m. in Fairgrounds Auditorium.

December 23

- 4-H Young Riders, 6 to 8 p.m. in the Fairgrounds Arena.

December 26

- Benton County offices closed.
- Benton County Mounted Posse, 6 to 10 p.m. in Fairgrounds Arena.

December 27

- Benton County Board of Commissioners Work Session, 9 to 11 a.m. in the Large Meeting Room of the Benton Plaza, 408 SW Monroe Ave., in Corvallis.

December 28

- 4-H 4 Paws II, 7 to 8 p.m. in Guerber Hall at the Fairgrounds.
- Mid-Valley Gamers, 7 to 9 p.m. at Fairgrounds Arena.

January 2

- Benton County offices closed.
- 4-H Open Ride, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Fairgrounds Arena.
- 4-H 4 Paws, 7 to 8:15 p.m., Fairgrounds Guerber Hall.
- Benton County Mounted Posse, 6 to 10 p.m., Fairgrounds Carriage House.

January 4

- 4-H Archers, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Fairgrounds Auditorium.
- Benton Bowmen, 8 to 9 p.m., Fairgrounds Auditorium.
- 4-H 4 Paws II, 7 to 8 p.m. in Guerber Hall at the Fairgrounds.
- Mid-Valley Gamers, 7 to 9 p.m. at Fairgrounds Arena.

January 8

- 4-H Livestock Judging Club, 6 to 9 p.m., Fairgrounds Carriage House.

January 9

- 4-H Small Animal Leaders Meeting, 4:30 p.m., Fairgrounds Conference Rm.
- 4-H 4 Paws, 7 to 8:15 p.m., Fairgrounds Guerber Hall.
- Benton County Mounted Posse, 6 to 10 p.m., Fairgrounds Arena.

January 11

- 4-H Archers, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Fairgrounds Auditorium.
- Benton Bowmen, 8 to 9 p.m., Fairgrounds Auditorium.

January 14

- 4-H 4 Paws II, 7 to 8 p.m. in Guerber Hall at the Fairgrounds.
- Mid-Valley Gamers, 7 to 9 p.m. at Fairgrounds Arena.

January 16

- 4-H 4 Paws, 7 to 8:15 p.m., Fairgrounds Guerber Hall.
- Benton County Mounted Posse, 6 to 10 p.m., Fairgrounds Arena.

January 17

- Fair Foundation, 7 p.m., Fairgrounds Guerber Hall.
- 4-H Benton Rabbits, 7 to 9 p.m., Fairgrounds Conference Room.

January 18

- 4-H Archers, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Fairgrounds Auditorium.
- Benton Bowmen, 8 to 9 p.m., Fairgrounds Auditorium.
- Mid-Valley Gamers, 7 to 9 p.m., Fairgrounds Arena.
- 4-H 4 Paws II, 7 to 8 p.m., Fairgrounds Guerber Hall.
- Benton County Fair Board, 7 p.m., Fairgrounds Conference Room.

January 21

- Indoor Winter Market, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Fairgrounds Guerber Hall.

January 23

- 4-H Large Animal Project Leaders, 6 to 8 p.m., Fairgrounds Conference Room.
- 4-H 4 Paws, 7 to 8:15 p.m., Fairgrounds Guerber Hall.
- Benton County Mounted Posse, 6 to 10 p.m., Fairgrounds Arena.

January 25

- 4-H Archers, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Fairgrounds Auditorium.
- Benton Bowmen, 8 to 9 p.m., Fairgrounds Auditorium.
- Mid-Valley Gamers, 7 to 9 p.m., Fairgrounds Arena.
- 4-H 4 Paws II, 7 to 8 p.m., Fairgrounds Guerber Hall.
- Benton County Fair Board, 7 p.m., Fairgrounds Conference Room.

January 27

- Indoor Winter Market, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Fairgrounds Guerber Hall.

January 28

- 4-H Large Animal Project Leaders, 6 to 8 p.m., Fairgrounds Conference Room.
- 4-H 4 Paws, 7 to 8:15 p.m., Fairgrounds Guerber Hall.
- Benton County Mounted Posse, 6 to 10 p.m., Fairgrounds Arena.

January 30

- 4-H Archers, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., Fairgrounds Auditorium.
- Benton Bowmen, 8 to 9 p.m., Fairgrounds Auditorium.
- Mid-Valley Gamers, 7 to 9 p.m., Fairgrounds Arena.
- 4-H 4 Paws II, 7 to 8 p.m., Fairgrounds Guerber Hall.
- 4-H Horse Leaders Advisory, 7 to 9 p.m., Fairgrounds Carriage House.

January 28

- Indoor Winter Market, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Fairgrounds Guerber Hall.

January 30

- 4-H 4 Paws, 7 to 8:15 p.m., Fairgrounds Guerber Hall.
- Benton County Mounted Posse, 6 to 10 p.m., Fairgrounds Arena.

Linn Benton Food Share: Feeding the hungry since 1981



Hunger is a persistent problem throughout the state, and Benton County is not immune to its impact on communities. Linn Benton Food Share has been combatting hunger in Linn and Benton counties since 1981.

Food Share is part of the Community Services Consortium, which is run by a nine-member board that includes all county commissioners from Linn, Benton and Lincoln counties and supplies nearly 5 million pounds of food annually to 74 non-profit distribution agencies including food pantries, soup kitchens, emergency shelters, daycare centers, shelter homes and gleaning groups.

Oregon is third nationally in hunger, Food Share Director Mike Gibson said, and is first

in the nation for having the lowest consistent access to adequate food for children. In Linn and Benton counties, the problem is getting worse, with the number of people asking for food boxes up 19 percent over last year.

Last year the organization distributed an average of 3,625 boxes of emergency food to over 12,300 people per month in the two-county area. Soup kitchens and emergency shelters served an additional 21,200 meals each month. Overall, Food Share clients comprise nearly 20 percent of the population between the two counties.

Food Share accomplishes all of this with 6 full-time employees based in a 10,000-square-foot warehouse in the Tangent area. It also takes 13,000 hours of volunteer service to operate Food Share, and 160,000 hours when considering all the distribution agencies. This is a source of pride, according to Gibson, because many other food banks of similar size need about 20 to offer the same level of service.

"Our feeling is we're all about getting food out to hungry people," he said, "so we stay as lean as possible."

As a central distribution center, Food Share supplies local food banks and other agencies that distribute the food to those who need it based on a priority system. Emergency pantries that deal with immediate need are the top priorities, followed by soup kitchens, shelters and other similar entities.

Residents donate food and money to Linn Benton Food Share, which uses funds to purchase up to 15 pounds of food for each dollar. United States Department of Agriculture commodities also help feed hungry people and families, though federal budget cuts have slashed that allocation by 35 to 40 percent. Food Share has been creative in building corporate partnerships, as well.

The Fresh Alliance program allows Food Share to collect meat, milk, produce, deli products and other items at or near expiration date for quick distribution.

Food Share also offers programs that help low-income people acquire the food they need for themselves and each other. There are approximately 14 gleaning groups in the two-county area that serve about 5,500 members. These groups, coordinated by Food Share, are separate non-profit entities with an even mix of active and adoptee

gleaners. Active gleaners go out into fields on participating farms and pick leftover crops. They also gather expiration dated bread and other products from donating supermarkets. Adoptee gleaners receive food from the active gleaners. Gleaners also distribute approximately 15,000 pounds of produce to their members the next day after it is received. A gleaning coordinator working for Food Share helps people form gleaning groups through paperwork, board training, field training and other assistance.

Providing water, wastewater and library services

Aside from overseeing the executive, legislative and quasi-judicial functions of county government, the Benton County Board of Commissioners also serves on governing boards of districts that provide important services to rural county residents.

When official district business is conducted, the board convenes for that specific district. Each district also has its own budget committee, appointed by the governing board, which consists of three appointed citizen members from the service area. Citizen Advisory Committees also can be appointed to recommend service rates, as well as maintenance and operational policies.

The district is managed and operated under an ordinance that establishes and outlines legal and procedural aspects of running the operation. This ordinance is adopted by the Benton County Board of Commissioners, and the Board of Commissioners also identifies the specific department that has day-to-day responsibility over district operations. County Service District staff members serve as billing, accounts receivable and maintenance depart-



ments for water and sewer districts. Often, that duty falls upon the Benton County Administrative Services and Public Works departments, in addition to their other county obligations.

Rates for services are established and adopted through rate orders, which generally are proposed to the Governing Body by the Advisory Committee and county staff. Then it goes before the Budget Committee for a public hearing process.

Local governments pool resources at COG

Certain services and activities can be offered better and more efficiently when resources are shared. Cascades West Council of Governments has been one organization through which local governments have shared resources since the mid-1960s.

On behalf of its members – local governments in Linn, Benton and Lincoln counties – COG carries out various local, state and federal programs. The agency is governed by a Board of Directors with one representative from each member government. Participation is voluntary and the

majority of funding is provided by way of contracts to operate specific services. The Cascades West COG is not a taxing authority.

Senior and Disability Services Department functions include adult protective services; food stamp program; information and referral regarding services; long-term care programs, Medicaid and Oregon Health Plan benefits; and aging and disability resource connections.

Veteran Services staff members at the COG serve as a resource to veterans helping

them locate and connect with dependent veteran benefits, non-service connected disability pension, service connected disability, Veteran's Affairs Healthcare compensation benefits and widows pension benefits.

Community and Economic Development programs include business lending, community facilities development, economic development, Geographic Information System Services, planning and transportation. Among transportation activities, COG staffs the Cascades West Area Commis-

sion on Transportation, the Cascades West Transportation Demand Management Program, Cascades West RideLine and the Corvallis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization.

The COG Technology Services Department also provides contracted Information Technology services to governments including network implementation, software and website development, computer and phone maintenance, consulting and project management, in addition to serving all COG departments.