

# NEWS from BENTON COUNTY

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October 13, 2010

Benton County, Oregon

Volume 2, Issue 4

## Fruits of their labor

In Benton County the Community Services Consortium is growing the workforce of the future in a garden.

Across from the CSC building in downtown Corvallis a group of 16- to 21-year-olds is toiling away in a garden patch – generously donated by nearby Allann Bros Coffee Co. – producing vegetables, fruits and flowers to sell and building job skills along the way.

While they till soil, care for plants and harvest and sell vegetables these young people are gaining experience and job skills in horticulture, planting, marketing, pricing, customer service and leadership. They are paid a performance-based stipend for their labors and also can gain high-school elective credits for their service.

For about eight to 10 weeks during the summer participants work approximately 32 hours per week. During this time they put their newfound horticulture knowledge to work by participating in work crews for Benton County Natural Areas and Parks sites by removing invasive plant species and developing habitat for protected species. The young workers also partnered with the Corvallis School District by working at school-based gardens, such as the one at College Hill, while the teachers and students were away for the summer.

During winter the workers usually put in between 15 and 20 hours each week, depending on their school schedules and other obligations.

Next to the garden, in the basement of a house CSC converted

to office space, seeds have been planted and are under growing lights. From there, the seedlings graduate to a small greenhouse for further growth before being planted in the garden. This allows for a head start on the growing season and, with the use of cold frames for the raised garden beds, the participants are able to enjoy a year-round growing season.

“It really allows us to start things much earlier than we would by just planting the seeds in the ground,” CSC Operations Manager Sharee Cooper said.

The students sell the fruits of their labor at the Corvallis Farmer’s Market. They carry a variety of flowers, herbs, vegetables, fruits and even berries and, with a nursery license, they are able to sell plant starts. This comes in handy early in the Farmer’s Market season when much of the produce isn’t ready yet.

The proceeds from sales cover supply costs for the garden, but additional funds covering staff time and participant wages come from Workforce Investment Act dollars through the Workforce Investment Board. Additional funding comes from smaller grants from various organizations.

“We get lots of community support for the project and we really need it to keep the project going,” Cooper said. “I think people have embraced this project. We definitely encourage passersby to walk through and look around. The community, just in general, seems to support the kids and the concept.”



Workers tend to the CSC garden in downtown Corvallis.

## 99 Express rolls into the station

Earlier this month travelers along state Highway 99W from Adair Village to Junction City likely began noticing more buses running passengers north and south of Corvallis.

The 99 Express left the station for the first time on Oct. 1 and now, five days a week, passengers who otherwise would have difficulty getting from Adair Village or Monroe to Corvallis for shopping, medical appointments and other tasks have better access to those activities.

The low-cost service allows rural passengers to access urban shopping centers, services and facilities. It also will help reduce fuel consumption and emissions as more people choose to ride the bus.

Service between Corvallis and Monroe runs Tuesday through Saturday every week, with the first run leaving Corvallis at 6:35 a.m. The bus arrives at every stop – which includes the Corvallis Municipal Airport and Industrial Park – along the route about every three hours. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, Monroe and Junction City residents can travel back and forth between those two cities from about 7:25 a.m. to 5:23 p.m. The last run of the day returns to the Corvallis Transit Center at 6:16 p.m.

For the northern route, the first bus leaves Adair Village at 7:08 a.m. Monday through Friday and makes its final stop of the evening at 5:56 p.m., also in Adair Village.

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## Roadside spraying improves visibility

The Benton County Public Works Department spends a considerable amount of time during the spring and summer every year working to control vegetation alongside county roads and in roadside ditches.

The annual Roadside Shoulder Spraying Program utilizes several manual, mechanical and chemical techniques to meet the demand of public safety while balancing environmental responsibility. The purpose of Benton County's vegetation management program is to prevent the spread of noxious weeds, maintain clear, safe roadsides by maximizing visibility and protect beneficial vegetation. The Benton County Public Works Department is responsible for maintaining all county rights of way.

Over the last 10 years new programs continue to be implemented to meet state and federal mandates for clean water and endangered species

protection.

Benton County's goals with roadside vegetation management are to:

- Improve safety for the traveling public by eliminating site distance issues and removing hazardous trees;
- Provide good stewardship of the environment controlling noxious and invasive weeds;
- Maintain and preserve public facilities such as bridges, culverts and road surfaces through proper vegetation removal;
- Promote vegetation in ditches and back slopes to minimize soil erosion, reduce pollutants and improve water quality; and
- Protect threatened and endangered plants that grow

in county rights of way.

There are many ways that landowners can be good stewards and partner with the county to accomplish these goals. These include properly using chemicals on lands and near waterways; keeping ditches vegetated with native or non-invasive grasses and low-growing shrubs; and by participating in the Public Works No-Spray Program to maintain roadsides without using herbicides. The No-Spray agreement must be renewed annually and the property owner is responsible for maintaining vegetation and noxious weed control.

For more information about noxious weeds, roadside spraying and no-spray and modified spray agreements, those interested can call 541-766-6821 or go online to <http://www.co.benton.or.us/pw/roads/#vegetation>.

## 99 Express

*Continued from page 1*

Stops common to both routes include Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center, Circle Boulevard and Ninth Street and Avery Square. The service to Monroe and Adair Village includes four round trips each day with morning and evening commuter service and two mid-day routes.

Fares for transportation vary among routes based on destination. Rides from Adair Village to Corvallis, Monroe to Junction City and Corvallis to the airport are free for children 5 years and younger and seniors 75 and older with a Senior Pass and top out at 75 cents for those 18 and older. Trips from Monroe to Corvallis are free for children 5 years and younger and seniors 75 and older with a Senior Pass and top out at \$1 for those 18 and older.

Coupon books also are available, good for 20 rides, and cost between \$6.50 and \$11.25 depending on riders' ages and trip destinations. Monthly passes for all riders range from \$10 to \$24 depending on the route.

For more detailed information, those interested can go online to <http://www.co.benton.or.us/pw/stf/rural.php> or <http://www.bc99express.com>.

## Let it snow ... and let the plowing and sanding begin

As autumn begins its transitioning into winter, everyone should be mindful of the potential for snow and its impact on winter travel.

In the event of snow and icy conditions, Benton County crews are ready to brave the weather to clear downed trees and other obstacles, as well as snow and ice on County roads. This work will be conducted in accordance with the Benton County Ice and Snow Removal Plan, which prioritizes the order of roads to be maintained based on several factors, including the following:

- Road function classification;
- Traffic volumes;
- Availability of alternate routes;
- Whether the road features steep hills, sharp curves or other potential hazards;
- Whether there is adequate room to turn around county equipment;
- Emergency vehicle accessibility; and
- Whether the road is on a school bus route.

This allows Benton County to provide better countywide access for emergency vehicles, maintain passable road conditions for school bus routes and mitigate for unsafe

road surface conditions to the fullest extent possible with the resources available.

Drivers in Benton County all should do their part in the event of wintry weather to keep everyone safe. That means driving at appropriate speeds in the snow and ice, planning extra time to reach the destination and other measures. It also is important to remember that snow plows will be working on the roads. They are large vehicles that require extra time to stop; more so than the average passenger car.

It is critical that abandoned or parked vehicles are removed from the right-of-way. These vehicles are a hazard to travelers and in some circumstances it is impossible for a plow truck to work around the vehicles without damaging them or getting stuck. It also is extremely difficult to see these vehicles in the dark, which can lead to further accidents. Abandoned or parked vehicles can be towed at the owner's expense, but that decision is dependent on the weather situation.

For more information about the Benton County Ice and Snow Removal Plan, those interested can go online to <http://www.co.benton.or.us/pw/>

[documents/snow\\_04.pdf](#). The site includes questions and answers and a map, as well as the order in which Benton County roads are cleared in inclement weather events.

### 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

## Roads paid for with property taxes? Not so fast

Property tax dollars go to fund many public services and programs such as local schools and community colleges, city and county government services and many more, but there is one thing that many people often assume is covered when they send in their property tax payments every year: roads. But that's not the case.

In fact the law states that property tax funding cannot be used to fund road construction or maintenance projects, unless voters approve a special option levy specifically for that purpose.

In Benton County no such levy exists. Road funding comes from many different public sources, with the largest dollar amounts typically coming from state and federal agencies.

In all, Benton County maintains 190 miles of gravel roads, 270 miles of paved roads and more than 100 bridges on a budget that has not kept pace with the cost of inflation since 1993. Benton County Government's share of property tax dollars – about 17 cents per dollar – can be used to cover all county expenses, except road construction and maintenance expenses.

For example, in the 2009-2010 Fiscal Year, which just wrapped up in June, the largest portion of Benton County's \$6.2 million road fund revenue collections came from a State Highway Apportionment of around \$3 million. That money is allocated by the state, based on a formula, and comes from state gas taxes, vehicle license and registration fees, weight-mile taxes for trucks and other transportation-related sources. That dollar amount has remained steady at around \$3 million for the past 17

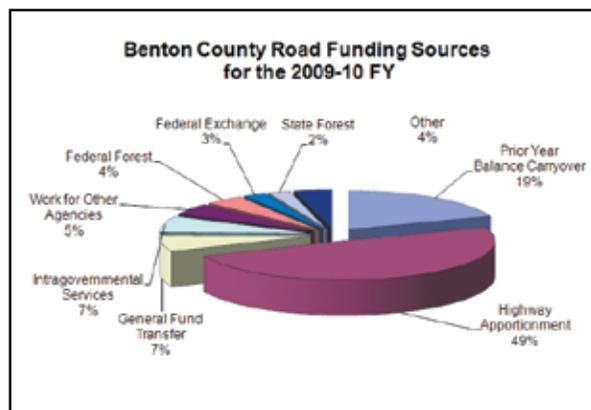
years, with no adjustment for inflation. Most years the county also receives grant funding. However, grant funds are earmarked for specific purposes and projects and can't be diverted to other activities.

Revenues received from the federal government – including forest payments, which are not a guaranteed reliable revenue source – help to fund some road projects, but they account for only 4 percent of the total county road budget. State Forest Road Reimbursement funds – which come

from timber harvest proceeds on state lands – account for about 2 percent of the county's roads budget, but can be used to maintain specific forest roads, which generally are not high-volume traffic arteries.

Benton County has been entrepreneurial and creative in finding ways to increase revenue and cut costs over the years. About 12 percent of the revenues for Benton County's road budget come from services and work performed for other government agencies. Department staff members also generate savings by dismantling and recycling bridge decks and other components throughout the area. Those elements are removed, inspected for structural integrity and re-used in Benton County at a fraction the cost of building new bridges.

Given limitations on funding streams and dollar amounts available, Benton County continues to look for ways to creatively and cost-effectively fund and carry out maintenance for county roads. When the property tax bill comes every year, that money is used for many important services, but maintaining and building county roads – in accordance with state law – is not one of them.



## A healthy partnership

The Community Health Centers of Benton and Linn Counties operations in South Corvallis and Monroe were awarded re-certification this year as school-based health centers.

Both operations – with one located on the Lincoln School campus and the other at Monroe Elementary School – offer accessible and affordable health care to everyone, but their locations near schools allow prompt response to students' medical issues.

"I am very happy with what staff members have been doing," Community Health Centers Director Sherlyn Dahl said. "They've really strengthened their focus on outreach and building connections with the schools."

The concept of school-based clinics has been around for a long time in Benton County and both schools featured small clinics for years within their buildings. When Benton County received a grant to begin operating the Community Health Centers, they were placed in modular buildings on the school grounds and integrated into the larger Community Health Centers system. The mission of the Community Health Centers of Benton and Linn Counties is to provide affordable and accessible health care to residents of all ages with discounts determined by a sliding scale based on client income. All Community Health Centers accept commercial insurance and receive funding from Medicare and Medicaid programs.

Even though they now are open to the entire community, the school-based centers still provide special benefit to the schools. Lincoln and Monroe students visit school nurses if they are not feeling well or exhibit signs of illness. If the nurse determines that medical care is needed, parents are contacted for approval and the child is either seen by a provider at the health center or referred to a personal physician.

"The whole idea is for these students to have access to healthcare, to see physicians, and to have some kind of medical triage for them," Lincoln Center Certified Medical Assistant Margie Pridgen said. "If a student presents illness to the receptionist and they feel they need to be assessed by somebody in the clinic, then they will bring the student over. Staff members do a quick triage on the child and, from there, they determine if the child

needs to see a physician."

Each year the majority of parents at both schools sign waivers allowing their children to be assessed at the health centers. Often eligible children are referred to state-administered services such as Oregon Healthy Kids and Oregon Health Plan, which can help families cover the cost of care.

At both Lincoln and Monroe, staff members at the health centers participate in school fairs and other activities to promote health and wellness, as well as create awareness about health center services. This fall the Monroe Health Center offered physicals to sports participants. In all, 52 children attended four-hour clinics at the high school and grade school and many others had appointments at the health center. Those services were offered at low rates to make health care – and athletic participation – more affordable for many families.

"We're trying to get active healthy lifestyles promoted early," Monroe Health Center Medical Assistant Lori Diaz said, adding that the health center is seeing an up-tick in business from school-aged clients. "If students aren't referred from the schools, their parents are bringing them in. And when the schools see high risk students, they are sending them our way."

The certification process for the school-based health centers is based on an audit of each center's operations, policies and procedures. They must meet requirements set by the Oregon Department of Human Services School-Based Health Center Program. Both school-based health centers in Benton County passed with flying colors.

"They take a look at the facility, operations and policies and procedures to make sure the Health Centers are in compliance with the school-based health center requirements," Dahl said. "Their review system provides an opportunity to make corrections within a certain period of time if needed. This year ours was completely clean. They actually commented on our policies and procedures being of very high quality and requested permission to share some of them. We're pleased to receive such a positive review and value our partnership with the schools we serve."

# Getting a kick out of health



This year's Fifth-Annual Soccer Tournament and Family Weekend event was bigger and better than ever before, thanks to a strong community effort.

The Benton County Health Department, Community Health Centers of Benton and Linn Counties and the Corvallis Parks and Recreation Department teamed up to offer the annual event Aug. 13 through 15 at Willamette Park in Corvallis.

An estimated 1,500 participants attended the three-day event with 16 soccer teams from around the state competing in the tournament (up from 12 last year), with many players bringing their families along to enjoy the event.

The tobacco- and alcohol-free community event is designed to promote healthy living and local services available to Benton County. Activities included team soccer competitions; children's activities; free health screenings; Yoga, Zumba and Pilates demonstrations; DJ entertainment; and an awards ceremony.

The Soccer Tournament and Family Weekend, which this year was expanded from two to three days, featured a strong youth and family focus with new partners and sponsors to promote healthy, active living. Casa Latinos Unidos (a grassroots

organization) coordinated the children's activities; Corvallis Parks and Rec Instructor Charyl Dowing led Zumba classes; and The Little Gym hosted climbing equipment and activities at the park.

In all, 132 people were screened for diabetes, high blood pressure, glaucoma and hearing and vision problems by the Lion's Club Screening Unit, and 55 people were vaccinated by Oregon State University School of Pharmacy students and staff members. The Community Health Centers of Benton and Linn Counties scheduled 15 appointments for those who received screenings and needed further medical care. Verizon-GoWireless sponsored Internet access for Benton County staff members to remotely access the electronic health record program and schedule appointments on-site.

In all 14 organizations and agencies participated in the resource fair, including the Center Against Rape and Domestic Violence, Oregon State University College of Forestry, OSU Extension Service, Samaritan Health Services and the Community Health Centers of Benton and Linn Counties, among others. For the first time, the Corvallis Library Bookmobile was on-site and helping families obtain library cards.

## Meet Carolyn Ashton

The Oregon State University Extension Service is pleased to announce that Carolyn Ashton is the new 4-H youth development agent in Benton County.

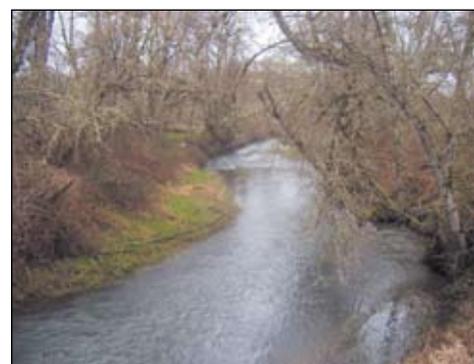
Ashton follows Tammy Skubinna, who retired in February after 26 years working with 4-H youth in Benton County. Ashton previously worked in Illinois as a 4-H Extension agent and staff chair for seven years. For the past five years, she has overseen the 4-H Extension program in Lane County. Ashton's previous work has involved the full range of 4-H programs, with special emphasis on older youth and at-risk populations.

Ashton brings with her to Benton County a federally funded, multi-year grant addressing children, youth and families at risk. She officially began her work in Benton County on Oct. 1.

Ashton, who grew up in Chicago, holds a bachelor's degree in Media Arts from the University of Arizona and a master's degree in Communications from Michigan State University.



Carolyn Ashton



Rivers, creeks, streams and wetlands have been cherished by humans since the beginning of time. The sound of a creek, the chirp of birds in a wetland and the countless goods provided by our shared waters are vital to our economic and environmental sustainability.

Benton County residents care about protecting and restoring our riparian and wetland areas. The people's vision for water resources was captured in the Benton County Comprehensive Plan, which contains goals to protect and improve our shared water resources. Benton County Community Development proactively pursued and was awarded a competitive United States Environmental Protection Agency Region 10 Program Development Grant totaling \$59,912 for riparian and wetland inventory, outreach, education and planning.

The Benton County Riparian and



Wetlands Project is led by a diverse all-volunteer Advisory Group of local landowners and researchers, along with county staff members from Community Development, Natural Areas and Parks and Public Works. The group is "floating right along" currently and again will share its inventory work through a second round of countywide

community meetings this fall.

Benton County staff members hope to see you there to talk and learn together about our shared waters!

For more information about the grant, or to participate in the project, those interested can contact Adam Stebbins, Riparian and Wetlands Project lead, by e-mail at [adam.stebbins@co.benton.or.us](mailto:adam.stebbins@co.benton.or.us) or phone at 541-766-6085. Information also is available online at [www.co.benton.or.us/cd/riparian](http://www.co.benton.or.us/cd/riparian).

## Our Shared Waters

By Adam Stebbins  
Water Projects Coordinator

## Plants We Love, Plants We Hate!

2010 Benton County Sustainability Award

Native Plants in Benton County  
Tom Kaye, Executive Director  
Institute for Applied Ecology

Fuzzy Little Bugs: What we can learn from them?  
Pollinators in Benton County  
Dr. Andy Moldenke, OSU

10 Most Wanted Weeds in Benton County Natural Areas  
Henry Storch, Director  
Benton Soil and Water Conservation District  
Bring your plant for identification!



Tuesday, October 26, 2010  
at 7:00 PM  
Corvallis Public Library  
645 NW Monroe

This presentation is sponsored by the Benton County Environmental Issues Advisory Committee. All Benton County residents are invited to attend. Those in attendance will be invited to express their interests in environmental issues affecting Benton County. For further information you may contact Laurie Starha at 766-6002.