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NEWS from BENTON COUNTY

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February 2016 | Benton County, Oregon | Volume 8, Issue 1

Longtime volunteers reflect on 50 years with 4-H

Nellie Oehler and Jeri Hitchcock got hooked on 4-H in different ways, but [illegible] u could say it's in their [illegible]

Change to "received"

[illegible] ngtime Corvallis area residents were honored recently for 50 years of service to the organization [illegible] n County. Both women [illegible] wards and recognition [illegible] rom their peers around [illegible] common theme of pride [illegible] in the impact they've been able to have and relationships they've developed with the children they have mentored over the years.

"in the impact they've had and the relationships with the children

"You meet some really neat kids," Hitchcock said. "You haven't lived until you've had 10 kids in a group and helped them get their projects in."

Oehler has always known she wanted to be involved in 4-H, and she devoted her career to it. She started out as a professional 4-H agent straight out [illegible] has held positions in Benton and Linn counties for 10 years. Being a 4-H agent was demanding and so she resigned when her daughter was boArn. In 1980 she was hired by OSU to develop the Master Food Preserver Program and in 1981 was hired by OSU Lane County Extension to coordinate the [illegible] Lane County. She's still working as faculty in Lane County and also drives all the way to the Roseburg area to teach Master Food Preservers in Douglas County.

born

Join these sections

"I actually started my career here in college, and one of our projects was to coordinate [illegible]

4-H clubs at the Children's Farm Home, which was an orphanage then," she said. "What I like about 4-H is I'm a total kinetic learner. I learned everything from 4-H because 4-H is hands on. A lot of our kids are hands on with how they learn."

Hitchcock had to seek out the organization. She had married a man with two children and then some other kids moved into the neighborhood.

"I figured they needed something to do other than chasing each other and throwing rocks at each other," she said, "so I went down to the Extension 4-H office and before I left there, they had made me a leader."

The self-described "Jack of all trades" worked numerous jobs during her career as a caterer, overseeing seven stores for Young Enterprises and at one point managing a KFC. Hitchcock typically worked 80 hours a week and then spent countless hours of her own time on 4-H.

"Once you start, you can't give it up," she said. "You've got all these kids and they stop calling you Mrs. Hitchcock and start calling you Grandma."

Even once their children left the nest, the two kept at it. Both lead groups focused on home economics projects. Hitchcock also led sewing groups and Oehler branched out into livestock. Hitchcock started an international club with youth from India, Iran and other countries. She also started two clubs in other states, one in Colorado and another in Texas. Oehler, who had her own kids in 4-H as soon as they were old enough, led numerous clubs over the years. Then, eventually, grandchildren entered the picture.

"When my grandkids got old enough, we started an Adventure club, now known as Clover Buds," Oehler said. "I still have those kids now in the Food for Fun Club. They all have different school schedules, but we all still get together and cook and preserve foods. We meet when we can."

That group started when the kids were first-graders and they are in high school now, attending school at different locations around the county. The clubs are more than just fun and games, and youth learn skills in the subject area of interest as well as leadership, management and other attributes that serve them well in the working world.

This needs a cutline~!!!!

Jeri Hitchcock and Nellie Oehler

"When they leave, these kids know how to run a meeting and know what leadership is," Oehler said. "It provides you with a lot of opportunities to meet people, too."

Oehler and Hitchcock have been recognized over the years for their efforts. Both have been named "Leader of the Year" and earned other awards. Both were inducted into the Oregon 4-H Hall of Fame. Oehler still leads groups, including the "Ram Ewe Down" livestock club she started with her own children years ago. Hitchcock contributes in other ways, judging 4-H entries at the State Fair and contributing a scholarship fund for university and college-bound graduating seniors, as well as helping cover the costs of 4-H youth who may need financial assistance with fees. Hitchcock also contributes to the Pastega House, having sewn 400 dish towels sold to raise funds for the pantry there. She also cooks dinner at times and has taken 4-H club members there to cook for 25 to 30 people, teaching them community service.

"I'm a big believer in giving back to the community," Hitchcock said. "If you're going to get something out of it, you'd better give something back."

But the most rewarding part is hearing back from the youth they have been able to impact. It's been plenty of incentive to keep the two coming back for more volunteer opportunities year after year for half a century.

"Jeri and Nellie have shared not only their time and talent, but their years of wisdom," Carolyn Ashton, who leads the OSU Benton County Extension Service 4-H program, said. "After 50 years of volunteering, you learn a thing or two. They have given so much to 4-H, we are fortunate to have them in our program."

Juvenile work crew learns value of giving back

It was a relatively quiet Saturday morning in Camas Commons in southwest Corvallis, save for the roaring of leaf blowers and lawn mowers.

Benton County Juvenile Department work crew members, under the supervision and assistance of Benton County Juvenile Department Work Crew Coordinator Kelly Sheaffer, were busy cutting grass, pruning trees, blowing leaves off the sidewalk, raking and gathering yard debris to clean up the facility.

It is all part of the work assigned to the youth for community service as a consequence of committing some form of offense. As a result, many of the youth are finding a greater meaning and reward in public service from the experience.

"When I started out working here, it was court required," 16-year-old Corvallis resident Alex Gray said. "Then I really got into it because it was helping out the community, and helping out the community is a good thing. It's made me really happy and it has this place looking nice."

On this particular Saturday in early November, three youth were working the day away, down from the usual four or five on average who work at Camas Commons. They typically put in about 6 hours each Saturday. Work occurs on site weekly during the spring and summer but tapers back to every other Saturday during the fall and winter months.

"I feel like they're invested," Sheaffer said. "When we get on site the 'veteran' youths know what to do; get set up, put on their safety gear and get started. I have more experienced youth guide newer ones. This gives them a sense of ownership on the project, while building self-esteem and confidence. They are gaining skills and working harder than I feel they have before. We get a lot of feedback from parents saying work crew is really good for them."

The group mows, trims bushes, collects leaves, prunes trees and does extra jobs as favors for residents outside their homes. Camas Commons is a low-income property in southwest Corvallis operated by Linn-Benton Housing Authority and co-owned by the Housing Authority and Willamette Neighborhood Housing. So far the client is quite happy with the work.

"We're a low-income property and it's really expensive to keep up with our landscaping because we have lots of trees and lots and lots of grass," Camas Commons Resident Manager Shannon Reich said. "They make the property look great. They're just really happy to be working and they're doing a great job."

Linn-Benton Housing Authority reached out to the Juvenile Department based on a similar property utilizing work crews from Linn County. An agreement was struck with Benton County and work began in late May of this year. The county is paid a small amount for each work day compared to what it would cost to have the property professionally landscaped. The proceeds from the work go into a fund for purchasing holiday gifts for underprivileged children locally. By November, the amount earned by the youth workers to purchase those gifts was approaching $1,800.

This needs a cutline Member of the Juvenile Department work crew

"For me this is like work but I'm not getting paid," 18-year-old Ryan Lane said. "I like this work. It's for a good cause and it's nice that the money goes to kids for Christmas presents."

Both Lane and Gray reported a background of hard work in their personal lives. Gray works with his grandmother around her house pruning trees, gardening and mowing. Lane has worked on a farm and enjoys doing physical labor.

"I've had a few jobs and all have been manual labor, maintenance stuff," Lane, a senior at Crescent Valley High School, said. "I couldn't work in an office sitting at a desk."

Gray is wrapping up a few months' worth of court-ordered service and Lane was knocking out his first day to go toward about 18 total hours. Both have found the experience to be rewarding and both expressed plans to continue volunteering on this project even after their requirements are met.

"I have a day left and next time is my last day but I am going to keep doing it because I like to volunteer," Gray said. "It's kind of groovy."

Dust Control changes coming

The county will continue offering itself as a bidder for dust control services in 2016, but that may not be the case next year.

The county is discussing whether to suspend the program for 2017 and allow property owners to obtain a free permit to use their own dust control contractors. The program burdens the department with a heavy administrative cost, which prevents additional right-of-way work such as ditching and mowing as well as more road and bridge work.

This year, we will offer residents the choice between two products: lignin and Earthbind100. Earthbind is known to provide better stabilization while lignin works better as a dust control agent. Both products are environmentally friendly, but require the correct weather conditions to work perfectly.

We would love to hear your comments on this topic. Please write us at Benton County Public Works, Attn: Josh Wheeler, Public Works Director, 360 SW Avery, Corvallis, OR 97333 or by email at *Joshua.wheeler@co.benton.or.us*.

Creating opportunities

Dial-A-Bus earns award for hiring those with disabilities

There is no reason a person's struggles should preclude them from finding a job where they can contribute. That is exactly the approach taken by Dial-A-Bus Operations Supervisors Carmen Palinkas and Roberto Ponce.

In fact, the two were honored by the Oregon State Rehabilitation Council for their outstanding contribution to hiring and including individuals with disabilities as employees at Dial-A-Bus. Every quarter, the Rehabilitation Council presents awards during a quarterly meeting to recognize employers and partners who have demonstrated strong commitment to empowering Oregonians with disabilities in their employment endeavors. Palinkas and Ponce received their awards at a brief ceremony late last year in Newport.

"This recognition for Carmen and Roberto is a small token of appreciation for the monumental effort these two put forward every day in tireless advocacy of our clients," Dial-A-Bus Director Steve Harder said. "Under their supervision, extraordinary measures to ensure that our fragile clients are well-served have become completely routine."

Oregon State Rehabilitation Council's purpose is to provide vocational rehabilitation with an external, consumer-oriented perspective. The council advises vocational rehabilitation on the needs of Oregonians with disabilities concerning programs, policy, services and other issues. The goal is to meet the employment potential of Oregonians with disabilities.

This type of work hits especially close to home with Dial-A-Bus, which contracts with Benton County to provide transportation services to seniors and those with disabilities in the community. Through bus services as well as individual ride programs, the organization connects its clientele with medical appointments, work, shopping and other necessities of everyday life. Palinkas and Ponce have hired between three and five clients of vocational rehab as drivers, helping those individuals achieve meaningful employment.

"They are all driving developmentally disabled people to and from their worksites as well as seniors and persons with disabilities," Ponce, who has been with Dial-A-Bus for 8 years, said of the employees who were hired. "I didn't realize these folks had difficulties. I just thought they were being retrained. When they came and interviewed, they did well and we hired them. They seem to be folks who really want to work, which makes all the difference."

The first couple of hires were referrals that came in from Vocational Rehab and their applications were included in the pool of other applicants. They performed so well, they were offered and accepted jobs with Dial-A-Bus. Managers have been so pl[illegible] those employees that they [illegible] back to Vocational Rehab [illegible] there are openings.

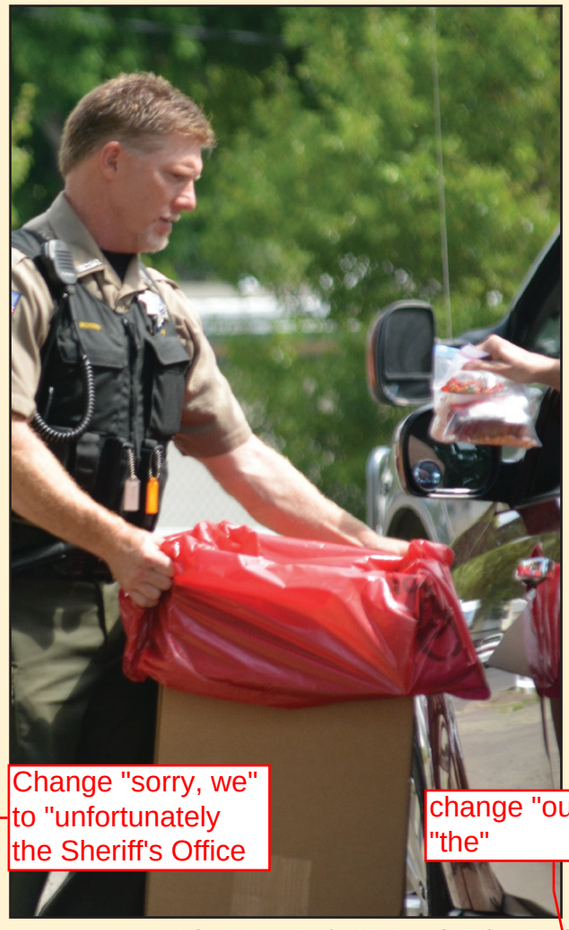
"We took a leap of faith and they interviewed well," Palinkas, who has been with Dial-A-Bus for almost 6 years, said. "Next time we needed another driver, Vocational Rehab was able to accommodate and send somebody over for an interview."

~~The individuals won the job on their own merits~~. Palinkas and Ponce were surprised to hear that they had won an award. As far as they were concerned, they were simply doing their job of hiring the best possible applicants for the positions they had.

"It makes me feel g[illegible] people have been ou[illegible] some time and it's difficult for them to get work," Palinkas said. "To be able to get them work is quite rewarding. I've had friends and family who have been on disability and it's hard to get work. If we can give them a chance, then I'm more than happy to do that. And the employees have turned out awesome."

Benton County Sheriff's Office Sponsors Drug Take Back Event

Saturday, April 30, 2016



Safely dispose of your expired or unused medications at this year's Drug Take Back Event. Sponsored by the Benton County Sheriff's Office, in partnership with the Philomath Police Department and the Benton County Fairgrounds, this one-day event will take place on Saturday, April 30, 2016.

This free, drive-through event will be held at the Benton [illegible] Fairgrounds [illegible] 0am – 2:00pm. [illegible] ~~ll direct you~~. [illegible] nt will close promptly at 2:00pm, so you are encouraged to come early.

Expired prescription medications, medicine from deceased family members, pet medications and unknown tablets and capsules are all allowed. Sorry, we cannot accept thermometers, intra-venous solutions, injectibles, [illegible] arps such as EpiPens, or syringes, [illegible] ctronic glucose monitors, medical or [illegible] zardous waste of any kind, or illegal [illegible] ugs. Please do not bring these as they will be turned away.

Also, this event is for household use only, we are not accepting material from businesses such as doctor's offices, nursing homes, or veterinary clinics.

As part of the Drug Enforcement Administration's National Take Back Initiative, this event helps keep our community safe. It ensures that unwanted medications are kept away from kids or others who may misuse them and it disposes of these medications in a way that keeps them out of our water supply.

For more information, go to the Benton County Sheriff's Office website at: *www.co.benton.or.us/sheriff* and click on the "Other Services" menu.

Change "so you are" to "the public is

Change "sorry, we" to "unfortunately the Sheriff's Office

change "our" to "the"

change "we are not accepting" to "and cannot accept"

Public Works wants to hear from you!

The Benton County Public Works Department has made a shift in its focus when it comes to reaching the public.

When I came aboard in 2014, I was asked to proceed with the approval of a process [illegible] build a multi-use path connecting North Albany and North Corvallis. In the end, this approach came up short. Recognizing we could do better, I recommended to staff and the Commissioners that a different [illegible] necessary to connect with the residents of Benton County.

insert "that"

P and O should be lower case

I am happy to announce the rollout of our Public Outreach program, called TRIP (Tool for Reaching Individuals in the Public). This is our Public Outreach tool to reach as many in the public that we can in as many ways as we can.

In 2015, we sent out postcards to those directly affected by any major work we were completing whether it was our chip seal program or projects as big as the roundabout. We heard from the public that our mailings were successful, so we will continue those in 2016. Some mailings will provide information on long-t[illegible] and others will discus[illegible] construction work.

change "is working" to "continues to work" and kill comma after "projects"

Our next step for 20[illegible] the public on the journ[illegible] with us as we move forw[illegible] such as the Corvallis to Albany multi-use path and the 53rd Street railroad overcrossing take many years to design, fund and construct, quickly falling off the public's radar. Behind the scenes, Public Works is working on these projects, but the public is unaware.

That is changing. We are setting up project websites to help you follow these long-term projects. We also will be notifying those properties directly impacted by the projects by mail on a semi-regular basis. If you are not directly impacted by the projects but wish to be notified, you can request to be placed on the mailing list. Updates will occur up to four times per year.

Updates for all county projects also will be given on a weekly Facebook post. Public Works has created its own individual Facebook page for 2016, and we need you to "like" our page to get updates. We are creating a document that provides an overview of the condition of our road and bridge system, which we will be publishing in the summer of 2016. This document will show the history and future of our infrastructure. In 2016 we also are planning five open houses throughout the county in Corvallis (includes the Philomath area), Albany (includes the Adair Village area), Monroe, Kings Valley and Alsea to spread the word about our long-term projects and describe our 5-year maintenance plan, as well as our 5-year capital plan.

The other way we will be taking the public with us is by asking the public to join us hand-in-hand collaborating on possible solutions to needs within the County Transportation System [illegible] than telling you to follow us. [illegible]o forward with the Corvallis [illegible]ny path, we will be asking the [illegible] to brainstorm options with us [illegible]ect the two cities rather than [illegible] what location we have selected without input. Our first step in this process is to determine the need. Surveys were taken during November and December.

"Our first step in this process was to determine the need through surveys taken in November and December 2015.

With projects like the 53rd Street overpas[illegible] ork to determi[illegible] or the safety is[illegible] ng the opening [illegible] ctually more c[illegible] r the railroad [illegible] w any "at grad[illegible] makes that opt[illegible] ope to also have an open house about this important project in 2016 to discuss all of the options and potential projects in the 53rd Street corridor, as well as the overpass project.

We are looking for stakeholders in many areas, as well as new members for our Roads Advisory Committee. This is a great way to help staff determine the best way to proceed on many different topics concerning infrastructure within our county. We are looking for stakeholders to join a group that is discussing safety on Highway 20 between Corvallis and Albany with Oregon Department of Transportation. Lastly, we are updating our Transportation System Plan (TSP) and we are looking for stakeholders to assist with the updating of that 20-year planning document.

Finally, it is our duty to keep our roads and bridges in the best condition possible with the funding available. Working with our legislators, we will continue looking for grants to fund our infrastructure, create plans that make us project ready (or "shovel ready") when the state and [illegible] reate stimulus [illegible] tinue to grade our gravel roads, fill and pave potholes, clean our bridges and design myriad projects to improve the travelled way.

change "take part" to "receive"

To become a part of any of our committees, take part in any of our mailings or just make your comments known, please contact me, Public Works Director Josh Wheeler, at 541-766-6010, by email at Joshua.wheeler@co.benton.or.us or [illegible] Avery, Corvallis, OR [illegible] write me or call for an appointment to discuss your concerns in person. We want to be here for you, At Your Service, and ensuring that the public is informed and part of the process in moving our department forward.

change "just" to "to"

Public Works Director Josh Wheeler

Regional collaboration works for Public Works

In November, the county met with representatives from Albany, Corvallis, Oregon Department of Transportation and Philomath to strategize on winter storm efforts.

This was the second annual meeting where staff discussed ways to work together by sharing equipment, increasing communication and finding ways to assist each other to maximize efforts and increase public safety.

The county is hosting a Roadway Surfacing Alternatives workshop, bringing in various suppliers and contractors to educate our region on alternatives to Chip Seals and basic resurfacing. The goal is to look at cost-effective maintenance [illegible]lternatives that would work both [illegible]n the county and in the cities.

The County Shop continues to assist our neighbors, including government entities as far away as Sweet Home, with their fleet repair needs. This regional program is self-funded and has been active for more than 20 years.