

# NEWS from BENTON COUNTY

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## County crews maintain 460 miles of roads

Benton County road crews will be busy this summer with chip-sealing projects around the county. In all, the county maintains 460 miles of roads, mostly in rural areas.

Chip seal is a treatment of the surface of a paved road. It is designed to seal and protect the pavement, extending the life of the road. Chip seal paving improves road quality, protects road surfaces from water damage and improves vehicle traction.

This summer Benton County road crews will complete chip seal projects on 16 different stretches of Benton County roads, including the following:

- Palestine Avenue from Independence Highway to Oak Grove Drive;
- Oak Grove Drive from Metge Avenue to Scenic Drive;
- Sulphur Springs Road from Lewisburg Avenue to the oil mat;
- Mountain View Drive from state Highway 99W to Lewisburg Avenue;
- Rosewood Drive from Sulphur Springs

Road to the end of the county road;

- Springhill Drive from Buena Vista Road to Scenic Drive;
- Independence Highway from the Polk County line to Camp Adair Road;
- Soap Creek Road from Tampico Road to Beef Barn Road;
- West Thornton Lake Drive from North Albany Road to Scenic Drive;
- West Thornton Lake Drive and Scenic Drive intersection area;
- Tampico Road from Wiles Road to Trillium Lane;
- Metge Avenue from Independence Highway to Oak Grove Drive;
- Arboretum Road in its entirety;
- Tampico Road from areas where grindings have been laid out to the Polk County line (over two days); and
- Marys River Estates.

In all, about 20 miles of roadway will be chip-sealed this summer. The work is scheduled to begin in early- to mid-July.

## Roundabout construction underway

Benton County kicked off its construction of a new roundabout designed to improve safety and relieve traffic congestion at the intersection of West Hills Road and SW 53rd St. in Corvallis.

Construction began on May 1 and is scheduled to continue through July 24. Beginning May 18, West Hills Road was closed to through traffic, including bicyclists, at the intersection with SW 53rd Street until construction is substantially complete. 53rd Street remains open to traffic at all times, but may be limited to one lane of traffic through the construction area while the contractor is onsite.

Temporary traffic delays should be expected. Those who use West Hills Road at that intersection will need to find alternate routes, and the county will post a detour route if it is determined to be necessary. Warnings of this closure have been posted.

Right-of-way acquisition was completed in the fall. Utility companies completed relocations in winter and early spring. The multi-use path has been rerouted to its new location and will remain as gravel until the paving portion of the project is completed. Users of the path should use caution in the construction zone and on the gravel portion of the path.

Between March and May 1, county crews installed erosion control, advance warning signs and relocated the multi-use path. Roads remained open in that area while that work is completed.

Deadline for construction completion is tentatively set for July 24, and all roads should be opened to traffic at around that time if everything goes according to schedule. County crews are scheduled to finish landscaping and other final tasks between Aug. 3 and Sept. 30.



Captain Rabago and Lt. Jewell take 2014 Citizens' Academy participants on a tour of the jail.

## Benton County Sheriff's Office offers Citizens' Academy

Applications are being accepted for the 2015 Benton County Sheriff's Office Citizens' Academy. The Citizens' Academy is an annual program that gives residents insight into the operations and challenges of their Sheriff's Office.

This class meets Tuesday evenings from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. for eight sessions Sept. 8 through Oct. 27. Two Saturday sessions will run from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Oct. 3 and 17.

Most classes are taught at the Law Enforcement Center, 180 NW Fifth St., in Corvallis. During the program participants gain insight into the challenges faced by deputies. The Citizens' Academy covers all

aspects of Sheriff's Office responsibilities including law enforcement, emergency management, search and rescue, parole and probation, jail operations and support service and command responsibilities. Past participants report that the program is enlightening.

"Overall, I am very glad that I had the opportunity to be a part of this program," wrote a 2014 participant.

The program is free and all interested individuals are encouraged to apply. Applications are available online at [www.co.benton.or.us/sheriff](http://www.co.benton.or.us/sheriff) or from the Law Enforcement Center. Deadline to apply is Aug. 14.

For more information, those interested can call 541-766-6858 or go online : [www.co.benton.or.us/sheriff](http://www.co.benton.or.us/sheriff).

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# The long road to help leads to Benton County

Charlie had been told much of his life he had “emotional problems” when he lived in Alaska. After suffering from various forms of abuse as well as mental illness and alcohol addiction, Charlie hit the road to find help, leaving Alaska for the Pacific Northwest of the “Lower 48.”

“I was told I had emotional problems until I was about 25 but I had no idea what that was all about,” he said.

But that was just the beginning of Charlie’s story as he sought out suitable help. The 57-year-old Corvallis resident was living on the streets in Alaska, Washington and Oregon for 19 years before he could get himself set up with the resources he needed to live in society.

About a year and a half ago he came to Corvallis after spending a year in Eugene. Ultimately, he was connected with the Benton County Assertive Community Treatment Team. The team – which includes mental health, physical health, and other case management professionals – helps residents like Charlie who suffer from mental illness to seek the treatment they need for their mental, emotional and physical needs. Levels of service depend on the needs of the client, and each person who participates in the program has a plan with goals they wish to achieve.

For some, it’s stable employment and complete self-sufficiency. For Charlie – who suffers from arthritis, had a heart attack a few years ago, shows signs of suffering a stroke at some point and is recovering from alcohol addiction – a job isn’t realistic, but he strives for a stable life, to make friends and become part of a community.

“He’s pushing himself to meet new people,” Benton County caseworker Anna Dennis-Kelly said. “He’s made several new friends. That’s huge for Charlie; making a home, having a place and staying there. This is a big deal for Charlie.”

Building social supports is a huge part of the program. County staff members help clients connect to community groups that interest them such as churches and community organizations. They also help clients connect to the community resources available that meet their needs. Hands-on work of county staff includes case management, health care delivery through the Community Health

Centers, mental health treatment from county mental health professionals and the appropriate frequency of home visits to check in on progress and administer medications. Peer support also is provided to help give clients other resources they desperately need. They also gain assistance in learning day-to-day living skills and interpersonal relationships and interactions.

ACT clients have more severe mental health needs and it’s an unlimited duration service. Some people go through the program and meet goals such as securing stable housing, getting a job or becoming completely self-sufficient. Others will require services on a more permanent basis.

“It’s a recovery oriented process so it’s geared toward helping clients reach their goals and helping them break those down into smaller, more achievable, steps,” Program Manager Raina Wickham said. “Ideally we connect them to natural supports in the community. Our goal is to help clients reach their goals and obtain stability in the community. In essence we work ourselves out of a job.”

ACT services are working. Benton County has the lowest psychiatric hospitalization rate in the state.

“That’s attributable to a variety of programs but the more severe cases can be attributed to this service,” Wickham said. “It’s an evidence-based practice and the state of Oregon has mandated that every county have an ACT team, but even before the mandate was presented Benton County had created a rural ACT team.”

After 19 years living on the streets, Charlie has to adjust to living in one place and having a stable home. He still struggles holding on to possessions because he has become so used to moving from place to place with only as much as he could carry.

Progress toward kicking his 25-year dependency on alcohol has been one of Charlie’s proud accomplishments, but it’s been a struggle. Recently, after 19 weeks of sobriety, he slipped.

“I’ve been doing it so many years, it’s hard to quit,” he said. “I don’t believe ‘if you can do it, I can do it,’ but I do believe if you want it bad enough you can make it happen. I know it can be done and it’s just how badly you want to.”

Charlie gets two visits a day for medication. He’s attending church locally and reaching out to surround himself with positive influences. He gets up every morning at 4 a.m. and walks over a mile a day. He gets the mental health treatment he needs. He is taking care of himself physically, as well, with the help of his treatment team at the Health Centers. Charlie is maintaining a home of his own, an apartment in Corvallis.

These are the outcomes that are apparent from the successful ACT model. The program’s purpose is to minimize police contact, keep clients out of the

state hospital or jail and to help them address their mental health and physical needs in the community with a strong support system. Currently there are 40 ACT clients out of about 500 people countywide enrolled in specialty mental health treatment.

Charlie is working hard and remains hopeful that he will continue to remain sober and maintain his home, as well as continue to build a positive network of friends.

“I’m going to continue getting help; that’s most important,” he said. “I feel like I’m getting great support.”

## Benton County works to maintain iconic landmark

Benton County Courthouse was completed in 1888 and currently is the oldest courthouse west of the Mississippi still used for its original purpose. The courthouse is a structure of unreinforced masonry with flexible wood floor and roof diaphragms.

Over the years the building has shown wear from natural settling, movement of the shifty Willamette Valley clay and natural aging of the materials used to build the structure. The building has been inspected several times over the years by at least four different engineering or architecture firms since 1985 to assess the integrity and safety of the building. The latest of these walk-throughs was in December 2014.

In a 2008 study conducted statewide by Hennebery Eddy Architects, the Benton County Courthouse was ranked 15th out of 48 for life safety with a 3.67 out of 5.

“Based on our observations and review, we feel the building is in good structural condition for its age,” according to a 2012 report from KPFF Consulting Engineers. “We did not observe any significant distress or settlement that would be of structural concern.”

The county has continued monitoring the status of the building. Currently it is conducting a Request for Proposal process for structural engineers to calculate the current cost estimate for repairs and seismic upgrades. The county has looked at grant opportunities over the years to help fund seismic upgrades and continues to do so.

Federal Emergency Management Agency funding isn’t available because courthouses aren’t considered to be critical structures like schools, hospitals, fire stations, police departments and some others.

The courthouse is showing its age superficially such as some cracking of plaster and gypsum wall board in non-structural partitions. Those cracks are checked on a weekly schedule and there has been no movement since testing began a few months ago. Identified areas also have been checked regularly for moisture and related damages.

“We’re not seeing any movement,” Benton County Facilities and Utilities Manager Chris Bielenberg said. “We’re more apt to see changes seasonally based on ground moisture, humidity and other factors.”

So far the building is checking out. In the meantime, the county will continue searching for funding opportunities for seismic upgrades, inspecting and evaluating the facility, conducting some minor mortar improvements and taking care of this important public resource and source of pride.

“We’re looking for opportunities to fund the retrofit,” Bielenberg said. “Under current conditions the courthouse is in very good shape and there is no threat under normal conditions. We’ve been pretty diligent in responding to questions and concerns. The building is in really good structural shape.”

## Lincoln Health Center envisions better health for its patients

Vision problems are among the most common pediatric health issues, affecting about one in four school-age children in the United States. And the earlier a vision problem is diagnosed and treated, the less likely it is to impact a child's development. Yet only about one in three children receive an eye examination or vision screening before entering school.

But at Lincoln Health Center, vision problems are caught early thanks to routine vision screenings and collaboration between the clinic and nearby Lincoln Elementary School.

In addition to the vision program at Lincoln School, all patients of Lincoln Health Center receive a vision screening as part of their regular checkups and patients who need it are referred for optometric care. This model of care that catches health issues before they become bigger problems is what every patient experiences at Lincoln Health Center.

Staff members provide health screenings and other preventive care measures and also make referrals to specialists, such as eye doctors, and follow through to make sure their patients receive the care they need, said Pediatrician Carolina Amador, M.D., who has worked at the clinic since 2006.

"Each of our clinics has connections to all of these services," Dr. Amador said. "Having these connections can be very helpful to our patients."

Access to a network of medical providers including dental, mental health, vision and other specialists is one thing that makes this neighborhood public health clinic unique.

Like is the case in each member of the family of clinics that makes up the Community Health Centers, doctors,

nurses and medical professionals at Lincoln Health Center are bilingual and bicultural to serve a diverse community which includes South Corvallis and the Lincoln School neighborhood.

Lincoln Health Center provides routine care – including well-child exams, immunizations and acute care – as well as mental health services. It also does some school-based care, including seeing any child who becomes ill or is hurt at school. But most patients are seen for primary care and the health center is open to everyone.

Dr. Amador said another common concern for her young patients is asthma. Many children with the chronic condition, one of the leading causes of missed days from school, have not been diagnosed or are not receiving treatment. But by educating her patients, and with proper medicine, many families are now able to manage the condition.

Dedicated nurse care coordinators at the clinic also follow up with patients for any additional health needs, such as referrals and ordering tests. These coordinators also can work with patients on issues such as financial problems or lack of transportation to arrange the care they need. And a behaviorist works exclusively at the Lincoln clinic four days a week. Patients who are in need of mental health services can see the behaviorist during their visit and don't need to make a return appointment.

Community Health Centers such as Lincoln make it convenient for people to see the doctor. Same-day appointments are available for established patients and providers are accepting new patients with no waiting lists for new patient appointments.

## Data security and protection is a Benton County IT top priority

The Benton County Information Technology Department is taking proactive steps to protect data and secure the county's network.

An independent external contractor conducts regular audits to identify vulnerabilities and evaluate security. The contractor acts like a hacker trying to infiltrate the network.

Based on those attempts to breach the system, the contractor provides recommendations for strengthening security. Those recommendations are

rated based on threat level. Some items are lower risk than others and some things need to "be fixed by the end of that meeting," according to IT Deputy Director Adam Loerts.

"We start with critical issues and work our way down the list," Loerts said.

Last year was the first time the county has done such an exercise and as they continue the scope will be narrowed to focus on certain departments or specific types of county business.

"Aside from getting ourselves to the

## Benton County Fair and Rodeo offers family fun

Benton County Fair and Rodeo, July 29 through Aug. 1, includes appearances by top musical acts and returning favorites, as well as even more fun for the entire family at the Benton County Fairgrounds.

The Main Stage concert lineup includes:

- Country artists Jeremy McComb, Corvallis's own Jackson Michelson and A Thousand Horses beginning at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, July 29;

- Faith and Family Night, Thursday, July 30, with Hawk Nelson and Sanctus Real, starting at 7:30 p.m.;

- Friday, July 31, rock and roll legend Foghat performs at 8 p.m.;

- Johnny Limbo and the Lugnuts provide lively performances of classic 1950s and '60s hits on Saturday, Aug. 1, with performances at 7 and 9 p.m.

There will be even more family entertainment including hypnotist Tammy Harris Barton, Mutton Bustin' sheep-riding for children and an opportunity to see exotic animals and reptiles up close with Walk on

the Wild Side. A new interactive exhibit at the Fair will be Splash Dogs, showcasing "man's best friend" in an exciting and competitive atmosphere.

The Benton County Fair is excited to welcome back Davis Amusement Cascadia, providing favorite carnival rides. Discount carnival bracelets are \$20 in advance, or \$25 at Fair.

Discount fair tickets are available through July 24, with slightly higher prices at the gate. Advance ticket prices are as follows:

- Adults (17-59) - \$6 per day (or \$20 season pass)

- Seniors (60+) - \$4 per day (or \$12 season pass)

- Youth (6-16) - \$2 per day (\$9 for a season pass)

- Kids 5 and under FREE all day, every day.

Parking is \$5 per day, or \$15 for the season. Parking passes and Fair tickets are available at [www.bentoncountyfair.net](http://www.bentoncountyfair.net), or at the Fairgrounds office, 110 SW. 53rd St., Corvallis.



Corvallis's own Jackson Michelson will perform July 29.

Centers, the Benton County jail, Juvenile Department and others. Aside from these audits, the county conducts security audits relative to health records and criminal justice related privacy laws and regulations.

Internally the county also is offering mandatory electronic security training modules for employees.

"We also do training, which is mandatory, for employees to raise the waterline of people's understanding of technology and what the risks are," McDonald said.

point that we meet standards, every year there are new threats and different ways they are attacking and we need to make adjustments," Benton County IT Director Grace McDonald said. "The county takes threats seriously and we are making an ongoing effort through a third party to analyze our risks so we can remediate them."

A great deal of personal client data is stored on the county network for clients of departments such as the Health Department, Community Health

# Now is the time to protect against wildfire

Last September hundreds of Corvallis residents experienced a wildfire up close. As wildfires go, it was not catastrophic – an 86-acre “brush fire” causing limited damage and no injuries – but many Timberhill area structures could have been damaged or lost.

The fire spread quickly and a large number of fire personnel was required to suppress it. Response from 17 fire agencies in Benton and four adjacent counties was swift and effective. However, successful suppression of the Timberhill Fire doesn't necessarily mean safety from wildfire threat in the future.

Wildfires occur each year in Benton County and fortunately they are extinguished promptly. National estimates place the number of wildfires escaping suppression at about 2 percent and local fire professionals repeatedly remind us, “It's not if, but when” such fires might occur.

## Embers Cause Home Ignitions

Imagine the Timberhill Fire further from town in an area with no fire hydrants, narrow roads, sloping terrain and homes surrounded by forest vegetation. This

description fits most of rural Benton County. Unlike the grass and brush of the Timberhill Fire, when trees and heavier vegetation burn, embers (burning chunks of wood) are lofted into the air where they can travel more than a mile. Embers are the primary cause of home ignitions during wildfire. Even when the flames are too distant to be seen, entire homes can be consumed by fires sparked by an ember landing in a bed of fuels.

## What Are Fuels?

Fuels can include any materials that can combust during a wildfire such as dry grass, pine needles, last year's leaves, stacked firewood, shrubs, trees, fences, lawn furniture, decks and even houses! A few inches of pine needles in a gutter are a highly flammable fuel that, when ignited, can produce a flame length of 18 inches – enough to set a home ablaze. During a wildfire, when ember storms carry burning debris through neighborhoods, something as simple as dry leaves beneath a wood deck can trigger a sequence that leads to the loss of a home.

**Reduce Fuels – Create Defensible Space!**

Visualize a wildfire scenario with a few – or even dozens of – homes on fire surrounded by burning forest fuels. Add to this the dry and windy conditions of late summer in Benton County. How long would it take before professional firefighters become overwhelmed? In similar situations across the nation, personal homeowner responsibility for creating defensible space has been a key factor in saving thousands of homes from wildfire.

What can residents do? They can create defensible space – and keep it lean, green and clean. Defensible space breaks up

the continuous path of vegetation that could carry wildfire to a home. It also gives firefighters a safe zone from which to fight a wildfire.

This checklist provides essential tasks that can help protect homes from wildfire. For expert assistance evaluating a home and property for wildfire risk, those interested can contact Oregon Department of Forestry Community Wildfire Forester Patrick MacMeekin at 541-929-9165. More information is available online at:

[www.co.benton.or.us/cd/cwpp/](http://www.co.benton.or.us/cd/cwpp/)

## E-book, app aid fire-resistant landscaping

Oregon State University Extension Service has made available a free online resource to help homeowners decrease potential for wildfire damage by using fire-resistant plants in landscaping.

“Fire Resistant Landscape Plants for the Willamette Valley” was authored by Oregon State University horticulturists Brooke Edmunds, Barb Fick and Paula Rogers Lupcho and is available online at <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/em9103>.



## DEFINE YOUR DEFENSIBLE SPACE CHECK LIST



1	<b>DEFINE YOUR DEFENSIBLE SPACE</b>	Create 30 to 100 feet of fire-resistant space around your home to prevent fires from starting near or spreading to your home.	
2	<b>REDUCE FLAMMABLE BRUSH AROUND YOUR HOME</b>	Trim or remove brush to eliminate a direct path for fire to reach your home and remove brush from beneath trees (ladder fuels) to prevent fire from spreading up into trees.	
3	<b>PRUNE OR REMOVE TREES</b>	Prune low-hanging branches and thin out dense stands to reduce the potential for fire to reach tree tops and spread to other trees (crown fire).	
4	<b>KEEP GRASS AND WEEDS CUT LOW</b>	Trim grass and weeds to less than 4 inches to prevent rapid spread of fire and prevent high flames.	
5	<b>CLEAR WOOD PILES AND BUILDING MATERIALS</b>	Keep combustible materials at least 30 feet away from the home and outbuildings. Keep all brush and weeds at least 10 feet away from wood piles and propane and fuel tanks.	
6	<b>KEEP YARD AND ROOF CLEAN</b>	Clear pine needles, leaves and debris from your yard, deck, roof and gutters to reduce places where embers can smolder and ignite you home. Remove overhanging and dead tree branches.	
7	<b>KEEP ADDRESS SIGNS VISIBLE</b>	Post easy-to-read address signs and trim vegetation away from driveways so emergency personnel can find and access the home quickly.	
8	<b>CHOOSE FIRE-RESISTANT BUILDING MATERIALS</b>	Use fire-resistant roofing, siding, decking, fencing and lawn furniture materials to prevent the spread of fire. Install and maintain spark arrestors on chimneys.	
9	<b>AVOID BURNING YARD DEBRIS</b>	Rather than burning, instead recycle, chip or compost yard debris. Yard debris burning is a frequent cause of wildfires.	
10	<b>BE PREPARED TO RESPOND TO WILDFIRE</b>	Keep a 72-hour kit handy. Know evacuation routes and procedures; practice them with family members, using a checklist of what to do before leaving. Make a plan!	

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