



National Guard soldiers in Kosovo, appreciate home support

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Cory Grogan
Oregon Military Department
Joint Forces Headquarters

KOSOVO — Captain Jace D. Cook, a Linn County, Oregon, Deputy District Attorney from Grants Pass, is deployed to Kosovo with the Oregon National Guard. A Lewis and Clark Law School graduate, he serves as a Judge Advocate General (JAG) officer, specifically as the Trial Counsel and an Ethics Counselor.

As Trial Counsel, he helps maintain Soldier discipline to meet military standards. He also turns complex laws – like the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and Military Rules of Evidence (MRE) – into guidance, readying him for courts-martial if needed, while protecting the mission's integrity abroad.

Before his deployment, Cook's colleagues at the District Attorney's Office threw a special celebration for him on Flag Day. The ceremony wasn't just about the event—it was a heartfelt show of pride and support for his service, reminding Cook that his community was behind him as he prepared for his mission.

Cook acknowledges that the support from his family and coworkers has played a crucial role in his deployment.

"The understanding and support I receive allows me to focus fully on my duties in Kosovo. It's uplifting to know they're proud and behind me—their strength fuels mine," Cook said.

For Cook, serving in the military is not just about his work while in uniform—it's also about the people who make it possible: families, friends, and employers.

"Without their support, the mission would be far harder to complete," he added.



Sgt. 1st Class Lonnie Dornhecker (left) and Cpt. Jace D. Cook pause for a photo at Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, Apr. 4, 2025. Cook and Dornhecker expressed appreciation for their civilian employers who have been supporting them while deployed.

Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Cory Grogan

Col. Pete Helzer, commander of the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, and current commander of the NATO-led Kosovo Force Regional Command East, also known as KFOR RC-E said employers are a part of the Oregon

National Guard family.

"Employers play a vital role in supporting our National Guard members and their families," Helzer said. "They are a part of the military family that bridges the gap between duty and

home life. Their support helps ensure the well-being of our Guard members and their families."

SOLDIERS ... See P. 12



Final Road Dept. budget for Wayne Mink

Linn County Roadmaster Wayne Mink presented his final budget proposal during the Wednesday, April 30, Budget Hearings session. He plans to retire the end of June. Pictured with him is Operations Manager Kevin Hamilton and Engineer Daineal Malone.

Budget Committee approves \$279,850,597 budget for 2025-'26

By Alex Paul
Linn County Reporter

ALBANY — After three days of presentations, the Linn County Budget Committee approved the 2025-2026 budget of \$279,850,597 on Thursday, May 1 at the Linn County Fair & Expo Center.

The Budget Committee is composed of the three Linn County Commissioners, Roger Nyquist, Sherrie Sprenger and Will Tucker, along with community members Kerry Johnson, chair; Rex Watkins, vice-chair; and Dustin Welkers.

Johnson thanked the commissioners for appointing the community members and said they enjoy the process.

She also thanked all of the department heads and elected officials for being "diligent" in building responsible budgets.

"We must not forget where these dollars come from," Johnson said. "They came out of someone's pockets and they work hard to earn them."

Board of Commissioners Chairman Nyquist said after the hearings, "Linn County is in a better financial position than most other local governments, in part because the team focuses on delivering services that meet our budgets every day. We work at being in as good

BUDGET ... See P. 15



The Linn County Reporter is digitally published monthly by the Linn County Board of Commissioners.

Would you like to receive the newsletter?

Please send your email address to Alex Paul, Linn County Communications Officer, apaul@co.linn.or.us or call 541-967-3825.

Linn County Board of Commissioners

**Roger
Nyquist**



**Sherrie
Sprenger**



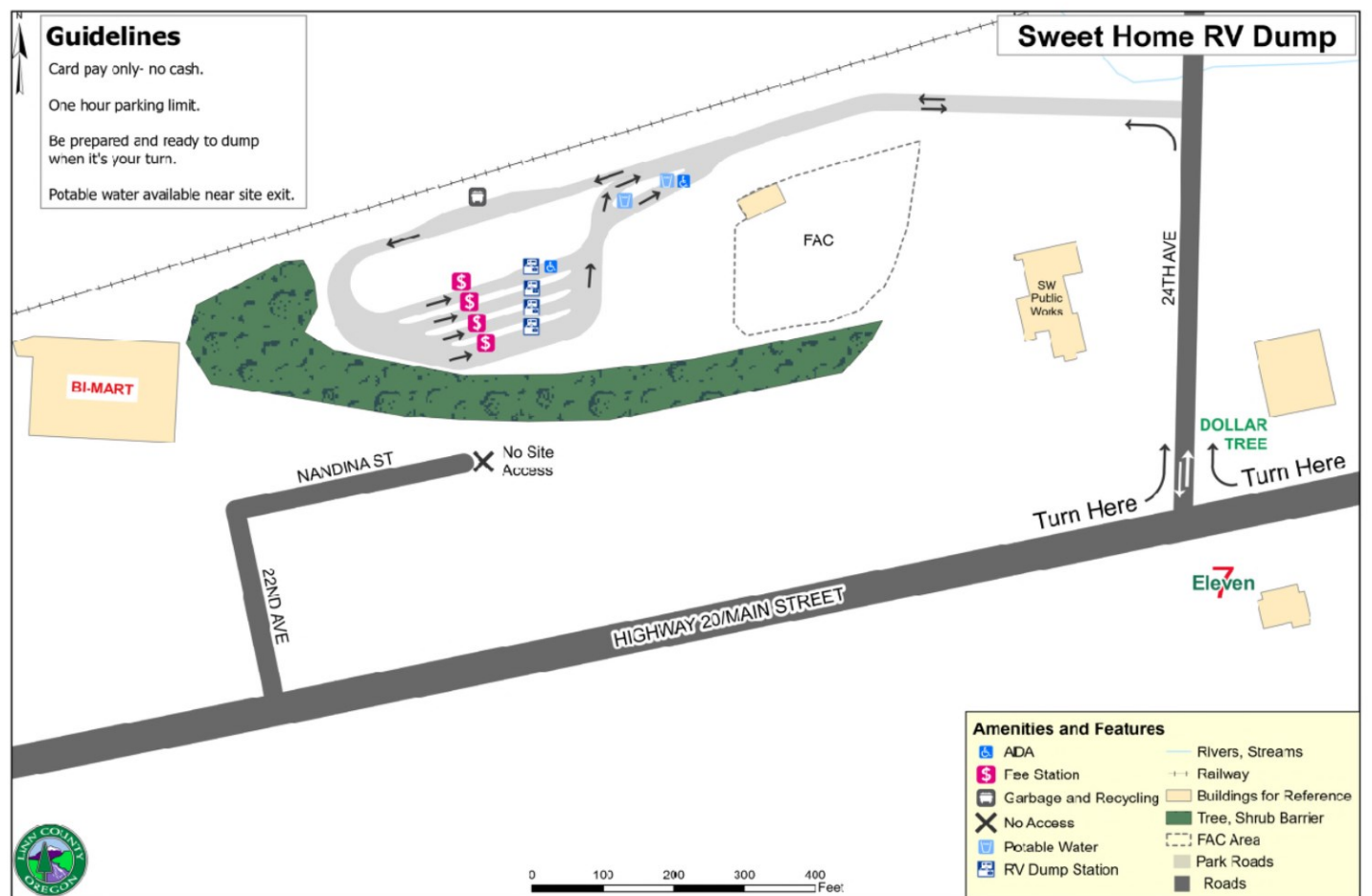
**Will
Tucker**



The Board of Commissioners meet at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesdays.

You can listen to the meetings by calling 541-704-3002 PIN 8442.

Call 541-967-3825



RV dump ribbon cutting is May 8

SWEET HOME — The public is invited to a ribbon cutting and grand opening for the new Linn County Parks & Recreation RV dump station in Sweet Home at 2 p.m. on May 8.

The new facility is on 24th Avenue, off Highway 20 (behind the Bi-Mart store).

The new facility offers four dump lanes, all electronically accessed by credit card, plus a pull-through lane. Cost is \$10 per vehicle. RV owners and others will be able to purchase potable water from the City of Sweet Home at the site. Currently, the city's only bulk water dispenser system is at the city's water plant.

There is ample space for the largest of RVs said Parks & Recreation Department Director Stacey Whaley.

The facility is on 4.62 acres owned by Linn County. The property had been part of the former Weyerhaeuser (Willamette Industries) property.

Linn County park dump sites for use by campsite users are currently located at River Bend County Park (\$15 dump fee) and Waterloo County Park (\$15 dump fee). Those dump sites are reserved for campers at those sites only. Linn County Parks has dump stations at Riverbend and Waterloo campgrounds, but those facilities are restricted to use by campers.

The new facility was funded by a \$355,000 grant from the Oregon State Parks Department, plus funding by the Transient Lodging Tax and RV license fees. Total cost is approximately \$900,000.

Knife River of Tangent did all of the subgrade and ground work and completed putting down asphalt in February.

A ground-breaking ceremony was held on November 4. Participants included Chris Phillipson, Knife River project manager; Tristan Davis, Parks & Recreation Operations Supervisor; Parks Director Stacey Whaley, Sweet Home Mayor Susan Coleman, Knife River's Brian Reichart and City Manager/Police Chief Jason Ogden.

Learn more about Linn County Parks & Recreation at <https://linnparks.com/>.



Above: Participating in a ground breaking ceremony on Nov. 4, 2024, were, left to right, Chris Phillipson, Knife River project manager; Tristan Davis, Parks & Recreation Operations Supervisor; Parks Director Stacey Whaley, Sweet Home Mayor Susan Coleman, Knife River's Brian Reichart and City Manager/Police Chief Jason Ogden.

Right: A new SaniStar electronic payment machine.

Below: Knife River employees laid asphalt at the site in February.



STAND Council's student members produce timely videos

By Alex Paul

Linn County Reporter

When Shannon Snair talks about the young people who make up the Linn County STAND Council, she can't help but smile, because she is so proud of them.



Shannon Snair

Snair is an Addictions Specialist with Linn County Alcohol and Drug, who works with the STAND Council. STAND is an acronym for (Students Taking Action Not Drinking) and its mission is to "create a positive school

climate through media campaigns that address underage substance use and mental wellness."

Currently, there are 38 students from Lebanon, West Albany, Harrisburg and Santiam high schools, who meet monthly to tackle issues such as underage drinking, smoking, youth mental health and most recently to develop short videos encouraging parents to talk regularly about youth substance use.

The STAND Council operates under the umbrella of Linn Together.

Snair said the videos use a Dr. Seuss-style deliverance to drive home the message that although teens may act like they don't want to talk about issues with their parents, they really do — and on a regular basis — not a long lecture.

The young people's videos focus on three key themes: vaping, marijuana and alcohol. Scripts and props were put together by the STAND Council members. They then worked with local videographer Jeremy Ito Story Design to put the videos together.

In the videos, STAND members break down the risks associated with each activity and why it's important for adults to talk to their children.

"I believe these short videos will make a big impact for both teens and parents. In STAND, we talked about how uncomfortable

parents can seem when they talk with their kids about substance use, so we created these videos to help," said STAND member Lily Ridgely of Harrisburg High School. "The videos are meant to encourage parents to have small talks with their kids about alcohol, vaping, and marijuana."

Lily added, "It is very important to talk about substance use with teens because there are so many questions and ways to prevent temptation. Creating these videos was a really great memory and opportunity for me because it was amazing to see so many people my age come together to help the community and encourage



STAND member Lily Ridgely of Harrisburg High School, says the new videos are designed to encourage parents to have short, but more regular talks with their kids about the dangers of alcohol, vaping and marijuana use.

other teens to talk openly with their families about the risks of substance use."

Snair said STAND is important because it's a peer-to-peer that uses prevention science, local data and students' own experiences within their schools to guide the projects the Youth Council takes on.

"Last year, the 27 STAND students contributed 400 volunteer hours in their schools and communities," Snair said.

The 90-minute monthly meetings rotate among participating schools and each school has a local advisor.

STAND is open to all high school students, including those who are home schooled.

Snair said the new videos are being released about three weeks apart.

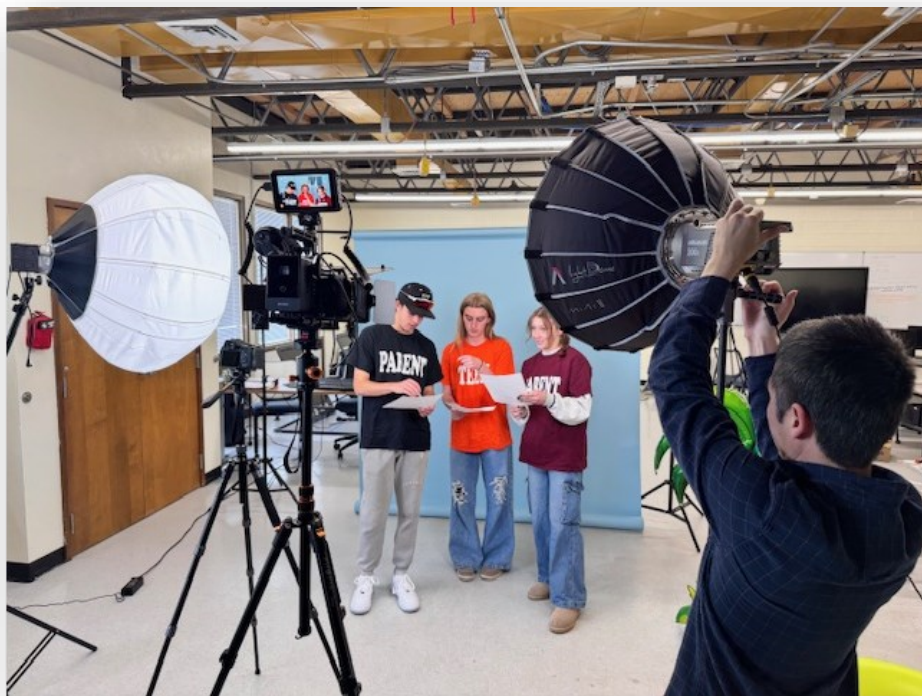
"These videos are all youth-driven," Snair said. "The messaging is peer focused. It's messaging they want to share. The kids want adults to understand that parents and caregivers have an impact on youth behavior."

The videos encourage parents to have "short, regular conversations with their kid. The kids don't want long lectures, but they appreciate snippets, check-ins," Snair said.

"Parents may not realize how much influence they have on their high school age children," Snair said.

STAND Council members must be substance free — no alcohol, no tobacco and no drug use (including over-the-council and prescription drugs.)

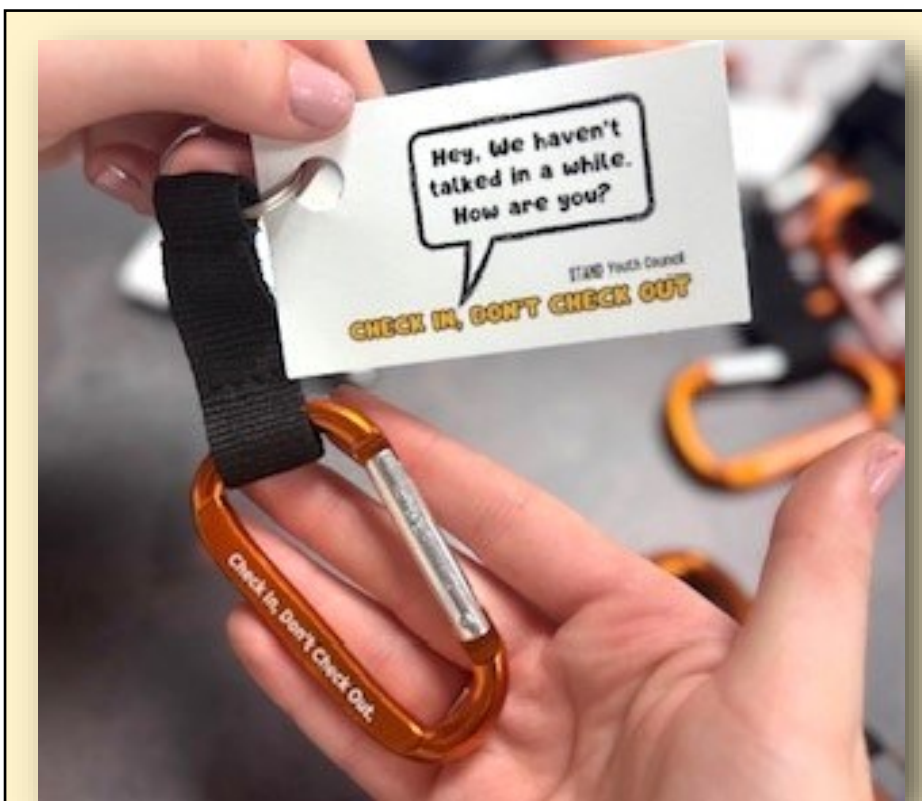
They must maintain a minimum 2.0 grade point average and be passing all of their classes. Council members are expected to be on time and attend at least 75% of meetings.



STAND members have been very "hands on" making three videos encouraging adults to talk to children about the dangers of using alcohol, vaping and marijuana.

Tips about talking with your children from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration:

- Short, frequent discussions can have a real impact on your child's decision about drinking alcohol.
- Talking often builds an open, trusting relationship with your child.
- When you talk about alcohol, make your views and rules clear.
- As children get older, the conversation changes.
- Remember that the conversation goes both ways.



A carabiner carries a message of concern, created by STAND members.

Check In, Don't Check Out!

In addition to their new video series, STAND Council members have launched a spring campaign called "Check In, Don't Check Out", encouraging students to reach out to their friends if they're worried about them — whether it's due to substance use, mental health struggles or tough times.

STAND members designed and assembled all materials for the campaign, including posters, carabiners with check-in tips and a short announcement. The materials will be distributed by STAND students at their high schools.

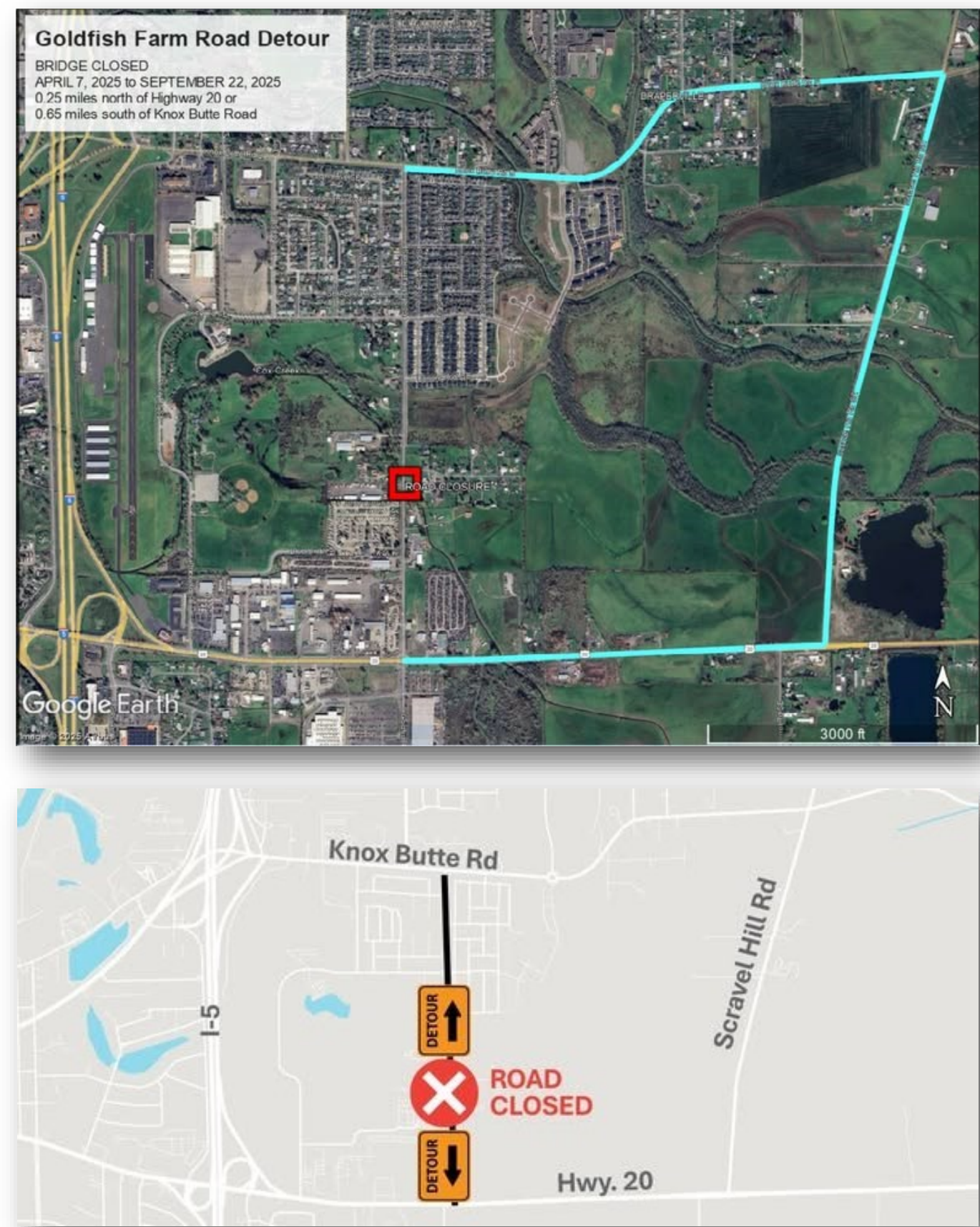
The goal is to raise awareness about the signs that someone might be struggling, share ways to check in with friends, and provide helpful resources for support.

The hope is that students will recognize when others need help and feel empowered to offer a listening ear and connect them with the resources they need.

Learn more about
STAND and watch videos at:

<https://linntogether.org/stand-youth-council/>

Goldfish Farm Road detour in place through September



The Cox Creek, Goldfish Farm Road Bridge Replacement project on Goldfish Farm Road is underway and is expected to run through September.

Cascade Civil Corporation recently submitted the winning bid for this project.

According to Road Department Operations Manager Kevin Hamilton, “Linn County is contracting with Cascade Civil Corp. to remove the existing bridge and replace it with a wider bridge. The existing bridge is weight limited and narrow.”

Hamilton added, “This project will allow legal loads and permitted over-sized loads to safely cross Cox Creek at this location. Widening the bridge will accommodate the anticipated future improvements to Goldfish Farm Road, which will more or less reflect the road profile north of Dogwood, including curb and gutter, sidewalks, etc.”

This is a capital improvement project which is managed by the Road Department’s Engineering Division staff.

Information is available to the public on the Linn County Road Department website:

<https://www.linncountyor.gov/roads/page/construction-projects>.

Veterans Services helps veterans, families get benefits owed them

ALBANY — Linn County Veterans Services helped local veterans and their families recover \$1,655,043 in tax-free benefits from July 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025, Director Dee Baley-Hyder told the Board of Commissioners April 8.

Veterans Services recovered \$493,721 in the first quarter of 2024 and \$460,783 in the first quarter of 2025.

Baley-Hyder said that the move into a new office at 505 SW Ellsworth, has helped increase foot traffic.

“A year ago, we reported that our office, over the years, has served 9,453 veterans and family members,” Baley-

Hyder said. “As of today, our office has helped 9,774 people.”

She said her staff is “extremely busy” but encourages veterans to call or drop in to see what benefits they are entitled to.

Baley-Hyder said her department has used Oregon Department of Transportation and Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs grants to provide transportation for veterans to medical appointments. The grants total \$91,370 and so far, \$80,602 has been spent.

New assistant Veteran Services Officer Nate Larson has passed his Milestone Accreditation test and his ODVA accreditation test. He will soon complete full accreditation with Veterans Affairs. Once he is fully accredited, there will be three Veterans Services Officers on staff.



Mingling the Lebanon Biz Expo

James Wright of KGAL radio, Commissioner Will Tucker and Melissa Robinson and Rachel Lytle of the Fair & Expo Center participated at the annual Lebanon Biz Expo on April 17 at the River Center.

Thanks for reading the Linn County Reporter.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month



Plants in the workplace ...

Linn County Mental Health staff held a plant exchange April 22. People were invited by the Wellness Committee to take home a variety of cuttings.

The event highlighted the value of having plants in the workplace.



“What Is Your Why?”

Why do you work in Mental Health?

“I believe that people that work in our field want to provide services to a underserved population that might have fallen through the systems cracks over the years. The support provided by people like us, makes the clients feel seen and heard.”

“I work here to support my community. Particularly those who are LGBTQ. Representation is incredibly important and I know what it feels like to feel alone.”

“Working in mental health has been the most challenging, impactful, and stimulating job I’ve ever had. It’s also the most deeply rewarding. Every day, I have the opportunity to make a real difference, helping people reconnect with their sense of purpose, guiding them toward healing, and fighting the stigma that surrounds mental health. This field is about constant learning, deep human connection, and real advocacy. It’s about helping people find hope, reclaim their lives, and rediscover their strength. There’s nothing more fulfilling than that.”

“Therapy is a sacred adventure. I have the privilege of witnessing the most difficult and beautiful parts of people coming to services. Therapy can be a confessional, a place where people speak the hardest truths, possibly for the first time. It’s also an opportunity to impart dignity, which can be unfamiliar to them. These, among

many others, are my “whys” for committing to this work.”

“At a young age I was always told I am such a good listener. I have always been “that person to go to” and decided I want to help improve their mental health once I saw the need and lack of awareness.”

“I choose to work in mental health because I am passionate about helping others and making a difference in their lives by offering compassion, patience, and empathy, especially in challenging times. Providing a positive, calm and safe environment in the face of adversity is important to me when working with both our clients and staff as I strive to understand people’s needs so I can meet them where they are at in each moment. At the end of the day, I feel good knowing that I am impacting our clients in a positive way by helping them to the best of my ability.”

“I’m passionate about building and engaging in organizations that value people, and by engaging with supporting and providing opportunities for healing and compassionate care we build opportunities for each individual to thrive to the best of their ability. Everyone has the potential to bring amazing things into this world, and I want to do everything I can to be a part of that. I want the place that my kids, myself, and my loved ones experience life to be the most vibrant and fulfilled community possible.”

Mental Health Awareness Month

“In Every Story, There’s Strength.”

MAY 2025

SAVE THE DATE

AGRICULTURAL CENTER

GROUNDBREAKING

MAY 22, 2025 | 3:30 PM

PLEASE PARK AT CASCADE EQUINE VET CLINIC
31730 SPORT HORSE WAY, TANGENT, OR 97389

 **Linn-Benton**
Community College

SCAN TO RSVP



Juvenile Department Plant Sale is May 7



Plants will go on sale early next week!

The annual parking lot plant sale will be held at Oak Creek Youth Correctional Facility from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Wednesday, May 7, in the parking lot in front of the administration building.

Bedding plants for sun or shade.

4" plants are priced to sell at \$3.

Specialty plants priced accordingly.

12" hanging baskets for \$30 and other smaller baskets are priced accordingly.

Native trees and shrubs will be sold in 14" tall pots, which help their roots out-compete the weeds' shallow root systems. Native trees are \$4 if you are able to return the pots.

"You won't find better materials for a better price anywhere," said horticultural instructor Patrick Meehan.

Visit: new-beginnings-garden.myshopify.com





OSU Extension Service



Merl Walton

Learning about tractor safety!

32 young people were trained at this year's Tractor Safety Training, coordinated by Andrea Leao, Linn County 4-H faculty.

This training was held at Knife River Training Center's dome.

We are extremely grateful to Knife River for supporting this event and allowing use of their facility and for sponsoring lunch for the youth each day.

We appreciate the strong support of our community partners.



Richard Forrest

Master Gardener program welcomes new faculty

By Mitch Lies
Growing Editor

Two new faces, one relatively new and one brand new, are leading the OSU Extension Linn and Benton County Master Gardener Program this year.

Otillia Schreuder started as Master Gardener Program Coordinator for the two counties in November 2023. Annie O'Shea started as an Educational Program Assistant in December 2024.



Schreuder



O'Shea

degree in environmental education, most recently was working with Portland Parks & Recreation where among other duties she did restoration work in the city's natural areas.

She too embraced the opportunity to work in the Extension Master Gardener Program. "I love working in education and I love working for government agencies, so this is what I was looking for," she said.

O'Shea received her bachelor's degree from California State Polytechnic University — Humboldt, and her master's degree from Southern Oregon University in 2021.

Schreuder, who has a bachelor's degree in agronomy from Oregon State University, came to Extension from a position with a commercial horticulture company. She said she enjoyed her work at the nursery but jumped at the opportunity to lead the two-county Master Gardener Program when the position came available.

"This is the kind of education position I was hoping to get into," she said.

O'Shea, who holds a master's

Thanks for reading the
Linn County Reporter.

Send story ideas to:
apaul@co.linn.or.us



Call the Linn County Board of Commissioners at 541-967-3825.

Researchers turn spent coffee grounds into food packaging

OSU News Service

CORVALLIS, Ore. – Researchers have made a key advance in turning spent coffee grounds into food packaging materials that can extend the shelf life of products.

An estimated 60 million tons of spent coffee grounds are generated worldwide annually. Most end up in landfills and release methane, a potent greenhouse gas. That has led researchers to study other uses for coffee grounds, such as incorporating them into biofuels, cosmetics, catalysts and composite materials, including concrete and now food packaging materials.



Spent coffee grounds packaging material.

Coffee grounds are challenging to work with because tightly bound lignin, a complex organic polymer in plants that makes them rigid, is difficult to break down, said Jooyeoun Jung, an assistant professor at Oregon State University.

Jung, graduate student Cecilia Hernandez-Hosaka, and other scientists from Oregon State and the Rural Development Administration in South

Korea studied two pretreatment options, one using formic and acetic acid and the other using ethanol. They cooked the spent coffee grounds with the two treatment options at high temperatures.

They found that the ethanol pretreatment provided the best results, significantly lowering the unwanted impurities, producing cellulose-rich materials that are desirable for eco-friendly packaging materials.

Once the solvent-based pretreatment was complete, the researchers pulped the grounds and used a low concentration of peracetic acid, an eco-friendlier alternative to traditional pulping methods that use other chemicals.

The peracetic acid helps lighten the grounds and create a cellulose-rich concentrate that resembles paste or mashed potatoes. The paste can be diluted as needed and then dried for various packaging applications.

The researchers can incorporate bioactive ingredients, which are substances found in plants and foods that can have desirable biological properties, including antioxidant and antimicrobial effects, into the packaging materials.

“We’ve shown that it’s possible to turn spent coffee grounds into biodegradable packaging products instead of throwing them out,” Jung said. “This could aid the coffee industry by turning a waste product into a value-added, eco-friendly product.”

Still, more research is needed, Jung said. Future efforts will focus on refining the mechanical processing of the cellulose material to enhance its ability to resist things such as light, moisture and oxygen.

Research will also seek to improve the antimicrobial and antioxidant properties of the packaging to extend food product shelf life. Ultimately, a large-scale facility will be required to process spent coffee grounds for commercial applications.

The researchers believe coffee grounds could be used to make different food packages, including sheets between sliced cheese, pads underneath fresh meat and pads in clamshell containers used to package strawberries.



Paste-like substance made from spent coffee grounds.

The findings were recently published in the Journal of Food Science. Other co-authors were Yanyun Zhao of Oregon State and Bo-ram Park of the Rural Development Administration in South Korea

The Oregon State researchers have also previously studied turning other agricultural waste products, including from apples and grapes, into packaging materials. They are also currently working with hemp stalks.

June 13-14

Friday 4-8pm, Sat 9am - 4pm

2025

LCYLA

FIELD DAY

Animals are highly encouraged to attend on Saturday!



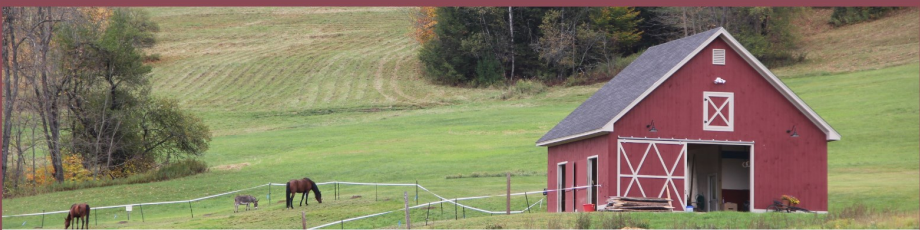
Topics will include:

- Showmanship
- Feeding to the Finish Line
- Grooming and fitting
- YQCA Training
- What to expect at Fair
- And lots more!

SAVE THE DATE

Sign ups will be available soon!

For questions:
Andrea Leao or Stacey Lyle




RURAL LIVING DAY - May 10th, 2025

8:30am - 3:00pm, Junction City High School


If you live in the country or are considering a move, you won't want to miss this event. Workshops throughout the day offer something for everyone, including composting, weed management, soils, tree identification, septic systems, chainsaw safety, food preservation and more!!

Cost: \$20 per adult *Scholarships available

Advanced Registration Required - Space is Limited



Register Here:
<https://beav.es/NSc>



Questions or Accommodations? Contact carrie.mack@oregonstate.edu or (541) 237-6808





Linn County 4-H & FFA Fair



Information

2025 Fair Schedule : <https://beav.es/NTM>

2025 Camping : <https://beav.es/NTQ>

2025 Auction Rules : <https://beav.es/NTg>

2025 Animal Care : <https://beav.es/Nck>





Thank you to our Health Department folks!



April 7-13, 2025, marked the 30th anniversary of National Public Health Week—an opportunity to raise awareness about health in our community! During the last 30 years, strides have been made in decreasing commercial tobacco use and HIV-related deaths, increasing access to medical and mental health care, expanding nutrition access and education, and developing technologies that support and protect our health.



Who needs
the measles
vaccine?

The Mumps, Measles, & Rubella (MMR) vaccine is recommended for people aged 68 years or younger.

Going somewhere?

Teenagers and adults who have already received one dose should consult with their healthcare provider about the possibility of receiving a second dose if they are traveling to an area where measles is circulating.

Contact your primary care provider
for more information.

Contact our team if you need help finding care

From now until Labor Day, call 503-769-9319 or email chw@santiamhospital.org to inquire about getting help in assessing your risk and accessing care.



1401 N 10th Ave., Stayton, OR 97383 • santiamhospital.org

Commissioners to support 19th First-Time Youth Wage program

ALBANY — Tuesday morning, Linn County Commissioners Roger Nyquist, Sherrie Sprenger and Will Tucker agreed to support the 19th year of the Linn County First-Time Youth Wage Grant program.

The commissioners agreed to subsidize employers \$3 per hour for first-time teen employees, ages 14 to 19. Youth work in a variety of jobs, from local restaurants to farming operations. In recent years, 21 employers hired 46 young people, who worked almost 10,800 hours.

County Treasurer Michelle Hawkins said the program has reimbursed employers from \$20,000 to \$40,000 per year. To qualify, businesses must hire eligible employees between May 1 and September 30. The employee must be legal to work in the United States and a resident of Linn County.

Qualifying businesses must employ 35 or fewer employees and the young people must be first-time employees, who have not previously worked for the individual business. An employer can hire up to three youth at any given time and receive a maximum of \$1,500 per new hire, or \$4,500 total. Employers have until November 14, 2025 to submit a request for reimbursement.

The Board of Commissioners supports this program through the county's share of Oregon Lottery funds.

For more information, call Courtney Leland at the Linn County Board of Commissioners office at 541-967-3825, extension 2129, or visit <https://www.linncountyor.gov/businessdevelopment/page/youth-wage-grant>.

Please send us your graduation photos.

Names of those in the photos (left to right), which school or college and connection to Linn County employee — son, daughter, grandchild etc.

Please send to apaul@co.linn.or.us.

South Willamette Valley Honor Flight



Linn County Commissioner Will Tucker.



Albany Mayor Alex Johnson II.



Pastor Dorothy Nielsen, Faith Lutheran Church, Albany.



Flags were available for all.



Guardian George Hunt Jr. and Army veteran Chris Keys.



Reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Call the Linn County Board of Commissioners at 541-967-3825.

South Willamette Valley Honor Flight

Honor Flight a joyful trip for Vietnam veteran Chris Keys

By Alex Paul

Linn County Reporter

For Albany resident Chris Keys, 80, the recent South Willamette Valley Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. was a chance to reconnect with fellow Vietnam veterans by sharing stories and talking about the effects the memorials had on each of the travelers.

The Air and Space Museum was his favorite site and the Army Museum was surprisingly well done he said.

"I was highly impressed with the Changing of the Guard ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier," Keys said. "The pride and precision of their marching was very impressive."

Keys didn't know anyone who died in Vietnam, but his brother Charley was a Marine Corps sniper and had a friend who lost his life there. Charley named his only son Arthur after him, Keys said.

"With the help of a Park Ranger, I found the name and took a photograph of it," Keys said. "It was like he was my friend. I know how important he was to my brother."

It was pretty wet the first day, but Keys said he took good rain gear and that worked out nicely.

Overall, Keys said the trip was "surprisingly joyful" and he hadn't expected the adventure to be so "uplifting".

Keys participated in the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) in high school in the Panama Canal Zone and in college.

But one day in December 1966, Keys realized he was tired of college and decided it was time to enlist in the military. He intended to enlist in the Navy.

"I went down to the recruiting station, but the Navy recruiter was only in on Monday and Wednesday and it was Tuesday," Keys said. "The Army recruiter was in his office and the next thing I knew, I was holding my right hand up in the air being inducted into the Army."

Keys chose the signal corps (microwave radio operation and repair) and was shipped to Ft. Polk, Louisiana for Basic Training.

He arrived in Vietnam in February 1968 and called the experience "wonderful" even though the base was sometimes the target of rockets and mortars.

"We had a good bunch of people and it was a small detachment," Keys said. "We had about 12 people and we han-

dled 48 lines of telephone traffic between Saigon to Long Bien."

Keys said his fellow soldiers were creative and he was industrious as well. He operated a soda pop refrigerator to earn some extra spending money.



Keys and his "honor system" soda fridge.

Keys returned stateside in February 1969 and worked in Maryland at the Bomb Safe Alternate Pentagon inside a granite mountain, until he took an "early out" to return to college in September 1969.

He returned to Northwestern Louisiana State and majored in zoology with a minor in chemistry, graduating in 1972.

After graduation, he worked at a power plant in Houston, Texas and spent several years working at the Johnson Space Center. He is proud that he worked in the Shuttle Avionics Integration Laboratory (SAIL) that tested software for the space shuttle, before it flew.

He was drawn to Albany by a job with Advanced Control Technology and later owned his own factory controls company for more than 20 years. Some of his expertise focused on projects at Boeing Aircraft in Seattle.

Today he sings in the choir and serves on the council at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, in Albany.

He is the father of five children including the young man for whom he was a "Big Brother" at the YMCA, Lt. Ryan Keys, of the Linn County Sheriff's Office.

Keys was accompanied on the Honor Flight by his guardian, Army veteran George Hunt Jr.

"We got along quite well," Keys said. "And we got to share a lot of stories with other soldiers."



Chris Keys holds a photograph of himself working during his tour of duty in Vietnam.



Left: Chris Keys gives a fellow soldier a haircut. Above: Microwave site where Keys worked.



Army barracks at Di An, Vietnam.



Keys (far right) with some of his fellow signal corps soldiers, rebuilding an underground bunker.

Call the Linn County Board of Commissioners at 541-967-3825.



Oregon Army National Guard 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team Col. Noel Hoback attends a ribbon cutting ceremony Sept. 18, 2020, at a school in Lebane, Kosovo. Hoback, the deputy commander of the Kosovo Force Regional Command East, was accompanied by KFOR-RCE’s civil-military cooperation personnel who are responsible for promoting positive relationships between Kosovo communities and KFOR-RCE.

(U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Miguel Ruiz)



Col. Peter Helzer, Commander of the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team looks on at the mobilization ceremony for Soldiers from the Oregon Army National Guard’s 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) that took place at the Salem Armory Auditorium in Salem, Ore., Aug. 16. The event marked the beginning of a significant deployment as the unit prepares to join the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR-RCE) for a year-long mission.

(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Cory Grogan)

Soldiers appreciate support from home ... From Page 1

Sgt. 1st Class Lonnie Dornhecker, from Junction City, Oregon, is also deployed to Kosovo with the Oregon National Guard supporting KFOR Regional Command East. As the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) of the Tactical Effects Cell, Dornhecker helps ensure Information Related Capabilities effectively contribute to the mission.

Having previously served in Afghanistan, Dornhecker, who lives in Lane County and works in Benton County, said he has always received strong support from his employer, Buffalo Wild Wings in Corvallis. Dornhecker said his employer has been in constant contact with him during his deployment to see how things are going and wish him well.

“That support makes me feel good because it shows they obviously care,” Dornhecker said.

Dornhecker and Cook share a common appreciation for the support they receive from those back home. Both know their service wouldn’t be possible without the understanding and backing of their families, employers, and communities.

The Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) plays an important role in helping employers recognize the importance of supporting employees who serve in the military, and both Dornhecker and Cook emphasize how critical it is to know their jobs are safe and that they have that support from home.

ESGR is a U.S. Department of Defense program that promotes cooperation and understanding between civilian employers and their employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve. It

“I nominated my boss, Linn County DA Doug Marteeny, and supervisor Richard Wijers, for ESGR Patriot Awards because their exceptional support made my KFOR deployment seamless ... ”
... Capt. Jace Cook

provides resources for both employers and service members about employment-related issues. Programs like the “Statement of Support” encourage employers to back Guard and Reserve members. ESGR also allows employees to nominate their employers for awards, including the Patriot Award that recognizes employers for their support.

Dornhecker said he plans to nominate his employer for a Patriot Award.

“I appreciate my employer because I know how important employers are to the National Guard,” Dornhecker said. “I plan to nominate them for a Patriot Award because they’re supportive and making sacrifices, too, and I appreciate that a lot.”

Cook presented his employer with awards prior to the deployment.

“I nominated my boss, Linn County DA Doug Marteeny, and supervisor Richard Wijers, for ESGR Patriot Awards because their exceptional support made my KFOR deployment seamless,” Cook said. “Oregon ESGR representatives presented the awards in a thoughtful ceremony, recognizing their efforts to keep my Deputy District Attorney role secure. That affirmation steadies my focus here, reinforcing my resolve to advise commanders with precision.”

Even while deployed, both Dornhecker and Cook carry the support of their families, coworkers, and communities, and employers with them. They know they aren’t alone. Their service is not just about what they do in Kosovo—it’s also about the people at home who are there for them every step of the way. That support gives them the strength to keep going each day and reminds them that their mission is part of something bigger—something they share with those who help them accomplish their work while deployed.



Col. Noel Hoback, deputy commander for KFOR Regional Command East, toured the “Osman Rama” fifth grade classroom after the inauguration of the playground donated by KFOR Sept. 22,2020 in Cabra/Cabre, Kosovo. The School staff and students thanked KFOR-RCE for the donation. Hoback emphasized the KFOR-RCE mission to create stability in Kosovo and for the people and the institutions of Kosovo.

(Photo by Capt. Nadine Wiley De Moura)



U.S. Sgt. 1st Class Lonnie Dornhecker, assigned to the Oregon Army National Guard, goes into a Kosovo community and speaks with civilian role-player, Milica Jovanovic, to gather information that assists KFOR in predicting flash point events that may hinder their ability to provide a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement in the Hohenfels Training Area, Germany, Oct. 7, 2024. KFOR 34 is a multinational training event conducted to prepare the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team for their deployment to the Kosovo Regional Command East.

(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Thomas Dixon)



Healing gardens are designed to promote healing and provide a place of peace and refuge for patients, families and staff. The three Lebanon gardens, developed by world-renowned Japanese landscape designer Hoichi Kurisu at the behest of the Lebanon Community Hospital Foundation, are located at

Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital, at the entrance to the Samaritan Health Sciences Campus across the street from the hospital, and next to the Boulder Falls Inn Event Center on the Health Sciences Campus.

Lebanon's healing gardens offer world-class horticulture

Courtesy: *The New Era*

Local residents who have not had a chance to visit the healing gardens in Lebanon are missing out on a world-class opportunity. The three healing gardens offer local residents and visitors a chance to experience top-notch landscaping and horticulture that exemplify beauty and tranquility through the use of water features, plants from around the world, and exceptional design.

Healing gardens are designed to promote healing and provide a place of peace and refuge for patients, families and staff. The three Lebanon gardens, developed by world-renowned Japanese landscape designer Hoichi Kurisu at the behest of the Lebanon Community Hospital Foundation, are located at Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital, at the entrance to the Samaritan Health Sciences Campus across the street from the hospital, and next to the Boulder Falls Inn Event Center on the Health Sciences Campus.

Healing Garden at Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital

The Healing Garden was developed in 2004 and provides a sanctuary for rest, regeneration and reconnection. Centrally located within the hospital complex, the 11,000-square-foot garden is fully accessible to patients and staff. It can be viewed from birthing center patient rooms, infusion stations, the hallway, dining area and conference rooms.

A series of free garden events will be held at the Boulder Falls Conference Center/Patio this summer. The first event will be at 1 p.m. on May 24 and will feature a traditional Japanese tea ceremony and a demonstration of ikebana, Japanese flower arranging.

Samaritan Health Sciences Campus Entrance Garden

The Entrance Garden, developed in 2009, features waterfalls, Japanese foliage and pathways. The garden covers three-quarters of an acre and features 625 tons of artistically arranged boulders and a waterfall with a meandering path.

Samaritan Health Sciences Campus Garden

Located next to Boulder Falls Inn Event Center, this 1-acre Japanese garden was developed in 2013 and expanded in 2015. It features a large pond with koi fish, 1,500 tons

of boulders, more than 6,200 feet of walking paths, multiple gazebos and several trees from Hoichi Kurisu's personal stock. The garden, accessed from the hotel (where parking is free), is open to the public for free.

Learn About the Gardens

Garden tours are held at 10 a.m. on the second Friday of every month, from April through September. The one-hour tour will guide visitors through Samaritan Health Sciences Campus Entrance Garden and Campus Garden. Learn about their history and how they're cared for, while enjoying the tranquil atmosphere.

Stroll for Well-being is a seven-week program designed to help participants experience the restorative power of nature. Through guided walks and reflective journaling, participants learn to appreciate the sensory stimulation of a garden environment and engage in mindful practices to promote overall health and well-being.

Each participant will receive a Stroll for Well-being reflection journal to use during their weekly self-guided walks in the Samaritan Health Sciences Campus Garden, located next to Boulder Falls Inn Event Center in Lebanon. This program is supported by Samaritan

Health Services, Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital Foundation and grant funding provided through TMS. For more information or to register, contact Brandy O'Bannon at bobannon@samhealth.org.

Support for the Gardens

Community support ensures the upkeep and sustainability of the gardens and enables events and programs that promote the use of the gardens for healing and wellness. Gifts to the Lebanon Community Hospital Foundation's Healing Garden Endowment are tax-deductible and can be made at samhealth.org/GiveLCHF or by contacting O'Bannon at the above email address.

Volunteer/Visit

The foundation is seeking volunteers interested in learning more about the history of the gardens and helping foster the gardens through light weeding and upkeep once a month. Meet new friends, learn about plants and watch the beauty of the gardens through the seasons.

To learn about volunteer opportunities, contact 541-451-7062 or slchvolunteerservices@samhealth.org.

For more information about Samaritan's gardens, or to schedule a group tour, call the Lebanon Community Hospital Foundation at 541-451-7063 or visit samhealth.org/Lebanon-HealingGardens.

Native + American + Cultural + Encampments

Brought to you by Linn County Parks
& Recreation
Open to the public

Hello everyone, we invite you to our home away from home and hope you will have a great time learning about our culture, heritage and traditions and to share with you our native ways.

We always end our weekend with a feast on Sunday afternoon. We hope you will enjoy your time with us.

Hiya Masi (Thank You)

What is a cultural encampment?

Cultural encampment is a group of Native Americans from different parts of the United States coming together, making village-type settings with tipis and tents. We share our individual cultures and traditional information with the community.

Many moons ago, traveling through an area, you might see groups of tipis or tents for a short time in each area. They were there to gather together, trade or meet family members and to celebrate life by having a big feast and sharing food with one another as they traveled from one area to another. Come see what we have to offer.

A little bit about us.

We are a group of Native Americans with different backgrounds from different tribes in the U.S. We have come here to share with you our culture and traditions. We are working to enlarge our group and add more interested tribal people so we are always reaching out to many different indigenous groups around the U.S. to bring more information about native culture from all over the U.S. to share with the community.

You can ask questions about us and we will answer the best way we can with the knowledge that has been passed down to us. We have brought



to you some of our history of our people and their journey through this area they traveled many years ago — trading, gathering, fishing and hunting.

At each encampment, there will be an agenda posted at the entryway to our village. There you will find dates and time of each event happening Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Please come in and visit and talk with us.

FRIDAY

Morning Prayer

We always start each day with a morning prayer. If you are up before the sun you may join us at our camp. A prayer is a good way to greet the day and make sure that the day goes smoothly and to ask our Creator/Great Spirit to bless the grounds we are on and everyone who may visit and thank him for our blessings.

Usually, we start at sunrise with the prayer and to catch the first rays of the sun when it touches our camp area about 5:30 or 6 a.m. When the prayer is finished we usually start a campfire and cook breakfast.



We will open the village at 10 a.m. Friday through Sunday

Meet & Greet 10-10:30 a.m.

It is important for us to introduce ourselves and welcome you to our camp,

answer questions that you might have. We will do this every day of the encampment.

We will have things on display and items for sale from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Please come and see what there is for offer.

Each encampment will have its own craft class you can participate in. Instructors will help you complete your craft item before you leave each day. Class times are from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Storytelling & Flute Music: 4-6 p.m.

We start with a flute song, then storytelling and we combine the two as we go along. We also answer questions about stories and our music at this time. When the last story is told, we thank you for coming to listen to us.



Evening Prayer

After we are finished with the stories and music, we finish with a prayer to end the day. We thank everyone for coming and remind them of the next day's events.

SATURDAY

Today, as before, we start with a prayer at sunrise; camp opens at 10 a.m. and the Meet & Greet will be

from 10-10:30 a.m.

Craft Class from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Native American Traditional Dancing Demonstration and Information 1-3 p.m.

Beautiful bright colors moving in the breeze, feather flowing in the air, the heartbeat of Mother Earth, voices singing a song for everyone to dance to and prayers in each step.

Evening Prayer

Please join us in prayer after we have finished daily presentation.

Sunday

Morning Prayer: We start the day at 6 a.m. with a prayer at sunrise. You may join us if you wish. Camp will open with a meet and greet from 10 -10:30 a.m.

Native American Traditional Dancing

Demonstration & Information 1-3 p.m.

Dance demonstration and information about our dance regalia and meaning of the dancing. We will also answer questions and are happy to share our dancing traditions with you.

Thank You Feast 5-7 p.m.

We welcome all of our new friends with a feast to thank everyone for coming and sharing our culture and traditions. We thank all those who helped us with everything. We hope you enjoyed yourselves.

Hiya Masi (Thank You)

Ending Prayer

We thank the Creator for everything and everyone who has come to share with us and all those who have helped us.

Blessing to all.

Hiya Masi — Thank You

We wish to thank our friends at Linn County Parks & Recreation for bringing us back this year, the Park Rangers for everything they have done for us and all of the help needed to bring these encampments together.

Contact Information

You can reach Deitz Peters/Cultural Encampment Director/Cultural instructor at: petersdeitz@gmail.com and at naculturalencampment.org and the Linn County Parks web page.

Call 541-570-5950.

Also: Kathy Keating-Peters Non-Profit information Liaison.

naculturalencampment.org/

Cultural Encampments

ROARING RIVER PARK

— JUNE 26-30

WATERLOO COUNTY PARK

— JULY 24-28

CASCADIA COUNTY PARK

— AUGUST 21-25

Sharing news about Linn County government

Linn County Commissioner Sherrie Sprenger provided an overview of the state of Linn County government at the Lebanon Chamber of Commerce lunch forum on Friday, April 25.

Commissioner Sprenger told about how the county acquired Clear Lake Resort for \$100,000 in 2007 and the growth of the Parks Department that now includes management of U.S. Forest Service campgrounds and millions of dollars of building projects.

She said Linn County has about 750 employees and the 2025-2026 Budget Hearings were to begin April 28.



Property Manager Rachel Adamec and Juvenile Director Torri Linn pick up budget materials April 28, the first day of 2025-2026 Linn County Budget Hearings.



Parks Director Stacey Whaley answers a question from a Budget Committee member.

Budget Hearings ... From P. 1

of a financial position as possible year-round.”

He also thanked department heads and elected officials for bringing forward well thought out and realistic budget requests.

Although approved, the budget will need to be adopted at 10 a.m. on June 26 in the Board Room of the Linn County Courthouse.

Here is the approved budget: General Fund, \$57,652,602; Road Fund, \$51,093,715; Fair Fund, \$783,600; Law Library, \$346,854; General Grants Fund, \$17,910,922; Bicycle and Pedestrian Fund, \$722,467; Corner Preservation Fund, \$419,565; Law Enforcement Levy, \$54,236,355; Historical Fund, \$49,326; County Forest Park Fund, \$1,432,500; Health Fund, \$88,122,905; County School Fund, \$1,966,100; Federal Forest Title 3 Restricted Fund, \$191,353; Internal Service Fund, \$4,922,333.

The permanent Tax Rate was set at

\$1.2736 per \$1,000 of property valuation and the Law Enforcement Levy was approved at \$2.98 per \$1,000.

4-H and Extension Service District Budget

On Wednesday, April 30, the 4-H / OSU Extension District Budget Committee approved a budget request of \$810,904 with projected total FY2025-2026 revenue of \$1,010,176. Funds will be allocated by: Salaries, \$392,053; other payroll expenses, \$276,079; student and intermittent salaries, \$25,000; and services and supplies, \$117,772.

The budget will support 6.77 fulltime equivalent positions and a new half-time Field Research Assistant position to support the Field Crop Faculty position.

The Budget Committee approved levying the full permanent tax rate of seven cents per \$1,000 property tax levy.



Health Department Administrator Todd Noble tells about his proposed \$88 million budget.

Loretta Robinson's photo of an old barn on Oak Grove Lane at sunrise earned grand champion honors in the annual Albany Visitors Association's 18th Annual Photography Contest.

And the AVA photo winners are ...



ALBANY — The Albany Visitors Association has announced the winners of its 18th Annual Photography Contest.

These are just some of the more than 100 photos entered this year that the AVA uses in the official Albany Visitors Guide, AVA social media and online calendar so keep an eye out for other fun and beautiful photos.

Prizes this year include certificates and gift cards for: Champion, Reserve Champion, People's Choice, Student and 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners in seven categories. All photos in this year's photo contest can be viewed on the Pix Theatre screen prior to the feature film, later this spring as well as on our website; AlbanyVisitors.com.

The winners of the 2025 Albany Visitors Association Photography Contest are:

- **Champion:** "Sunrise Old Barn" by Loretta Robinson
- **Reserve Champion:** "Albany Municipal Airport" by Camron Settlemier
- **People's Choice:** "Ellsworth Bridge Along the Willamette River" by Tobias Wilson
- **Youth:** "Fogged in at Ellsworth Bridge" by Aidan McWayne
- **Staff:** "Winding Willamette" by Lonna Capaci

(New this year! We invited AVA staff and their families to participate in a special new category. While not eligible for a cash prize, it's been fun to celebrate the talent within our own AVA family!)

Food

- 1st Place** - "Dinner Art Sweet Red" by Ryan McWayne
- 2nd Place** - "Sweet Red Bistro: by Melissa Whitney
- 3rd Place** - "Sir Burger and Pepsi at the Legendary King Kone" by Tobias Wilson

Events

- 1st Place** - "4th of July at River Rhythms" by Ben Ammon
- 2nd Place** - "Candy Cane Cannon go Boom" by Camron Settlemier
- 3rd Place** - "Tommy Gun and Loot" by David Lumbert

Historic Albany

- 1st Place** - "Father Christmas" by Melinda Martin
- 2nd Place** - "Sign" by Margo Bennett
- 3rd Place** - "Train House" by Camron Settlemier

Landmarks

- 1st Place** - "Oak Grove Barn" by Loretta Robinson
- 2nd Place** - "Thompson's Flour Mills" by Melissa Whitney
- 3rd Place** - "Lucky Day" by Melinda Martin

People

- 1st Place** - "Calapooia Pirate" by Ryan McWayne
- 2nd Place** - "Riding the Ferris Wheel at the Linn County Fair" by Camron Settlemier

3rd Place - "Marshmallow Moment" by Brenda Daigle

Downtown

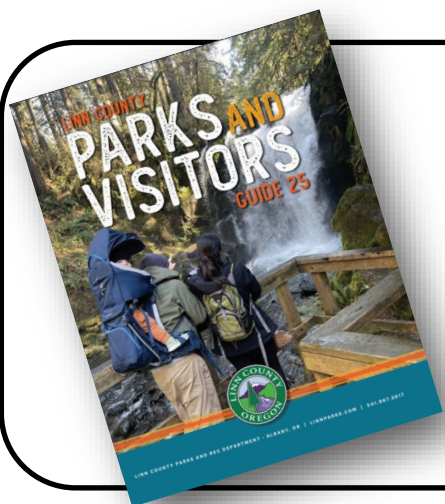
- 1st Place** - "OE Hotshot Eastbound" by Camron Settlemier
- 2nd Place** - "Garden Gate" by Melinda Martin
- 3rd Place** - "Park Bench at Monteith Park" by Loretta Robinson

Scenic

- 1st Place** - "Periwinkle Park Reflections" by Starlene Strange
- 2nd Place** - "On the Cattails" by Mike Shouse
- 3rd Place** - "Farm on Dumbeck Lane" by Loretta Robinson



Camron Settlemier's photo at the Albany Municipal Airport earned Reserve Champion honors.



Now available — the annual *Linn County Parks and Visitors Guide*

Online at www.linnparks.com or pick up a copy at the
Parks & Recreation office, campgrounds or Board of Commissioners office.

Call the Linn County Board of Commissioners at 541-967-3825.