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Community

News about Benton County, the mid-Willamette Valley and the Pacific Northwest

Officer charged with DUI

By Rob Privo
Corvallis Times Reporter

A Corvallis police lieutenant has been placed on paid leave following his arrest and a charge of driving under the influence of alcohol.

Lt. Bruce Benner, 44, a 12-year member of the Corvallis Police Department, was arrested shortly after 10 p.m. Thursday by an Oregon State Police trooper. Benner was stopped at the 600 block of Southwest West Hills Road after the trooper observed his westbound pickup weaving in the road.

Benner was placed on paid administrative leave pending an investigation of the incident. Police Chief Paul Bonkowski said Friday.

Any further disciplinary action will depend on the outcome of that investigation, he said.

Bonkowski said the leave was imposed as a matter of department policy. Results of a breathalyzer showed Benner had a blood alcohol content of .14 percent, the legal limit for Oregon drivers is .08 percent.

Benner said Friday that he was on his way home when he was stopped but declined further comment on the incident.

Victim identified

A 30-year-old Albany man who drowned Thursday east of Corvallis has been identified as Johnny Lee Douglas. His name was not released by officials until relatives could be notified of his death early Friday.

An investigation by the Benton County sheriff's office showed alcohol consumption may have been involved in the drowning. It happened about 7:45 p.m. Thursday at one of the ponds just west of the Willamette River on property owned by Moore Bros. Inc. off of Oregon Highway 34.

Witnesses told investigators the victim had consumed most of a bottle of whiskey before entering the water. Douglas went to the pond to fish along with his 19-year-old son, Johnny Lee Douglas Jr., and Leroy "Boj" Gove of Albany.

Gove and the boy were unsuccessful in their attempts to save Douglas, who was pronounced dead at the scene by rescuers.

Dad thinks missing girl ran away

MEDFORD (AP) — The father of a teenage girl missing from her home near Santiam Pass said Friday he thinks she ran away.

Steven Pickle of Medford said KIRO radio that when his daughter left after visiting him at his home, she had a lot more clothing than was found at her home in Linn County.

Rachanda Lea Pickle, 11, last was seen July 19 by her mother and stepfather at their home at Santiam Junction. There her stepfather, John Achroyd, works for the state Highway Division.

Steven Pickle said Rachanda was visiting him in Medford a week before she disappeared. When she left his home, she had a suitcase and a black duffel bag filled with clothing, he said.

Pickle added that he has found at his home a New Kids in the Block T-shirt. Rachanda was believed to have been wearing when she disappeared.

A Linn County sheriff's detective investigating the case said the father's comments offered a new direction in the case.

The detective, who refused to give his name, told investigators weren't aware of the duffel bag and had earlier discounted the possibility that Rachanda had run away.

"There's a gray area there on this one," he said.

The Linn County sheriff's office cordoned off ground and air searches of a 30-square-mile area for a week after Rachanda disappeared. Law enforcement officials and civilian search and rescue groups from seven Oregon counties participated.

Efforts there were fruitless and the search was called off last Friday. It was renewed Sunday after the discovery of a pair of black pants that authorities initially thought might be hers. Laboratory analysis indicated they were not, however.

"There wasn't anything that would rule them out, but there was nothing that would say positively that they're hers either," Sheriff Art Martinek said Friday.

"Frankly, I'm doubtful that they are, because they're in an area that had already been searched."

Deputies continued to interview people at campgrounds and lakes around the area, Martinek said.

The girl has lived with her mother, stepfather and brother near Santiam Junction for about six years.



Vinyl liner seals fill

By Carr Chang Murter
Corvallis Times Reporter

Valley Landfills Inc. of Corvallis is setting a precedent for landfills in the state and across the country.

The Coffin Butte landfill north of the city is in the process of closing an 8-acre section that has been the disposal site for residents' garbage for the past 12 years.

While landfill closings are nothing new in recent years, Valley Landfills has initiated a new method of closing landfills sections that will help prevent potential environmental problems.

Bill Weber, general manager of Valley Landfills, said Coffin Butte is the first landfill in Oregon that is using this "ultra-thin" method, which he said will cost "a little under \$1 million."

The method is similar to other closing methods in that it uses alternate layers of gravel, sand, dirt and rock to cover the heap of garbage. But its unique aspect is the vinyl liner that is placed between the layers.

The liner, designed by Sweet Edwards/EMCON Engineers of Tualatin, is made out of a high density polyethylene.

"It's 60 times the thickness of a garbage bag," said Joyce Almon, a spokeswoman for Valley Landfills.

"It acts as an umbrella, which seals the portion that's being sealed from potential groundwater contamination," she said. "It's a preventive measure."

Bob Wilson of the Benton County Health Department said the liner will ensure that rainwater will not be able to penetrate the landfill. That will prevent contaminant leakage, he said.

Although the 8-acre section of the landfill is expected to be closed in about a month, Almon said, the remaining landfill will be able to serve the area for another six or seven decades.

Surgeons switch 5-day-old baby's heart arteries

PORTLAND (AP) — A team of Portland surgeons has successfully switched the transposed heart arteries of a 5-day-old boy, in the first operation of its kind in Oregon.

The surgery was performed last week on Drew Perry, son of Matthew and Deborah Perry of North Plains, Wash.

The child was born with his aorta and pulmonary arteries reversed, an abnormality that occurs in 1:250 Oregon infants each year.

The defect causes blood that is supposed to go to the lungs to go to the body and vice versa. It deprives the blood of oxygen and can cause a baby to look blue.

An infant would die within a year if left untreated, said Dr. Albert Starr, leader of the surgical team.

"Now he is pink," Deborah Perry said at a news conference on Thursday.

He was absent at first and you could tell something was not right.

The condition was diagnosed shortly after the infant was born on July 11.

"It was a big shock," said Matthew Perry, the baby's father. "We were expecting a normal birth."

The couple has two other children, ages 2 and 1.

The operation, called the "switch" or "arterial switch," restores the normal anatomical arrangement of the two

great arteries. Surgeons cut and sew the aorta and pulmonary arteries of where they belong.

The conventional treatment for the condition is to wait until the child is 1 or 2 months old and then perform a venous operation to redirect blood flow to the proper place, Starr said.

But there are disadvantages to that treatment. In addition to making the sick child wait, the venous operation is not a correction.

It only allows each of the heart's pumping chambers, the ventricles, to do the wrong work. The right ventricle is supposed to pump blood only to the lungs, but with transposition of the great

arteries, it takes on the greater workload of pumping blood to the entire body.

Patients also may require more surgery as they grow, or even require a pacemaker.

Starr said the switch surgery his team performed is more corrective than others because it restores the normal arrangement and has fewer long-term complications.

The correction is technically difficult because of the intricate work that must be done. The very tiny coronary arteries that supply the infant's heart must be elevated from the aorta.

"It is always hard to do that first one, and this was it," Starr said.

Worker carried gun undetected into Trojan nuclear plant

PORTLAND (AP) — A worker carried a loaded gun in his briefcase into the Trojan nuclear plant without setting off security alarms, a federal agency says.

The worker told Portland General Electric Co. officials about the handgun when he was being questioned in mid-July about a personnel matter, said Greg Cook, spokesman for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Portland General Electric, operator of the Rainier-area plant, immediately notified the regulatory agency about an apparent breach in its security system.

Cook said he said the agency and Portland General Electric were investigating the incident.

Jim Cross, the utility's nuclear division vice president, declined Thursday to confirm or deny the incident occurred.

"We take any allegation of a security violation at Trojan very seriously," Cross said. "We have completed a thorough review of our security equipment and procedures to ensure that if this did indeed occur, that it was an isolated incident and will not be repeated."

Cook said the worker, a contract employee, reported the incident occurred in

June while the plant was shut down for annual maintenance.

During nuclear plant maintenance periods, utility companies routinely hire contract workers. Many of them travel from plant to plant, doing the tasks required during annual refueling.

Cook said the worker told company and federal inspectors that he put the gun in the briefcase after sunset practice one night. The next morning, he took the briefcase into the plant. That afternoon, he opened the briefcase and saw the gun. He showed it to an employee, he told inspectors, then took it out to his car without reporting it to security.

Cook said the employee should have notified plant security that the metal detector did not pick up the presence of a gun.

Cook declined to give details about why the utility had questioned the contract employee about a personnel matter.

"It's a personnel matter and I'm not going to get into that," he said. "This is complicated enough without getting into a personnel matter."

Cook and Steve Sautter, a spokesman for Portland General Electric, said they did not know who the contract employee was.



Tending his garden

Chris Garg weeds his garden of cucumbers, cantaloupe and tomatoes on Highway 20, just north of the Children's Farm Home. He plans to set up an "honor stand," which he describes as an unmanned stand supplying fruit and other, where people can choose what they like and leave their money in a can provided.

Washington mills to buy shipment of Soviet logs

TACOMA, Wash. (AP) — A group of Western Washington mills is looking to the Soviet Union to bolster their rapidly shrinking timber supply.

Six mills have joined in a venture to import unprocessed logs from the Soviet port of Nakhodka, near Vladivostok on the Sea of Japan, said Gus Kurbane, president of the Northwest Independent Forest Manufacturers.

"We're going to do everything we can to keep these logs coming. If it takes shipping them from Russia, that's what we'll do," Kurbane said.

The experiment will bring 20 shipping containers filled with Soviet logs to Tacoma or Portland, Ore., within a month. The containers will be divided among the six mills and sawed into dimensional lumber, Kurbane said.

Kurbane said much of the timber is likely to be Siberian or Daurian larch, which may be similar to a species of larch logged occasionally in Eastern Washington.

The logs will be fumigated before being removed from the containers to get rid of pests which might pose a danger to Pacific Northwest forests. Then the processed lumber will be tested to determine whether it can be substituted for American lumber, Kurbane said.

"The logs from Asia have never been brought into the U.S. We don't know the strength values," he said.

If the pilot project proves successful, the plan is to haul the Soviet timber on otherwise empty Japanese log ships coming to pick up American logs.

But because the Soviet logging industry is primitive, the investment may also require road building and other improvements in Siberia, Kurbane said, inspectors and some loggers may have to go to the Soviet Union to get the shipments moving.

Kurbane said eventually one ship loaded with Soviet logs could call on a Northwest port every week. He said that would represent about 200 million board feet of timber a year, worth between \$50 million and \$75 million.