



## Thanks for reading our new newsletter

**W**elcome to the first issue of The Linn County Reporter, a monthly newsletter for and about our nearly 700 employees and the many projects and programs they tackle every workday.



**Darrin  
Lane**  
Administrative Officer

Unlike our Linn County Parks Newsletter, which is published from May through September — and yes, it's also new — our goal is to publish The Reporter monthly simply because there is so much going on throughout our county.

The news mix in The Reporter will be geared toward stories about projects underway in Linn County such as the Road Department's annual chip seal program on Page 3, but also information about our staff members such as our Page 1 feature about retiring Veterans Services officer Kim Grooms and her successor Deanna Baley-Hyder.

We will also include information from our partners such as OSU Extension-Linn County (don't forget the annual 4-H and FFA fair that starts Monday) and the Linn Soil & Water Conservation District, as well as communities throughout the county.

As The Reporter evolves, we plan to feature stories about our staff members and their hobbies such as hunting, fishing or cooking, so their fellow employees and the 129,000 Linn County residents can get to know them better.

Just a few of the many things going on in Linn County that we will talk about in coming issues is the progress being made on the intermodal facility at Millersburg — it's on track for a January opening — and how our staff members and the

**Darrin Lane ... See P. 3**



Outgoing Linn County Veterans Services officer Kim Grooms, left, and her successor Deanna Baley-Hyder.

## Helping Linn County veterans was more than just a job for Kim Grooms

By Alex Paul

**W**hen Kim Grooms talks about “her veterans” she smiles and her eyes twinkle.

For the past 24 years, Grooms has been the county's veterans services officer and it's easy to see she loves her job.

That should read “loved her job” since as of July 1, Grooms is retired and Deanna Baley-Hyder has stepped into that role after five years in the department.

Grooms, 56, is a Linn County native, born in Lebanon and reared in Albany. She graduated from South Albany High School in 1983 and worked at Oregon Freeze Dry, the YMCA and Oregon Health and Sciences University before joining Linn County in 1997.

“It's the best job I ever had,” Grooms said without hesitation. “I have absolutely loved it.”

But Grooms said, her decision to retire was based on realizing life is short and she and her partner, Bob Cooper, who is retired from the Navy, want to travel.

“I lost my mom in 2015 and my husband, Ken, who worked at the Road Department for 26 years in 2018,” Grooms said.

Her mother, Ginny Gatchell, was the Road Department office manager for

### Quotable

*“It's the best job I ever had. I have absolutely loved it.”*

many years.

Grooms said she could not have worked with better clientele.

“Veterans are just special,” Grooms said. “They serve and come home and don't ask for anything. Sometimes, they just need help getting what's due them.”

Grooms said she was grateful Linn County values its veterans and the Board of Commissioners and administrative staff have given her “lots of autonomy” to do what is best for each veteran.

“We work for the government, but we aren't here to tell our veterans they can't do this or that,” Grooms said. “Our goal is to provide them with information, help them cut through red tape, fill out forms that can be many pages and get them the services they are entitled to.”

Grooms said the best part of her job was “making positive changes in someone's

life.”

Grooms said the office helps veterans who might be entitled to a pension, health care or even a home loan.

“The Veterans Administration is a huge machine,” Grooms said. “Our job is to make sure that machine is working for our local veterans.”

For example, a basic VA form can run as many as a dozen pages.

“We provide our veterans with information up front such as what types of medical information the VA wants,” Grooms said. “It makes it much easier if the veteran has info up front.”

Grooms said her office works with as many as 2,000 veterans at any given time.

“The VA estimates there are 12,000 veterans in Linn County,” she said. “I think that's amazing since Oregon doesn't have a military base. We have the Coast Guard and a couple Air Guard operations, but no full military base.”

Grooms has already begun traveling. She and Bob went to Florida and met family members and they have a trip to San Antonio, Texas coming up.

“I want to see the Alamo and the river walk,” she said.

**Kim Grooms ... See P. 2**



## Linn County Board of Commissioners



**Roger Nyquist**



**Sherrie Sprenger**



**Will Tucker**

Call 541-967-3825

## Mass vaccination clinics successful; thanks volunteers!

Linn County's mass vaccination clinics ended June 9, according to Public Health Director Todd Noble.

"Over the last 18 months we distributed more than 1.5 million PPE (personal protective equipment) items to mid-valley communities and tested more than 25,000 people," Noble said. "Starting January 19, we ran 42 mass vaccination clinics and 57 mobile clinics."

Noble said 98,000 vaccinations were completed in Linn County. Of those, 79,000 were completed by Linn County partnering with the Medical Reserve Corp.

"The Linn County mass vaccination clinics were unique in that they were the only mass vaccination clinics run in the state that were not hospital-based," Noble said. "The Linn County mass vaccination clinics at the Linn County fairgrounds were run entirely by volunteers and Linn County staff."



Noble said more than 1,000 volunteers participated, totaling 22,458 hours of volunteer time translating into \$1.1 million worth of volunteer time.

"The clinics were efficient with an average wait

time of six minutes from the moment a person walked in the door until a vaccination was administered," Noble said. "At the height of operations, we were able to do eight shots per minute and the most given in a single day was 3,625 on May 6. Linn County is incredibly grateful for the generous support from volunteers especially from the Medical Reserve Corps which made this all possible."



## We want your photos

Linn County is truly a beautiful place to live and we want our new county website to reflect that beauty.

We are soliciting photos from throughout the county — from Albany to the Santiam Pass and Mill City to Harrisburg — as we develop a new website in the coming months.

We need scenic photos, people at work and play, our many community festivals — Sportsman's Holiday and the Oregon Jamboree to the Fourth of July parade in Harrisburg.

Photos may also be used for other county purposes, such as an annual calendar, or Christmas card.

Please send high-quality photos to Alex Paul, Linn County Communications Officer at [apaul@co.linn.or.us](mailto:apaul@co.linn.or.us).



Photo courtesy Trisha King

## Kim Grooms ... From Page 1

A large poster of Elvis Presley hangs in Grooms' office and yes, she plans a trip to Graceland in the future.

She also plans to spend more time with her son, Michael Darrah and grandson Riley, 8, who live in Lebanon.

Incoming Baley-Hyder said she has learned about how to treat veterans working with Grooms the last five years. Plus, she's going to miss the cup of ice Grooms brings her every morning.

"When you get to help a veteran, it makes you smile for them," Baley-Hyder said. "I love the people we work with. It's an easy job to love and I've enjoyed seeing the joy Kim brings to other people."

County Administrator Darrin Lane praised Grooms efforts.

"Kim has been an invaluable asset to Linn County and our veterans for many years," Lane said. "She is extremely dedicated and cares deeply about veterans."

Lane added that Grooms, "Is very generous in sharing her knowledge and has



built a great team that will carry on after her retirement."

Retiring veterans services officer Kim Grooms is an Elvis Presley fan, and a trip to Graceland is definitely on her travel agenda.



# Abby Johnson joins Linn County 4-H leadership

New Linn County 4-H Program Coordinator Abby Johnson has landed the job of dreams.

Johnson, 23, grew up in Gaston and was a nine-year 4-H club member, including at Western Oregon University.

For the past 2 ½ years she was the 4-H education program assistant in Marion County.

“This is the job I wanted,” Johnson said. She started work in Linn County on June 1.

“I love that 4-H is open to all young people and that it is also open to all of their interests,” Johnson said. “Anything a young person is interested in can be a 4-H project.”

For Johnson, that meant showing pigs, goats and being active in communication and leadership activities.

Johnson graduated from Western Oregon University in 2019 with a degree in education studies.

She and her husband Jacob — an FFA adviser at Lebanon High School — live in Albany with their dachund Juniper.

“We call her Juney. She’s adorable,” Johnson said.



Abby Johnson

4-H Program Coordinator

When she isn’t working, Johnson enjoys cooking and baking and helping her husband with FFA projects.

“And he helps me with 4-H,” Johnson said.

Johnson said her goal is to learn what 4-H clubs and leaders need to keep the program growing in Linn County.

“I’m so excited to be doing what I enjoy in the county where I live,” Johnson said. “4-H is growing here and we want to provide what is needed to keep that momentum alive.”



Road Department workers chip seal Bell Plain Road in June.

# Linn Road Department plans chip seal projects

ALBANY — The Linn County Road Department will chip seal about 65 miles of paved roads this summer, according to Operations Manager Kevin Hamilton.

The county has approximately 1,150 miles of roads, of which about 950 are paved.

“Chip sealing is cost-effective,” Hamilton said. “It is a good way to preserve road surfaces. It’s a lot like regularly changing the oil in your car or truck. It’s maintenance.”

Hamilton said repaving a road costs four to five times as much as chip sealing.

“Chip sealing allows us to keep the base structure — the rock and asphalt — in good shape,” Hamilton said. “The chip seal protects the road from adverse elements.”

Hamilton said the county tries to chip seal roads every six to 10 years, depending on the amount of traffic and size of vehicles that regularly pass over them.

“There are actually several varieties of chip sealing processes, from single or double to scrubs and slurry,” Hamilton said. “We try to match the application to the road conditions.”

A major chip seal project will take place Aug. 12-15 on Main Street in Brownsville.

There will be times when traffic will be stopped, and other times when there will be only one lane of travel.

There will be no daytime roadside parking any of the four days.

“This will be a scrub seal with a fog seal applied on top overlay,” Hamilton



Kevin Hamilton

Operations Manager

said. “The fog seal is actually a thin layer of asphalt and it will turn black, so it looks nice and it provides a nice background for road markings.”

Hamilton said the last time major work was done on Main Street was about 15 years ago.

“We will start about 7 a.m. August 12 at Rock Hill Drive. We will be proceed south to Hausmann Ave. at the north end of Main Street in Brownsville,” Hamilton said. “This is about 5.75 miles.”

Hamilton said he hopes to start working on Main Street around noon, continuing through downtown throughout the afternoon.

The crew will divide the Main Street project into three segments to Highway 228. Sweeping Main Street and applying the fog seal will occur in segments on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

# Lewis Creek adds safety barrier

SWEET HOME — In May, the Linn County Parks & Recreation Department staff installed a new water safety barrier at the Lewis Creek County Park swim area.

The new equipment was installed about 50 feet from the safety boom that has been in place for many years and creates an area that is off limits to swimmers and watercraft.

The safety barrier cost \$255,844 and is designed to stop a 27-foot boat traveling at 60 miles per hour in less than a half-second. It was paid for with the county’s Transient Lodging Tax and parks reserve funds.

The county reminds people they are not allowed to tamper with the boom in any way, including sitting on it or tying water craft to it.

Such actions can lead to citations and fines.



The public is not allowed to play on, or tie watercraft to the new safety barrier at Lewis Creek County Park.

# Darrin Lane ... From P. 1

Board of Commissioners are being proactive in planning for possible wildfires in coming months.

We will also keep you updated on how the development of a new county website is progressing and invite your comments about how we can make it more useful to our fellow Linn Countians.

Please let us know if you have story ideas by calling Alex Paul, Linn County Communications Officer, at 541-967-3825 or email [apaul@co.linn.or.us](mailto:apaul@co.linn.or.us).



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](mailto:apaul@co.linn.or.us) or call 541-967-3825.





**Blue Oyster Cult July 15**



**Matt  
Stell  
July 16**



**Tyler Farr July 17**

## Gearing up for the Linn County Fair July 15-17

ALBANY — Arkansas native Matt Stell will round out the entertainment lineup at the Linn County Fair, headlining on Friday, July 16, joining a musical venue that includes Blue Oyster Cult on Thursday, July 15, and Tyler Farr on Saturday, July 17.

They take the stage each night at 8:30.

The 6'7" Stell — who was an outstanding basketball player at Drury College in Springfield, Missouri — likes to say that like Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings, he doesn't want to be stuck in one box musically.

His "Prayed for You," topped Billboard's Country Airplay Chart in 2019 and has registered more than 270 million streams on-line, earning Stell his first RIAA Platinum certification.

Stell says his current Top 10 hit, "Everywhere But On," is a bit biographical.

Opening acts start at 7 p.m.

A mid-valley favorite, Fate 55 will open Thursday night's entertainment, Jesse Leigh opens on Friday night and Adam Larson takes the stage on Saturday.

General concert seating is free with paid admission and reserved seats (including

admission) are available for \$22 at <https://linncountyfair.com/concerts>

The Linn County Fair will run from July 15-17 at the Linn County Fair & Expo Center, 3700 Knox Butte Road, Albany.

General admission is \$7 for adult and children 12 and under admitted free.

Gates will be open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Family Land featuring Washboard Willy, K-9 Kings, Kid Fit, Puzzlemania, Cirque Adventure and more, will be open from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

The always popular senior ice cream social will be at 2 p.m. Thursday.

For more information, visit <https://linncountyfair.com/>.

The 4-H and FFA fair will run from July 12-17, with the annual livestock auction at 1 p.m. Saturday in the Calapooia Arena.

A buyer's lunch will be served starting at 11:30 a.m.

This will be an in-person event, with optional online bidding.

Buyer registration is open at [www. http://www.lcyla.com](http://www.lcyla.com).

## Santiam Canyon wildfire cleanup is progressing



Above: The BLM's office at Fishermen's Bend was destroyed by the September wildfires. Left: BLM Field Manager John Huston, left, talks with Linn County Commissioner Will Tucker during a recent field trip to review damage and clean-up in the Santiam Canyon.

Commissioner Will Tucker recently spent a day with BLM officials in the north canyon area — Mill City and Gates — that was heavily damaged by wildfire last September.

Here are his observations and comments:

- The devastation is still difficult to look at. Black trees, patches of brown from trees that are dying and swaths of healthy trees.
- Many of the major BLM roads are open but still need to have dead, dangerous trees removed. I was amazed to see so many whole downed trees. The winds that spread the fires and the winds created by the fires, have fallen thousands of whole trees with root ball intact.
- I was very pleased with how the BLM is working with private property owners. Commercial timber and getting roads open and safe. It was great to hear that, based upon conversations post fire, the BLM is going to repair and improve a road to create a second escape route for community members.
- Based upon what I saw, it appears commercial timber has made great strides in recovery logging of salvage timber.
- Work has been done, or is scheduled, to get culverts and ditches repaired. There are many heavily damaged roadbeds and surfaces from the fire and firefighting.
- The work being done in rights-of-way looked very clean, in some cases using masticators to pulverize the logging debris.