

Dear Patrons,

Arguably, school districts across our beautiful state face the most difficult budgeting since the great depression. In our district, this translates to staff reductions, including teachers and support staff. The following addresses some of the questions and issues related to the current financial crisis.

How much does Columbia School District face in budget cuts? The compromise between Governor Gregoire, The Senate and House of Representatives, reduced an estimated (\$308,516) from our district.

How will the reduced funds impact staffing levels? The deep reductions will decrease staffing levels, increase class sizes and require other program reductions and cuts. Partly due to retirements, we anticipate little reduction in our support or non teaching staff. The budget, however, gutted Initiative I-728 funds, which includes funds primarily intended for hiring teachers and lowering class sizes. Our state's financial crisis, which mirrors the troubled global financial downturn, clearly works counter intuitively against reducing the class sizes in our state, which are among the highest in the nation. The budget from Olympia reduced our district's I-728 funds by almost \$300,000. We all anguish that the loss of these funds translates to the loss of some exceptional teachers.

Will our district run another maintenance and operation levy to make up the losses from the state? No. First, as it should, our school board will *not* approve the request for a new levy to make up the losses from the state nor does current statute allow for more than one maintenance and operations levy to be in place at a time. Since our local voters just approved a two-year maintenance and operations replacement levy, for which we are grateful, our voters will not be asked to replace this levy until it is about to retire in two years. Second, although our governor supported the idea of temporarily improving school funding through increasing the allowable maintenance and operations levies from local communities, this idea favors the property affluent districts, such as Mercer Island and Bellevue that tend to raise school taxes with relative ease. However, less affluent districts, such as ours, often struggle to raise local school levies. Third, local levy assistance, often known as levy equalization or LEA, helps the less affluent district to *somewhat* equalize or balance the difference in funding between the more affluent and less affluent districts. The state budget reduced the LEA funds by 15.85%, which negatively impacts the funding of the less affluent districts that include most rural districts, such as ours.

Will the federal special education and Title I federal stimulus dollars help make up the short fall from the state? Marginally. The funds target special needs students and Title I remediation for language and math. These federal dollars will not support adding a kindergarten teacher, a physics teacher, or offset the major reductions from I-728.

Will the district trim other areas of its operations to save some of our teachers? Yes. Next year we believe that we will save over \$125,000, for example, by altering our transportation routing, maximizing our grant indirect dollars (i.e., heat and lights) and improving food service efficiencies. Leveraging these dollars augment basic education dollars. All of which helps save jobs, particularly teachers.

Finally, despite the anguish of losing quality teachers, we will continue to offer the best education for our students. This goal will not change.

Sincerely,
Dr. Lou Gates, Superintendent



Academic Awards Night

The Columbia High School Academic Awards banquet will be held on **Thursday, May 21st at 7:00 PM** in the auditorium. The community is invited to join us in congratulating the academic accomplishments of **ALL** Columbia High School students. Please encourage your child to attend!

Attention 8th Grade Students

Remember that permission slips for the 8th grade trip must be returned by May 15th to the school office. The 8th grade trip will be on June 2nd, and it will be a day trip to Triple Play in Couer D'Alene, ID. If parents have any questions, please contact Deb Kassing at 539-4565.

Community BBQ

Make plans to join the Columbia School District staff and students for the annual community barbecue on Thursday, May 21st. The barbecue will be held at the middle school playground from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM. Advance tickets are available at the middle school office the week of the May 18-21, 2009. ***We strongly encourage everyone to pre-purchase meal tickets to alleviate long lines.*** Adult tickets are \$3.50, and student and children tickets are \$2.50. The menu will be a hamburger **or** hotdog, chips, baked beans, carrot sticks, cookie, and milk or juice.

Attention Senior Parents!!

The final Senior Parent meeting will be held on May 20th in the CHS library to finalize plans for the After-Grad party. We would like to provide a fun, drug/alcohol free party for our children, but in order to do so we need all senior parents help! Please plan on attending. If you have any donations of prizes or money please bring it with you to the meeting.

We appreciate everyone's help in making this a safe and fun experience for your graduate.

Project Success

Columbia High School has adapted Project Success as our Prevention/Intervention Model. The program is funded through a grant funded by the U.S. Department of Education to reduce adolescent alcohol and other drug abuse. The goals of the program are to help prevent and reduce alcohol use, increase awareness of the harm of alcohol use, change attitudes toward alcohol use, and improve school performance. To accomplish these goals, students will have the opportunity to participate in school-wide awareness programs, classroom discussions, extracurricular activities, and small group and individual meetings. The program will provide alcohol, tobacco and other drug prevention education and counseling services to students.

To learn more about this program please contact Sarah Crow, Student Assistance Counselor at Columbia High School 545-8573 ext. 358.

Help

Community Service Project

A community work day has been set for Saturday, May 16th from 8:00 AM to 11:00 AM to help make improvements on the softball complex. As a community, let's work together side by side grooming the fields, picking up rocks and preparing the softball fields for more grass. All ages are welcome, and the more the merrier! Please bring rakes, shovels, buckets, and a helping hand, and together we can all make a difference! We will have complimentary refreshments for volunteers. Any questions, please contact Marilyn Lott, 547-2089.

Kindergarten Registration

Parents and their 2009-2010 kindergarten child are invited to a special kindergarten registration session on Wednesday, May 13, 2009 from 8:30 AM to 11:00 AM in the Columbia Elementary School gym. Please bring the following for registration:

- Child's up-to-date immunization records
- Child's birth certificate
- Family emergency and employment information

Your soon to be kindergarten child must be five years old by August 31, 2009. All immunizations must be current in order to register. For additional information, please contact the Columbia Elementary School office at 547-9393.



Columbia School District extends a heartfelt thank you to Bob Smith and his crew for their donation of time and equipment to bury rocks and contour the landscape on our softball complex. Their generous help has helped improve the landscaping around our complex tremendously. Soon we will have a softball complex that everyone will be proud of and have fun playing on. Thank you Bob, Cody and Nacho!!!

Community Softball Game

The Coyote Boosters are sponsoring a softball game night on May 20, 2009 beginning at 5:30 PM at the Varsity and JV Softball fields. Games will consist of staff vs. students and alumni vs. the community. The winners of the two games will play again at 6:30 and the other two teams will play each other. You may call the CHS office to add your name to the player list at 545-8573. A hot dog dinner and light concessions will be available. Be sure to bring your lawn chairs and join the fun!



Bus Driver Training

Columbia School District will be offering training during the month of July for anyone interested in becoming a bus driver. For more information, please contact Holly Brickey at 380-0145.

Burbank Grange to Play Bunco

Everyone is invited to attend a BUNCO game day on Saturday May 23rd from 10 to 2 at the Burbank Grange Hall. They will begin playing BUNCO at 10 AM and will break for lunch at Noon. The cost to play is \$5 and lunch will cost \$4. Come join the fun!!

FFA Congrats

Congratulations to Seth Shelton for receiving the WAVE scholarship which is a two-year full ride scholarship for college!!
 Congratulations to Jon McGreevy, Zac Reisenauer and Garrett Long for taking first place at the Asotin County Fair for tractor driving. Jon McGreevy placed as the 2nd high individual out of all contestants and Zac Reisenauer was the 6th high individual!
 Also, good luck to the Ag Sales team who will be competing at the state level on May 16th.
 Holly Espinosa, FFA Advisor

School Board Meeting



May 18, 2009

Administration Building Board Room

Regular Board Meeting

AGENDA

Open Session: 7:00 PM

Staff Reports

League Athletics and Budget

Superintendent Reports

Teacher Appreciation

Enrollment/Fund Balance

May 1 & 22 Staff Development

New Business

2009-2010 Academic Calendar

WIAA Approval

Future Meeting Dates—7:00 PM

June 8 & 22, 2009

For a complete list of agenda items, please check the Tri-City Herald or the Walla Walla Union Bulletin the Sunday prior to the meeting.

Cystic Fibrosis Fund Raisers

Please help us help the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation in their quest to find a cure! Evan Pratt, a student at Columbia Elementary School, was born with Cystic Fibrosis, which is a genetic disease that deteriorates the lungs and digestive system. There will be a bake sale to benefit the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation on behalf of Evan Pratt on May 19th and 20th at the Elementary school. If you would like to donate bake goods, please drop them off at the Elementary school by Monday, May 18th. On behalf of Evan, there will also be a Spaghetti Feed at the Burbank Grange Hall on Friday, May 15th from 4 PM to 8 PM. Dinner will include spaghetti, salad, bread, and soda or coffee. There will also be a raffle. If you would like to donate supplies or your time please contact Jennifer Pratt at 378-5994. All dinners will be by donation only.

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Expect the best, and prepare for the world!

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Elementary School	(509) 547-9393
Middle School	(509) 545-8571
High School	(509) 545-8573
Transportation	(509) 380-0145

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