IN BRIEF

SNAP replacement benefits available for losses due to power outages

Households that lost or disposed of food purchased with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits because it was unsafe to eat due to power outages related to the recent wind and ice storms are encouraged to request replacement benefits, according to the Oregon Department of Human Services.

Households may request to replace food benefits equal to one month of the normal benefit for the household within 10 calendar days of the food loss by calling Oregon Eligibility customer service at 800-699-9075 or sending an email to SSP.StatewideWorkshare@dhsoha.state.or.us

Once approved, replacement benefits are added to the household's existing Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card.

Volunteers for homeless count

The Mid-Willamette Valley Homeless Alliance is seeking volunteers and resources for the annual Point-in-Time County in January. The nationwide event attempts to gather information on individuals experiencing homelessness on a given night.

The 2023 event will be conducted during daytime hours on Jan. 24, 25 and 26. Volunteer teams are needed to cover the Marion-Polk region. Interested volunteers can sign up in three areas:

- Salem area: tinyurl.com/4937yc59
- Marion County: https://tinyurl.com/yc6jahru
- Polk County: https://tinyurl.com/yc629h5z\

The organization also needs donations of funds or goods such as gloves, socks, blankets, tents, tarps and other items. Donated goods can be dropped off from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Thursday Dec. 12 through Jan. 26 at United Way, 455 Bliler Ave. NE. Monetary donations can be made at bit.ly/PIT23donations.

Jan. 15 is last day of open enrollment in Oregon Health Plan

Oregonians who don't have health insurance have until Jan. 15 to enroll for private health insurance in Oregon's health insurance marketplace through OregonHealthCare.gov.

Details on plans are available at orhim.info/shop. The tool also shows which plans cover specific prescription drugs and are networked with preferred primary care doctors or hospitals.

Free help to enroll can be found from health insurance experts around Oregon at gov/GetHelp.

Olaf, played by Brenner O'Neill, with the summer chorus in the January 2023 production of "Frozen Jr." by Salem Keizer Inspirational Teens Theatre. PROVIDED BY S.K.I.T. THEATRE

BottleDrop changes processing fee for dropped-off bags

BottleDrop sent notification to account holders that it has discontinued, effective Jan. 1, the 40-cent per bag processing fee for bags of bottles dropped at BottleDrop Redemption Centers and BottleDrop Express sites.

The flat fee has been replaced with a fee equal to 8% of the refund value of the containers in each bag.

"We have heard from many customers who feel a flat fee penalizes those who follow our terms and conditions and limit the weight of their bags because it applies the same fee to a bag with fewer containers as to a bag with many more containers," the notification said.

The flat fee, the notice said, also encouraged customers to put as many containers as possible in a bag, leading to safety concerns for BottleDrop employees who lift and process overweight and overstuffed bags.

Local teen actors to present 'Frozen Jr.'

Salem Keizer Inspirational Teens Theatre, better known as S.K.I.T., returns to live production with a cast of 30 presenting "Frozen Jr." in January at Salem First Free Methodist Church.

The musical includes favorite "Frozen" characters such as Anna, Elsa and Olaf and songs such as "Love is an Open Door," "Do You Want to Build a Snowman?" and "Let It Go."

S.K.I.T. will perform six shows, including a public dress rehearsal at 7 p.m. Jan. 12. General admission tickets for the rehearsal are $6 and available only at the door.

Three evening shows at 7 p.m. will be held Jan. 13, 20 and 21, along with matinees at 2 p.m. Jan. 14 and 21. Reserved seating is available, along with tickets at the door. Tickets are $6 for children ages 3-12, $8 for teens and seniors, and $10 for adults.

All performances will be at Salem First Free Methodist, 4455 Silverton Road NE in Salem. For more information, visit skittheatre.com or call 503-689-7588.

Silverton MLK Observance returns in person Jan. 16

The Silverton MLK Observance will have its first in-person event in three years on Jan. 16 with a vigil at Town Square Park followed by a community potluck at Silverton Grange.

This is the 20th year the event will be held, but the first in person since 2020.

The keynote address, "Building Community Through Service and Sensitivity," will be delivered by Joel Autry of Silverton.

Autry is a food security activist and works with the community meal program "We all Dine in Silverton!" He formerly owned Silverton Bar & Bistro until that was closed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The MLK Observance Vigil will take place from 2:30-3:30 p.m. at Town Square Park. It will feature signs and quotes from Martin Luther King.

The potluck is at 6 p.m. at the Silverton Grange, 201 Division Street.

Donations are encouraged and will go to Silverton Area Community Aid. The event is being put on by Silverton People For Peace. For more information, contact Robert Sisk at robertjsisk@yahoo.com.

– Bill Poehler

Cryptocurrency investors warned

The Oregon Division of Financial Regulation (DFR) warns cryptocurrency investors to research the company and web address to make sure it is legitimate before giving any money to a crypto trading platform.

"Many crypto trading apps or websites are really just fake platforms set up by scammers to take investor money and give nothing in return," the department said in a news release. "Investors are promised huge returns in a short amount of time and will see account balances increase rapidly, but will not be able to withdraw funds without having to deposit more money in 'withdrawal fees' or 'taxes.'"

Once the investor become suspicious about the fees, the account is drained, the release said. If someone contacts an investor asking for usernames and passwords to accounts, it is more than likely a scam.

According to the North American Securities Administrators Association, some common schemes fraudsters exploit as new investment products or opportunities are:

- **Fake digital wallets**: A digital wallet is used to store, send and receive cryptocurrencies. Scammers design a fake digital wallet to lure users into providing their private key or code that enables the wallet to open. Once scammers receive the private key, they can steal all the cryptocurrency from the owner's digital wallet.
- **Pump-and-dumps**: Groups of individuals coordinate to buy a thinly-traded cryptocurrency, promote the cryptocurrency on social media to push up demand and the price, and then sell it in a coordinated sale. The price plummets and those unaware of the scheme are left with the devalued cryptocurrency.
- **Multi-level marketing platforms**: Companies lure investors through the promise of high interest with low risk. These investors are then incentivized to recruit more members.

Women's ski clinics offered

Hoodoo Ski Area's Ski and Ride School will host advanced women's clinics for both skiers and snowboarders already comfortable on blue runs.

Clinics will be held from 10 a.m. to noon Wednesdays through Feb. 22. Groups will include a maximum of six taught by experienced female instructors.

The cost is $65 each week. Participants do not need to sign up for the whole season, but preregistration for each day is helpful. For more information, visit skihoodoo.com or email Craig Mackie at craig@hoodoo.com.

Council chambers during a meeting in 2019. MADELEINE COOK / STATESMAN JOURNAL

On the agenda: Salem council returns to in-person meetings

Whitney Woodworth
Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

After holding virtual-only meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic — followed by further delays due to complications with the hybrid meeting technology — Salem City Council will resume in-person meetings Monday at City Hall for the first meeting of the new year.

The city stopped meeting in person in March 2020 as COVID-19 hit the region. They briefly resumed hybrid meetings in August 2021 but encountered technical difficulties with having people engage in the meeting virtually.

After lengthy supply chain challenges, the council chambers are now equipped to provide hybrid meetings that allow participation both in person and online, city staff said.

Mayor Chris Hoy said in a statement that he was excited to return to in-person meetings.

"During the pandemic, we were forced to meet virtually to keep everyone safe, but our city should be as open and accessible as possible," he said. "As we continue our fight to provide affordable housing to our residents, shelter and services for homeless individuals, and our work to grow the local economy, meeting in person will help these conversations happen more effectively."

At Monday's meeting, city officials elected in 2022 will be sworn in, including the mayor, councilors Linda Nishioka, Deanna Gwyn, Julie Hoy and Micki Varney, and Municipal Court judge Eleanor Beatty.

Agenda items will include:

- The airport commercial air service readiness project.
- Board and commission appointments.
- An agreement with the Salem Mass Transit District (Cherriots) for the Youth Fare Program.
- FEMA funding from the Emergency Management Performance Grant.

The meeting is at 6 p.m. It will be held in person at the City Council Chambers at the Salem Civic Center at 555 Liberty St. SE and can also be watched on Comcast Cable CCTV Channel 21 or on the Salem YouTube channel in English/American Sign Language and Spanish.

Those wishing to comment in person can sign-up on the rosters at the chamber entrance before the start of the meeting.

Written public comments on agenda items can be emailed by 5 p.m. Monday to cityrecorder@cityofsalem.net. Or pre-register between 8 a.m. and 2 p.m. Monday at cityofsalem.net/Pages/Public-Comment-at-Salem-City-Council-Meeting.aspx to speak during the meeting via Zoom.

For questions, comments and news tips, email reporter Whitney Woodworth at wmwoodworth@statesmanjournal.com, call 503-910-6616 or follow on Twitter @wmwoodworth