

Travel industry a top Clark County employer

If the travel industry in Clark County were a single company, it would rank as one of the top employers in the county, right up with Southwest Washington Medical Center—over 3,200 employees—and Vancouver's two large school districts, Evergreen and Vancouver, each with over 2,200 employees.

Kim Bennett, president of the Southwest Washington Convention & Visitors Bureau, estimates travel-related workers in the county earned a total of \$78 million last year. If these jobs paid \$30,000 a year, that would account for over 2,600 employees, working travel-related jobs.

In 2004, according to state statistics, travelers to Clark County spent \$280 million, getting here, staying here, eating here and buying gifts.

Yesterday Bennett held a news conference in the Vancouver Barracks' E. B. Hamilton Room and stated SWCVB, a nonprofit organization funded primarily by a \$2-per-night hotel tax paid by the occupant, is going to step up efforts to make certain potential travelers know that Southwest Washington is a major destination.

Bennett unveiled a series of illustrations by local artist **Jim Torson** that will be used in advertising and promotional materials. Torson's illustrations depict southern Washington tourist sites.

According to Bennett, Vancouver and southern Washington is a destination for more and more visitors, and the reasons for this are Mount St. Helens, the Columbia River Gorge, all the elements that make up the Vancouver National Historic Reserve, including Vancouver Barracks, Pearson Field and the Fort Vancouver National Monument sites. According to the organization's website, The Pacific Ocean and Mount Hood are also within a one- or two-hour drive from Vancouver.

The new Hilton Vancouver Washington Hotel, opening next week, will increase the county's hotel capacity by over ten percent, to more than 2,400 rooms.

Last year, the SWCVB distributed 80,000 visitor guides and brochures.

Although the new illustrations have not yet made their way to the SWCVB website, there is a wealth of information to be found on tourist attractions in southern Washington by going to

www.southwestwashington.com.

Rick Melching to get Gerald Bader Award

Rick Melching, retiring superintendent of Evergreen Public Schools, has been named recipient of the 2005 Gerald Bader Award. Melching, who headed the county's largest school district for the past nine years, was cited for being an extraordinary leader "who has managed an outstanding school district and whose dedication to kids is unsurpassed."

The award, named for the first recipient, Vancouver pediatrician **Gerald Bader**, is given to those who have a demonstrated commitment to the well being and success of children.

The award will be presented to Melching at 5 p.m. Friday, June 17, at the first anniversary celebration of the Patricia Nierenberg Childcare and Early Learning Center. The award is sponsored by the Southwest Washington Medical Center Foundation and Education Service District 112.

Fewer crashes on Fourth Plain Boulevard

Vancouver's Fourth Plain Boulevard Traffic Safety Project has resulted in a 24 percent decrease in automobile accidents and a 38 percent decrease in injury-related traffic accidents.

The project affects Fourth Plain Boulevard between St. Johns Road and Vancouver Mall Drive. The principal reason for the success of the project has been traffic enforcement. In the first three months of this year, police made 750 stops, cited 489 drivers and issued 235 verbal warnings. Police also made eight drunk-driving arrests and cited 15 drivers for driving with suspended licenses.

Clean Water Act bills going to 60,000

About 60,000 Clark County residents in unincorporated areas will be getting their annual Clean Water bills in the mail, reports **Earl Rowell**, county water resources manager.

The average residential fee is about \$33.

The program is in its sixth year.

People

Asia Smith, Heritage High School, is one of three finalists in the George Morlan Plumbing Co. "Singing in the Shower" contest. She performs at 7:30 p.m. this evening in the KEX Festival of Bands at PGE Stadium. The winner gets a \$3,000 college scholarship and a free consultation from the Sterling Talent Agency.

Calendar

Leadership Clark County graduation ceremonies are at 5:30 p.m. today in the Student Services Building at Washington State University Vancouver. Graduation speaker is State Sen. **Craig Pridemore** (D-49th). Admission is \$10 and may be paid at the door. 🗳️ Republican Party's precinct committee officers in Clark County Commissioner District 3 are gathering in the community room in Clark Public Utilities 1200 Fort Vancouver Way headquarters at 10 a.m. Saturday, June 11, to select a candidate to run for the county commissioner position held by Democrat **Steve Stuart**. The public is welcome, but only precinct officers will vote.

[Friday headlines from at home and around the world:](#)

[Clark College alumnus stepping out--Columbian, **Tom Vogt**](#)

[Convention & Visitors Bureau uses colorful approach to market county--Columbian, **Jeffrey Mize**](#)

[Bureau unveils new tourism campaign--Oregonian, **Allan Brettman**](#)

[Utility District gets cited for minor appliance repair service violations, pays fine and will conduct promotional program with state Department of Labor and Industries to help prevent others from inadvertently failing to get proper permits and licenses--Columbian, **Erik Robinson**](#)

[New citizen, Elena Wood, to lead pledge of allegiance at Tuesday's flag ceremony--Columbian](#)

[Developers pay \\$24 million for farmland near Lacamas Shores--Columbian, **Gretchen Fehrenbacher**](#)

[Vancouver parents looking for 'Spiderman'--KATU](#)

[Bomb kills five marines in Iraq--USA TODAY, AP](#)

[Building Iraq's army: Mission Improbable--Washington Post, **Anthony Shadid** and **Steve Fainaru**](#)

[Columbian's Best Bets in entertainment](#)

Friday on the air

Seattle Mariners at Washington (live)—4 p.m. FSN, KFXN

President's Volunteer Service Award Presentation—4 p.m. CVTV

Intergovernmental Roundtable on Cowlitz Casino—4:30 p.m. CVTV

Portland Timbers at Vancouver (live)—7 p.m. KZNY, KXMG

Animal Control Hearings (6/8)—7 p.m. CVTV

Telecommunications Commission (6/1)—9:30 p.m. CVTV

Vancouver Symphony Orchestra: Magic Voyage—11 p.m. CVTV

Town Tabloids and the weather

Rod Swanson has all the right answers. 🗳️ **Tom Musser** visualizing indoor circus. 🗳️ **Judith Davis** getting deserved two-day celebration. 🗳️ **Elwood Larsen** getting E back. 🗳️ **Jennifer Kirby** taking care of business. 🗳️ **Allan Brettman**, "OK." 🗳️ **Jeffrey Mize**, "Fantastic." **Friday**, morning showers, 64. **Saturday**, rain clouds may obscure most of the sun, 65. **Sunday**, mostly cloudy, 65.