

# Chimacum Schools' levies remain constant

By **Sandy Hershelman**

Each time I read a newspaper article on the recent property revaluations, I cringed. It wasn't the fact that the assessed value of my house took a major leap that rattled my cage. It was that each headline read something like, "Chimacum School District taxes skyrocket." I know how school levies work. I knew the local school tax portion of my taxes would barely budge. But I also knew the perception of 96% of the readers was that the school was going to be getting a ton more money. Let's set the record straight: It's not.

As far as property values are concerned, "Chimacum School District" is merely the name of the area the assessor revalued. In 1968, it became law that all properties must be revalued every four years. At the time, using the school district boundaries as the valuation areas made sense: Maintenance and operation levies would be fair to all, as all property values in the district would be adjusted at the same time. The four districts were divided up with about 25% of the parcels each. (Today, CSD has about one third of the parcels.)

With my "Official Valuation Change Notice" in hand, I met with Jefferson County Assessor Jack Westerman. My cracker box on a postage-stamp-size lot in Hadlock went up 72.9% since 2003. Turns out that was the typical residential increase for the revaluation area; 2003-2007 had the greatest increase in market values in the 32 years Westerman's been assessor.

"Chimacum Schools is not receiving one penny extra from the revaluation. The amounts of money collected have already been

approved by the voters," Westerman said. "The revaluation will result in levy rates dropping significantly."

My 2008 local school tax bill will increase less than \$4 from 2007. The one-year transportation levy drops off before the 2008 tax bill comes. (For me, \$22.14 was for three new buses.)

For senior citizens and the disabled using a school levy exemption, the valuation was frozen the year they first got their waiver.

Timberland and open space didn't change much at all this last revaluation. Including commercial, the entire tax base increased 53%.

The amount people pay in 2008 for the state school levy will

be substantially higher than 2007, but CSD won't see a dime, Westerman explained. The money is not allocated based on what a county collects; the schools get paid per pupil—and enrollment is declining.

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**Jack Westerman, JeffCo Assessor**

When Dan Evans was governor (1965-1977), the state took over collection of federal forest funds. The logic was that the state pays for education and no district should get more than another. Well, the truth is that the state pays for about 68% of CSD's annual budget—and the kids in downtown Seattle now benefit as much from federal forest funds earned in our county, as do students in Quilcene, Brinnon and the Chimacum School District.



**Sandy Hershelman**

## College Night draws crowd

This year's College Night was the largest ever! The conference and display area filled the Chimacum High School commons and library. More than 230 visitors, from all area high schools, participated in event, cohosted by CHS and the Jefferson Education Center. The 26 colleges represented included all of the Washington four-year public universities, the U.S. Air Force and Coast Guard academies, Cornell University, five community colleges, and a variety of private and specialty arts colleges.

## New exit makes dismissals safer

Have you used the new exit by the elementary school? Our goal was to improve student and community members' safety by providing this new right-turn-only exit out of the main campus parking lot. The exit was paid for from

the Capital Projects Fund with money gained from renting space to the Tri-Area Teen Center and Sunfield School. Please continue to drive very carefully in the parking lot. Watch out for students!

