

Rock Cove braces for state cuts

Rock Cove Assisted Living Center Director Robin Aman has set to work collecting signatures to combat Washington State Governor Christine Gregoire's proposed budget cuts, which will directly affect the elderly, and their well-being in the community.

Counting previous budget cuts, a total of \$10.5 billion will have been cut from the state budget for various programs if the current proposal is approved by the state Legislature.

The Governor's proposal includes suspending Medicaid pharmacy benefits, and eliminating the Basic Health Plan, which, as it states on the Governor's website, "... delivers subsidized health care to 35,000 low-income individuals". The termination would take effect Jan. 1, 2012, if approved by the Legislature.

"My bosses sent me a letter saying, 'You know what's going to happen if these budget cuts go through?'" Aman said, alluding to the multiple tenants of Rock Cove Assisted Living Center who

pay their living costs with these state-funded resources. "They're going to put back people who can't take care of themselves."

People, she said, who cannot physically, in some cases, make the bus trip to town to take care of necessities; who can't ride out to Vancouver or The Dalles to go sit at a Social Security office.

Aman assisted residents in signing the petition, which outlined the negative effects of these budget cuts toward the elderly in this community, and maintained that there must be another way. Similarly, Aman had her employees sign their own petitions, and encouraged families of residents and employees to do the same.

Further estimated effects of these budget cuts will deprive the Rock Cove Assisted Living Center of an approximated \$3,000 per month (in operating costs), leaving those remaining residents not funded by state health care with a significantly lessened living experience.

Aman explained that these cuts would reduce

staffing and activities, as well as most extras for the remaining tenants.

Skamania County Senior Services has proposed cutting its mid-day bus run from Carson to Vancouver and back, in order to meet county funding declines. While the early morning run and the late run will still be in full operation, many seniors who use this public transportation regularly will have their opportunities further restricted.

These proposed reductions in services paint a worrisome time ahead for Skamania County's seniors, as well as seniors throughout Washington state, according to the Governor herself. She states on her website, from an article titled "Gov. Gregoire calls November special session", "Once again, we are facing a budget shortfall, and once again I'm calling the Legislature back into special session to address the state's budget. My only option is across-the-board cuts, and that option is unacceptable. Solving this budget crisis will require the Legislature to act."