

CHEERS & JEERS

Mall, library, 'Dino-crats,' young scientists share this week's spotlight

Cheers: To officials at Westfield Vancouver mall and the Fort Vancouver Regional Library District for their compromise that will allow the mall library to remain open through 2009.

Mall folks agreed to postpone requirements for a \$500,000 remodeling of the library, and accepted the library's proposed reduction of operating hours. For their part, library leaders decided to make budget adjustments by reducing schedules at five other branch libraries. Libraries that are now open six days a week (Battle Ground, Goldendale, Stevenson and Three Creeks) plus the main library will see reduced schedules. In all, the 13-library system will cut spending about 8 percent.

If the economic slump continues, the mall library will remain vulnerable to possible closure. And we hate to see the library services reduced. But, for now, keeping the mall library open for another year is good news.

Jeers: To Dino Rossi and his supporters who tried to make a big deal out of all the "Dino-crats" who were supposedly swept up in the wave of support for Barack Obama but still were going to vote for Rossi over incumbent Democratic Gov. Chris Gregoire.

According to noted Seattle pollster Stuart Elway, writing for www.crosscut.com, the Dino-crats "turned out to be like Sasquatch — a powerful myth, a couple of sightings but no scientific evidence." Elway, who has done statewide surveys for 30 years, provides more than just speculation: "Obama/Rossi voters comprised 4 percent of our October survey."

Not exactly a tsunami, is it? And when you factor in Elway's addition point about the reverse voters — "McCain/Gregoire voters comprised 3 percent" of those surveyed — then it's clear that the Dino-crats were effectively offset by a less-ballyhooed group we'll call the "Chris-icans."

Jeers: To online colleges that

attempt to offer a solution to the sagging job market by granting degrees that are pretty much worthless. As John Branton reported in Thursday's *Columbian*, many online schools are advertising heavily but — to the chagrin of uninformed students who learn the whole story too late — some are not accredited under federal standards or authorized by the Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board or Oregon's Office of Degree Authorization.

Not only is this masquerade a rip-off for students, it hurts the legitimate colleges and universities that offer online courses. According to Michael Ball of the Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board, "More and more schools are moving toward online course work. Just about all the major colleges have online classes."

The key, of course, is to know which are legitimate and which are not. You can verify the accreditation and authorization of a school by visiting www.hecb.wa.gov (click on "Authorization and Evaluation") or www.osac.state.or.us/oda. If you live in one state and work in the other, you should visit both Web sites.

Cheers: Could you build a paper airplane and fly it 50 feet to a predetermined target? How about design a ball of glue, liquid starch and salt that would bounce to a certain height? Or use straws and masking tape to build a device that would keep eggs from breaking when dropped from a fixed height? We didn't think so. Neither could we. But in these and other endeavors, we're not as smart as fifth-graders, are we?

Cheers to the 180 third-through fifth-graders who participated in the Nov. 2 Science Olympiad Invitational Tournament. And cheers to Clark College for hosting an event that is so valuable to young scientists. Offering academics as an extracurricular, out-of-the-classroom adventure is a great way to inspire tomorrow's leaders.