

Bits and PC's - Bringing Vernonia into the 21st Century

By Scott Laird

Things don't always turn out the way you plan them. And always be prepared for change. Those are just a few of the lessons that the owners of Bits and PCs are learning.

Jim Gooch and Jeff Hopkins are the owners of Vernonia's leap into the 21st century, a store right on Bridge Street that features technological gadgets and services. And even though some people said that there was not a need for this kind of business in a small town like Vernonia, Gooch and Hopkins have taken the leap in a big way, and are proving to be successful.

Many people in Vernonia know Jeff Hopkins, who owns Agalis Network Services, as their local Internet Service Provider. This is Gooch's first time as a business owner.

"Jeff and I started this business because we saw a need for a retail store front, but especially a place where people could bring their computers when they needed help or repairs, and know that someone knowledgeable with the right tools would be there," said Gooch recently during a break from work. "We saw a need and decided to fill it."

Bits and PCs offer a variety of services, specializing in PC repairs and building new computers. They sell new and refurbished cell phones and accessories. Gooch is also learning to repair cell phones. Another popular service is refilling ink cartridges for computer printers. "We send them out to Rapid Refill Ink who recycle the used cores and refill them as needed," said Gooch. "Our customers can bring in their empty cartridges or phone in their order with the cartridge they need, and we can have it for them usually the next day, or in two days at the most. It's been really convenient for a lot of people."

"Our goal is to find and provide services that don't exist here in this community, services that people have to drive to find today," explained Gooch. "That's really why we got into business in the first place."

So far the results have been, if nothing else, interesting. "We have been surprised by a number of things that have happened, things that we didn't expect," said Gooch.

Providence Medical Group Welcomes New Nurse Practitioner

The Providence Medical Group clinic in Vernonia has added a new provider, Robert Giusti--Family Nurse Practitioner.

On November 2, 2007 from 4-7 pm our clinic will be having an open house to welcome Bob to our community. We will have light refreshments and give tours of our clinic for those who have never been here.

There also will be a drawing for a door prize. The public is invited to attend.

The business started in the old Buckleberry Cottage building in Madison Avenue about fifteen months ago, and moved out to Bridge Street soon after. "We saw a 50% increase in sales once we moved out to the main street front," noted Gooch, "which was not a real surprise. What was surprising was how many people didn't know we were back there at all."

"We've been somewhat surprised by peoples' willingness to spend money on PC repairs. We do a lot of work repairing people's home computers. Our expectation was that more people would just buy new ones," said Gooch. "Prepaid phones have been very popular, and that was a surprise. And the need for cell phone repairs was not expected."

What does the future hold for Bits and PC's? "Well, without giving too much away, I would say we are investigating new services and ways of transferring older forms of media to newer forms," hinted Gooch.

"We hope to grow the business and be able to hire employees for jobs with higher skill sets. That way, we're giving back to the community."

"And we are trying to expand the repair and refurbishing part of the business," concluded Gooch. "People continue to bring us equipment they would like repaired. What

we need is used equipment that people no longer want, so we have access to parts. Lots of people have equipment sitting in drawers that are broken or that they don't use because they upgraded. We can use those things for parts, and help somebody else get back up and running."



Stay tuned. With the rapid changes taking place in technology, you (and Bits and PCs) never know what you'll see next.

Bits and PC's is located at 866 Bridge Street. They are open from 10am-6pm Monday through Friday, 10am-5pm on Saturday. They can be reached at 503-429-TECH.

Police Dog Training in Vernonia

Vernonia Police Sargent Mike Kay, through his training as a Master Handler, is helping expand the skill level of Police Dog handlers and their canine officers here in Vernonia. Every other Friday afternoon, officers from all over the Portland metro area gather in Vernonia to work on their handling skills through a program sponsored by the American Council on Criminal Justice Training.

Recently Officer Ken McCoy from the Clatsop County Sheriff's Department worked with his dog Chieba, and Officer Ray Ayers from the Warrenton Police Department got in some training with Ruff.

