



## Winter Wonderland



Winter fun at Stub Stewart state park. Story on page 11.

## Thank You for Your Service, Jim Walters



Over fifty people gathered at the Vernonia Fire Hall December 29 to honor and celebrate a man who has given twenty-five years of service to Vernonia. Jim Walters, Vernonia Police Officer, retired from duty on December 31, 2007.

When Walters arrived, he was met with a round of applause. The first person to greet him was his granddaughter who unabashedly ran to him and jumped up into his arms. She got a great big hug from her Grandpa, much to everyone's delight.

There was an abundance of stories, hugs and tears as residents celebrated Walters' years of service. The Fire Hall never smelt as sweet with generous homemade refreshments being shared by all.

During the celebration, Murray Carter of Carter Cutlery presented Jim with a custom made hand-forged knife in appreciation of his selfless service to the Vernonia Community. "I want to publicly recognize Jim for his friendly service and for making new arrivals, such as myself, feel so welcome here," said Carter.

Jim Walters was a popular police officer with the citizens of Vernonia, and the people will miss seeing him in uniform.

## Senator Ron Wyden Visits Vernonia

By Scott Laird

On Friday January 4, 2008, US Senator Ron Wyden held a Town Hall meeting at the Vernonia Scout Cabin. Senator Wyden, who had visited Vernonia immediately after the flood in December to assess damages, fielded questions from the audience and expressed his admiration for the spirit shown by the community.

"This is a gutsy community," said Wyden. "On my last visit here, just days after the flood, the lights flickered – and after all you've been through, you still laughed."

During an hour long question and answer session, Wyden discussed flood insurance issues, flood control, FEMA's work in the community, and health care.

On private flood insurance, Wyden asked for a show of hands from people who are having trouble with their insurance adjusters, and promised to look into the issue of insurance companies "low balling" or undervaluing customer claims. "You don't hear about that in their advertising," said Wyden. After fielding complaints about the national flood insurance program, Wyden stated, "This is a Federal Program, we should fix the confusion," and promised to follow up.

Two different residents expressed dissatisfaction with their interaction with FEMA and the resulting decisions about their claims. Both times Wyden had his staff gather the residents, FEMA representatives, and local relief assistance volunteers in a back room to try to sort out the issues and find solutions. "Let's start working on this right now," was Wyden's idea.

Senator Wyden also discussed flood control alternatives, including "Water Banking", and other ways to divert high water when necessary and store it for future use.

Wyden also took a moment to talk about the Healthy Americans Act that he has sponsored in the US Senate as a way to hold down health care costs through patient-driven coverage. Wyden discussed how he has worked to promote this Act through bipartisanship, personally visiting sixty Senators in an attempt to gain their support.

Wyden declined to publicly comment on the Presidential primary races, joking that he "...is the only person in the US Senate not running for President, because someone needs to stay in Washington and do the work."

Wyden concluded his talk by stating, "I'm going to pull out all the stops for this community. There is a lot to do, and the work is not done until it's done."



"I'm going to pull out all the stops for this community."

-- Senator Ron Wyden

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## Aldie Howard Appointed as Interim City Administrator

By Scott Laird

Aldie Howard has been appointed by Mayor Sally Harrison as Interim City Administrator to guide the city of Vernonia through its initial phase of flood recovery. Howard's appointment was made in the immediate aftermath of the December 3 flood in the absence of previous Administrator Dick Kline; the decision was formalized at a special City Council Meeting on December 18. Kline decided to resign his position, but has reached an agreement with the city to continue as the Financial Director on a contractual basis.

Howard became immediately and dramatically involved in the flood upon his initial appointment on December 6, and continues to head the city's efforts. "I want to thank all those who have so generously and willingly assisted in this recovery effort. Without them we would still be under water!" said Howard.

"Aldie Howard really stepped up to the plate for us," said Mayor Harrison. "He was the logical choice to fill this role. He knows all the players here, and knows our situation. He's a 'can do' kind of guy who takes a problem and finds a solution. Bringing in someone new would have been very difficult. He has done a wonderful job. He has shown he is dedicated to this city and to our recovery."

