

Lions Club Active in Flood Recovery

By Scott Laird

The local Vernonia Lions Club has been very active in their community effort in flood recovery. The club has worked hard to initially secure much needed resources and continues to find holes in relief efforts and plug them with donations.

"So far we have brought in nine tractor trailer loads of supplies," said club member George Tice. "We have helped supply food, diapers, cleaning supplies, and bleach. We delivered the first space heater to a local resident. We brought in a bunch of toys for the Toy and Joy project at Christmas. We continue to check the needs list that the County Flood Relief Team generates, and then we go look for ways to meet those needs."

"All of the area Lions have been contacting me asking, 'What can we do?'," said current Vernonia Lions Club president Pat Styles.

One service that the club is providing is free accounting and legal consultation for area residents with retired professionals who are Lions Club members. The consultants will be available at the Buckhorn Restaurant, Tuesdays-Thursdays from 1:30 pm until 5:00 or 6:00 pm for as long as they are needed. "They will be here to answer questions and give advice and tell people whether they need to hire a professional," said Styles. "We also hope to have some insurance specialists available as well."

"During the Lions' efforts in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, the club found this was a very important service that we could provide," said Tice. Residents who would like to schedule a consultation should contact George Tice at the Buckhorn at 503-429-3751.

The Lions are working in a number of areas to provide relief for the community. They are particularly interested in assisting with projects that involve youth and would like to hear from anyone with suitable project ideas. They are currently working to help replace sports equipment that was lost and have also made a donation to the Echoing Evergreen Day Camp.

They are also available to help replace lost or damaged hearing aids or eye glasses. They have collected a large amount of school supplies for students, and they have begun to warehouse a supply of furniture, both new and used, and bedding and linens for when people are ready to re-occupy their homes. "Each area club has taken a piece and made it their project to secure those resources," said Tice.

Tice also talked about the club's ability to leverage relief supplies. "We have made purchases from Rite Aid, Albertson's, Safeway, and Costco that have been matched by the supplier," said Tice. "Rodda Paints gave us 600 gallons of interior paint and is sending out twenty professional painters to help people in their homes. Curl's Trucking donated five pallets of packing boxes and got us a refrigerated truck for food storage."

Once again the Lions have stepped up and provided help in their community in many unexpected and creative ways.

CERT Training Available for Residents

By Scott Laird

The Vernonia Police Department is once again organizing a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training for anyone interested in participating. The training is being held on Thursday evenings at the Scout Cabin at Hawkins Park in Vernonia and will last eleven weeks. The class is free of charge and is made available through a Homeland Security grant that was secured by Vernonia Police Chief Mathew Workman. The training began on January 17 with sixteen new members. Because of the great response, another class is being planned. The training is designed to prepare community members to assist during disaster events by helping in their workplace and neighborhoods and then with emergency response agencies as needed. The training is also designed to encourage the community to take a more active role in emergency preparedness projects.

Vernonia Police Sergeant Mike Kay, who will be the lead instructor for the program. "We wanted to allow as many people to participate," said Kay. "And with the flood recovery still in progress, we knew people had lots of priorities. But we also wanted to increase our membership and capabilities for responding to an emergency like this last flood. And we wanted to get that started as soon as possible."

The grant for the class allowed for the purchase of seventy-five equipment kits that will be given to each participant. They include a backpack to store gear, a helmet, a radio, work gloves, light sticks and other preparedness items. Participants will be trained in fire safety, light search and response, and disaster medical operations. "We will be doing some additional training along with our local Fire, Police, and EMS personnel that includes grid Search and Response and some Swift Water Rescue training," said Kay. Kay is also working with four local dog owners to train and include them as a Search and Rescue resource.

Kay has also been working with the Vernonia School District to organize and train a Student Emergency Response Teams (SERT). "We have students who have expressed interest," said Kay. "We just have to work out the details with the district. The students would need to be at least fifteen years old, and their priority would be the safety of the school building and its occupants first in the case of a flood, earthquake or other disaster. They would then be able to help in the community as needed. We already have some staff members who are interested in participating as well." Kay said the SERT class would receive the same training as the CERT classes. He also noted that he was only aware of one other community (Grants Pass) with an organized SERT program anywhere else in the country.

"Our intention is to have both programs completed by June and then start integrating them with our current team and start holding regular drills and exercises," said Kay. "My hope is that we are even better prepared if and when we have another disaster event like we experienced this December."

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