

Meet Donna Webb - Vernonia Chamber of Commerce President

By Scott Laird

Anyone who has worked with Donna Webb knows she's a "Can Do" kind of person. Webb is one of those people that every community needs – a vital member of service groups, a person who always steps up to do what is needed, the person to call when a project is faltering or needs direction.

So when Webb began attending Vernonia Chamber of Commerce meetings a number of years ago as the liaison for Vernonia Pride, a downtown beautification group, she noticed that maybe the Chamber could use her help. "I saw that the Chamber wasn't making any revenue; in fact, they were spending all their savings. I thought I had something to offer."

Webb assumed the presidency of the Vernonia Chamber in 2005 and is a volunteer. "I am trying to at least keep us self sufficient," said Webb. She brought organizational skills and what she called an ability to look at the big picture. "I am very interested in the tourism aspect of economic development. We have so many things to offer here in Vernonia."

The Chamber meets on the second Wednesday of each month, one month for lunch, the next for dinner. Dues are thirty-five dollars a year which covers the basic costs of running the office- mailings, utilities, copy paper. Webb says she spends an average of five hours per week on Chamber business although, again, anyone who has worked with Webb knows this is probably underestimated.

As Chamber President, Webb helped organize the Cycle Oregon visit in 2005. Cycle Oregon organizers were so impressed with the job Vernonians did as hosts that they chose to feature the community on their 2007 weekend ride. Webb has also organized a community awards dinner where businesses and community groups can all meet to network and celebrate together. She has spent time traveling and attending conferences to help market Vernonia. She has organized classes for business owners to help with computer skills like



Excel and QuickBooks as well as customer service classes. And she continues to look for ways to attract visitors and economic development that will help Vernonia businesses thrive.

"My biggest challenge is figuring out how to help businesses like 'the carpenter,' businesses that aren't in the downtown corridor," says Webb. "That's what I'm trying to focus on now."

Webb said she finds herself more involved in her community since she moved to small town Vernonia. "People in a big town are not as engaged. People here take ownership of their town."

Webb wanted to remind everyone in the aftermath of the Flood of 2007 that local businesses need support now more than ever. "Many of our local businesses were not flooded but are still feeling the impact of the disaster. Christmas was a total loss, and people have other priorities for their money right now. When you can, try to shop locally."

Webb also mentioned that she could use any volunteers who would like to help. "I can always use help with data entry, updating the website, help with advertising. Right now I'm only one person trying to do a big job."

Portland Timbers Mascot "Timber Jim" Retires

By Allison Andrew

On April 17, 2008, Timber Jim will fire up his chainsaw at Portland's PGE Park for the final time.

Jim Serrill, Timber Jim to Portland soccer fans since the 1970's, is bowing out of his role as the Timbers most beloved icon at the age of fifty-three, thirty years after he first entertained crowds at what was then Civic Stadium.

Serrill was just a fan back in 1978 when the original incarnation of the Timbers soccer club was playing in the North American Soccer League. Serrill, who had worked as a logger and was handy with a chainsaw, offered to slice off a piece of log after each Timbers goal to add to the atmosphere at Civic Stadium. And the rest, as they say, is history. The original Timbers folded in 1982, and though there was a brief reincarnation of the Timbers in the late 80's, it wasn't until the most recent version of the Timbers was reborn in 2001 and Timber Jim returned to the renamed PGE Park. With many of the fans who had cheered for him back in the 70's in the crowd of 12,000, Serrill rode into the stadium on a Harley Davidson motor-

cycle. He picked up his chainsaw and re-christened the newly renovated stadium with a log slice, and it was like the nineteen years since his last appearance had passed in the blink of an eye.

A new generation of Timbers supporters immediately embraced Timber Jim and soccer in Portland. Timber Jim leads chants and cheers for the crowd and bangs his bass drum. He uses his chainsaw to not only celebrate each goal with another slice off the log, but he uses its roar to excite the crowd and intimidate an opposing goalkeeper. Serrill could frequently be seen climbing the pole at the south end of PGE Park or rappelling from the press box, often with a fired-up chainsaw in hand.

In 2003 Timber Jim partially retired to pursue a new career as a Lineman. But then in August 2004, his seventeen year old daughter Hannah, who had just recently given Jim and his wife Diane a new granddaughter Keiana, was killed in an auto accident on Oregon Highway 18. Serrill was actually at a Timbers game when he was told of the ac-

cident. But Jim was back at PGE Park for the next Timbers game because the Timbers and their fans are family to Serrill. The pre-game ceremony at the next match honoring Jim and his family is still remembered as one of the most emotional moments in Timbers history.

For the next three seasons, Timber Jim was once again a constant presence at PGE Park for Timbers matches mostly because, by his own admission, he needed the Timbers and their fans to get him through those years as much as the Timbers needed him. But at the age of 53, Serrill, who has diabetes, has decided to graciously bow out. He will be honored at the Timbers first match of the 2008 season, on Thursday, April 17, at PGE Park as he saws off his final slice of the log and holds it high for the adoring crowd.

Allison Andrews runs a website called The Timber Mill at www.timbers.soccercityusa.com which is devoted to the Portland Timbers.

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