

Readers lend their voices...

Beervana- You Hit that Nerve, Bud!

Again, let me compliment you and everyone involved on the great job producing Vernonia's Voice. It is truly a refreshing and classy local paper benefiting our tight-knit community which I express to people every time I pick up a copy.

Your Beervana article, "In Search of the Perfect Porter (or Stout)," roused a response for my appreciation of quality porters and stouts. Great article, Scott! Are you ready for the responses to start rolling in? Were it not for the persuasion twenty years ago from my late and much respected father-in-law to try a Michelob dark, I would have probably been satisfied with the more common mass-produced beers and not crossed over to the dark side. Michelob dark doesn't qualify to be anywhere near the same class as those you mentioned, but it was my first taste of a dark that encouraged others. I'm not a beer connoisseur by any means, but when it comes to a quality porter or stout, I will have to admit that I am a beer snob.

Of the noteworthy brewers you pointed out, there are a few that I've not had the pleasure of drinking and will definitely seek out. If there are any others you hear of, please pass them on. I'm always game for trying a good new dark brew. Another of our local brewers' stouts that was overlooked is the hailed McMenamins' Terminator Stout – on nitro or not. Some of their earlier year batches had that beautiful dark and light marbled cascading/churning effect in the pint glass. Their Black Rabbit Porter has been another good beverage in the porter category. Rogue Brewery puts out a few tasty ones, but I don't recall them to quite measure up to those of McMenamins. Unfortunately, the McMenamins brews are not available in stores. A relatively close place to try out their varieties is at the Grand Lodge in Forest Grove, and it's still on Highway 47, so it can't be all that bad.

The thick and flavorful darks that brought us the word Beervana are what I'd constitute as almost a dessert beer. There is that ONE that I've been fortunate enough to find and put in that "Beervana" category. It is an import from Australia called Sheaf Stout. I've only seen it sold in one size (1 pint 11 oz.), which makes for a perfect two-pint unwind from a long day. It has the combination of chocolate and coffee flavor, allows no light to shine through, has a nice light-brown head, and goes down ever so smoooooth! If you ever get the chance to try one, I know you'll not be disappointed.

Again, great paper and count me in on any taste tests!

-- Alan Carr, Vernonia

The following are letters we received from students at Cedar Tree Christian Classical School in Vancouver, Washington:

To the editor:

On December 3rd when the flood hit Vernonia, I wanted to reach out and help. I got to! My friends, some adults, and I from Cedar Tree Christian Classical School (in Vancouver) went to help a foster home that was going to have adults with special needs. We were able to help there the first week of January. Why did I do it? Because the man we met who maintained the home (Gene) probably couldn't have done it alone. With our help, Gene was amazed how much we got done encouragingly, caringly, and quickly as a team. Understandably, what I learned from my experience was that we should build folks up by helping them through what's extremely hard for them at that moment. I was softly sobered by the mess, but what a great opportunity it was to go out and serve in Vernonia! Another thing which I learned was that a little love can go a long way. From my experience I want to thank Gene for letting us come into his foster home and help hack out rotten sheetrock. Now I will be more grateful for everything I have. It was a pleasure to work in your town.

-- Sincerely, Ana Christina Bruechert, 6th grader

To the editor:

I was able to come and help Kathleen and John (who live on the main highway across from Vernonia schools) on December 28th. When we got there, my friends and I thought to ourselves, "It doesn't look that bad." It was. I went because I knew that if I lost everything that mattered, everything I cared about, everything I treasured, I would appreciate it if someone helped.

What I learned, I will never forget, nor the people whom I met. I learned that when you really pour your heart into improving the life of someone else, someone you've never met, joy fills your own life. I also learned to be careful handling something long and heavy when there's class around. This was an experience I will never forget!

-- Sincerely, Jake Ike, 6th grader
Cedar Tree Christian Classical School, Vancouver

To the editor:

I went to Vernonia with a couple of my teachers and two girls from my class at Cedar Tree Christian Classical School. Although the drive was long, it was extremely worth it. Why did I go? Well, I went because I felt sorry for the people in Vernonia. My having a great Christmas, while others were fixing their homes, made me feel badly.

Dallas Brass – "Phenomenal!"

I have kissed Bruce Springsteen on stage and been backstage at the Rolling Stones concert, and I have got to tell you, Dallas Brass is one of the best concerts I have ever attended. These guys were so talented, funny, and they played songs to die for, "What a Wonderful World, Somewhere Over the Rainbow, Pink Panther, and everything in between." They did a journey of American music from the days of George Washington and included history lessons as well. The hall was fabulous and A LOT more comfortable than the bleachers at WGS. The kids played a few songs with the band, and they did great, too! Our son Chris thoroughly enjoyed the day program with the musicians -- giving the kids advice on breathing techniques, tempo, and other tricks of the trade. They were just phenomenal!

At the door, a lady said she saw it in the paper and had to come for Vernonia.

We are so very lucky to have Mr. Izzett as our Band Director. He wants to do things for the kids that we would never dream about -- he is already planning a concert for next year to have in Vernonia.

-- Rose Curtis, Vernonia



When I went to Vernonia, it truly made me feel how fortunate I am. Seeing all the debris and personal items piled up outside the homes and businesses was devastating to see. It all happened because of one flood. It was laborious even to find a place to eat our sack lunches, for many of the cafes and restaurants were closed. Actually, it was pretty exciting ripping out nails and drywall. Even the sweeping was fun! Although it probably wasn't fun for the people whose homes were ruined. Going to Vernonia really did have positive impact on me. I started to think about the lives of the people in Vernonia. Why do we need to help people in need? Don't just help to make others think you're good, but because it lifts others up. I just wanted to let everyone know that my class is praying for the citizens of Vernonia and the volunteers. And, hopefully, everyone will have a good year and will learn something from this experience.

-- Sincerely, Whitné Danielle Moussan

To the editor:

When I first heard of this disaster, I wanted to help. Our sixth grade class at Cedar Tree Classical Christian School went to Vernonia twice, although I was only able to go once. On Jan. 3rd my dad, brother, fellow classmates, teachers, and I drove to Vernonia. We walked to an adult foster home. This foster home had been opened only a few days before the flood. They had but one resident. Gene, who was taking care of the place, was amazed to see us. We pulled nails, ripped out wet dry-wall, and swept the floors.

As we were walking around town, we spotted a lawn chair 15ft. up in a tree! I marveled at the intensity of the flood. While Vernonia was flooding, and others were suffering, I was home having a good time. I would love to help again. "What can I do to help?" That is the question that should be asked by many others. It was fun and it felt good to help others and see their faces -- tears of joy -- for the help that we brought.

-- Sincerely, Cassandra Terese Gossman

Dear Editor:

On December 28, 2007 some friends and I got into a car and took a 75 minute drive to Vernonia to help some of the flood victims. Finally, we arrived at John and Kathleen's house. John and Kathleen live across from the Vernonia schools. When I looked at their house, I could tell that we had some work to do. The front yard was flooded, and when I went inside, almost all of the drywall had been stripped off the wall, exposing the insulation. For the next four hours I picked up old drywall, took out about 60 screws (from the studs), ate lunch, and pulled out insulation. As I was doing these things, I was thinking about the great privilege I had to help people who were in need. I think this trip helped me with my flexibility because I had to be very flexible with what jobs I did. This trip to Vernonia was an over-all great experience and I know I will remember it for years to come.

-- Sincerely, Joshua Carlson

To the Editor:

These letters are from the 6th graders of my class at the private school where I teach in Vancouver. These are thoughtful reflections of kids moved with compassion at the plight of your town. Below are my reflections.

Gratefulness: In facilitating teams from my church in NE Portland as well as my school to Vernonia, I saw: an elderly lady slowing down in a pick-up to wave at us as we loaded up dry-wall into a dumpster. I heard the profuse thanks from an elder woman in the volunteer office who recounted to me how her self-sufficient husband had just that week been able to get back on his feet after injuring his leg trying to remove equipment from their barn during the flood. "Your coming to help means far greater than you can know." I listened to Bobbi, a wife out of town who fell between the cracks of funding and was so grateful for our kids

coming out to spread gravel. I received beautiful cobalt blue bottles -- slightly covered in mud -- from Kathleen (on Bridge Street) who had lost everything and heard that my kitchen was the same colors as hers had been.

Resiliency: My students and I were hugely impacted by the resiliency of the people of Vernonia. As I walked around, I snapped photos on my cell phone and in my mind of the following: a church reader board (Vernonia Christian Church) that was half-filled with mold and whose black felt board inside buckled from water damage. The message inside from early December? "It's a Wonderful Life." As I stopped by John and Kathleen's to check up on them on my second visit, I found out they were gone (they were still staying at her mother's). I peeked inside their living room window to note any progress. I hadn't noticed before a familiar poster up on the wall, undamaged and inches above piles of ruined furniture: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." Wow! Was that up there before the flooding, or did they just put it up to draw strength from following this devastation?

Ordinary people: One woman was visiting my church (New Song Community Church on NE MLK Blvd) for the 2nd or 3rd time. An employee at a uniform company in SE Portland, Vickie Christianson, had no wheels but a HUGE desire to get out to Vernonia and help. The morning she visited our church -- only at that service -- we announced that we were leaving right afterwards in carloads for Vernonia. She jumped at the chance! She only had her church clothes on, but she was able to borrow boots and wear one of the coats we were bringing for the men there. Sitting next to me on the drive out, she rejoiced over and over at that providential timing that enabled her to come help. A few weeks later as I checked in to the volunteer office with the dozen or so volunteers from my school, I was amazed at the hugeness of this clean-up organization. One man was taking phone calls, expediting equipment for volunteers, having people sign in, giving a nurse from Multnomah County instructions of where to go, and encouraging an older woman. I asked him what he did for work prior to the flood. "Oh, this and that!" Are you kidding?? Give this guy a high-level job in administration! Then I got to the foster home where a ~65 year old Gene, was waiting for us. He was the maintenance man for this two building business which got its license two days before the flood and its first client one day before the flooding. He shook my hand and had tears in his eyes more than once watching (and helping) our crew work. I asked him what line of work he'd been in earlier in his life, and he said, "Oh, odds and ends." This man was a rock! He said when the flood hit this newly-fixed-up place, he decided he had two choices: he could grow angry and bitter or realize Someone up there had a different plan. He decided on the latter, he told me, and said, "It's been a joy ever since!" Our hardest worker was a dad who teaches two hours of PE a week at the school. I was astonished at his endurance, refusing to take a lunch break. As I carried a load alongside this man to the home-made dumpster Gene had made to hold the drywall, I was shocked to see Mr. Sheets just take the whole wheelbarrow and fling it upside down over the five foot side-board. When I asked Mr. Sheets what he does when he's not teaching P.E., he shyly said, "Well, that's a long story. I have helped my dad with contracting work..." Then there was 5th grade Max, a skinny, enthusiastic kid working alongside his dad. As he pulled out screws from the studs and helped kick in old drywall, he kept yelling, "This is awesome! I want to do this some more. Mrs. R., can we come back here for a field trip??"

Thank you, Vernonia, for allowing our lives to be broadened and letting strangers come into your homes and personal space, only to leave as friends!

-- Kris Richards, 6th grade teacher
Cedar Tree Christian Classical School, Vancouver, Washington

HOW TO SEND LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Vernonia's Voice welcomes and requests your thoughts, opinions, and ideas. Please include your name, address, and phone number; limit your letter to 300

words or less. Vernonia's Voice reserves the right to edit, omit, respond, or ask for a response to letters submitted. We will print letters, space permitting. Deadline is the 15th of the month. **Email to: news@vernoniasvoice.com or mail to: Letters, PO Box 55, Vernonia 97064.**