

# Gretchen's Saddlery-Old Fashioned Leather Work

By Scott Laird



Gretchen Johnston and daughter Pearl.

Gretchen Johnston does her work the old fashioned way. Gretchen does custom repair and leather work including making handmade saddles at her shop in downtown Vernonia. She also fashions other horse tack like bridles, harnesses and bits. She makes other custom leather products - anything from watch bands, cell phone cases and truck tie downs to tool bags, suspenders, and knee pads for carpenters.

Johnston has been working with leather since she was a teenager, starting in a shoe repair shop in 1997 and learning as she went along. She practiced making horse tack, selling what she made as she learned she liked it and was good at it. She had always been around horses growing up and had repaired things

that broke, and so it became a natural progression, from fixing things at home to making it her trade.

In 1998, Johnston took a one week saddle making workshop from

Dusty Johnson in Loveland, Colorado, and learned a new skill. She has since created two custom saddles and hopes to build more.

Johnston has set up shop in numerous locations over the years: working from her parents' basement, in a tack shop in Newberg and in Cornelius before finally settling in her current location in Vernonia on Bridge Street. She has traded horse training in exchange for work space, bought tools and equipment used from tradesmen getting out of the business, and done lots of horse



blanket repair to get through the tough times.

Johnston has an interesting side hobby; she drives a mule team with Larry White. They work with either a team (two mules) or a Four up Hitch (four mules) driving a wagon or sometimes White's antique stagecoach.

A new mother, Gretchen's shop and home were both flooded in December. It's been a tough first six months this year, but she is determined to continue to provide custom leather work for those that need it.

Gretchen's Saddlery is located at 715 Bridge Street. You can reach Gretchen at 503-429-1012.



## In Vernonia – Did You Know...

- that Jazzercise measures up under the ACSM (American College of Sports Medicine) guidelines for achieving overall fitness. Most fitness professionals agree that cardiovascular endurance, muscle strength and endurance, flexibility and body composition are the essential components to health-related fitness. Jazzercise offers it ALL in just one hour. All you have to do is show up at least three times per week and join in the fun! And with over 25 classes taught per week right here in Vernonia, it's convenient, too. To find out more about Jazzercise, contact Penny Costley at (503)429-0196 or log onto jazzercise.com or call 1(800)FIT-IS-IT.
- Vernonia's Voice offers mailed subscriptions for your graduate leaving for college, retired parents, family members who live elsewhere, or friends or neighbors who have moved away. There is a coupon in the beginning of each issue. One year subscriptions are just \$25.
- Creatures and Flowers has floral arrangements for all occasions and will deliver in Vernonia for free. They also carry "Made in Vernonia" crafts and gifts so you can support local artists.

Just a reminder of services offered in Vernonia brought to you by the Vernonia Area Chamber of Commerce 503-429-6081.

SATURDAY  
JULY 12TH



## TEXAS HOLD 'EM TOURNAMENT

AT THE BUCKHORN RESTAURANT

Registration at 5:30pm, Tournament play starts at 6pm

50% of fees go to Local Charities.

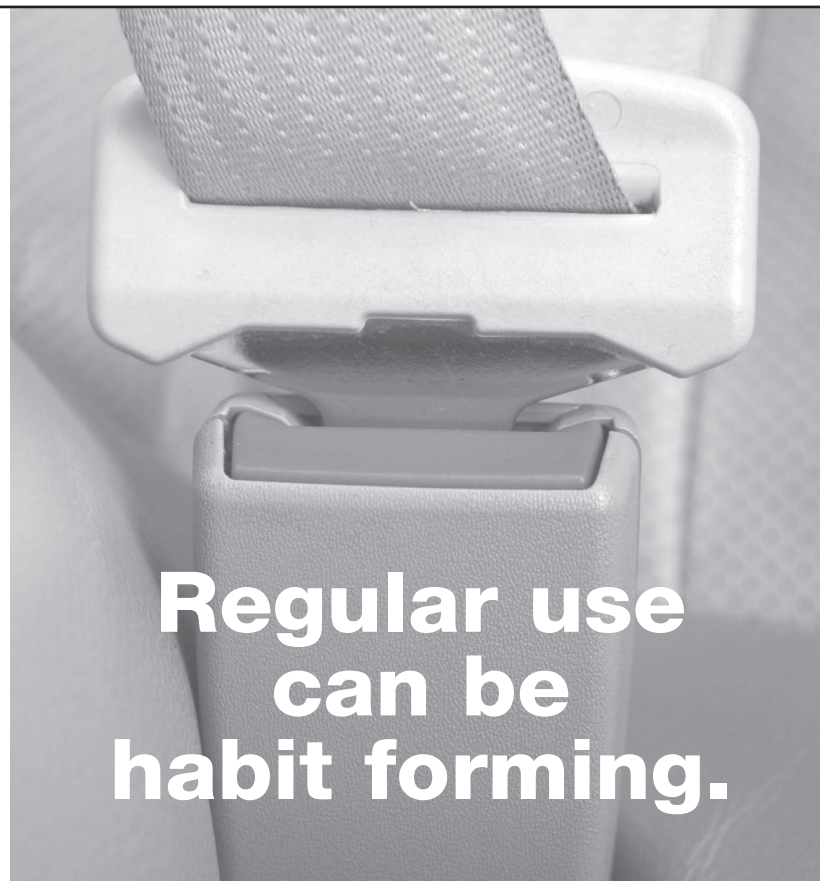
\$20 Buy-In. Cash Card Prize Payouts!

To register or for more information contact:  
George Tice 429-3751 or Aaron Miller 429-6049.

PRESENTED BY  
THE VERNONIA LIONS CLUB

## CPAC to Discuss Airport Development

The Vernonia CPAC committee will meet on July 8, 2008, at 7:00PM in the Vernonia City Hall to discuss potential development at the Vernonia Airport including an industrial complex on private adjacent land. This meeting is open to the public. Anyone interested is encouraged to attend.



Here's one habit that's good for all of us: wearing a safety belt every time we're in the car. Crash tests show that even at a lower speed, like when you're driving through a neighborhood, safety belts can save lives. Columbia 9-1-1 asks you to take safety into your own hands and buckle up every time you get into the car. We're always here to help in an emergency. But we'd rather help you stay safe.



**Columbia 9-1-1:**  
**Your safety on the line.**

P.O. Box 998 St. Helens, Oregon 97051  
Administrative Office: (503) 397-7255  
Non-emergency Dispatch: (503) 397-1521 1-800-696-7795  
www.columbia911.com