

## Readers lend their voices...

To The Editor:

What I wanted to say was that it has only been 3 years not 5 since we had cheerleading in the high school. It was here in the 2004-2005 winter term of the school year. I brought it back as much as I could and tried to get a lot of people to join in, with contributions and donations as well. I was a junior that year and also I was co-captain of the squad. So that is all I wanted to mention- that it has been only 3 years, not 5, and if you don't believe me then I have the yearbook to prove it!

Janelle Bashaw  
Vernonia

To the Editor:

Now that I am somewhat settled back in my home and awaiting elevation of same, it is time for me to acknowledge all those generous people and organizations that have helped me throughout the last 8 months to recover from the flood damage. Having lived away from Vernonia for so many years, it is heart warming to be the recipient of such thoughtful, welcomed help.

A big thank you to:

Groups - CCFR, Americorp, Vernonia Community Church Youth Group, Dept. of Veterans' Affairs, Vernonia City Hall & Police, and Silverton Zenith Women's Club

My friends & family - Jack Macy (my son who wanted to drive through rain swollen rivers and creeks to rescue me on Monday of the flood, but couldn't get through), George & Donna Tice (who moved & stored half of my belongings in their banquet room plus helping in other ways), Janice Bernardi, Nancy & Don Dailey, Sunny Huntzman, Pat McEntire Peterson, Sally & Leroy Weathers, Sally Harrison, Sharron Rockwood, Terry Rockwood, Janet Gagnon (my neighbor who kept an eye on my house), Kim & Ray Pultz, Kate Conley family (who all stopped on the 12/5/07 to help for a little while before they left Vernonia to fly to Alaska), Robb Wilson, Genny & Dale Fisher (who lifted my spirits), Jesse Jones (my young mentor), Julie Prohaska (my wonderful case worker at CCFR), and all my wonderful cousins, who are too numerous to list, who came at a moments notice to help pack and move me twice.

Sadie (my faithful companion) and I lived in Hillsboro during the 6 months it took to rebuild our house. As with all of us who were deeply affected by this flood, she and I suffered. We both missed the closeness of our community and all those familiar faces we love meeting every day. If I have forgotten to mention anyone, I apologize. I thank you all from the bottom of my heart for helping me put my life back together.

Sincerely,  
Janelle Thomas Cedergreen  
Vernonia

Letter to the editor:

I would like to clear up some confusion being generated about our blackbird populations.

It was stated that we have only 30 or so blackbirds around the Vernonia Lake due to the pumping of water and the fishing derby and cattail removal for fishing areas. We walked halfway around the Lake following the derby and the pumping of water and counted 104 blackbirds without really searching very hard. The nesting cycle is very brief for these birds as the attached article from the Audubon Society states.

Reproduction: In late winter, male Tricolored Black-

birds begin to sing, then move into nesting areas in early spring. Flocks of males sing in a loud chorus and fly together in order to establish a colony, which sometimes displaces other blackbird species, like the Red-winged. With song and ritualized displays, individual males usually establish territories before the females arrive. A typical display features lowered and spread wings and tail, an arched neck, and ruffled neck feathers. One to four females, most often one, make a small territory within the male's larger territory. A male that attracts more than one nesting female at the same time is considered polygynous. Courtship displays and ritualized nest selection bond a pair.

Attached to standing vegetation or thin tree branches, the female weaves a cup nest of stems and leaves. For about 12 days, she incubates 3-4 pale blue or green eggs, marked with browns, purples, or black. The male evacuates the colony, only to return shortly after the chicks emerge practically naked and blind. In about a week, fledglings leave the nest to form creches. Adults encourage flight and eventually lead the young flock to form a group in an adjacent marsh. Females may produce a second brood, but often change locations to do so.

I personally resent the ranting and exaggerations used to stir up many issues in our town by this one individual when we all need to pull together and help each other move on past our flood tragedy.

I will say the latest issue of the Independent was positive and helpful and hope we can put bickering behind us and keep on working together.

I really appreciate the Voice and their editorial contents and hope we can have two papers working to strengthen our community.

Jack Lindsley  
Vernonia

For the last few years, country music station KUPL has hosted a fishing derby at Vernonia Lake; in 2007 and 2008 the city prepared for this by cutting a small portion of the cattails surrounding the lake. The Independent criticized the city for this both times it occurred, claiming that it was an unlawful act and that these actions decimated the red-winged blackbird populations. As a wildlife professional who specializes in wetland birds, these accusations disturb me. While perhaps legally correct about the protection of the birds under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Independent shows a basic lack of understanding as to how populations and ecosystems function and subsequently respond to disturbances of various magnitudes. I have personally been down to the lake and must admit that I see no issue with the action that has been taken there. I don't believe that the cattails around the lake ever could have supported hundreds of breeding blackbirds, nor that cutting less than 10% (my estimation) of the approximately 2 km<sup>2</sup> of cattails ringing the lake could have been a legitimate factor in their breeding/survival rates. Having worked in wetland marshes for the last several years, graduated from Oregon State University with a degree in Fisheries and Wildlife, and been watching birds as a hobby for some time, my opinion is that the actions of the city were not detrimental to the birds. These actions even may have helped the overall system by providing a range of habitats for other animals. For example, during the summer you can see ducks foraging in the shallows absent of cattails, presumably looking for shallow water invertebrates. I do not believe that the Independent had any evidence for their accusations against the city, and were reporting based on what is scientifically referred to as "observer bias."

Colin Tierney  
Vernonia

## An Opinion: Find a Way to Fund Teen Court

By Scott Laird

At the recent Vernonia City Council meeting on July 7, a presentation was made by Jean Lewis from Youth Services Initiatives, asking for the city to support her bid to begin a Teen Court in Columbia County. Teen Courts are used as an alternative to the regular juvenile justice system. Generally they are reserved for younger, first time, non-violent offenders. The basic concept is to offer teen court as a voluntary option. In teen courts youths charged with an offense forgo the procedures of juvenile courts and after pleading guilty, participate in a forum that is made up of a jury of their peers who play a variety of roles in the court. Often their sentence includes community service. Teen courts rely on the premise that if peer pressure can cause youth to get into trouble, positive peer pressure might help them stay away from it in the future.

According to studies done by Jeffrey Butts and Janeen Buck, teen courts have proven effective in reducing recidivism in seventy-five percent of the systems analyzed. Madelynn M. Herman, in a report for the National Center for State Courts, concludes that Teen Courts are a "...positive diversionary alternative for juvenile first-time offenders." Herman cites Teen Court as a way to give offenders "...an improved perception of justice by our young people, fosters the ability of teens to learn from their mistakes because of early intervention, and educates them about the judicial process."

Lewis explained during her presentation that she is trying to raise \$15,000 to pay for a coordinator for the program for a year, the only real expense to operate the Teen Court she is proposing. She also stated that she had asked Columbia County to look over their records and identify cases that would fit the criteria to be considered for the program. They identified an average of 300 per year, which equates to a savings of \$111,900 for the County juvenile justice system.

According to Lewis, the City of Scappoose has given \$3500, the Rotary has given \$1000, and she is looking for more support. Both the City of Vernonia and Columbia County are currently in difficult financial situations. But this seems like a no-brainer to me. If a teen court could reduce costs by even a third of what Lewis is projecting, it would still be a big win for county finances. Columbia County should look for ways to help finance this program.

If this is a program that could be run effectively, we might see reductions in vandalism and petty crime among our local youth. Finding ways to keep youth out of the criminal justice system at an early age should be a priority for our juvenile justice system. And if Teen Courts help our youth recognize bad decisions, before they repeat them, then we have done something positive for them.

The City of Vernonia spends approximately \$500,000 on our Police budget each year. I would like to think the city could find a couple of thousand dollars to support a progressive and alternative program that has a good chance of benefiting all of us, especially our youth.

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