

Meet a Two-Time "Loser"!

By Scott Laird

Amy Barton is taking the "Vernonia's Biggest Loser" competition very seriously-- and the results are showing!

Barton won the competition three terms ago, and was the winner again this past term, which ended in late October. "Vernonia's Biggest Loser" is a local, quarterly competition, which encourages participants to lose weight, adopt a healthy lifestyle, and maintain their weight-loss, through competition, accountability, and group encouragement. The winner is based on the "loser" with the highest percentage of weight-loss during the term. Debbie Brown was this quarter's second-place finisher.

Barton started participating in Vernonia's "Loser" in February of 2008, and immediately saw results, winning that first term; using her second term to maintain her weight loss; and then winning again in her third term. Barton has lost a total of seventy-five pounds since February, and her losses in inches have been just as remarkable-- 11 inches in her chest, 8.5 inches in her hips, 5 inches in her thighs and 2.5 inches in her waist!

Barton attributes her success to regular exercise including a "Total Body Conditioning" class with Teresa Williams, and healthy meal choices-- "lots of protein and fresh fruits and vegetables" and lots of water.

Barton received \$300 in prize money for being "Vernonia's Biggest Loser." She also received other prizes donated by local businesses, including one month of Yoga at Cedar Mist Studio, one month of Jazzercise classes from Penny Costley, and a one-year subscription to Vernonia's Voice.

"Vernonia's Biggest Loser" is organized by Trish Maldonado, and costs twenty-five dollars to register for the term. Private weigh-ins take place weekly on Monday evenings at the Vernonia Community Church. First- and second-place finishers split the registration fees, 60-40.

For more information on how you can be one of Vernonia's Biggest Losers, contact Trish Maldonado at 503-866-7362.



Amy Barton before joining Vernonia's Biggest Loser (above) and after winning the competition for the second time in nine months (left).

Consilience: The Life You Save

By Erika Paleck

December 3, 2008, is the first anniversary of the flood that took over Vernonia. Might as well say it out loud: it's the gigantic dragon in the living room that we don't really want to talk about.

Much has been said and written about damage done; there's no point in re-capping the losses. Things won't ever be the same. They weren't after the '96 flood, and they won't be after this one, either.

For some of us, that hurts. A lot.

It's not just about the new look of houses being raised or the schools being demolished and eventually moved so that large, comfortable social patterns are changing. It's not only that so many people have taken a financial beating just as the county, state, country, and the world are in recession.

It's about our lives, our fundamental foundations, our personal and social underpinnings, our desire to be secure. When the rains started again this autumn, the plain truth of the matter is that many of us got scared. Really deep-down wide awake at 3:00AM scared. We're watching the river and listening to news and weather reports. We're calling the fire station to hear that it's going to be all right.

We're planning ahead, too. How many homes and offices are there with nothing stacked on the floor, or work still kept in filing boxes for easy movement in case of flooding? West Oregon Electric is just one example.

How does this affect people who have lived through all of it? Everyone is different, but it is undeniable that as this anniversary approaches, there is a change in town--an unsettling. Nerves are frayed, and it is seems almost impossible to get anything done in a timely manner.

At times like this we look for inspiration to help us along with the difficult business of just plain living. I've been writing about artists and crafters and people with vision and about how we can find inspiration in everyday moments. And with that dragon in the room looming ever larger, we may look outside our own experience for local inspiration as we think of those dark days last year. Remember the linesmen who risked their lives to keep the power coming into Vernonia where it was desperately needed; the volunteers who put the food bank back together to help handle incoming supplies for those newly made homeless; the friends of the animals of this town who made countless runs to beg for and haul food back to the displaced animals of our community; the hundreds of volunteers in the Fire Department and National Guard and various charitable organizations who came--not because they had to, but because they saw a need and knew they could help.

But inspiration comes from within, too. We can be our own inspiration, we as residents of Vernonia, of Oregon, of the United States, and Planet Earth. It is our choice to do so.

I knew a fellow who frequently said, "It ain't easy being me," and he was right. It's not easy being any of us. It's not easy to be a human here on this planet with all the mystery and uncertainty that surround us--the challenges, the pain and frustrations that threaten to overwhelm us. Even with a good job, health, and everyone doing well, it's not easy. There is always the next test.

Right now, the test is that dragon in the living room that is bringing back memories and making people re-live trauma on a large scale. The choice that each of us faces is how do we handle that dragon? Ignore it and hope it goes away? Or acknowledge it? And in acknowledging it, we must also note that we are all part of the shared fallout from the flood.

Can you walk around in someone else's shoes for a few moments each day? Apocryphal stories abound in human history of folks who've had enough of this life and are ready to cash it in. To make matters worse, it's more difficult around the holidays when the spirit is low. But then, as the stories go, someone--a stranger even--comes along and makes a difference in their lives. There is a moment of kindness or humor. A moment of respect or thoughtfulness. An offer of assistance or prayer. A plate of cookies. A smile exchanged, a pat on the back.

It ain't easy being you. You're having a hard time, and it looks like it's going to be harder before it gets easier. But it's your choice. You can kick that dragon right in the backside by reaching out to someone. You can be that someone who makes a difference in another's life right when it is so needed. The choice is yours.

The life you save might be your own.

Christmas Wishes From the Past

Letters to Santa taken from Vernonia Eagle 12/10/37...

Washington Grade School, Grade 1-B (Miss Ina N. Scott, Teacher)

- Dear Santa: I would like just any kind of a doll and my baby brother wants a tricycle. I carry in wood and help with the dishes. Your friend, Maudie Watson
- Dear Santa: I would like a bicycle and a pocket-knife. That's all. Your friend, Gale Wood
- Dear Santa: I would like a "bebe" gun. Mama said she might get us a wagon and you won't have to get it. Don't forget where I live. Your friend, John Roy Steele
- Dear Santa: I want a big doll with a set of clothes on her. Would like a set of dishes, a table with chairs, one rain umbrella, play Xmas tree. I'll be thankful for the stuff you bring me. Your friend, Bonnie Jean Smith
- Dear Santa: I would like a scooter with red handle and wheels and a wind-up train with tracks. I feed the chickens, clean up the yard, carry in wood and dry dishes. Your little friend, Lonnie Justice

Washington Grade School, Grade 2

- Dear Santa: I want a tool set and a cow boy suit and a cow boy book for Christmas. I want a puzzle for my brother and a toy garage for my brother too. Grant McCabe
- Dear Santa: May I have a doll buggy. May I have a set of dishes. May I have a doll. Lois Berger
- Dear Santa: Will you bring me a doll, a set of dishes and a sewing set for Christmas. My brother would like a cow boy suit. Bonnie Ross

Washington Grade School, Grade 3

- Dear Santa Claus: I want an electric train and I want a twenty-two gun and a sled, a football and a toy cannon and a real pony and a flash light to help the porr women and a pome book. Your friend, Bobby New. I wish you a happy new year.
- Dear Santa Claus: I want a car, a drum, a horn, a steam engine, to. Will you let me have a gun? I would like to have a pair of skis. Can I have these things? Merry Christmas to you. Your friend, Richard Powers
- Dear Santa Claus: I want an electric train. I want a basketball and the baskets too. My mother wants a new electric waffle iron. My daddy wants a twenty-two. Merry Christmas. Your friend, Russell Ralph Snook
- Dear Santa Claus: I want work bench and a tractor that is all I want. I am going to get you a box of candy. Your friend, Bobby McDonald

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