

## from the editor....

As we enter the holiday season this month, and the end of the year, Vernonia's Voice would like to take this opportunity to send out warm greetings to all our readers, supporters, friends and family, and especially to the community of Vernonia. May we all have a safe, warm and DRY holiday this year, and, hopefully, get to spend it with those who are most important in our lives.

In this month's issue, we take a look at the community of Vernonia one year after the Flood of December, 2007. Our December, 2008, issue is scheduled to be distributed almost exactly one year after the December 3 flood, and so it seemed appropriate to focus on where we are today. I started out talking with some residents who had been affected, and quickly realized that to truly express in print what is happening in Vernonia in regards to flood recovery would take several issues and months to accurately capture. So look in this issue and over the coming months for more about Vernonia-- One Year After The Flood.

One question became very apparent this past month: Is Vernonia ready for another flood this coming winter? In fact, Vernonia went through an early scare in mid-November, when weather forecasters put us on alert that a severe storm was headed our way, and to be prepared for high winds, heavy rains and possible flooding. The storm missed us this time (Washington State wasn't so lucky), and we didn't get flooded by rivers and streams. What we did get flooded by were emotions-- fears that residents might lose everything again, students acting out in unusual ways in school, elderly citizens afraid they would not be able to evacuate, business owners afraid of being put out of business-- again. People became very scared, and now wonder if we will be as lucky again, next time. It was apparent that we were not emotionally prepared to be flooded again.

The reality is that we are faced with a new paradigm when it comes to protecting ourselves against flooding in Vernonia. Whatever you believe might be causing this-- global climate change, heavy logging and clear-cutting in the headwaters, normal cycles of weather patterns, or just plain bad luck-- people in this community feel threatened and unsafe. Hopefully, Vernonia won't get flooded again anytime soon, maybe never again. Maybe, as each year passes with no disastrous events, those fears will recede, and it will get easier when we receive reports of approaching bad weather. Maybe we will get systems in place that will allow residents to feel safer, knowing they can be alerted to coming trouble. Maybe we will be able to secure and raise enough funds to move or raise all the homes in the flood zone, and the schools, and our vital services, and not have to worry at all. We can always hope for the best. In the meantime, we all need to work together; support one another; listen to our friends, families, and neighbors; and know that the fears they are expressing are very real.

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I have recently had a couple of conversations with readers of Vernonia's Voice about my "An Opinion" and "From the Editor" columns. From these conversations, I have gathered that some readers may feel I have an agenda, and might be trying to influence thinking in our community. While it is true that I have strong opinions about certain subjects, my intention has not been, and is not, to tell people how to think. Instead, my intention is to promote discussion and conversation about interesting ideas and topics among members of our community.

I understand that not everyone may agree with my point of view. In fact, at times, some of you may find my viewpoints objectionable. One reader told me he didn't want to read opinions in the paper-- he just wanted to read the facts. I disagree-- I think there is a place for an opinion in a local community paper, just as long as that opinion doesn't start creeping into the news reporting.

And, just because we disagree, doesn't mean we can't work together, be neighbors, or even be friends. Certainly, I hope, we can talk about our differences of opinion. In a small town, we are forced-- or given the opportunity, depending on how you see it-- to deal closely with people who have differing viewpoints about religion, politics, sex, education, the environment, race, economics or a host of other issues. How we choose to deal with those differences can set us apart-- do we try to ignore them and avoid those who see the world differently, are do we talk about them and embrace them, and work together to build a vibrant community?

A rule of thumb in many businesses is to never discuss politics, religion or sex with your customers. But my business is all about discussing information, and I see controversial subjects as an opportunity to get to know one another better, to build relationships, and to learn to work better with one another.

My hope, by addressing interesting subjects in a thoughtful way in my editorials, is that citizens in our community will begin to discuss these subjects over a cup of coffee, at the laundromat, in line at Sentry, or while talking in the street with your neighbor. Or that a teenaged son or daughter might come home one evening and ask, "Mom, what do you think about election reform? Do you think we should get rid of the Electoral College?" Lofty aspirations, I guess, but maybe I just don't know any better.

Maybe I haven't always been as thoughtful as is needed when writing my opinions? Maybe they have come across as too strong? My hope is that I will get better at this, and reach, rather than alienate, readers.

As always-- and maybe I haven't stressed this enough in print-- I welcome letters to the editor, and encourage those that disagree with my comments and opinions to put them in print. Let me know you think I've got it all wrong, and tell me why. My intention is that this newspaper be the voice of Vernonia-- the voice of our community.

Tell me what you think. That way, we can get to know each other a little better.

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**SATURDAY  
DECEMBER 13TH**



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TOURNAMENT**  
AT THE BUCKHORN RESTAURANT

Registration at **5:30pm**, Tournamant play starts at **6pm**  
**50% of fees** go to Local Charities.  
**\$40 buy-in with \$20 re-buy. 35 Player Limit - Sign-up Now!**  
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