

Senior Citizen Police Academy

The Vernonia Police Department, along with the Vernonia Senior Center, are organizing a Senior Citizen Police Academy, for citizens fifty years and older. This is an eight-week program designed to give participants a better understanding of their local police department and its operations. The program will consist of a series of classes, discussions, and a tour, and will be held once a week, concluding with a graduation ceremony. There is no cost to participate.

Each class will provide interesting information on the operations of the Vernonia Police Department and issues that effect local law enforcement. Participants will have the opportunity to meet and interact with several members of the department as the officers share their areas of expertise.

The Academy is intended to benefit participants and the community by sharing crime prevention strategies; teaching about department operations, crime scene protection and evidence collection and processing; and helping build a well-informed community which is familiar with local officers.

Some of the class topics include: crimes against senior citizens; cons, scams and fraud prevention; patrol operations; personal, home, vehicle, and traveling safety; telecommunications and crime reporting for citizens; prescription pill abuse; street drug use and its effects on the community; and neighborhood watch programs.

If you are a Vernonia or Columbia County resident who is fifty years or older, and interested in being a valuable community policing team member, please contact Karen Miller at 503-429-3912 or Interim Police Chief Michael Kay at 503-429-7335.

Deadline Nearing for Vernonia Cares Food Boxes

The deadline to register for the holiday food boxes through Vernonia Cares Food Bank is December 11.

Vernonia Cares plans to offer 250 Christmas holiday food boxes to low income households within the Vernonia community. The boxes will be disbursed December 19 when registered households pick them up from Vernonia Cares Food Bank.

The holiday food box will contain the basic groceries for a Christmas meal. "Our target group is the household who fall within the food bank guidelines," said Vernonia Cares Director Sandy Welch. "That is \$1,603 gross income per month for single person households, plus \$555 per month for each additional person in the household. The number of boxes will be DOUBLED this year as other households that were flooded last December also need a helping hand. This past year has taken an emotional toll on many families. Over one third of the food bank clients are children.

Applications may be obtained at the food bank, which is open Tuesday and Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. It is located in the American Legion Hall at 627 Adams Avenue. All applications must be received by Vernonia Cares by December 11. Only pre-registered households will be served. Vernonia Cares phone number is (503) 429-1414. Please leave a clear message with your name and contact information.

"At this point, we are planning to provide this service to 250 families and are praying the food and funds arrive to support it," Welch emphasized. "We've had great support for the holiday food boxes from our community in the past and I'm looking to them again this year."

To date, about 25 turkeys have physically been donated. Vernonia Sentry has just announced their donation of 100 turkeys as this goes to print! During this difficult year with flood recovery and a sagging economy, Vernonia Sentry's donation is greatly appreciated and will help to meet this year's goal of 250 turkeys. Donations are gladly accepted until

December 19 and Vernonia Sentry makes it simple to donate. You can purchase a turkey at Sentry and then donate it at the check-stand, and it will be stored frozen until the boxes are disbursed. They will also accept the cost of a turkey (\$10.00) as well as the sponsorship of a complete family dinner at \$30.00. THANK YOU SENTRY, FOR ALL YOU DO!!

Turkey herders Pat and Bob Stacklie are happy to provide taxi service of your turkey from your home, 503-429-7563.

Individuals and businesses interested in supporting this worthwhile cause may contribute directly to Vernonia Cares on Tuesday or Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00p.m., or it can be mailed to Vernonia Cares Food Bank, PO Box 126, Vernonia, OR 97064. Receipts for your tax deductible donation are by request to Sandy Welch, 503-429-1414.



Randy and Sharon Parrow of the Vernonia Sentry Market present a donation of turkeys to Sandy Welch of the Vernonia Cares Food Bank

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An Opinion: The Most Important Number & Color on the Planet

By Scott Laird

The internet is such a wonderful tool. The more time I spend researching, emailing, and reading, the more informed and connected I feel. Friends send links, I learn about something new, and I feel empowered, able to reach out and share the news and really make a difference, able to have a real impact and to have an influence.

A couple things I came across recently got me thinking-- and moving. I actually first read about the 350 project in a magazine (yes, print media is still alive!). But through the internet I was quickly able to read more about the campaign and get involved, just with the click of a mouse. We can connect with people all over the world, talk about issues and problems, and share ideas for solutions. It's a great world we live in!

But then, it's also a scary world we live in.

Just a side note here, I know many of you who read Vernonia's Voice may not want to read about international or national topics like war, famine, economic collapse, or presidential politics in your small-town local paper. That's what large dailies and the internet are for. But I am finding myself ever more drawn to the larger issues, and the way that we, as a country and a planet, need to be taking responsibility for our actions and working towards finding and creating solutions. We are learning we can't count on our politicians to fix everything for us, so we better start talking amongst ourselves and looking for answers.

Back to that scary world we live in, and the number 350. 350 is the number that scientists are now saying is the safe limit for carbon dioxide in our atmosphere; as measured in Parts Per Million (PPM). Current measurements put us at 386 PPM; in other words, we need to be reducing our emissions to avoid runaway climate change. This number, 350, has only recently been published by Dr. James Hansen, of NASA, one of the leading researchers on global warming. Before, we weren't even sure what was a safe amount of carbon, but they know now.

We are seeing the polar ice caps melting faster than predicted and unusual weather patterns. Whether you believe global climate change is real or not, and I do not believe this is a hoax, it appears that those who have been disregarding it all along may have been wrong. My question is, "Can we really afford to take that chance?"

I won't try to go into all the details here (if you're interested, look it up on the internet (try www.350.org to start). What is important is, we now have a goal; a target to work towards.

In December of 2009, the United Nations will meet in Copenhagen, Denmark, to discuss climate change and, hopefully, establish policies. Many leading authorities are saying this might be our last chance to get this right; if we wait any longer, the damage may be irreversible. Major decisions need to be made now, before it's too late.

It's time we all start taking this threat seriously-- which may mean we need to transform the way we live our lives, encourage our world leaders to institute change, and start finding everyday solutions to our problems. It won't be easy-- it will require sacrifices on the part of all of us. But I'm not sure we really have a choice.

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Now, about that color Red in the headline. I recently received the following forwarded email from a friend I'll call Charlie. Charlie sends me all kinds of links and info that he finds on-line. Now, I'm not someone who passes on every joke, inspirational message, or do-gooder plea that comes my way. In fact, I very rarely forward them on. But having just celebrated Veterans Day, this one got to me and made sense. Here is that email:

Last week, while traveling to Chicago on business, I noticed a Marine sergeant traveling with a folded flag, but did not put two and two together. After we boarded our flight, I turned to the sergeant, who'd been invited to sit in First Class (across from me), and inquired if he was heading home.

No, he responded.

Heading out, I asked?

No. I'm escorting a soldier home.

Going to pick him up?

No. He is with me right now. He was killed in Iraq-- I'm taking him home to his family. The realization of what he had been asked to do hit me like a punch to the gut. It was an honor for him. He told me that, although he didn't know the soldier, he had delivered the news of his passing to the soldier's family and felt as if he knew them after many conversations in so few days.

I turned back to him, extended my hand, and said, Thank you. Thank you for doing what you do so my family and I can do what we do.

Upon landing in Chicago, the pilot stopped short of the gate and made the following announcement over the intercom.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to note that we have had the honor of having Sergeant Steeley of the United States Marine Corps join us on this flight. He is escorting a fallen comrade back home to his family. I ask that you please remain in your seats when we open the forward door to allow Sergeant Steeley to deplane and receive his fellow soldier. We will then turn off the seat belt sign."

Without a sound, all went as requested. I noticed the sergeant saluting the casket as it was brought off the plane, and his action made me realize that I am proud to be an American.

So here's a public Thank You to our military Men and Women for what you do so we can live the way we do.

Red Fridays - Very soon, you will see a great many people wearing Red every Friday. The reason? Americans who support our troops used to be called the 'silent majority.' We are no longer silent, and are voicing our love for God, country and home in record-breaking numbers. We are not organized, boisterous or overbearing.

Many Americans, like you, me and all our friends, simply want to recognize that the vast majority of Americans supports our troops. Our idea of showing solidarity and support for our troops with dignity and respect starts this Friday -- and continues each and every Friday until the troops all come home, sending a deafening message-- that every red-blooded American who supports our men and women afar, will wear something red

By word of mouth, press, TV -- let's make the United States on every Friday a sea of red much like a homecoming football game in the bleachers. If every one of us who loves this country will share this with acquaintances, coworkers, friends, and family, it will not be long before the USA is covered in RED and it will let our troops know the once 'silent' majority is on their side more than ever, certainly more than the media lets on. The first thing a soldier says when asked 'What can we do to make things better for you?' is 'We need your support and your prayers.' Let's get the word out and lead with class and dignity, by example, and wear something red every Friday.

Whatever your political persuasion, please consider joining me and trying to wear Red every Friday to show your support for the men and women of our military.