

The Real Spirit of Christmas

By Scott Laird

Another Christmas-- another weather-related disaster. That's been the story of the Christmas holiday the last three years for Vernonia. Lots of anticipation and excitement about shopping and presents, about seeing relatives and holiday meals, about waking up to stuffed stockings and wrapped presents under the decorated tree, about packages arriving in the mail, and then-- Boom!, it all comes to a screeching halt. Three years ago, it was ice and wind and no power; last year it was flooding and no power; this year the worst snowstorm in forty years, and, you guessed it-- no power. It makes it hard to enjoy Christmas when the lights don't come on.



The Vernonia Firefighters and other volunteers, and even some of Santa's elves made sure everything got wrapped and Toy and Joy got distributed for Christmas



Even without power, folks enjoyed the Christmas Dinner put together by Bill James and his family and friends (above). Samantha Lindauer and Alex Barton helped serve meals at the emergency shelter (right).



Watching what happened around Vernonia this year, when the power suddenly went off on December 24 at 1:00 PM and wasn't restored until 2:00 AM on the 27th, (some families in outlying areas were without power for longer than a week) gave us a good glimpse into what is really important about the holidays. It showed how some members of our community are willing to give and sacrifice for others and showed the real Christmas spirit-- "peace on earth and goodwill towards all men." It's a phrase we read on greeting cards that we receive or sign our names to, but do we really stop and think about what it means?

During the holidays, many of us get caught up in the hustle and bustle-- the shopping and decorating, the traveling and greeting cards, the ordering and wrapping. But this year, Vernonia got to see how some people can take "goodwill towards all men" literally and act out its real meaning.

Bill James, and his family and friends, put on their third annual Christmas Day dinner, even

without power, and served turkey dinner to anyone who wanted to join with other community members for a meal. The folks who organized the dinner at the Senior Center gave up their day to cook and serve for everyone else, and the atmosphere was festive and friendly with all the turkey trimmings, pie and coffee, and good fellowship. James thanked his daughters, Jerilyn and Evelyn, for encouraging him to hold the dinner even without power, and also thanked Connie King and the Senior Center Board for the use of the building and kitchen, and all the volunteers who helped cook, serve and clean up. James' response when asked why he gives up his Christmas day every year-- "I felt like I wanted to give something back to the people of our community."



Another elf works hard getting Toy and Joy ready to go.

Down the street on Christmas Day, at the Vernonia Middle School, a disaster shelter was established, and again, local volunteers were giving up their holiday to care for our citizens who were in need. Gretchen and Terry Lindauer opened up the kitchen and along with their daughters, Samantha and Brittany, and a host of other volunteers, were turning out three hot meals a day for anyone who stopped by. Helen and Kevin Hudson, along with other volunteers and city staff kept

the shelter open for five days so anyone without power or heat had a place to come in and warm up, spend time with family and relax with some electricity, and spend the night if needed. Here again were Vernonians, sacrificing their holiday so others might be comfortable, warm, and fed. The Lindauers fed as many as 250 people each day, with numbers tapering off after Saturday, when power was restored. The shelter housed forty individuals on Christmas night, watched over by caring members of the community-- who even retrieved fourteen pet crates from Valley Vet, so residents could stay with their pets if needed.

All around Vernonia, there were folks going out of their way to help their neighbors, their friends and acquaintances, even strangers-- or just finding general work like shoveling walkways and clearing streets and roads, efforts that would benefit us all.

People giving of themselves-- that is the true spirit of the holiday season. And some Vernonians showed they really have it.

Holiday Bucks Winners Announced

The Holiday Bucks Program sponsored by the Vernonia Chamber of Commerce was a success once again. This year's winners in the weekly drawings were:

- \$25 Winners: Jeana Gump, Shannon Ervin, Bonnie Holce (2), Amy Etta, Sue Lundy, Mary Lou Busch
- \$50 Winners: Shari Vanderschelken and Judy McDonald

The Chamber thanks the participating Vernonia businesses for taking part in the holiday bucks program.

Penny Costley picks one of the many winners in the Holiday Bucks Contest (right) from the a selection of the numerous entries (below).



VERNONIA PREVENTION COALITION

Please join us for an Interactive
Community Meeting:
"The Dangers of Club Drugs"

This presentation is part of a series of
informational and educational community
awareness events for students, parents
and other interested individuals.

January 15, 2009, 7:00PM
Vernonia Middle School

Presented by Vernonia High School & Middle School students
and the Vernonia Police Department.
Sponsored by the Vernonia Prevention Coalition
and the Vernonia Police Department

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