

from the editor....

Well, here we are-- the beginning of a new year-- and it couldn't have gotten here soon enough for us Vernonians. We welcomed January with open arms-- we've had enough of December! For the third year in a row, we spent portions of the month of December dealing with natural disasters and weather-related turmoil. Once again, for many of our citizens, Christmas was spent not with family and friends, but without electricity, trying to stay warm and keeping our lives together. Once again, many of us were forced to rely on the kindness of neighbors and strangers, and, once again, Vernonians stood up and looked out for each other.

There are numerous people to recognize for their outstanding efforts during the snowstorm of December, 2008-- folks like Steve Weller, who used his trucks to bring needed generators to town; Pihl and Gwin Logging crews who patrolled the highways and helped keep them clear; everyone at West Oregon Electric who spent endless hours working to restore power and keep it on; the Vernonia Public Works and city hall staff who made sure we had drinking water, and ran the shelter at the middle school; the Lindauer family-- Gretchen, Terry, Sam and Brit--who gave up their holiday to provide three hot meals a day at the shelter; all the other volunteers who helped at the shelter; the CERT crews who went door-to-door; the ambulance, rescue and police crews who worked tirelessly throughout the ordeal; and individual community members like Ray Cota, Bill Sword, Tim Davis, and Ray Pelster (to name just a handful of the many) who dropped everything and showed up to be of service to their community when they were needed. I know I am missing lots of folks who shoveled walkways, checked in on vulnerable neighbors, and looked out for each other. It again showed the spirit of community that continues to thrive here in Vernonia.

A special shout-out needs to go to Interim Police Chief Mike Kay, Deputy Fire Chiefs Ben Davis and Dean Smith, the Rural Fire District Board, and the Vernonia City Council who led us through this declared emergency. With the resignation of Fire Chief Paul Epler in early December, the community was left without an experienced Incident Commander on duty. Mike Kay stepped into the role and ran a joint incident command with Davis and Smith, that used forethought, planning, and the resources on hand to manage the incident, under very difficult circumstances. Using lessons learned from past disasters, input from the community about needs, and delegation of responsibilities, the team did an excellent job of controlling the situation, getting help when and where it was needed, and coordinating a planned approach to potential situations. They were way ahead of the game, meeting regularly and communicating throughout the emergency, and were ready if the situation had turned worse. They are all to be commended.

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This month in Washington, DC, our nation will inaugurate a new President, Barack Obama-- a new leader for our nation. It is a troubling time for our country, full of fear, uncertainty and many perils, but also an exciting time-- a time of renewal and a time of hope.

Hope. It's a word we have heard throughout this campaign season, a word used to express anticipation of coming change. Hope. Webster defines hope as a verb-- to wish and expect; and as a noun-- a confident expectation that desire will be fulfilled, wishful trust, something which one longs to see realized, a person in whom confidence is placed or who could provide what is wanted. Hope. Mr. Obama used it in the title of one of his books--The Audacity of Hope, and it was used by Dr. Martin Luther King when he spoke about equality for all people in America.

Barak Obama was born in August of 1961, I was born ten months later. In August of 1963, Dr. King helped organize the March on Washington, DC, that gathered together about 250,000 Americans in the hope of inspiring fair and equal treatment for black citizens by demanding passage of meaningful civil rights legislation, an immediate end to all school segregation, protection for all civil rights protesters against police brutality, and a federal law prohibiting racial discrimination in the workplace. Dr. King led the movement for equal rights, having witnessed civil rights proponents harassed, beaten, and even murdered for speaking out and demonstrating for equality. In my lifetime, and Mr. Obama's, we have made great strides in ending discrimination-- Obama's inauguration is one clear reminder of that-- and yet, in my mind, there is still a long, long way to go.

On January 19, this country will celebrate its national holiday in honor of Dr. King's birthday and his legacy. The following day, we celebrate the swearing in of our forty-fourth President-- our first black President-- Barack Hussein Obama. What changes we have seen in a lifetime!

Here are just a few excerpts from Dr. King's historic "I Have a Dream" speech from August 28, 1963-- a reminder of just how much has changed, but more so, a reminder of how much work we still have to do, and a reminder of what it means to have hope. Happy New Year to everyone!

"And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream."

"This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the South. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day."

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

-Scott Laird
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**SATURDAY
JANUARY 10TH**



TEXAS HOLD 'EM 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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