

An Opinion: School Changes in Vernonia Not Good

By Hannah Fleck

When I first moved to Vernonia in 3rd grade, I was welcomed by many people older and younger than I was. I had an amazing teacher and I got to know most of the other teachers the first few months I was here. One of my favorite classes was Music, with Mrs. Holce, and being in her class was so nice-- I could get away from all the class work and be creative.

I am now in 5th grade and I will notice many changes in the school district in the next year. One of the biggest changes I will see in the grade school is that there will no longer be any Music classes for any grades except 5th, who can take Band. I think Music and Art are two important classes kids that are younger need to have in their schools. Now the grade school will have no Music or Art classes. I heard of this news from my mom who is the Spanish teacher in the high school. She will be working part time next year, and so will the middle school and high school Art teacher. I was very upset. One of the reasons is because I think kids will not be creative, and will have a limited imagination if they do not have music or art classes when they are younger.

One of the changes in the middle school is that the Art teacher will only be teaching high school students next year and the middle school will have no Art classes, either. Since I will be in middle school next year, I have actually considered transferring to a different school where they have Music and Art classes for all grades. Next year, I don't want to be in band so without Mrs. Holce teaching 6th grade Choir, I do not know what class I will be taking when the kids that want to be in band will go there. Some other classes and positions that are very important to the middle school are not going to be in the middle school, because they have fired a very good Language Arts teacher who has only been working at the middle school for one year. The middle school's principal is also being fired. So next year when I am in middle school with many other students, we will not have a full-time principal. I'm not sure how the middle school will manage being without a Language Arts teacher and a principal, but I guess we will.

The message I am trying to say is, I think younger and older students need Music and Art classes at least once a week. I encourage everyone who has a child in Vernonia public schools, or doesn't, to speak up and ask questions and make your opinion be heard so that next year kids can have Art and Music classes and be creative and imaginative and be themselves!

Readers lend their voices...

To the Editor,

A donation account has been opened at the Vernonia branch of US Bank for David Borders, who had major abdominal cancer surgery at OHSU on January 6, 2009.

According to Dr Rodney Pommier at the surgical oncology division of OHSU, David will now undergo a three month period of chemotherapy, subsequently requiring another major reconstructive surgery, followed by a period of three months healing time. From start to finish the Doctor expects David to be off work for a period of one year.

David Borders grew up in Vernonia, son of Bob and JeanAnn Borders. He did a lot of logging in this community before moving into the ceramic tile business. Luckily, being self employed, David carried major medical insurance, so the majority of surgical expenses are covered. Then comes the reality of co-pay percentage, travel expenses, prescriptions, and the needs of everyday life.

We are trying to help David and his wife of 7 years, Lisa, who herself has limitations due to MS, make it through the next months without David's income. Every 3rd week of his chemo treatment requires a five day stay in Boise Idaho, where the treatments are being administered. With that stay comes a whole host of other travel related expenses.

Many Vernonia residents have been asking how they can help, so we are trying to provide as many avenues as possible to bring peace to the hearts of those individuals and to David and Lisa as well. Prayers, cards, and letters of support, so warmly received, can be sent to their mailing address:

1445 4th St. --Baker City, OR 97814

Cash donations of any size can be made at any US Bank branch. Simply ask to make a donation to the "David Borders Donation Account". A letter from Dr. Pommier is on file with the Vernonia Branch to verify this information and qualify this account.

Rhonda Persyn
Vernonia

To the Editor,

Freedom is not free and neither is the celebration of it.

I first want to thank Vernonia Pride for raising the money for the fourth of July fireworks for all these years. Vernonia Pride has made it perfectly clear that after last July that they will no longer be raising the money for the fireworks. As far as I know no one has taken over raising money for the Fourth of July fireworks. Are we going to have a fireworks show this year, or is Vernonia going to add ourselves to the growing list of communities that are no longer doing fireworks? Fort Vancouver, Hillsboro are both are not doing fireworks shows this year. What does it cost you might ask? Last years fireworks show cost \$4500. But the actual value was over \$6000 because Western Display Fireworks donated an additional \$1500 of fireworks to help our community out. Permit fees, transportation, and Pyrotechnician fees are donated to Vernonia by myself that run about an extra \$1000. I am still willing to donate the permit, transportation, and Pyrotechnician fees, however I need money

An Opinion: Community Leadership Is About Relationships

By Scott Laird

A wise man once said that community leadership is not top-down. Community leadership is side by side-- leader and follower pulling together as a team.

We've been doing quite a lot of that in Vernonia recently-- pulling together to help our community recover and rebuild into a vital place to live.

That wise man, by the way, was Tom Gallagher, Director of the Ford Institute for Community Building, who sponsors community leadership training right here in Vernonia. Tom is a wise man not just for the things he says, but because he often arrives bearing gifts-- financial gifts of which our community has been the recipient several times in the recent past.

I recently received an award for Community Leadership, and had the chance to think about its meaning, while preparing remarks I would make while accepting the award. For me, community leadership is all about relationships. It's all about the connections we make, the friendships we develop, and the collaborations we build. It's about helping people find their place in the community and then getting them engaged in what's happening. And that engagement is the key that is making a difference and having an impact on the livability of our community.

Vernonia's Voice has made it a point to tell inspirational stories-- the good deeds, the people and volunteers who are making good things happen, the stories about what is working well here. I have had the privilege of meeting and writing about many really great people-- people who care about each other and about our small rural town.

After the flood of 2007, just six months after Vernonia's Voice was started, I was forced to write about the flip side of life in Vernonia-- about destruction, loss, and heartbreak. But, you know, through that very difficult time, what I saw was that Vernonia really was filled with great people who care about each other and about our small rural town. I saw resiliency, fortitude, strength, compassion. An amazing bunch of people, us Vernonians.

And so, sixteen months after December, 2007, Vernonia is continuing to rebuild. We are still in recovery, but things are looking up for us. We have the chance to turn disaster into opportunity. There are many questions still to be answered, and not everyone has fared equally through the red tape of insurance, federal aid and local assistance. But through it all, our relationships and connections are pulling us through. We are building a framework of trust--

We are building a framework of trust; in each other, in ourselves, in the strength of our community...

in each other, in ourselves, in the strength of our community, and in our ability to look out for each other and find solutions.

We are continually reminded that Vernonia can be a vibrant and exciting place to live. We see more and more participation as people feel more engaged in what's happening, as they feel part of something bigger than themselves and their families, and as we see people step up and take an active role in making Vernonia a dynamic and spirited community.

Here are just a few examples of some the collaborations that have been built here in recent years:

First Friday Celebrations-- Not just about the arts and local artists, this monthly gathering is organized by HandsOn Art who have organized with local businesses and the Chamber of Commerce, with our Friday Open Air Market, with the city and the Community Learning Center, and has hosted activities that include just about every group organization and non-profit in town. This is truly what community collaboration is about.

The Vernonia Grange Hall-- A building that was not being used to its fullest capacity is now the home to daily exercise classes, talent and open-microphone shows, dances, and drama presentations by a local home school group. A local landmark, the building is now creating revenue and is being used.

New Schools For Vernonia-- A collaboration of collaborators, Oregon Solutions put together a team of local, county, and state individuals and agencies to create a process to help select a site for a new school campus. They will continue to help secure funding for the project and help shepherd it along. The teamwork that it will take between school administrators, school board members, city, county, and state officials, the design team, and local interested parties-- to name just a few-- will be the ultimate test of how Vernonians can work together for a common goal.

Vernonia's Voice-- This monthly publication is the result of a multitude of relationships, as different contributors help create the content each month. New columns are springing up and more and more individuals and organizations see an opportunity to help create a vibrant and active community.

Vernonia is a special place filled with special people. And there is no shortage of interesting stories to tell. Many of us are building relationships, making connections, and helping others get engaged. We are building the capacity of our community and adding value to this place we call home.

Community leadership is about being out in our own communities-- developing relationships, building bridges, and make them better places to live. Community leadership happens because we really care, because it's important, and because it makes a difference. Vernonia will be a better place because we are working together-- side by side as a team.

to purchase the fireworks.

If we work together we can still have a fireworks show on July Fourth. I will work with whomever to make this happen--- Chamber of Commerce, Jamboree committee, Catching with KUPL, and any other civic groups. Just call me. \$2000-\$6000 is the range of what we would need to have a decent show, the more money the bigger the show. Time is our enemy because of the requirements to get permits and fireworks. I need to start the process no later than May 4th, the earlier the better.

Thank you for your help.

Tom D. Ramsey
Lead Pyrotechnician
Vernonia Fireworks Crew
Vernonia Or.97064

To the Editor:

Vernonia Pride will be awarding their Yard of the Month starting May 15th, 2009. Ballot boxes will be placed at City Hall and at Sentry Market by April 16, 2009, to deposit your yard nomination. A panel of judges will pick the winning yard, and the owners will be notified.

Please help pick the winners by getting your nominations in the ballot box before the 14th of each month. September will be the last month for Yard of the Month this year.

Sincerely,
Janelle Thomas Cedergreen

To the citizens of Vernonia:

Due to the resignation of former Fire Chief Paul Epler, the Board of Directors of the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District and the volunteer staff have had to restructure personnel. In saying that, we have taken Voluntary Deputy Chief Dean Smith and put him in a temporary full-time Duty Officer position at the fire house. He will be available to answers questions from the community concerning Fire Safety issues and will run the station during the day. We have have also hired Tom Ramsey for a part time position to do maintenance around the district and after hours duties around the station. Volunteer morale is up and spirits are high. As Board members we would like to thank the volunteers for the outstanding job they do and let them know we back them 100%. Lets all help keep it safe, because safety doesn't end at the front door.

Sincerely,
The Board of the Vernonia
Rural Fire Protection District.

Letter to the Editor,

The Vernonia School Board has four positions that are up for election this May. For six years I have been attending school board meetings trying to stay involved as a parent of young children and an active community member and now I have decided to take the next step and run

for a board position myself. My name is Amy Elton Cieloha and I am running for position 1.

Currently I have a 4th grader, Kindergartner and another little one to enter in a few years. Education has always interested me. I volunteer in my kids classrooms weekly and have since they began school. Staying active and involved in their education is important to me. Volunteering can give you a different perspective on the happenings inside the schools. I teach preschool out of the Vernonia Community Church and have stayed busy with the Vernonia Community PTA as well as holding a board position for five years. I try to stay involved in our schools because it is not only my kid's education we are talking about but our community at large.

I was born and raised in Vernonia and attended Vernonia Schools throughout my childhood. I am invested in our community! My family has been here for generations, my husband's family has been here for generations, and our own family will probably be here for generations to come as well. The decisions we make today will be long lasting and will affect Vernonia for years to follow. Please consider giving me your vote for Vernonia School Board on May 19th. Thank you.

Amy Elton Cieloha
Position 1 Vernonia School Board

HOW TO SEND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Vernonia's Voice welcomes and requests your thoughts, opinions, and ideas. Please include your name, address, and phone number; limit your letters to 300 words or less. Vernonia's Voice reserves the right to edit, omit, respond, or ask for a response to letters submitted. We will print letters, space permitting. Deadline is the 20th of the month. **Email to: news@vernonias-voice.com or mail to: Letters, PO Box 55, Vernonia 97064.**