



Vernonia Scout Cabin is a Real Gem *Rehab of Facility Was Truly a Community Effort*

By Scott Laird

Most Vernonians have, at one time or another, attended a function at the Vernonia Scout Cabin. From wedding receptions to family holiday gatherings to class reunions to city government functions, the facility has served as a meeting place for just about any type of community gathering. But how many of us know the story behind this wonderful community treasure? Well, a large group of people know the story-- they helped renovate an old, unusable building into the gem we know today. But a bunch of newcomers may not realize what a tremendous community effort went into the reconstruction. And most of us don't realize what it takes to maintain the building, week after week. This is a treasure many of us might be taking for granted.

Vernonia's Voice recently sat down at the Scout Cabin to chat with Shirlee Daughtry and Dede Webb, two of just a handful of Vernonians who make up the Friends of the Scout Cabin, the group who owns and maintains the building and rents it for community functions. The facility really is special, with a full kitchen, a river rock gas fireplace, large outside deck, and picturesque park setting with a view of Rock Creek. And the setting in the city-owned Hawkins Park allows rental of the park Gazebo for weddings. It is a unique and quaint facility, one this community is lucky to have.

Daughtry was instrumental in starting the project back in 1996, just after a major flood devastated the town. She told me about hearing that the city had some FEMA funding available to repair the building, and thinking they could really spruce up the building with a few thousand dollars. "I was very naive," said Daughtry, laughing. "A hundred thousand dollars later, here we are."

By 1996, the building, built in 1928 for the Campfire Girls, had fallen into disrepair, had no foundation and wasn't being used anymore. Daughtry was determined to renovate the building and put it back in use. "There were a lot of things that happened," said Daughtry, as she remembered trying to get the project moving. Key to getting started was the recruitment of Norm Brown, who had some experience with commercial construction codes and ended up acting as a sort of project foreman, and Don McLean, who provided



Dede Webb and Shirlee Daughtry proudly show off the Vernonia Scout Cabin.

blueprints. The city turned the property over to a new group that was formed that called themselves "Friends of the Scout Cabin."

"We were meeting every week discussing this project," said Daughtry. The group began fundraising, holding rummage sales and raffles, and writing grant proposals. They received a grant for \$10,000, and a few smaller grants, and then received a donation for \$50,000 from Tom Holce, which gave them enough money to complete the construction. It took almost four years from start to finish to complete. "Nobody thought we could do this," said Daughtry. "We showed how you can take something that looks pretty darn bad and turn it into something of quality."

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FEMA Extends Deadline for Vernonia Families

In a letter to Senator Ron Wyden, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) agreed to give Vernonia families left homeless by the December, 2007, flood an additional four months to stay in their FEMA-provided manufactured homes.

FEMA was planning to evict the families on June 8, but in a letter sent to Dennis Hunsinger, FEMA deputy administrator for Region X, Wyden requested a delay to give the families more time to finish rebuilding. In a response to Wyden, Hunsinger said an extension to October 8, 2009, would be appropriate.

"FEMA deserves a lot of credit for doing the right thing for the families of Vernonia who are still working hard to put their lives back together following the flood," Wyden said. "Now those families have a little more of what they need most-- time to continue picking up the pieces."

Dan Brown, Flood Recovery Manager for Community Action Team, was pleased to hear the news. "I appreciate what Ron Wyden did. He took the lead in this, but everyone else has jumped in and lent their support-- Representative David Wu, State Senator Betsy Johnson, and others."

Under FEMA regulations, there is an 18-month limit on the use of the manufactured homes. The period began in December, 2007, when the disaster declaration was signed and ends on June 8 of this year. However, the manufactured homes did not arrive in Vernonia until April 2008.

According to Brown, there are still fifteen families living in FEMA-provided housing. Six of those families are awaiting funding for buyouts. "I hope that the families take advantage of the additional time, particularly those making repairs," said Brown. "Four months can go by really fast."

"I keep saying this is going to be a long recovery," said Brown. "But the bottom line is that when we're done with this, probably fifty percent of the homes in Vernonia that were damaged are going to be mitigated against for future disasters-- which is a really, really good outcome for this project when everything is said and done. We still have some hurdles to get over. But we're going to end up with a lot of good things."

Vernonia Hires New City Administrator

The City of Vernonia has hired Robert (Bob) Young as its new permanent City Administrator.

Interim City Administrator Jim Johnson presented the City Council with terms of the contract he has reached with Young at an Emergency Council Meeting on May 26. Councilors Randy Parrow and Brett Costley, along with Mayor Sally Harrison were on hand to approve the deal to hire Young.

Bob Young, a 1967 graduate of Summit Pacific College with a degree in Theology, recently served as Mayor for the city of Bonney Lake, Washington, from 1998-2005, and was the acting City Administrator from 2001-2005. He received a Master of Public Administration from the University of Washington in 2008.

In Bonney Lake, a medium-sized city of about 16,500, Young supervised 125 employees.

Young's contract will pay him a starting salary of \$75,000. He is scheduled to begin his employment in Vernonia on June 22.

Summer Returns To Vernonia

Some sure signs that summer is almost upon us in Vernonia... Boys Baseball, Motorcycles along Bridge Street, and the annual Memorial Day Ceremony.



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