

Vernonia Booster BBQ – 4th of July

The Vernonia Boosters will be serving up hamburgers and hot dogs at the Snack Shack from 6-9:00 PM on the 4th of July. Come and support them! This year the Boosters have helped both the band and senior class go to Disneyland, gave four \$500 scholarships to seniors, helped fund the 4th of July fireworks, and all little guy/gal sports are under the Boosters. This just names a few of the programs they support. Help the Boosters keep supporting our kids and our community. Hope to see you there!

4th of July Parade-

Vernonia Pride will be sponsoring the 4th of July Parade this year. The parade will start at 7:30 from Weed Avenue and disband on State Street. No ATV's will be allowed--all other entries will be welcome.

Fall Soccer Sign Ups

July 9th and 23rd 5:00-7:00 p.m. at Vernonia Public Library. For more info call Katie Poetter at 503-429-0700.

Art in the Woods Camp Returns

Art in the Woods Camp is coming up July 27 to 31 at the Scout Cabin in Vernonia. This year's camp will follow the theme of "150 years of Crafts, Arts, and Music." Campers will be using hand tools to make crafts from the 1850's, as well as doing lots of singing, folk dancing, and learning to play the recorder together. The week will come to a grand finale with a Friday evening performance for friends and the whole community to enjoy. The cost is \$75 with financial aid available. There will also be teen classes in the afternoon, with the choice of art, singing, drama, and chamber music. The camp, which is sponsored by Hands on Art, will give Vernonia students the opportunity to learn from teachers who are outstanding artists and musicians. Applications are available at the Vernonia Library or by calling Carol Pelster at 503-429-0437.

Greenleaf Acting Company to Perform During Jamboree

There will be something new added to this year's Jamboree entertainment offerings: The Greenleaf Acting Company will be performing "Sherlock

Holmes" at 7:00 on Friday and 2:00 on Saturday at the Grange. Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$5 for children, students and seniors, with a family price of \$20. It will be an exciting adventure with the famous detective!, directed by Alberta Hardy, who has had leading roles in the Theater in the Grove and the Shoestring Players productions, as well as directing youth theater productions, including very successful plays by the Vernonia Homeschool group.

Teen Dance During Jamboree

Teen Dance at Jamboree for the Zack Rumbolz Memorial Scholarship. Saturday night August 8 in the school Cafeteria, from 8:30 - 11:00, for kids age 13 - 20. \$5 entry. Thank you!

Summer Qigong-

Qigong is an ancient Chinese exercise aimed at maintaining agility, focus and strength. Qigong literally translates into "life work". These exercises are intended to be practiced daily in order to maintain proper health. All movements associated with Qigong are gentle and strengthening all at the same time! ANYONE can do Qigong!!! Embrace the multiple benefits that practicing Qigong can bring to you! Start your day with a calming exercise at Hawkins Park. Tuesdays at 7:00 AM. \$5/class

Training for Non-profits Offered

Non-profit Board Member Basics seminar presented by Carol Cheney of TACS, July 15, 4-8 PM at VCLC. No charge to local non-profit volunteers; dinner included. RSVP by July 8; for more information, call Tobie Finzel 503.705.2173.

ISE Looking for Host Families

International Student Exchange is looking for families to host foreign exchange students in Vernonia. There is currently a shortage for the number of students who want to spend a year in Vernonia. Traditional families, single parents, retirees, as well as empty nesters can be hosts. It is not necessary to have children living at home. Learn about the traditions and culture of another country. Enrich your community. Make "friends for life" in another country. For more information call 1-888-785-2695 or 1-509-398-0759. Placements need to be made by July 15.

of which, employ a total of 6 including a records clerk/secretary. They also have the luxury of nearby community departments to assist them if needed.

I would also like to talk about my personal experience as a Vernonia Police officer. I'm one of those "Outsiders" mentioned in the letter to the editor. My family and I lived in Vernonia for a little over three years and have been proud to serve this community. I moved a short distance away about a year ago for several reasons.

During the time I lived here my family life has been disturbed, including fights on my front porch, my children being threatened while at the store and verbally abused at school. All because I am a police officer. Frequently, while living here, I would find tires on my personal vehicle flat. Other officers would have all their tires slashed, vehicles damaged, houses damaged or their retired police dog poisoned. A previous officer even had a substance put in his fuel tank that caused serious damage to his vehicle. Incidentally, I haven't had any problems since I moved. Officer's that still live in this community still do.

For my families safety and my peace of mind, I have chosen to relocate. The Vernonia Police Department is not the only agency that employs people that don't live in the city; I know of many examples where this is the case. As far as taking home a patrol vehicle, that rarely happens. On the rare occasions when it does, it is to allow an officer to be placed "On Call" so we can provide a 24-hour response instead of leaving the city with no one available to respond. The City has to provide them with a vehicle to respond in for liability reasons, also allowing the officer to arrive much faster for that call for service.

Should citizens monitor their local police departments and expect professional service? Yes, by all means. Do they have right to ask questions and raise concerns? You bet! But if they are going to publicly criticize us, at least have the facts straight and present a realistic argument.

The bottom line is, I have sat back and read all the recent attacks on the Police Department for doing what we were all hired and trained to do. Whether we live in town or not shouldn't have any bearing on our ability to do the job efficiently and effectively. It is my opinion that this community is under served with the number of Police officers it has. Everyone should keep in mind that we are doing our best with what we have.

Michael Conner
President – Vernonia Police Association

To the Editor

Has anyone ever proposed saving for future school buildings? We all know Vernonia is right now between a rock and a hard place facing the replacement of ALL its school buildings but what about the future? What if 1 - 2% of the school budget was set aside each year for 50 years, invested wisely and made inaccessible for current programs? In 50 years, when the buildings that will be built now are worn out, there would be enough to build new ones without a panic and a bond issue tax burden on our children and grandchildren. We as private citizens are wise if we save for a known coming need like retirement or our children's higher education. Why should the school district not be as wise? Or can we trust the school boards of the future to leave the funds alone and let them grow for future building needs? Maybe not and maybe that is a reason to not save wisely.

Dick Martin
Vernonia

Events Calendar

FRIDAY OPEN AIR MARKET, EVERY FRIDAY THIS SUMMER, 5-7:30 PM,
VCLC Courtyard

VERNONIA PREVENTION COALITION MEETING, JULY 1, 9:00 AM
At the School District Board Room

4TH OF JULY IN VERNONIA-

FIRST FRIDAY AND OPEN AIR MARKET, 5:00- 7:30 PM-At the Vernonia Community Learning Center. Open Air Market with fresh produce, crafts, food, and other vendors. First Friday includes Floating Art Gallery, Jr. Salmon Auction at 7:00 PM, Cars As Art on display, and Live Music by Brian Ayotte from 5-8 PM.

PARADE- STARTS AT 7:30 on Weed Avenue, disbanding on State Street. No ATV's this year, all other entries are welcome.

FIREWORKS-At school grounds. Vernonia Boosters will serve hot dogs and hamburgers.

ART IN THE WOODS CAMP, JULY 27 THROUGH JULY 31

At the Vernonia Scout Cabin. Campers will be using hand tools to make crafts from the 1850's, and singing, folk dancing, and learning to play the recorder together. Grand finale Friday evening performance for friends and the whole community to enjoy. Teen classes in the afternoon, with the choice of art, singing, drama, and chamber music. Sponsored by Hands on Art.

TRAINING FOR NON-PROFITS, JULY 15, 4:00-8:00 PM

At the Vernonia Community Learning Center, presented by Carol Cheney of TACS.

VERNONIA FRIENDSHIP JAMBOREE AND LOGGING SHOW, AUGUST 7-9

Confirmed Events include: Kids Fishing Derby, Parade, KUPL Concert, Teen Dance, Greenleaf Acting Company Drama presentation, Lawnmower Races, Hands on Art Show, Open Air Market and First Friday, Car Show, Motorcycle Show, Friends of the Library Book Sale, Boosters BBQ, Ridge Riders Play Day, Logging Show, Sunday Morning Worship Service

EVENTS AT STUB STEWART STATE PARK

JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAMS, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK AT 10:00

AM - At the Dairy Creek Amphitheater, Family campground programs will be held at a variety of times Tuesdays – Saturdays.

STAR PARTY!-JULY 18, 2009, 9:30 PM - Join OMSI, Rose City Astronomers and Vancouver Sidewalk Astronomers as we gaze at moon and night sky at Rooster Rock State Park and Stub Stewart State Park. From beginners to experts of all ages, visitors will have the opportunity to view the stars and other objects through a variety of telescopes. Viewing highlights include the moon, the planet Saturn, several star clusters, and more! For possible weather cancellation, call (503) 797-4610 on July 18 after 3:00 PM to get the latest information.

To the Editor

Recently in the two Vernonia papers, there has been a lot of coverage of the Vernonia Police Department (VPD) and the use of a Taser on Elliot S. Graf, 19, of Vernonia. Elliot was intoxicated and apprehended at a party where minors were consuming alcohol and marijuana was present. I doubt very much that the taser was deployed because Mr. Graf calmly put his hands behind his back and complied with lawful orders from Police.

I have read articles that attack VPD, City Council members, and the Interim-Chief Mike Kay; articles on Tasers, and a father's concern for his child. All of these articles have invoked certain questions to readers such as myself that I would like to address.

For instance, why is Mike Kay Interim-Chief? Do we need another police officer in Vernonia? Are City Council member decisions bias by having friends with special interests? Was the use of a Taser on Elliot Graf warranted? Finally why don't citizens police themselves?

First, Mike Kay is Interim-Chief because when the candidates within the department were assessed, he was the most qualified. He was the only sergeant and had 11 years police experience. Currently, he does have college credits just not the required 90 college credits by DPSST which recently enacted a "college rule". He also has not attende the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training "Middle Manager Course" which is 10 days long, a course required through DPSST to be a Chief. He could meet these requirements and eventually become Chief through hard work, time and the blessing of the City Administrator.

Secondly, does Vernonia need another officer? If the citizens want twenty-four hour protection, seven days a week, that is one hundred sixty eight hours. For the safety of the officers there would need to be at minimum two officers on duty increasing the hours to two hundred thirty-six hours. Divide this by four officers and that equates to five, twelve-hour shifts and a partial. This doesn't account for possible over time. Basic hours, that create a workweek too gruelling and long, to be safe. There is an argument that our town shuts down after 10:00 PM and there is no need for a fifth officer. This time line simply does not apply to crime. Thieves, druggies, spouse abusers, and drunk drivers don't punch in at 8:00 AM and then out at 10:00 PM. Vernonia has recently had numerous arrests for ecstasy, heroin, and multiple citations for crimes linked to alcohol. So if a call comes in at 10:02 PM.... For let's say a party. At this party people are highly intoxicated and potentially on illegal substances that could make them more aggressive or even violent. The way things are now, that call would go to a single on-call Officer. That Officer has to drop whatever he is doing, get geared up and go to the call alone. Once he gets there if the situation is out of control, he would need a second Officer. With the recent cuts to Columbia County Sheriff's Office, his best bet would be an OSP Trooper and who knows how far away they might be. These officers uphold the law and protect the innocent. At some point we as a community need to show our appreciation and gratitude for their selflessness.

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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@vernoniasvoice.com or mail to: Letters, PO Box 55, Vernonia, OR 97064.

Readers lend their voices...

To The Editor:

This letter is in response to the June 04, 2009 Letter to the Editor published in The Independent titled, "Does Vernonia Need Five Police Officers?"

I know most people in this community understand the need for police and appreciate the services we provide. But recently our department has been the subject of criticism from a few sources, and I feel the need to write a response.

Does little Vernonia need five cops? Well yes, in my opinion they do! In fact, eight or nine would be best. I'm not sure the author of that letter really understands the facts of what your police and the department does and the types of things they are responsible for. I would like to take this opportunity to explain some of the facts, and offer my opinion on a few other issues.

In the late 90s there were as many as six paid Police Officers employed by the City of Vernonia. Those positions over the years have been slowly whittled away to where they are now. All the added duties and responsibilities now rest in the hands of only four.

The Police Officers often work alone with no hope for a rapid response from outer agencies should one of them need emergency assistance. With future cuts to the Columbia County Sheriff's Office the likelihood of that rapid assistance will be even less available.

As stated in the published letter, these are different times. There are indeed bad people out there, and dangerous drugs on the streets. There are also many petty crimes committed, petty things that take a lot of time for Police to deal with. Although, someone may think the issue is petty, someone else thought it serious enough to call for Police, requiring a response and often times a written report. The author of the letter would lead you to believe that he does not require police services, stating "I've never had a problem I couldn't personally resolve." Actually, public records would show that Vernonia Police have responded to his residence several times in the past few years, including once last month for a disturbance.

In response to the people caught with illegal narcotics. The Vernonia Police Department is proud of all our drug arrests, big and small. In each one of those, illegal narcotics taken off the street could have caused serious physical injury or death if landed in the wrong hands. I don't believe anyone is portraying that any type of drug cartels are moving into town, but we do have a problem that needs attention in this community.

In order to get those narcotics off the streets you have to have Police Officers working the street. Not just police officers, but COPS. Officers that will stop a car at 2:00 AM, alone and possibly out numbered. The Vernonia Drug Coalition recently received a large government grant to help work with youth and combat the drug issues within this community. The most recent Healthy Teen Survey portrayed Vernonia as above the state average on everything: teen drug use, teen pregnancy and violence in the schools were all above the state average. Maybe that is why the department is trying for a school resource officer, someone with resources and trained to work with our youth, not a security guard.

What else do your Police Officers do? Investigate thefts and burglaries. Respond to domestic disputes and disturbances (which are sometimes violent), yet still responding alone most of the time. They also respond to motor vehicle crashes. Deal with fights in bars. Child abuse, animal abuse, underage drinking, criminal trespassing. It is my belief that most Vernonians appreciate having an officer to respond when they encounter these situations. What else? Vandalism, business and home alarms, patrolling for speed enforcement. This is how we spend our time each month.

These are the same officers that are willing to work for lower pay than they could receive in neighboring cities like Rainier and Clatskanie; departments in communities of smaller populations than Vernonia. Both