

Be a Piece of the Puzzle: Because Prevention Works

By DeAnna Pearl, Director of the Vernonia Prevention Coalition



What is prevention? Simply, prevention is an action that stops something from happening. For instance, parents of young children often put door locks on lower cupboards so their toddler and small children can't get to cleaning supplies. Further, parents lock up their guns to prevent accidents.

It's neither hard nor complicated. Most parents have a vision for their child and do anything to support them in achieving their goal. In the seven years I have been working in the field of prevention, not one parent has ever told me, "My vision for my child includes addiction." Often it is the opposite, "I never saw it coming."

There are groups of dedicated people in the Vernonia and surrounding communities that have a vision too! One

of these is the Vernonia Prevention Coalition.

The VPC's vision statement: "Vernonia will become a community where healthy decision-making is fundamental and being drug-free is the norm." **The VPC's mission:** "To develop a safe and healthy neighborhood through collaborative planning, community action, policy advocacy and enforcement."

This coalition, in its 5+ years, has made efforts to reduce the harm of A.T.O.D's (Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs). Some of the efforts include reducing the access of minors to alcohol; reduce the exposure to second-hand smoke of children and their growing lungs; helping enforce A.T.O.D. free spaces in our community; and providing quality programming to educate parents on the effects of drugs and alcohol on the brain. The Coalition has been providing support to parents, grandparents

and providers that help their children to reach their full, uninterrupted potential.

Anyone can be a part of the prevention puzzle. Regardless of what piece you see yourself as, a straight-edge or one with many interlocking sides, it is only together that we can make a whole picture. There is a need for many people to develop an interlocking structure to help support a healthy and safe community.

Do you see yourself being able to support the VPC's vision? Monthly meetings are at 9:00 AM on the first Wednesday of the month at the Vernonia Community Learning Center. Don't see yourself attending meetings? There are many ways to help with prevention efforts: Get informed and then share what you know. During the year, evening informational gatherings will be offered for free. Topics will include dealing with addiction; proper RX disposal, bul-

ly-proofing your kid, parenting classes and more.

Another way to support the Coalition is to attend community functions throughout the year and encourage others as well. If you don't know what is going on, coming soon is a calendar of events on the vpd.vernonia-or.gov website. Open the community page and locate the coalition link. The calendar will be updated regularly.

If you have any questions or comments that can only improve the coalition, please contact DeAnna Pearl, VPC Coordinator and DFC Grant Director at DeAnna@vernonia-or.us or call 503- 369-7370. You can also stop by my office at the Vernonia Community Learning Center. No one piece can stand alone. It takes all of us to complete the puzzle of prevention.

What's the Plan, Stan? A Monthly Update on City Planning

By Seth Lenaerts

The City and County Planning Commissions both unanimously passed a motion to recommend approval for the 22-acre Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) expansion request for the new school site at their respective meetings. At the August 13th City Planning Commission meeting, all seven commissioners voted yes after hearing testimony in favor of the expansion. Carol Connell, the City's Planning Consultant, said no public testimony was given at the County Planning Commission meeting prior to the Commission's approval.

The expansion request now goes to the County Commission and the Vernonia City Council to approve the expansion. The City Council will have the first public hearing Monday, September 8th. At the time of writing, the County had yet to add this item to their agenda.

In the meantime, City staff is addressing the UGB expansion application. The Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) wants more evidence against using the current school site, and they have transportation concerns regarding the proposed site. Carol Connell is working on updating the UGB expansion application and is confident that the updated application will adequately address DLCD's concerns.

As this project illustrates, planning isn't easy. It requires the work of elected officials, public input, government agencies, non-governmental interest

groups and others. One action to make usual planning easier is having community consensus as to where the City wants to go. Often this is called visioning. In my opinion, there is some value to visioning, emphasis on "some." It is a good chance for the community to express frustrations with the current situation and to talk broadly about community aspirations.

The problem with visioning is that too often the "vision" is unattainable, unrealistic, or lacking details. A vision that lacks details can be frustrating for everyone. One alternative model for community planning is called a charette. A charette is similar to visioning, but it differs in important ways. For one, it adds emphasis to bringing in people and groups (often called stakeholders) with differing opinions. Secondly, it brings in specialists who are able to answer questions and explain the technicalities of certain actions. Third, a good charette follows an intensive agenda and is very detail-oriented. Fourth, emphasis is given to create a concise, community-approved plan that includes strategies and objectives to achieve its goals. And lastly, it attempts to create a realistic timeline; unfortunately, realizing plans can be s-l-o-w.

The reason I bring this up, is I have yet to see, find or hear, a concise vision/plan for the future of Vernonia. This creates several issues for your City-- the most obvious being that Vernonia has a serious identity

crisis. So, I pose the question: Vernonia, what do you want to be? Do you want a town that celebrates its logging past? Do you want to be a tourist or tourist recreation-based town? Do you want to be the leading "green" City in Oregon or do you want to be something else?

Sometime in the near future, the Economic Development Committee is planning on meeting and doing a work session to develop strategies that will hopefully yield an applicable detailed plan for Vernonia to reach its future economic goals. Ideally, others will follow this lead and take part in this process. And remember-- it's all in the details!

Most cities, especially small cities, are looking to grow or at least sustain themselves. In the August article of *What's the Plan Stan*, I referenced a study that found that future professionals' first priority is find a city or place that has the amenities that they want. Then they will find a job, etc.

I end this article by asking, why would someone choose to live in Vernonia and what is the image that Vernonia is projecting to the world? Having a clear identity, as well as a realistic plan for the future, will have significant positive impacts for Vernonia.

Until next time, you don't have to be coy Roy, just listen to me.

Geography Matters

By Ben Fousek

This month, I want to talk quickly about the new Vernonia GIS website and volunteer opportunities with the Vernonia GIS. I'll start with volunteer opportunities. We have really turned the corner with the Vernonia GIS. The servers are humming along, a lot of the base data has been collected, and both the city and the public have access to these resources online. But these things will not be enough to make the Vernonia GIS all that it can be. A major component is missing. That component is people. I had a geography professor who said that people were the most important part of a geographic information system. Granted there are plenty of people who are interested in the maps and data which the Vernonia GIS can provide, but there are few interested in being part of the system which provides these services to the city and the citizens of Vernonia. I know it is summer time, and we are enjoying the outdoors and other summer activities. As fall and winter come

along, should you find yourself needing something to do, please consider helping the Vernonia GIS make Vernonia a better place. There are several projects which you could help out with. These projects include collecting and inputting data. Another project includes scanning important city documents into PDFs so that they can be made available to the public online. You don't need any special skills or software to get involved; all that's required is a computer and an internet connection. I will help get you started with software and some training. Another opportunity to help that I think is pretty cool, is on-the-ground mapping. The city is currently working to obtain a hand-held GPS with GIS software installed on it. The first project is going to be the mapping and data collection of all the fire hydrants in Vernonia. The information gathered will be used to determine where new fire hydrants need to be installed and which ones need to be replaced or repaired. Ultimately, the city

will be able to put limited funds where they will have the biggest impact-- as opposed to throwing money around without a good understanding of current conditions or what the real outcome will be. A good example is that \$100-plus water/sewer bill we all get each month; the better part of which goes to pay for a sewer system that is inadequate at best. But I digress. Contact Ben at 429-6115 to find out how you can help or visit the website, which I am going to discuss next.

I have been working on a new website for the Vernonia GIS. It has a new look and is full of geospatial information about Vernonia. The Vernonia GIS is using more of our software capabilities to get important information like flood-zones, zoning and natural resource information out to the public. You will also find other helpful features like the Forms and Documents page which will eventually have all the City of Vernonia forms for permits, development, etc., as well as other important documents that have not been readily available to the public, or city staff, for that matter. The web address is still the same: <http://www.klssurveying.com/vernonia>.

So check it out when you get a chance and keep an eye out for new maps and information. Next month, I will be revealing some interesting information about Vernonia I'm generating through spatial analysis. I sure hope you'll check it out.

PAYROLL PLUS LLC

Full Service Payroll Bookkeeping

Income Tax Preparation (Individual & Small Business)

VERNONIA, OR

Edi Sheldon

503-429-1819

LTC#29629-C

edisheldon@gmail.com