



It's Toy and Joy Time Again

Each year, as the holidays approach, we are reminded that this is the time of year for giving-- the time of year to remember those in need, and help make the season a little brighter for everyone in our community.

The Vernonia Volunteer Fire Department is stepping up again this year and coordinating "Toy and Joy," a program that provides Christmas presents for children in the local community who, without the program, would not have received anything for Christmas.

Applications for the "Toy and Joy"



Volunteers get presents ready for Toy & Joy delivery.

program will be available starting on November 14th, and toys will be delivered on Sunday, December 20th, between 11:00 AM and 8:00 PM. **Applications must be received by December 13th.** Eligible children must be between the ages of 0-14, and be living in the family home. The applying families must reside within the Vernonia Fire District.

This year's program is being organized by volunteers Kathy Wolfe and Janelle Bashaw. "We just want to make a lot of magic happen, a lot of eyes sparkle, and a lot of people happy," said Wolfe, as she and Bashaw were announcing this year's program in late October.

Applications, as well as barrels for

toy donations, will be available at the Vernonia Fire Station, Sentry Market, Black Bear Coffee Shop, and Creatures Pet Store. Completed applications should be returned to the special holiday mailbox located in front of the Fire Station at 555 E. Bridge Street. Letters to Santa can also be dropped in this special mailbox, and will be forwarded on to the North Pole by the firefighters.

"Everything will be out and available on November 13th," said Wolfe.

Toys and gifts are especially needed for the youngest members of our community-- infants and toddlers, and the older eligible children, aged 12-14.

If you would like to make a financial donation to the Toy and Joy Program, checks should be made out to "Toy and Joy" and sent to the Vernonia Fire Department, 555 E. Bridge Street, Vernonia, OR 97064. A gift-wrapping party and potluck is scheduled for

December 19th-- this is a great opportunity for adults in the community to participate and help make Toy and Joy a reality for local kids.

The program will be slightly different from the past two years, due to the large influx of donations that were received immediately after the Flood of December 3, 2007. So many gifts were donated that year from outside sources that a large storage container was set up in the station parking lot, and a large number of gifts were held over and used last year. The large number and types of gifts available were unusual the past two years. "We received donations in 2007 from large corporate donors of things like \$50 gift cards that we were able to provide to children in the community," says Wolfe. "We just don't have the resources this year to distribute those kinds of gifts."

Even so, Wolfe expects local firefighters to make a big impact on the lives of local children again this year at Christmas time. "We expect to spread lots of joy throughout the community on December 20th," she said.

If you need more information about the Vernonia "Toy and Joy" program, you can contact Kathy Wolfe at 503-429-4650, or at 503 804-2844.

UNWC Welcomes Back Salmon Part II: A Closer Look at a Watershed Restoration Project

By Scott Laird

The Upper Nehalem Watershed Council (UNWC), based in Vernonia, has been helping develop and implement watershed restoration projects for many years throughout our local region. A nonprofit, volunteer organization dedicated to the protection, preservation, enhancement and restoration of the Nehalem Watershed, the council helps address watershed management issues and provides a framework for coordination and cooperation among key interests.

Key to the UNWC's work is their role in establishing partnerships and bringing together regional stakeholders like environmental groups, local and regional government agencies, forestry and agricultural interests and local citizens.

One specific focus and concern is the health and viability of local native salmon populations. To that end, this past summer the UNWC helped implement a number of projects that monitored and directly affected local Coho Salmon's ability to find suitable refuge and return to streams that flow directly into the main stem of the Nehalem River.

Maggie Peyton, UNWC Director, with the support of UNWC board of directors, has been responsible for securing millions of dollars in grant funding for various projects, and built partnerships that have continued to work together to develop successful projects.

This past August, Peyton and the UNWC acted as Project

Manager for what was called the "Tweedle Project," to replace two impassable culverts with bridges on Tweedle Road that crosses Tweedle Creek and George Creek in the Jewel area near mile 40 on the Nehalem River. "These culverts were



Work crews install a new bridge near Jewell that will allow better fish passage.

the only barriers to fish passage on either of these streams," said Peyton.

The project brought together the Clatsop County Road Department, and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Department of the Interior, along with local contractors. Peyton was especially happy with the partnership with the Clatsop County Road Department. "They helped oversee the design process, helped with the grant application, they hired the contractors, oversaw the implementation, did some of the paving, and some erosion control, after the fact," said Peyton. "Clatsop County Road Department did an awesome job. Their work was just flawless."

When complete, the project will enhance 2.3 miles of salmon-bearing streams. A major funder of this project, and most of the UNWC's projects, is the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB)-- on this particular project, they contributed over

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New Film Shows Concerns About Gas Drilling

A new documentary film, *Split Estate*, was recently aired on the Green Planet channel during the month of October. The film, presented by Red Rock Films, explores concerns around natural gas drilling and mineral rights ownership, and the social and environmental impacts and effects this loosely regulated industry is having in communities where they are at work. The film, since its initial showing on October 13, has generated quite a buzz on the internet.

Recently, gas drilling has begun near Vernonia in the Mist/Birkenfeld area where mineral rights leases have been signed by local residents.

The film focuses on Colorado and New Mexico,

but points out that natural gas drilling activities are expanding all over the United States. It explores concerns about drinking water contamination, loss of civil liberties, and health issues.

In addition to being shown on television, some local communities where gas drilling is being considered are taking a somewhat unconventional approach and obtaining their own DVD copies of the film. It has been shown publicly at local schools, churches, and restaurants.

For more information on this controversial and informative film, go to splitestate.com, or to view other news articles about the issue, search "split estate" on the internet.