

The House the Roberts Family Built

Recently I went out for a photo shoot for Yard of the Month, an award that is given by Vernonia Pride to recognize exceptional landscaping in our community. The awards are given monthly to residents and

themselves-- hauling the cement stones for the retaining walls by hand and building the garden beds, stone stairway, and back yard.

On that first visit, Janelle had to leave after our tour of the yard. But Tera seemed anxious to show off the inside of the house, so I took the tour that Tera offered, getting to see and hear about an equally impressive story-- the renovation Tera and her children have done over the last four years. I decided to return and do a feature story on Tera, her children and the home they are creating for themselves.

Tera Roberts and her husband moved to Vernonia in 1995 with four children and a fifth on the way. The 100-year-old house they bought had a finished 950 square foot upstairs with three bedrooms and one bathroom and a full day-

light basement.

Three more children were added to the family, including Gabriel, who was born with a congenital heart defect, and now lives with a pacemaker. In 2003, the house showed signs of slipping off the hill. Tera received a grant from Community Action Team to stabilize the foundation, remove the east side of the home and add 600 square feet to the house. Work began in 2004-- the house was gutted, the foundation work completed, and the addition framed, though the house was not insulated or sheetrocked by the fall of 2004.

In October of 2004, Tera and her husband separated and went through a difficult divorce that lasted two years.

Tera found herself a single mother of eight young children-- having to find a way to take care of her family and complete the home renovations. She decided to go back to school to earn a nursing degree, starting at Portland Community College in January of 2005. Due to Gabriel's medical condition, he qualified for Social Security and a grant from the Fairhaven

Trust Fund, which was used to purchase sheetrock and retaining block to help stabilize the backyard dirt.

Tera took loans and grants to get started in school. She also applied for and received significant grants from the Soroptimist International Organization, which supports women as heads of households and the Ford Family Foundation, which has a restart scholarship program for heads of households wishing to return to college. In 2006, Tera was accepted into the OHSU Nursing program, one of twenty-four people chosen from 924 applicants, and with the various grant funding was able to continue fixing the family home.

With occasional help from knowledgeable friends, Tera and the children installed sheetrock and finished walls, laid tile, installed appliances and fixtures, built cement countertops, and completely landscaped the yard. They have added and finished two bedrooms and a bathroom in the basement.

Tera graduated from OHSU Magna Cum Laude and recently started the graduate program there to earn a Doctor of Nursing. Her two oldest children, Brittanie and Gavin, have graduated from Vernonia High School and are attending PSU and PCC on scholarships.

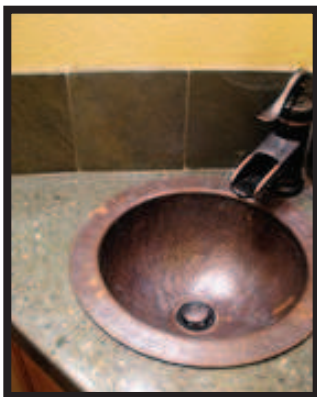
Tera Roberts and her family have stuck together through some tough times, have kept a positive attitude, even when things have been really hard, and have built a home that is comfortable and beautiful.



The Roberts family L to R: Gavin 18, Dezi 14, Tera, Odessa 8, Sierra 17, Jocie 12, Mason 15, Brittanie 20 and Gabe 9.

businesses who exemplify pride in our community by showing extra special care in how they tend their yards and gardens. Janelle Thomas Cedergreen, who chooses the winners each month, and I met at the home of Tera Roberts on Bridge Street, to look over her garden, which Janelle had chosen as Runner-up for the month of August. Tera showed us her gardens at the front of the house and then took us around the side, down a steep stone stairway, with terraced gardens and Oregon Flagstone walkways, to a grassy backyard with retaining walls and more terraced beds. Janelle was shocked! Because the house is built into a steep hill, she had not even noticed the beautiful side garden and back yard from the street when she first noticed the Roberts property. In fact, Janelle was so impressed that she named Tera Roberts the Yard of the Month winner for September.

Tera explained to Janelle and me that she and her children, all eight of them, had done all the landscaping



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VERNONIA PREVENTION COALITION

Upcoming Meetings

First Wednesday of each month at the Vernonia Community Learning Center at 9:00 AM.

Open to the public, input is welcome.

November 4th
December 2nd

Be a piece of the puzzle.

Coming in December:
"Conducting Underage Drinking Investigations"

Featuring Travis Bruyer, nationally recognized for his efforts in addressing the issue of underage drinking.

This course provides an informative "how to" approach to conducting illegal alcohol use investigations. Cost: \$95.00
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To register email us at:
www.accjt.org or call 406-241-6150

For more information contact:
DeAnna Pearl, VPC Director 503-369-7370