



Who's On Your List This Holiday

You'll Find Something for Everyone in Vernonia

By Scott Laird

I know some of you type A's out there are probably already finished with your holiday shopping. You're the ones who actually have time to sit down, relax at this time of the year and take the time to read parts of this publication. So I may be talking to the wrong audience here. You guys probably already have those gifts wrapped and already have your tree up, don't you?

But just in case you're one of us that hasn't finished your shopping, or maybe haven't started yet, this is my chance to remind you that when heading out to shop, don't forget to visit your local merchants here in Vernonia-- or in your own town, if you live somewhere else.

I recently came across a group and their website called The 3/50 Project. Their goal-- saving the bricks and mortars our country is built on. Here's their pitch: What would happen if

each of us picked 3 local businesses each month and spent a total of \$50 between those businesses? According to the 3/50 people, for every \$100 spent in locally owned independent stores, \$68 returns to the community through taxes, payroll and other expenditures, as opposed to only \$43 if you spend your money at a chain. Spending money locally can have a very real, significant impact on a local economy.



Just one holiday gift idea that you can purchase from local merchants in Vernonia.

This concept can be used year round, but can be especially significant during the holiday season, when so many of us are spending money that isn't in our

continued on page 14

Is Vernonia Prepared for Winter?

The last three years have seen significant weather events in the Vernonia region, prompting significant response from area Emergency Management officials. High winds and power outages in 2006 and 2007, a devastating flood in December of 2007, and paralyzing snows and flood threats in 2008 and 2009 have left residents anxious. City officials are reviewing management plans and gathering resources as we head into another winter. Some heavy rainstorms and flood warnings in early November put the community on alert and reminded everyone that the time to prepare for weather events is upon us, again. Everyone is wondering what to expect this year.

New City Administrator Bob Young and new Police Chief Frank Grace have not been through a Vernonia winter before. *Vernonia's Voice* sat down with Young and Chief Grace to ask them about the city's preparations for winter. Do they feel they are ready?

According to Young and Grace, the city has an Emergency Hazard Operations Plan in place. The last time it was updated was in 2005. Chief Grace has now completed a draft re-writing of the plan. "This has been one of my priorities-- to get that plan updated," said Young.

Chief Grace reminded citizens that the City plan is really a Hazard Mitigation Plan, and is in place not just to deal with winter weather emergencies, but other potential events including fire, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, nuclear incidents, drug labs, and drought.

The past few years have been a clear indication that in the event of an emergency, a couple of things happen. One is that we are potentially

continued on page 5

Vernonia Approves School Bond

The balloons lining Bridge Street from the current Vernonia schools up the hill to Spencer Field said it all. Vernonia is moving towards new schools.

In a strong show of support, Vernonia voters on Tuesday, November 3, approved School Bond Measure 5-197. The bond approves the sale of \$13 million in bonds to help build replacement schools for the buildings that were damaged in the December 2007 Flood.

With a 67% turnout, voters approved the measure by a 22% margin of victory-- 61% for and 39% against.

The passage of the bond sets the stage for additional fundraising that will be needed to complete the estimated \$37 million project.

A celebration was held at Spencer Field on Wednesday, November 4, the planned site of the new school building, which will house grades K-12.

"Today we're going to celebrate, and tomorrow we're going to roll up our sleeves and start working again," said Columbia County Commissioner and Vernonia resident, Tony Hyde.

Selected students and staff, the school band and local and regional dignitaries attended the celebration. Later, a rally was held in the Vernonia High School Gym, with all students and staff in attendance.

"What we have here today is a very resounding message from the community that we are stepping into the future. And we're going to invest in our community," said Commissioner Hyde at the Spencer Field celebration.

Among the dignitaries in attendance was The Ford Family Foundation representative Tom Gallagher and State Senator Betsy Johnson, who brought greetings from Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski.

"The voters spoke very clearly last night," said Senator Johnson, in her

own personal remarks. "They stood up for the future of this town, they stood



Vernonia school students celebrate the passage of School Bond Measure 5-197 at Spencer Field.

up for the kids, they made an investment in opportunity. This is the beginning of the rebirth of a great place in Oregon."

Johnson then read from a letter from Governor Kulongoski. "Citizens of Vernonia-- Congratulations on coming together to pass this critical measure that represents the beginning of a new and bright future for your community. I know this wasn't easy, especially during such difficult economic times. But your commitment and investment in education is exactly where we should be focusing our efforts, so our students and our state are well positioned for the recovery ahead. Your community has been through some very trying times. But today marks a new beginning and a brighter future. Please know you have a partner in this state to help make this community thrive once again. Congratulations on a job well done. Ted Kulongoski, Governor of the State of

continued on page 16

inside



8
city
news



16
santa's
coming!



17
the sun
spot opens

Town Hall December 3rd, 2009

It's been two years since the flood of 2007 made Vernonia "Oregon's New Orleans". Thursday, December 3rd, the Vernonia School District and the City of Vernonia will sponsor a Town Hall Meeting from 7:00 to 8:00 PM in the Middle School Cafeteria. We will mark the second anniversary of the December 3, 2007 flood by sharing both the latest updates and dessert as we meet to provide the community with a status report.

We will be sharing the latest information on the new school design and the evolving funding strategy. We will also discuss a potential

partnership with the city of Vernonia concerning the wastewater sewer system upgrade and the district's need for wetland mitigation, and finally there will be some timely information on emergency preparedness and how the city is preparing for another winter.

Please come and join us for dessert as we share information on where we are heading and the progress that is being made. There will also be an opportunity for you to get your questions answered.

--Dr. Ken Cox, Superintendent
Vernonia School District