

## The John Brown Project: Turning Vernonia Memories Into Songs

Musicians take book of local poetry and make music with Vernonia at its core. They will be performing at this year's Salmon Festival on October 2nd.

By Scott Laird

There has been something special in the air around Vernonia this past spring and summer. It's music-- music with its roots in the hills and trees and the logging camps. Music with its words and notes inspired by the town, by the people, by the mill and by the history of Vernonia. Words and songs and stories that were written years ago, but are finding new life and new audiences. Music that is being revived as Vernonia celebrates and honors its history.

In July, Hobe Kytr and Dave Berge, who once played together in a band called "Timberbound," returned to Vernonia to perform songs from their "Dog Salmon and Rutabagas" CD-- songs about the Pacific northwest that relive the logging camp days. This summer, a reunion was also held in Keasey where the members of "Timberbound" reunited after almost thirty years to record songs written by John Cunnick and his wife, Kim. Kim returned from Costa Rica to join Kytr and Berge and Mark Loring to play the songs that were conceived when Kim and John lived in a cabin in Keasey in the 1970's before John's tragic death in a car accident. More recently, musician Joe Seamons, who grew up listening to the music of Kytr and Berge and who has also been inspired by John and Kim Cunnick's music as well Woody Guthrie's songs that he wrote about Oregon while employed by the BPA, performed with his band "Renegade Minstrels" in Vernonia.

And at the Vernonia Friendship Jamboree this year, a new band arrived on the scene-- "The John Brown Project," which has taken the poems of long-time Vernonia resident John Brown and recorded them as music. It seems like music and magic is in the air all around Vernonia.



Eric Kotila and Kris Stuart of The John Brown Project

The first time I met Eric Kotila and Kris Stuart, the two people most responsible for "The John Brown Project," was in the lobby of the Vernonia City Hall. I was making a quick stop before heading to help set up the May 2010 First Friday-- Vernonia's monthly celebration of the Arts. Eric and Kris were standing and talking with some city staff and introduced themselves as musicians who had written songs about Vernonia and were looking for places to play their music. I asked them if they might want to stop by First Friday later that evening and play. Which they did.

And that was how I was introduced to "The John Brown Project"-- what has become an almost mystical collaboration of words, music, and relationships.

*I don't know where whistles go  
when mills have to shut down  
but Vernonia lost it's heartbeat  
When it lost that familiar sound  
- "Mill Whistle"*

continued on page 10

**School Town Hall Sept. 28  
at 7PM Vernonia School Cafeteria**

## inside



**9**  
local  
saw mill



**12**  
world  
champion



**18**  
hello kitty

## Local Watershed Council Busy with Projects

By Scott Laird

The Upper Nehalem Watershed Council (UNWC), based in Vernonia, has spent a very busy spring and summer coordinating numerous activities and projects. A few projects were focused on the East Fork of the Nehalem River sub-basin and were scheduled to be completed throughout the fall, helping the council meet its goals of the protection, preservation, enhancement and restoration of the Nehalem River Watershed and also reminding the Council of their roots.

According to Executive Director Maggie Peyton, the recent projects that the UNWC have helped facilitate have been

made possible, in part, because of all the temperature and turbidity survey work the UNWC Council has documented over the last few years. Turbidity measures the amount of sediment in a stream and is a simple test of water quality. River monitoring over the last few years has shown that the Nehalem River shows elevated levels of turbidity and becomes too hot in the summer, potentially endangering the ability of juvenile Coho salmon to survive. This work, in addition to data collected using Rapid Bio-Assessment surveys to assess summer rearing and over-winter survival numbers in the basin, is validating the need for the projects that the UNWC is promoting and implementing.



Workers place a new 24 foot wide culvert with a natural stream bed bottom on Elk Creek.

continued on page 19

## Change at the Vernonia Health Clinic: What Does It Really Mean?

By Scott Laird

In the August 24th issue of *Vernonia's Voice*, we included a message from the Vernonia Health Center Board of Directors (VHCB) concerning their exploring the possibility of ending their relationship with Providence Health Services and entering into a new partnership with Coastal Family Health Center as a Federal Qualified Health Center (FQHC). This change in health care service providers could be significant for many reasons and has raised numerous questions and concerns among local residents who access their health care through the local Providence Clinic. It also raises the question of what will happen to local jobs that are currently held by local Providence employees.

The following is more detailed information about why the VHCB may choose to end its relationship with Providence Health Services, what is required for the VHCB to enter into a new partnership, and more information about Coastal Family Health Center and what they expect to bring to Vernonia.

### Who is the Vernonia Health Center Board?

The Vernonia Health Center Board is made up of Vernonia community members: Carolyn Keasey, Marie Krahn, Bob Wagner, Wendy Sears, Darlene McLeod, Barb Ervin, Cynthia Watts, Ralph Keasey, Phillip Darrah, Rebecca McGaugh, and Heather Lewis. Debbie Snook is the Executive Director.

The mission of the Vernonia Health Center is to participate, as far as circumstances may warrant, in any activity designed and carried on to promote the general health of the community with highly qualified primary and preventive health care services and a professional medical staff; to do so without concern of individual's financial situations.

continued on page 15