

# Governor Salutes Vernonia's Efforts *continued from front page*

project into a reality."

Interim City Administrator Bill Haack discussed the various projects happening within the City such as the Rose Avenue Project. He also mentioned that the City was able to get an extension of an existing CDBG award to 2013 and doubling the funds available from a half million dollars to 1.2 million dollars for the engineering on the Waste Water Project. Sharon Bernal, Bond Committee Chair, talked about the school bond that was raised and thanked a number of people who helped make the bond passing possible.

Dan Brown, Director of the Flood Recovery with Community Action Team, informed the group that they have

said that the "11.2 million dollars is more than just a financial achievement, and represents a tremendous, committed and coordinated effort on the part of FEMA leadership, Senators and Congressmen, local leadership, the school district and many others. Kitzhaber said he feels so strongly about the value the Oregon Solutions approach can bring to communities across the State that he has asked his Regional Solutions Director, Greg Wolf, to bring this same kind of coordinated presence to every corner of Oregon. He added, "Vernonia is a model that we can look to as we go forward."

Ken Murphy, FEMA Region 10 Director, reminded Vernonians that they cannot change whether or not they

as well as environmental success, but most of all it is about community sustainability. It is about "Sustainable Recovery."

Columbia County Commissioner Tony Hyde continued Senator Johnson's thoughts on

sustainability by adding that we in Vernonia have the opportunity to set the tone for the state and nation. He said, "With that comes a large responsibility. We do not want to lose sight of an opportunity that is afforded us today." He further commented that we have opportunity to not only rebuild our school and community but also to take advantage of our natural resources and bring us to the next level in terms of research and development for forest products.

Hyde noted that, because of the intervention and waiver that came through our Federal Delegates and the constant case made by Dennis Sigrist of Oregon Emergency Management, Vernonia was able to parlay \$500,000 into the 11.2 million dollars we know today.

Mayor Josette Mitchell thanked the Governor and guests. She reiterated that this grant has created a great opportunity for the community. She described the new park plans and stated the total park area will be approximately

177 acres that will run from Rock Creek all the way to Vernonia Lake. Potential uses will offer recreation, environmental education, and other park amenities to our citizens and visitors. She announced the City is seeking additional funding for



Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber took part in a ceremonial tree planting during his recent visit to Vernonia. Photos by Alan MacComb.



740 clients in the database. So far, they have helped about 600 of those through small and large projects combined. They have acquired 30 homes and have done 24 home elevations. They have an additional 20-30 home acquisitions and another 25 home elevations to do as well.

Continuing the celebration outside, Dr. Cox, guests and community members welcomed Governor Kitzhaber. The Governor expressed his appreciation for being invited to the celebration by Senator Betsy Johnson. He also saluted everyone who helped bring about the grant. He recalled the challenges that communities in Oregon faced and overcame after the 1996 floods. As a result of those floods, the Oregon Solutions concept was first born. He recognized Tony Hyde for his efforts on behalf of the City of Vernonia and Oregon. Kitzhaber commended the community for rallying immediately after the flood to ensure they emerged whole.

Kitzhaber stated he was "proud to say that the Vernonia Oregon Solutions effort is probably the best example we have of how it ought to work." He also


will flood again, but they can change the outcome. He commented that Oregon is a leader and that this story will be told many times across our nation. Vernonia was inspired to recover and should step back and take a look at its accomplishments. Vernonia is a great story because it takes the whole community to make things like this happen. Vernonia exemplifies what a community can do when they put their minds to it.

He ended his sentiments with a challenge: "Don't stop with what you are doing! Keep working and doing things that will make your community better. I am very proud of you and you should be proud, too."

Murphy also presented Mayor Josette Mitchell with a Whole Community Commendation in recognition of the residents of Vernonia for their efforts in recovering from the severe flooding in December, 2007.

Senator Betsy Johnson spoke about how people overuse the word sustainability. She said that Vernonia has come up with a new definition that she likes a lot. It is about economic

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