

## Vernonia Grange Gets a Facelift

Members of the Vernonia Grange and other community members are excited by the some of the new ac-



Vernonia Grange member Carol McIntyre helped paint the interior of the Grange Hall

tivities happening at the Grange building on North Street in Vernonia.

A group of dedicated volunteers spent the weekend of September 23-25 prepping and painting the main hall, constructing new covers for stage front, cleaning out closets and generally sprucing things up. Prior to that work weekend, one of the restrooms got a makeover with new paint, new trim and handrail, and new sink skirt and curtain.

Next up is another workday scheduled for October 22 which will focus on the kitchen. Volunteers are working to get the gas stove in working order, clean up a newly donated refrigerator, clean out the cabinets and generally organize the kitchen so it is available for use by the membership and for community events and for rental.

Several new community activities have been taking place over the last few months in the old hall, including yoga classes taught by Britt Bensen Steele, who has helped organize much of the clean-up effort. Three community Contra Dances have also taken place; a



Grange and community members celebrated the spruced up interior of the Vernonia Grange Hall with a potluck and Contra Dance on October 7th.

pot luck dinner was held before the dance on October 7<sup>th</sup> to help celebrate the harvest season and the new look of the Grange.

Grange members are hoping to host more community activities and put the building to good use.

"We look forward to the Grange being an even more beautiful place for us to meet as a community, as families, and as a dedicated support system

for agriculture, community and the rich and vital history the National and local Grange can offer," said Steele. "I am so honored to have the expertise, dedication, and experience of all who have kept this beautiful organization and building in Vernonia alive."

For more information about getting involved with the Vernonia Grange contact Britt Bensen Steele at [bbensensteele@gmail.com](mailto:bbensensteele@gmail.com).

## WOEC Hosts Open House

West Oregon Electric Cooperative held an Open House on September 30, 2011, giving their members and community a chance to see the interior of their new headquarters.

WOEC General Manager Marc Farmer proudly led tours of the facility, which was only recently completed. According to Farmer the project was finished on time and on budget,—at just under \$3 million.



The Lineman's Lounge in the new WOEC headquarters provides a place for employees to take a break and even spend the night during long power outages

heritage. But it didn't cost a lot of money."

Staff spent the first weeks of September moving into the new facility. WOEC currently employs twenty-four people. Five Star Builders, Inc. from Banks, OR was the General Contractor on the construction project.

The building sits out of the flood plain and has been built to new seismic code standards and is designed to withstand a category 4 seismic event. The old headquarters facility was flooded in both 1996 and 2007 suffering over one million dollars in damages.

Farmer explained that much of the labor and work on the new facility came from local workers and Co-op members and notes one example—Vernonia resident Alan McComb and sons built all the cabinets and counters.

One of the highlights of the new building is the cedar siding on the exterior of the building. Farmer explained that the original plans called for a metal sid-



ed building but Five Star Builders came up with the idea of buying a portable saw mill and milling their own lumber—saving the project about \$44,000, and giving it a beautiful look. The timber used in the project came from the property of a local members and member, Clint Jackson, did the mill work.

Farmer is also proud of the fact that much of the interior furnishings and fixtures have been reused from the previous building, including doors, toilets, desks, chairs, filing cabinets and more. Counter tops in one work area were fashioned from solid wood doors that didn't fit in the new building.

According to Farmer the new building was designed to provide a better work flow for employees and contains

several amenities that had been missing from the old facility. The new facility provides locker rooms and showers for workers, a separate lunch room, two conference rooms and two futons for overnight stays in the lineman's lounge.

Farmer says the large conference room adjacent to the lobby will be available to the community for meetings. The truck bays were designed and built with the idea that they could be used as emergency shelter for the community in case of a natural disaster. The facility also contains an extra-large emergency generator.

"The whole idea of this facility is that it is not just for West Oregon Electric's purposes—it is going to be for the community," said Farmer.

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