

# Six Annual Events Showcase Vernonia

## Part II: Vernonia's Spirit of Christmas and Christmas in the Country Bazaar

By Jill Hult

Too early to think about Christmas? Not for the organizers of these two spirit-filled events! Continuing the series on events that bring our community together as well as inviting tourists in to share, Vernonia's Spirit of Christmas and Christmas in the Country Bazaar are great ways to celebrate the season.

### Vernonia's Spirit of Christmas:

Two years ago the Spirit of Christmas was originally started as a project of the Downtown Business Association as a way to bring businesses together. Now, the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual event is under the direction of the Vernonia Area Chamber of Commerce. The event is open to any organization that would like to get involved which means there are opportunities for public awareness, fund-raising, and recruitment. It also means there is always a need for individuals to volunteer and help out too.

The Chamber of Commerce spearheads the event but most activities are actually the efforts of separate groups, individuals, and organizations in Vernonia who dedicate themselves to creating a piece of Christmas spirit for everyone. The core number of volunteers organizing the event is typically around 10 with many additional volunteers decorating the town or working during the activities of the day.

The event does not currently have a collective budget with expenditures and revenues. If anything, the biggest expense is time. The next would be in advertising and printing. Each organization or individual takes on the responsibility of their own budgeting as well as fund-raising opportunities for their activities. Organizers of each activity are free to implement entry fees or suggested donations which help pay for contest awards, supplies, and other normal operating costs.

The festivities, which are scheduled for the first Saturday in December, typically include a lighted truck parade, storytelling, a live nativity scene, Christmas tree lighting, Dickens carolers, decorating downtown, baking contest, snowball dance, hot cocoa and cider, and a fruit cake fling. More activities are being considered for this year as well.

I asked Nicole Larke what, if any, challenges this event encounters? Nicole stated, "Weather is a challenge because you never know what it will be doing and it is a cold time of year." She

would also like to see more activities which would expand this event into an all day festival but another challenge is in getting people to attend more activities other than the parade or Christmas tree lighting. It is a good event to come out with family and friends to get into the Christmas spirit. Any more events, ideas, and volunteers are welcomed.

Planning meetings started in October and will be held once a week on Fridays at Noon in Mariolino's restaurant. Decorating the downtown corridor is scheduled for the weekend immediately following the Thanksgiving holiday. This year that will be November 24, 2012. If you are interested in participating as a volunteer, organization, or simply have a great idea to add, please contact either Nicole Larke at 503-701-5928 or DeAnna Pearl at 503-369-7370.

### Christmas in the Country Bazaar:

For the last couple of years The Spirit of Christmas has been held on the same weekend as the Christmas in the Country Bazaar and organizers of both events would like to see that happen again in the future but this year the events are held on different weekends.

The Christmas in the Country Bazaar will be held Saturday, December 8 and Sunday, December 9, 2012.

It is an exciting year for organizers Corrie Smith and Angela Wolfe as they prepare the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual event to be held in the new Vernonia Schools commons area!

Corrie Smith took over organizing the event in 2003 and quickly recruited her friend Angela to help out. They both said they work well together and have divided the tasks of organizing the event to fit each other's strengths. When I asked them if there was a need for volunteers they both agreed the need for volunteers is in the actual set-up before the event and clean-up after the event. Tasks could include moving tables, carrying items in, and general help for vendors. Like most volunteer activities they recruit family members to help out as well.

This event, much like the Spirit of Christmas, does not have a complicated budget. Most expenses come in the form of facilities rental, postage, copies, paper, advertising signage, etc. They will typically spend money out of pocket and then reimburse those expenses after the event.

Corrie and Angela solicit ven-

dors from a variety of sources such as their vendor list from past events, word of mouth, festivals guide, and facebook page. They send out an invitation letter that details dates and location, table sizes, fees, cancellation policy, registration form, and other policies including: all items must be homemade. Corrie and Angela stated it is important to them to keep it a homemade craft bazaar and do not wish to venture into the commercial sales market.

Vendors come from Vernonia and other parts of the state; some as far away as Grants Pass. Space rental and table are \$30.00. In the past, average participation has been around 55 vendors. This year there will be much more space to work with so Corrie and Angela are hoping to see more vendors.

The event works with the Vernonia Boosters and all proceeds go to funding things like scholarship awards for VHS students. Boosters sell food at the event and it is also a great time for other school groups and other non-profits to do a good portion of their fundraising in order to continue doing good work for the kids and the community.

Corrie and Angela said they are excited to have the new venue with a larger space and that this year will be a year to learn how many more vendors they can accommodate. It will also be a time to see what new challenges come up. A concern is that the bazaar has always been held in the very visible downtown area and now will be just a bit off the main highway. They hope to advertise enough with flyers and signage to make sure everyone knows the event is still here. Corrie said, "Most of the challenges we are thinking we might face are actually good problems to have." They

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reflecting the spirit of our community

**Publisher and Managing Editor**  
**Scott Laird**  
**503-367-0098**  
**scott@vernoniasvoice.com**

**Contributors**  
Lynn Berry  
Mark Brown  
Dr. Kenneth Cox  
Jill Hult  
Dr. Carol McIntyre  
Jennifer Moloney  
Peter Nelson  
Diana Peach  
DeAnna Pearl  
Gayle Rich-Boxman  
Sarah Rossi  
Christopher Sedlmeyer  
Michal Smith  
Sonia Spackman

**Photography**  
Scott Laird  
Peter Nelson  
Gayle Rich-Boxman  
Larry Snethen

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also added it would be nice to see an element of entertainment return with much more space and the ability to utilize the stage.

If you would like to know how to become a vendor or to find out about volunteer opportunities with the Christmas in the Country Bazaar please email vernoniabazaar@aol.com.

**Alumni Volleyball**  
**Friday, November 16th, 7pm**  
**Come watch VHS Alumni take on the 2012 Varsity Volleyball team at the VHS gym. Donations accepted. All proceeds benefit the Zack Rumboltz Memorial Scholarship Fund.**

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