

from the editor

On Monday November 19, 2012 Vernonia and the surrounding area got its first winter weather scare when heavy rains drenched the town throughout the very early morning and into the afternoon, sending local rivers, streams and creeks rising, some of them out of their banks.

The winds that accompanied the driving rains made the morning seem eerily familiar to those of us who were here on December 3, 2007. The intensity and duration of the rain, the timing of the storm and the way the water accumulated so quickly certainly caught my attention. As the rain continued to fall in sheets, blown by the driving wind, with more heavy rain in the forecast, I started to get worried. With Thanksgiving just days away, I was afraid Vernonia was about to see another holiday ruined, just like Christmas in 2007. It felt a little too familiar.

I know almost every year since 2007 this community has seen nasty winter weather that has threatened to send the rivers overflowing into our streets, homes and businesses. And I know that most of you who have lived here longer than I have say this happens almost every year—the waters rise up close to flooding and then they recede—and nothing bad comes from it.

But it is still hard to control that gut reaction that happens for those who were affected by the waters in 2007—and for those of us who care about our friends and neighbors who could be impacted in a flood.

One thing that was different this time was that many of us were able to watch the river gauges online as well as receive updates from others receiv-

ing current information and data. There was some reassurance in knowing what was happening with river levels and how quickly the water was rising. As the water level surged past earlier projections of where and when the river level would peak—first 10 feet, then 11 feet, then 12 feet—things started to look real serious by early afternoon. The ability to monitor the situation offered some relief, especially for those commuters who were working out of town.

When the rain started to let up around 2:00 PM and the dark clouds started to lighten, it looked like we were going to dodge a major event. The waters continued to rise through the afternoon, cresting at well above 13 feet and causing some flooding, especially along Bear Creek in town and out Timber Road way. Mostly it was minor, although not for those who were affected. Fortunately we did not have to deal with evacuations in the dark.

As I was working outside in the driving rain early in the day to unplug a storm water pipe that helps drain the standing water from my property, I realized something else significantly different about this weather event. I felt a deep sense of peace knowing that so many of my neighbors throughout the community would not have to deal with the horrors of a flooded home, thanks to all the elevations and buyouts of houses that have been accomplished over the last few years. Right now in my neighborhood around State Street there are several lifts which have just been completed and several more homes which are in the air. It was such a relief to know that, in the event of continued rain, I would not have to worry about whether my

immediate neighbor needed assistance, but could instead worry about my own property. It was good to know that so many other neighbors would probably be available to assist others who were less fortunate and still sitting in the danger zone. It was comforting to know that so many families would not be impacted the way they were in 2007.

Coincidentally, there was a City Council meeting the evening of November 19 and on the agenda was a public hearing to discuss the impact that Community Development Block Grant Recovery Funds have had in Vernonia and Columbia County. These funds were secured through Community Action Team and used to help elevate and buy-out homes damaged in the 2007 flood. Eighty homes were assisted through the program; thirty-one homes were elevated, seventeen were rehabed, thirty-one homes were bought out, along with one business.

Many other families have used other resources, including their own funds, to elevate their homes above the high water mark, meaning many less people in our community are vulnerable to high water.

Yes, there are still homes that are in danger of being flooded the next time we have a flood event. But we have made a significant dent in the housing stock that would be impacted. The next time this town is flooded—and it is only a matter of time—things will be different. Very different

The folks at Community Action Team have worked very hard over the last five years to find resources, develop programs, and work with home owners in order to make our community and our families safer. No, not everyone was able to receive help, but a large number of families were.

The storm on November 19 was a clear reminder that, if you were look-

VERNONIA'S
voice
reflecting the spirit of our community

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ing for something to be thankful for this month, you didn't need to look any further than this.

Scott Laird
Editor and Publisher



Happy Hour Mon-Fri 4-7
Lady's Night Wed 5-12

"STILL BIKER FRIENDLY"

EVENTS
Nov. 30-Dec 1
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Dec. 15
Texas Hold 'Em
Dec 22
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Check our Facebook page for daily specials and upcoming events
756 Bridge Street, Vernonia 503-429-5841

VERNONIA ALUMNI

Vernonia's new K-12 school is now open and is quite impressive, however the athletic fields and facilities are not yet complete. As Vernonia Alumni, we need to step up to the plate and help finish the job. We ask you to join your fellow Alumni by contributing to this important cause.

A "SPORTS INITIATIVE" fund through the Vernonia Education Foundation (VEF) has been established. At the October 19 Homecoming football game a check was presented to the VEF for \$3500 which we have collected so far. Please join us and show your support for the students and staff of the Vernonia School District and the entire Vernonia community.

You may send your tax deductible donation to:
The Vernonia Education Foundation
 1201 Texas Avenue
 Vernonia, OR 97064

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