

from the editor

On Saturday December 8, 2012 our community tragically lost another young person, we personally lost a friend our very good friend lost his son.

Charles Colburn was in his early twenties and lived life fully and on the edge. His impish smile and mischievous eyes let you know that he was always up to something. His attitude was infectious and his curiosity contagious. He was loved by many, many people.

Our hearts are aching for a father who has lost his son too early and for the sudden loss of a friend.



I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all of our loyal readers, our contributors and our advertisers who have given this newspaper their trust, confidence and support over the five years that *Vernonia's Voice* has been in operation. Your continued belief in our vision for your community newspaper has been overwhelming and it has helped us survive in a competitive market and through tough economic times.

The Independent recently published their Farewell Edition. Independent Publisher Clark McGaugh and I have had our differences over the last five years but I have often felt that our opposing points of view have been good for our community; a community we both cherish and care about. Varying points of view are vital to a democracy and to transparency in government.

When we initially started *Vernonia's Voice* we set out with a philosophy that we would reach out and find positive stories happening in our community. We wanted to create a publication that would make people feel good about living in Vernonia and highlight the vibrancy and resiliency that we saw each and every day. A publication that would meet the needs and reflect the spirit of this community.

In my view, a small town, community newspaper needs to be much more than just the watchdog of local government. Yes, that is one role, but it is not the only role. I believe a small local newspaper should be about building the community up. It should be about getting information about activities that are happening out to the public. It should be about supporting our schools and our youth, about supporting civic organizations and about creating a positive atmosphere. And mostly it should

be about building relationships within the community.

Over the last five years we have worked very hard to create relationships with our schools, including the administration, the faculty, the staff, the students and parents. We have built partnerships with and helped local organizations publish information and stories about their activities; organizations like the Vernonia Rural Fire Prevention District, The Lions Club, The Vernonia Prevention Coalition, HandsOn Art, The Vernonia Health Board, The Vernonia Boosters, the PTA, the Vernonia Library, and many more. We have worked with local business to try to support their endeavors with feature articles and press releases. And we have worked with local government to try to keep the citizens informed.

To me, this is what a community newspaper is supposed to do: go out into the community and talk to people about the activities they are involved in. Report on the undertakings that help make this a special place to live. Encourage people to get involved and participate in their community.

I am concerned that with *The Independent* having gone out of business, some people will feel their voices and some points of view will not be heard. I want to encourage everyone in our community to make use of our Letters to the Editor column to send us your opinions; we want to hear your thoughts, concerns, questions and criticisms. I would also welcome any and all writers to send us their ideas. I continue to be interested in reflecting the entire community.

There are many things I would like to say in response to Mr. McGaugh's final statements in the final edition of *The Independent*. His interpretation of some of the things I've written about over past years is, I believe, somewhat skewed. But honestly, I don't believe the people in this community really need to hear any more about the disagreement between myself and Mr. McGaugh; a disagreement that he has made, and continues to choose to make, so very personal. For me this has always been about business and about meeting the needs of this community.

Suffice to say that I am proud of and stand by our body of work, am proud of the publication we present to the public twice each month, and proud of the place that we have created for ourselves in this community.

Running a community newspaper is very large responsibility, one I

take very seriously. Publishing *Vernonia's Voice* has been a learning experience with a very steep curve. I have certainly made mistakes and admit that my writing and publishing styles have had to grow and change.

It is almost always a sad day when a small local business is forced to close its doors. I have a lot of respect for Noni Anderson, her journalism skills and how she served this community for so many years. It is a sorry day when a business that has been in existence for twenty-seven years and an institution in a community must cease operations.

Competition is the American way. Operating a successful business is not an entitlement and customers are not beholden to anyone.

I am happy to say that we are still here. We really do appreciate the loyal support this community has shown us over the last five years. Your continued encouragement has helped confirm that we are, for the most part, meeting your needs. We will continue to be a positive influence in this community for many years to come. We will continue to try to improve and will continue to build relationships. And we will continue to reflect the spirit of Vernonia.

Scott Laird
Editor and Publisher

Vernonia's Voice is published twice each month on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday. Look for our next issue December 25th.

VERNONIA'S
voice
reflecting the spirit of our community

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