

An Opinion: It Does Take a Village

By Scott Laird

Another Jamboree has come and gone in Vernonia, and hopefully all of you enjoyed a weekend of fun, festivities and friendship.

Many of you may be surprised to learn that the Vernonia Friendship Jamboree and Logging Show doesn't just happen spontaneously and on its own. It takes a lot of work and planning. It also takes money. And it especially takes a lot of volunteers. In fact, it almost takes the entire town to make this weekend come together and happen.

And "come together" is the key phrase here. Because that's what has to happen if we are going to host a successful Jamboree weekend. What we see every year at Jamboree time is our community working together in the name of friendship and pride. Numerous groups and individuals band together, invite visitors and old friends to return and enjoy our hospitality and then put on a three day celebration for everyone to enjoy.

It's because so many people give selflessly that Jamboree and the Logging Show happen each year.

I would like to take a moment here to thank all the many, many volunteers who give up countless hours of their personal time to strategize and organize the many events and activities that make up Jamboree. I would also like to thank all those people who give up parts of their weekend during the event to volunteer and make all those things that were planned an actual reality.

The Jamboree Committee has been meeting for many months this past year, just as they do every year, discussing ideas and ways to make each Jamboree

ree a weekend to remember. This year there were several new members who joined the committee, including chair Ernie Smith. Smith and the several new members brought a breath of fresh air and new energy into the planning and implementation process and there is a lot of excitement about the future for the Jamboree moving forward.

Right now you might be asking yourself, "So, who is the Jamboree Committee?" Well, they are you and me-regular Vernonia citizens who come together to make this big event happen for the rest of the community. There is no paid staff; the event is organized and carried out strictly by volunteers, with some much appreciated help from City of Vernonia staff with certain tasks. From the Fishing Derby on Friday, to the Parade and Elvis concert on Saturday to the Logging Show on Sunday, this year the events that made up Jamboree weekend were brought to you by your friends and neighbors right here in our town. Or in some cases, your friends who used to be from this town.

This past year the Jamboree Committee focused on marketing and bringing more people to town to celebrate with us. Signs, banners, posters and flyers were spread far and wide by volunteers in an effort to encourage more people to visit Vernonia for this big weekend. From the crowds I witnessed and the feedback I heard on the street, I think the committee accomplished their goal.

A big thank you also goes out to the Vernonia business owners in the downtown corridor who took it upon themselves on the Thursday prior to Jamboree to repaint the curbs in front of

their shops. Your initiative and willingness to work and really dress up the downtown showed your true Vernonia pride and spirit.

The "Give Back Bash" was a special event this year--a fundraiser organized by the VHS Class of 1973 to raise funds for athletic facilities at the new Vernonia School. The event featured a live concert by Justin Shandor, a very talented Elvis tribute artist, and brought people from all over for a reunion and a good time. This event was excellently organized by mostly out-of-towners who still love Vernonia and who gave selflessly of their time, talents and energy for our Jamboree. Thank you to Kathi Knowles, Deborah Dustman, Gayle Welch, Marsha Sturdevandt and the many other volunteers who made this happen. It was a successfully organized and marketed event that helped bring more people to town and gave those who saw either of the two professional shows many wonderful memories.

Many volunteer groups in town got involved in Jamboree as a way to raise funds for their activities and provide services for visitors. From the fire department to the PTA to 4-H to the Lion's Club to the Boosters, they all found a way to help make this year's Jamboree even better.

The Erik Kesterson Memorial Motorcycle Show was another example of the community coming together to make an activity happen. Forced to work around the demolition work at the old school grounds, Sunny Suppes and her friends from the Vernonia Free Wheelers cleaned up the parking area, receiving help from Chief Dean Smith and the Vernonia Fire Department with hosing off and washing the site. More Vernonians working together.

There are many events during Jamboree weekend that take a lot of effort to organize and I know I will leave someone out if I try to name them all. Each activity and event--from the information booth, to the street and food vendors, to the live music in Shay Park to the Lawn Mower Races--are all critical to making Jamboree weekend fun, entertaining and memorable. To those organizers and volunteers, just know that all your time and efforts are appreciated and recognized.

I do want to take time to note the work of Logging Show co-chairs Kelly and Lindsay Baska and Alicia Normand who have breathed new life into this very Vernonia event. So much work



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One year subscriptions (24 issues) \$35

Vernonia's Voice is published on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month.

Vernonia's Voice, LLC
PO Box 55
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www.VernoniasVoice.com


goes into the setup, organizing, securing sponsors, advertising, recruiting participants and clean up. But this single event provides so many great memories each year, it is worth all the effort. Just ask anyone who was there this year to witness Dean Schaumburg lift that chain saw and slice that log from his wheelchair. Unforgettable!

The Jamboree Committee intends to send out an on-line survey soon to ask for more feedback and new ideas about what you would like to see at Jamboree. They also plan to meet throughout the year and have already begun planning for next year. If you would like to join the Jamboree Committee and help with next year's event go to their Facebook page "Vernonia Friendship Jamboree and Logging Show," to find out when the next meeting will be held.

Remember, it takes all of us to make Jamboree a success.

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