

Health Center Celebrates Groundbreaking

Six years after the Flood of 2007 damaged the health clinic in Vernonia, the new Vernonia Health Center took another major step towards becoming a reality on Friday, March 28, 2014.

Over 100 friends, family, dignitaries and citizens joined members of the Vernonia Health Board to

In her opening remarks Paleck lauded the efforts of the many groups, organizations, foundations, civic entities, professionals and individual volunteers who worked together to move the project forward. Paleck noted that, not only was the Health Board breaking ground on a new facility, they were also breaking new ground on the



The first shovels of dirt! (L to R) Vernonia Mayor Josette Mitchell, Senator Betsy Johnson, County Commissioner Tony Hyde, Heather Lewis, Health Board members Wendy Sears, Bob Wagner and Ralph Keasey

celebrate the official groundbreaking for construction of the new health care facility on a rainy but joyous day.

The event was held at the West Oregon Electric Cooperative truck bays and included speeches, light snacks and the ceremonial first shovels of dirt, which was held inside, due to the hard spring rain that was falling.

Health Board President Erika Paleck welcomed the crowd to what she called a "...long, and overdue occasion."

rural health care paradigm as well. "The old school paradigm said bring in a big conglomerate," said Paleck. "In the new paradigm the Vernonia Health Board is entering into partnerships that emphasize not just primary care but partnerships that educate, that support mental health, that help clients navigate through the insurance mazes and in general support the whole human being."

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Library Event for Local Poet's Publication

Many of us have enjoyed reading the poetry of Kala Cota. Cota records special occasions and events in the life of the Vernonia community and its residents with rhyming lines.

Now one of Cota's poems has been chosen to be published in a new "Chicken Soup for the Soul" edition which collects 101 poems about Alzheimer's and Dementia. Kala's mother, Faye Millis Sword suffers from Alzheimer's and is currently residing in a memory care facility.

her own words:

One day an announcement/article popped up on my Facebook page. Somehow this announcement found me



Kala Cota with her mother, Faye Millis Sword.

The Vernonia Library will host an open house event on May 7th from 4:00 PM-8:00 PM to celebrate Cota's poem being published. Books will be available for purchase for \$14.95 (signed of course by Kala!) along with refreshments. According to Vernonia Librarian Jennifer Moloney the money raised from the sale of the books will be used for new landscaping at the library. "Kala's mother loved reading and spending time in her yard, said Moloney. "It seemed the perfect fit to utilize all funds raised to beautify the landscaping, starting with a remembrance garden as you walk up to the library from the parking lot."

So how did Cota end up contributing a poem to Chicken Soup for the Soul, the Alzheimer's edition?

We'll let Kala tell the story in

from *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. They were putting together a new book about Alzheimer's and other forms of Dementia and all the proceeds would benefit the Alzheimer's Association.

Since my mom's diagnosis and subsequent move into a memory care home, over a year and a half ago I have written many poems and journal entries. This seems to be my way of coping with my grief over this sudden and sometimes overwhelming change in our lives. Poetry has become a form of therapy for me.

Anyway, with the encouragement of family and friends I submitted a few poems and one was chosen for the book. I had originally entitled it "Holding Hands" they have since changed the

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Meet Bob Perry New General Manager at WOEC

By Scott Laird

Bob Perry has been the General Manager at West Oregon Electric Cooperative (WOEC) since January. *Vernonia's Voice* sat down to visit with him, find out about his background and ask him a few questions about his view on the operations at WOEC.

Perry is an intelligent and thoughtful man who takes his time and answers questions in a very deliberate manner. He is extremely knowledgeable about the electric utility industry in general and especially about cooperatives. He appears to approach his job with a customer service mentality and is very community minded. He is approachable and easy to talk to, with a dry sense of humor and a no-nonsense attitude. He says his personal motto, which is etched in stone on his desk (on the back of his

name plate, facing him) is "Non Sibi, Seb Aliis," *Not for Themselves, But for Others*.



Perry and wife Linda are purchasing a home in Vernonia with a yard for Megan, their Labrador retriever. Together Bob and Linda enjoy riding motorcycles and kayaking. Linda likes to quilt and garden; Bob says he enjoys shooting

sports, fishing and amateur radio. Bob, who is of Scottish decent, also owns and plays a set of bagpipes.

Perry says he will become a member of the Lions Club and would like to be an active member of the Chamber of Commerce.

The question on everyone's minds about the new General Manager is, of course, "Can you lower our electric rates?" Perry's answer, though probably not what the members want to hear, was a simple, no.

"You have a certain revenue requirement to pay your bills," explained Perry. "That is just a fact of life. The economics of this co-op are not going to change. It's not that we can lower rates. I think looking forward we could stabilize rates."

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