

“Walk Your Wheels” Help Make Sidewalks Safer *continued from front page*

According to Vernonia Police Chief Mike Conner, violation of the ordinance is punishable by a \$50 fine. Conner says his officers will initially give warnings to violators, especially for visitors to the community who may not be familiar with the ordinance. “My hope is that we can move the kids onto the side streets or encourage them to use the trail more,” added Chief Conner.

Hanson has firsthand knowledge about the issue she has championed. She says she first noticed an issue with safety on Vernonia’s sidewalks about ten years ago when she owned a shop on Bridge Street in downtown. She said she often had complaints from customers who told her they had almost been hit on the sidewalk by someone on a bicycle or skateboard. Because all retail establishments are required by law to have doors that open outward, Hanson believed it was just a matter of time before someone was struck and badly injured.

Hanson recently became concerned again about the issue after spending more time downtown and reading complaints on Facebook. “I was surprised how many other people felt the same way I did,” says Hanson. She began talking with local business owners; almost all of them told similar stories—customers complaining about close calls on Vernonia sidewalks.

“I knew with all the renewed and additional bicycle traffic this wonderful town has been receiving, it was only going to get worse,” says Hanson.

Hanson and Chief Conner agree that the signs the City had spray painted on the sidewalks stating “Pedestrians Only” were proving to be ineffective. “We needed better signage so we could feel comfortable enforcing the ordinance,” says Conner.

Hanson decided to take action. After watching pedestrian traffic last summer and making notes about what she observed, Hanson had several conversations with Chief Conner. As a way of educating the public she spoke with Vernonia Elementary School Principal Aaron Miller and was able to have the word “pedestrian” added to the vocabulary



list for students. Hanson was then invited to participate in the PTA Bike-A-Thon to spread the word about sidewalk safety. She was invited by Muffy Marshall to speak to the Vernonia Lions Club who expressed interest in supporting her project. She contacted graphic designer Rollin Krueger about creating signs that contained the message she wished to convey, worked with staff at City Hall and received assistance from Joann Glass and the City Planner about signage regulations, and got a petition signed by almost every downtown business owner. Hanson then brought her plans for her campaign to the Vernonia City Council.

Hanson says she has been pleased and amazed at how quickly and smoothly her campaign has moved

forward. “The public process was really just so easy, I think because it was so community minded,” says Hanson. “Everyone at City Hall was on board because they realized this was an issue—other people had also been complaining to them about it.”

City Council gave Hanson their consent and she moved forward. After a second presentation by Hanson, the Vernonia Lions Club agreed to pay for eight signs to be produced, at a cost of \$414.72.

With her new signs in hand, Hanson hit the streets during the first week in January looking for business owners to install the signs. Vernonia Florist and Galorist, Vernonia True Value, and The All In Pub and Eatery were all happy to oblige. Hanson returned to City Council on January 5, thanking them for their support and requesting that a sign be placed on the Community Learning Center building, which Council approved.

“I hope the community understands why we are doing this—it’s for all of our safety,” says Hanson.

Conner suggested that the zone where wheeled devices are prohibited on sidewalks might need to be adjusted. Currently it runs from the south end of the business district, across the Rock Creek Bridge, past the old school property (now the new Spencer Park), and all the way to California Avenue. Conner says he believes a zone that includes the downtown core to the Rock Creek Bridge would be satisfactory.

When this concern was brought to the City Council’s attention at their January 5, 2015 meeting, they agreed and said a review of the ordinance would be discussed at an upcoming City Council meeting.

Now that the signs are up, Hanson says she intends to continue her safety campaign through more awareness and says she hopes to include an educational piece through the Vernonia School system. “There already was a city ordinance, and my hope is that now it will begin to be enforced,” says Hanson. “But we need to let people know about it. We don’t want anyone to be surprised or blindsided by this.”

Valentine Classified Ads

Join us in wishing our loved ones a Happy Valentine’s Day!
It’s not ALL about Sweethearts... it’s about LOVE!

Remember grandparents, parents, children, spouses, grandchildren, aunts & uncles,
nieces & nephews, best friends, pets, even your hunting buddy!

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

3.

2.

1.

It’s easy!

1. Write your message (25 words or less)

2. Choose your icon #

3. Send this ad and a check for \$5 for each classified to:
Valentine Classified PO Box 55, Vernonia, OR 97064

4. Deadline Monday, February 2nd. Valentine Classifieds to be published in the February 5th issue.

Additional messages:

Your Name: Phone/Email:

Little Brown Bat, I’m so glad you are here to enrich my life. Thanks for being such a good friend. Fox

Mom, Thank you for always being there for me. I love you to the moon and back. Billy

Harper, you can come stay with us anytime! Happy Valentine’s Day. The C Street Pack

Trevor & Sophie, we love and miss seeing you! Your Vernonia Aunt & Uncle

Monkey Puzzle, my love for you is deep and wide. Thanks for sharing your life with me.

Okemah you’re the best playmate ever. I love you. Laslo