

# Small Town, Big World: Look!

By Britt Bensen Steele

Look! Look again.

At first glance, you might think you saw a monkey. Look again.

My husband and I had the opportunity to spend quite a bit of time in Indonesia a few years back. One of the most impressive things we noticed was how close the natives were to nature.

One morning, we were sitting on our veranda (really our living room, since most of our rental house was outdoors) and we caught a glimpse of something rustling in a nearby coconut tree. Rustling in the trees is pretty common, as the tropical location makes for a lot of animals living off the bounty of the papaya, mango, avocado and coconut trees.

But this time was different. This time the rustling we were hearing was a neighbor man of ours scavenging through the jungle, barefoot.

We had learned he was looking



for food, something to add to his morning prayer table, or firewood. The fronds of the coconut tree rustled, then three thuds, "Thud! Thud! Thud!" as coconuts hit the ground some 30 feet below. And then

to our delight, we saw the man scurry down the tree and luckily we had our camera ready.

The "monkey" in this picture? That's the neighbor man. And the "tail" you see? That is his machete. He uses this to cut the coconuts from the tree. And he scales his way up and down the tree completely barefoot. Amazing! (According to the locals, in many parts of Southeast Asia men have been replaced in this work by trained monkeys.)

So, next time you enjoy the increasingly popular coconut oil, coconut milk, or shredded coconut in your morning breakfast, maybe you'll smile, and get curious about how it came to land on your table... maybe it was picked by a man like this one, or maybe it was a monkey.

Here's a simple recipe inspired by the staple foods of Bali. It's a great deviation from oatmeal, and it is scrumptious! It can be taken for breakfast, an after school snack, or a healthy dessert.

## Coconut Rice Porridge

Prepare rice of your choice (white or brown, as indicated on the package) 10 minutes before rice is finished, add a ripe, chopped banana to the rice and complete cooking.

That's it: You're ready to serve: Just top it with slightly toasted coconut (Bob's Red Mill is my favorite as it is unsulphured and unsweetened, and it comes in large or small flakes), milk of your choice (rice, unsweetened almond, or coconut milk) and a natural sweetener (honey, real maple syrup, or, you guessed it: coconut sugar!)

*Britt Bensen Steele, BS, MPH lives just outside Vernonia with her husband, Larry and their farm critters, where she offers community yoga classes and related events at their home and YogaFarm. Before moving to Vernonia, Britt worked as a health care consultant, taught public health at the college level and conducted hospital research and development. Stories presented here weave her life in Vernonia with her various overseas travel, teaching, and study. To learn more about Britt, visit BrittBSteele.com*

# Creature Comforts: Dental Care

By Michal Smith

February is pet dental health awareness month. So, when was the last time you checked your pet's pearly whites, or took them to the vet for a dental exam?

Many pet owners may not realize just how crucial pet oral care is. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA), 80% of dogs and 70% of cats show signs of oral disease by the age of three.

They also report that more pets are getting the care they need based on pet insurance claims filed each year. In 2013, nationwide policyholders filed more than \$10.2 million in claims for dental care.

While preventative dental care can stave off dangerous disease, research indicates that when it comes to our fuzzy friends, dental care is still not a priority.

The AVMA reports the organs most often affected by oral diseases are the lungs, heart, kidneys and liver, and even the nervous system. Signs of Dental Disease are: bad breath; loose or discolored teeth or teeth covered in tartar; your pet is not comfortable with being touched within the mouth area; drooling or dropping food from the mouth;

bleeding from the mouth; loss of appetite or loss of weight; vomiting whole pieces of food after eating.

Our pet's dental health is just as important as our own; if your pet shows any of these signs, consider scheduling an appointment with your vet as soon as possible. As the pet owners, we can brush up on our four-legged friends' oral care by following three simple steps: Take your pet to get a dental exam. Your pet should have a routine vet exam, including a careful exam of his teeth and gums, at least once a year. Start an at-home regimen. Ask your vet to suggest nutritional supplements, chews or additives to be done on a regular schedule as well as a teeth brushing schedule with specially formulated toothpaste. Check your pets food for additives also designed to help remove plaque and tarter from your pet's teeth. Schedule dental cleanings. Take your pet for regular dental checkups.

Creatures carries a variety of dental chews, pet toothpastes, dental sprays, water additives, and more to get you well on your way to seeing a healthier smile on your pet! Open Mon-Fri 10-6; Sat 10-5; Sun noon-4. 503-429-PETS (7387).

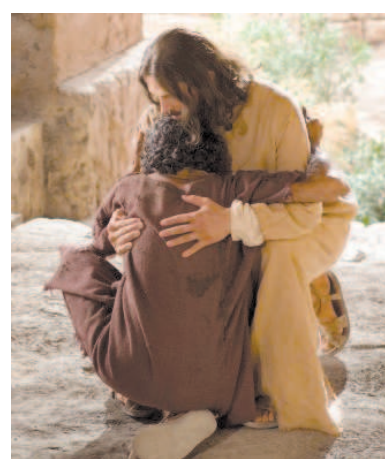
# Interested in Vernonia Theater?

Vernonia Community Theater is contemplating another production sometime in 2015. We're curious if there are Vernonians interested in on-stage as well as backstage roles. Are you an actress, actor, singer, or dancer? Would you like to co-direct, pull the curtain, or operate the lights? Paint sets or collect props? Adults and children are welcome. A play will be selected based on community response. If theater in Vernonia

appeals to you, send Kinnell Steward a note at [mtskys@frontier.com](mailto:mtskys@frontier.com) or call 503-819-0143.



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For more information contact:  
Matt @ 503-396-5265 or Randy @ 971-225-8013  
Francis @ 503-369-5426 or Frank @ 503-201-7495