

Kendra's New Heart

On July 24, Kendra Stefan, a junior at Vernonia High School, received a new heart. The road to recovery after a transplant is a long one, but she's a trooper, bravely fighting her way through the hurdles to healing. But that's Kendra.

Kendra was born with a heart defect and has endured multiple surgeries throughout her life. But she's never let that hold her back. For six years, Kendra raised and showed Flemish Giant rabbits in 4-H. She volunteered at the Summer Meals Program, at the library, and served as a VHS registrar for Red Cross Blood Drives.



After a stroke following major surgery in 2016, Kendra still achieved a 3.8 cumulative GPA at school, and she's striving for the Oregon Promise, planning to attend Portland State University when she graduates. She started making jewelry to help regain her fine motor

skills, and she continues to make gifts under her business name "Kendra's Kreations - Art from the Heart."

When asked to describe Kendra in one word, her friends and family responded with: Positive, Enthusiastic, Responsible, Loyal, Empathetic, Giving, Unbreakable, Joyous, Wholesome, Magnetic, Bubbly, Radiant, Resilient, Kind, Real, Vibrant, and Spontaneous.

Kendra's surgery took place in Seattle, Washington. She and her aunt, Heather Lewis, must remain near the hospital for six months so her new heart can be closely monitored by her medical team. She enjoyed the support of the Vernonia community as she waited for this new lease on life. As her family gathers around her and her amazing friend Georgia keeps up her spirits, it's time for this wonderful community of Vernonia to cheer her on again.

A fundraiser to help Kendra and Heather handle their expenses while they spend the next six months in Seattle will be held on September 15 at the Cabin in Vernonia (Scout Cabin). An account will also be set up at a local financial institution where tax deductible donations can be made on their behalf.

Missionaries Serving in Vernonia

Young women missionaries have been serving the community since October

By Scott Laird

You may have noticed them as you've driven through town recently - a pair of young women walking and giving a friendly wave to each car that drives by. Or maybe they've stopped by your house to chat and share their faith, or offer to help you with a project around your home.

Since October of last year Vernonia has had a pair of young women missionaries living in the community as part of the local Vernonia Branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). The sister missionaries have been spreading the word about the Mormon faith and helping those in the community in need.

Currently Sister Bonzo and Sister Alvey, both originally from Utah, are here serving in Vernonia. During the program Vernonia has had six different young women rotate through and serve.

Sister Bonzo is from Nephi, Utah and previously served in Brownsville, Oregon. She has been on her mission for nine months and has been serving in Vernonia for the past four months. She attended Utah State University for one year, studying art and design, before being called to serve, and says she plans to return to her studies at the end of her mission.

Sister Alvey is from



Sister Bonzo and Sister Alvey are Mormon missionaries currently serving in the Vernonia community.

Sigurd, Utah, a tiny town with a population of 438, and has served in Woodburn and La Pine, Oregon. She just arrived in Vernonia and has been here for about three weeks. She attended Dixie State University in Utah where she earned a Associates Degree and may return to study at LDS Business College following her mission.

Their missions will last a total of 18 months; young men on Mormon missions serve for two years.

"I like serving here in Vernonia," says Sister Bonzo. "Everyone is very nice."

"It's nice in a small town because everyone is so friendly," adds Sister Alvey.

"Our main purpose is to invite others to come to Christ," says Sister Bonzo when asked

about their mission. "We're representatives of Jesus Christ so we go and help build people's faith in Him and let them know our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ loves them. We know how much it's blessed our families and that's why we go on our missions - to help God bless other people's lives."

"We know that family is so important and that having faith in Jesus Christ can help others have a strong relationship with their families," adds Sister Alvey. "We've definitely seen it in our own families growing up and how it's blessed us and so we share those blessings with others."

Local Branch Mission Leader Tim Nebergall is the local contact for the missionaries and helps them coordinate their

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A Conversation with State Representative Brad Witt

Brad Witt has represented Columbia County and District 31 in the Oregon House of Representatives for the last 14 years and is currently running for his eighth term in Oregon's Legislature. Recently *Vernonia's Voice* had an opportunity to sit down with Witt and chat about his work in Salem on behalf of Oregon's citizens.

Representative Witt currently sits on the Transportation Committee, and the Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee where he is a Co-Chairman for the Ways and Means Subcommittee.

Witt is originally from central Massachusetts, which he describes as a "very rural area." He moved to Oregon in the mid 1970s to work and located in Clatskanie in 1989. He worked as a union rep for the United Food and Commercial Food Workers Union, representing mostly grocery store workers, but also workers in some related indus-

tries, including the seafood industry.

Through-out his career Witt has strived to work on issues important to some of the most vulnerable members of his communities, including senior citizens and veterans. He has also been a strong advocate for animal rights and protections.

Witt says the 2017 transportation bill should have an impact on Oregon's rural communities. "The focus of that bill was to get funding out to the counties, and we're starting to see that happen" explains Witt. "Columbia County in particular has begun to resurface a lot of our roads. As we all know, state roads are ODOT's responsibility, but our county roads fall to the local



county governments to maintain. County governments have had such a serious challenge since the beginning of the decline in timber harvests. The 2017 transportation bill is a shot in the arm for transportation statewide, not just at the state level, but at the county and local levels as well, and

we're beginning to see those efforts pay off."

One of those projects is the bridge replacement on Highway 47 which will directly impact Vernonians who commute and also local businesses. "Vernonia will see the bridge replacement on Highway 47, which I know was seen as an impediment to business

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