

# Intercultural Society of Vernonia

*New public charity focusing on organizing community events*

By Scott Laird

The newly formed Intercultural Society of Vernonia is filling a needed gap in the community, after the closing of the struggling Chamber of Commerce. While the new organization doesn't directly benefit local businesses as part of their mission, they are working to promote Vernonia as a friendly and interesting place for visitors while organizing fun and family friendly events for local citizens.

As a way of introducing themselves to the community the Intercultural Society, a volunteer based group, is hosting a new event next month, a Mardi Gras Masquerade Ball on March 2, that will serve as a fundraiser to help support their other activities.

According to Intercultural Society President Nicole Larke, the Vernonia Chamber of Commerce was struggling to find funding and provide the benefits their members expected. Without adequate resources, like staff and overhead funds, the Chamber was unable to sustain their general activities that included answering phone calls, managing their website, updating memberships and their list of current businesses, and stocking brochures at their office at City Hall. Slowly they had shifted from being a support service for local business, and focused more on promoting tourism and events already taking place.

"We had to find a way to support all the events we were sponsoring in a new way," said Larke. "We had been working from funds the Chamber received from hosting two different Cycle Oregon events in the past. When we started losing our overhead we really lost our capacity to promote businesses. We decided that we needed to found a charitable non-profit so we could apply for grant money and so donations would be tax deductible."

Based on that decision, the Chamber was closed down and the Intercultural Society of Vernonia was founded, which is now officially a 501(c)(3) entity.

Acting as an umbrella organization for numerous events in the community, the Intercultural Society will assist in managing and promoting events, and also provide financial support.

"The businesses here in town that were members of the Chamber are now actively able to participate by sponsoring or donating to these events and festivals," says Intercultural Society Vice

President Stacey Pelster. "We've really been encouraged by the way businesses have chosen to get involved."

Currently the Intercultural Society sponsors the Easter Egg Hunt and the Halloween Sidewalk Parade. They also organize The Great American Bash concert and parade on July 4<sup>th</sup>, (in collaboration with the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District who sponsors the fireworks display) and The Spirit of Christmas in Vernonia festival.

"With Christmas in Vernonia being as successful as they have been the last couple of years, I would really like to see that flow over into our other events in some way," said Larke. "I think we saw it this year with the Halloween Parade, where we had almost double our previous attendance. If things like that can happen with the Great American Bash, we could really get some people flowing into town to enjoy it, and that benefits everyone."

The Mardi Gras Masquerade on March 2 is a dinner and ball fundraiser that will feature a no-host bar, live music, and a catered dinner at Cedar Ridge. Because of business sponsorships the Intercultural Society has been able to reduce the cost of tickets to \$35. "The idea behind the Mardi Gras ball is to give us a way to raise funds so we can have a match when we apply for grants," explained Larke. "If it's successful it can also supplement the other events we do." They say they plan to hold an annual social event like this, maybe at different times of the year; they are currently talking about holding it on New Year's Eve next year. Tickets for this year's event are available at Vernonia True Value or at VernoniaSociety.org.

In addition, the Intercultural So-

ciety is serving as the fiscal agent for the Save the Greenman Field Grandstands committee. The Intercultural Society will hold the funds for the project to refurbish the facility and will be the signee on the lease agreement with the City of Vernonia, who owns the property.

Larke and Pelster say if the annual fundraising ball can be successful, they hope to build and grow some of their other events by adding more activities to their schedules, assist other groups doing events, and maybe add new annual events. "It's sort of a give and take with the different groups since we're such a small community," says Pelster.

The Intercultural Society is run by a Board of Directors. In addition to Larke and Pelster, the Board includes Shawn Gibson, Dean Pearl, Kim Byrem, Jeana Gump, and Tiffany MacTaggart. There are two general Board positions that are currently open if anyone in the

community is looking to get involved. Pelster says there is also a need for help with subcommittees that work specifically on events they oversee, like the Ugly Sweater Run, which is held on the same day as The Spirit of Christmas. "We can always use more hands with different events for people that are interested or have a passion for a specific thing," says Pelster.

"Our ultimate goal is to make all these events as cost effective for the community as possible, if not free," says Larke. "Being a 501(c)(3) non profit will allow people to donate and get the tax write off," adds Pelster, "but at the same time their donations will help to make these events more inclusive for families, community members, and local businesses."

For more information go to [vernoniasociety.org](http://vernoniasociety.org).



**Steve Emory**

President and Sr. Loan Officer

NMLS# 45523

Chair Ethics OAMP, '99-'03

**o. 503-747-7998**

**c. 503-730-7364**

[steve.emory@pacificsunsetmortgage.com](mailto:steve.emory@pacificsunsetmortgage.com)



- ◆ I'm a Mortgage Broker. Big difference in rates for you.
- ◆ In 29 years, I've never lost a loan I said would close.
- ◆ Learn Strategies to save \$\$.
- ◆ Local Lender (I even live in Vernonia) - Communication - Trust

**Purchase, Refinance and Reverse Mortgages**

- ◆ Low and No Down Payments
- ◆ First Time Buyers
- ◆ Forever Home Buyers
- ◆ Investment Rental
- ◆ Vacation Homes
- ◆ Country Property Expert
- ◆ Build a Home on Your Land
- ◆ Refinance
- ◆ & More. Please call with your needs.

**Many Loan Options**

- ◆ Conventional
  - ◆ FHA / VA / USDA
  - ◆ Jumbo
  - ◆ Construction / Remodel
- Loans for Many Property Types**
- ◆ Single Family Residence
  - ◆ Condos / Townhomes
  - ◆ Duplex, 3-4 unit
  - ◆ Manufactured Home on Land

**Read 40+ Raving Reviews on Facebook**

Pacific Sunset Mortgage, LLC NMLS# 1806349 ML-5769

15455 NW Greenbrier Pkwy, Suite 145, Beaverton, OR 97006

(Hwy 26 and Cornell)

Certain Restrictions apply. Not all applicants will qualify. This is not a commitment to lend.



**Recreational & Medical Marijuana Dispensary**

*Serving the Community*

Featuring:

- Edibles • Concentrates
- CBD Oils, Topicals, & Tinctures
- Flower Grams & Pre-rolled Joints

**VERNONIA'S NATURAL CHOICE**

Open 7 days 10am - 8pm  
886 Bridge Street

**Marie Krahn**  
*Massage Therapy*

**Heather Lewis**  
*New Day Massage*

**Therapeutic Massage Specializing in:**

- Medical Massage Cupping
- doTerra Aroma Touch
- Trigger Point Therapy
- Reiki • Deep Tissue
- Myofascial Release
- Reflexology



- Medical Massage Cupping
- Manual Lymph Drainage
- Post Mastectomy Care
- Nutritional Counseling
- Oncology Support
- Sauna on-site

503-429-5180  
#5495

503-429-4677  
#10732

**Collectively serving Vernonia for over 30 years**  
Accepting HSA debit cards and insurance billing available

BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER  
9 BEERS ON TAP  
GROWLERS TO GO  
PRIME RIB DINNER EVERY FRIDAY & SATURDAY

**The BLACK IRON GRILL**

HOME OF THE BEAR CREEK PUB

CHECK US OUT ON FACEBOOK

503.429.0214  
831 BRIDGE ST.