

## Spaghetti Feed Fundraiser to Help Local Family

*January 11 event will include a silent auction to support Rick Hood*

Longtime Vernonia resident Rick Hood is facing a serious medical issue, and friends and family have organized a fundraiser to help support Rick and his wife Lisa.

Rick, age 51, was diagnosed with Alpha 1 Antitrypsin at the age of 38. It's an inherited disorder that leads to damage to internal organs, especially the lungs and liver. Rick is now in need of a lung transplant, and is on the list and awaiting a match. When that occurs, Rick and family will need to stay in Seattle for at least several months. This fundrais-



er will help the family deal with living expenses during this time.

Rick is a graduate of Vernonia High School, where he played football and wrestled. He has worked as a logger and is an avid hunter, fisherman, and outdoorsman. He is currently undergoing IV transfusions weekly, and taking multiple medications and supplemental oxygen to help him breathe.

The Spaghetti Feed and Silent Auction fundraiser will take place at Vernonia Christian Church on January 11, 2020 at 5:30 pm. In addition, an account has been opened at U.S. Bank in the name of "Richard Hood Lung Transplant Fund."

## Senior Center/Vernonia Cares Foundation Gets Poured



Supporters of the Vernonia Senior Center and Vernonia Cares Food Pantry got an early Christmas present when crews poured the cement foundation for their new, joint facility on December 17. The City of Vernonia project, funded through federal Community Development Block Grants, is being constructed by Five Star Builders. The project also received good news at the end of December from the Birkenfeld Trust concerning their grant application. See story on page 5.

## Mist School Visits with Santa



*Santa and Mrs. Claus dropped by the Mist School just prior to the holiday break. Santa and Mrs. Claus, along with members of the Mist Birkenfeld Rural Fire Protection District, brought every student at the school a new hat and a pair of gloves during this annual visit.*



## Is Renewable Energy's Future Dammed?

*A proposed hydroelectric project on the Little Colorado River shows the tricky trade-offs in transitioning from fossil fuels*

By Nick Bowlin  
High Country News

Just outside Grand Canyon National Park in Arizona, a year-round, mineral-rich spring turns the Little Colorado River a vivid turquoise. This final stretch, about 10 miles from the river's confluence with its larger relative, is one of the West's spectacular waterways, with bright water flowing below steep red-rock cliffs. But the view will change dramatically if a Phoenix-based company builds a proposed hydropower project. The two dams could alter the flow, discolor the water and flood a Hopi cultural site.

The project remains a long shot: It needs the approval of the Navajo Nation, whose leaders have been publicly skeptical. It also has to contend with varying river flows and the protected humpback chub, plus a remote location that will require building extensive transmission lines. The river's beauty

makes this particular project stand out, but it's just one of a number of proposed hydropower projects around the West.

The structure of today's energy market helps explain hydropower's appeal, even for dubious projects like this one. As it stands, renewables struggle to match power supply to common patterns of demand (as revealed by solar energy's "duck curve"). The result is a renewable energy bottleneck. If the U.S. is to meet global climate goals, an enormous, rapid shift away from fossil fuels is needed. This creates what one recent academic paper calls "green vs. green trade-offs," exemplified in the West by the recent trend of proposed hydropower dams. Such projects destroy waterways and harm ecosystems — but they could also help purge the grid of fossil fuels.

Solar power works only during the day, and wind is inconsistent. To meet peak power demand, which tends to spike at night, utilities rely on coal, nuclear and — increasingly — natural gas. In order to rapidly increase and decrease supply to meet real-time demand, gas plants must run all the time.

This limits the amount of solar and wind power the grid can accommodate, thereby prolonging fossil fuel use. States are already producing more solar and wind power than their grids can take.

The capacity to store the day's excess solar and wind power for nightly use would solve the problem. Battery storage, while advancing fast, is years away from being both advanced enough to replace gas plants and fully integrated into power production, according to Suzanne Stradling, a University of New Mexico Ph.D. student who is studying the renewable transition. If we could meet peak power without natural gas, she said, "there's no limit to the amount of solar we could bring onto the grid."

But how do you manage without gas power? Coal is a greater pollutant, and nuclear waste is politically - as well as environmentally - toxic. That leaves hydropower. Like gas, hydropower can ramp up power generation almost instantly. Pumped storage dams, which are essentially enormous batteries, could meet peak power demand, allowing solar and wind energy to chase

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