

Bridge Street Bits



By Karen Miller

WE THE VERNONIA SENIOR CENTER BOARD would like to wish all our Voice readers a Happy New Year 2021.

SPEAKING OF THE BOARD we would like to introduce our Board Officers for the New Year:

PRESIDENT Charles Kibben, 1st VICE PRESIDENT Carl Holsey, 2nd VICE PRESIDENT Pat Ray, SECRETARY Sandy Welch, and TREASURER Tobie Finzel. Thank you for serving and leading.

WE ARE STILL NOT OPEN FOR INSIDE DINING at our new building but hopefully things will be changing soon. Please check out our news on the Vernonia Senior Center Facebook page. Also keep abreast of happenings on our Bargains on Bridge Street Page. Theresa Kilgore is our General Manager for the

kitchen, thrift store and the Cabin in Vernonia. Theresa's Christmas Kid's Shopping Event was a big success. Watch this column or social media for this year's Kids Shopping! Marny is our Officer Manager and is in the office at our new building on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 10 to 3. Phone number is (503) 429-3327

STARTING THIS WEEK YOU CAN WIN a brand new Ninja coffeemaker in our mid-week winter contest. Come in the store for details.

WE APPRECIATE ANY DONATIONS to our Home Delivered Meals Program, an appreciated service for those in need. Donations can be sent to Vernonia Senior Center, 547 Weed Avenue Vernonia OR 97064. PLUS we thank our volunteers who help deliver the Home Delivered Meals each week, through rain, sleet, or snow!

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR PATRONS that shop at our Thrift Store plus everyone's donations. Donations can be dropped off Wednesdays and Saturdays starting at noon. We wish to thank our volunteers who work to clean, sort, and put things out.

FOOTCARE is available at the new building. Call Joyce Jessi directly to make an appointment (503) 753-7745

MEMBERSHIP DUES FOR THE NEW YEAR are still \$15. Members are welcome to attend our monthly meetings on the second Friday of the month at 10:00. All input is welcome.

SENIOR SIGN OFF: Wanting to say Hi on here to my oldest brother Marvin who faithfully reads the Voice from up in Gig Harbor, Washington!

See ya' around town...

Vernonia Senior Center • 547 Weed Avenue • (503) 429-3912

What We Need Now: Bridges, Ladders, Imagination *continued from page 3*

derstand that some wounds in America are too deep and too wide for everyone to cross now; I understand that some folks will never cross bridges from "I can't understand" to "I want to understand" or from "I now understand" to "I'm sorry."

But many people are capable of bridge building and bridge crossing now. Urban, western Oregonians: I'd like you to find the bridge that will help you understand why my rural Oregon county voted to discuss changing our county borders and "moving" to Idaho. I'm ready to cross bridges too: which bridge do you want me to be looking for?

The bridges I want to build do not ferry you from your opinion to mine — they just span the chasm so we can stop saying "I just can't understand" and start talking and working together. I care about our schools and so do you. Let's start with raising money for the volleyball team or the band or robotics club and see where it goes.

When we spend time on bridges in common cause (of which there are many), we moderate each other's tendencies to see things as "us and them." And what more can we hope for than to simply influence each other in positive ways?

I imagine that often we will stomp off these bridges in rage or pain and flee back to our own side — bridges aren't rainbows. But as author Glennon Doyle writes, "We need to learn to withstand people's anger, knowing that much of it is real and true and necessary. There are worse things than being criticized — like being a coward."

She also writes, "We can do hard things."

So let's do the hard thing. When we find ourselves saying, "I just can't understand ..." let's start looking for bridges. If you can't find one and you can build one, do. We build bridges by forging relationships with people who come from a different place or class; who we don't work with; who we disagree with but with whom we share a kernel of interest.

If we count up our friendships and relationships and don't find people who are different than us, well, maybe that's why we "just can't understand" things.

If we find ourselves misunderstood by "them," let's look for a bridge where folks are waiting for us. They want to be understood too because the opposite of our strongly-held, "moral" belief is not an amoral belief we "just can't understand." The opposite of our

belief is an equally strong belief forged from a different life experience and a believer who is also misunderstood.

Ladders

Bridges are just one part of the national and personal infrastructure project we need — the other part is ladders. When we accomplish something, we have the choice to either carry the ladder we climbed up with us, or lower it for the folks behind us — our colleagues, our neighbors, the next generation.

What we each have or lack is based on a complex set of factors including history, luck, decisions and timing. If we are fortunate enough to find ourselves with a good job, enough to eat, a safe place to live — let's don't draw up the ladder we climbed. Let's lower it for folks to rise with us. When we get a new program at our school, we can lower the ladder and help other schools gain access too. When we get a promotion at work, we can say, "there's no more room up here" or we can lower the ladder and make space.

I think we can all find a hundred ways people helped us get to where we are, but even if you feel that you were alone in your ascendance, you can still drop a ladder and be the person that helps others along. Glennon Doyle says

"the miracle of grace is that you can give what you have never gotten."

If we all start lowering ladders in our personal life and building an infrastructure of ladders for our nation, we will narrow the division we claim to abhor in income, class, race, gender and more. A nation of more ladders is fairer for everyone. If you lower ladders and help make that the norm, you will find more ladders to climb too.

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The divisions we see in America today are upsetting and seem worse than ever, but they were baked into the founding of this country; into this experiment. People in early America fought like we do along lines of ideology, class, race, gender, geography and religion. That is not to say we're doomed, but that we descendant generations are, and will always be, tasked with creating the "more perfect union."

As the Declaration of Independence was debated by the Continental Congress, Benjamin Franklin told fellow delegates that they must stand together or suffer separately at the hands of the British.

As Black suffragists fought and helped win women's right to vote 100 years ago this year, their motto was "Lifting as We Climb."

Our forebearers knew the only way forward is through, and the only way through is together. It will take imagination, bridges and ladders.

Nella Mae Parks is a farmer from Union County. This commentary was originally published in the Winter 2020-21 issue of The Other Oregon, A Voice for Rural Oregon. The Other Oregon is a quarterly magazine and monthly e-newsletter to address, from a rural perspective, the issues, values, culture and lifestyle uniquely important to rural Oregon. Content focuses on key areas, such as health care, economic development, water, workforce, transportation and education, along with impacts from federal and state legislation and the urban-rural interface. www.TheOtherOregon.com



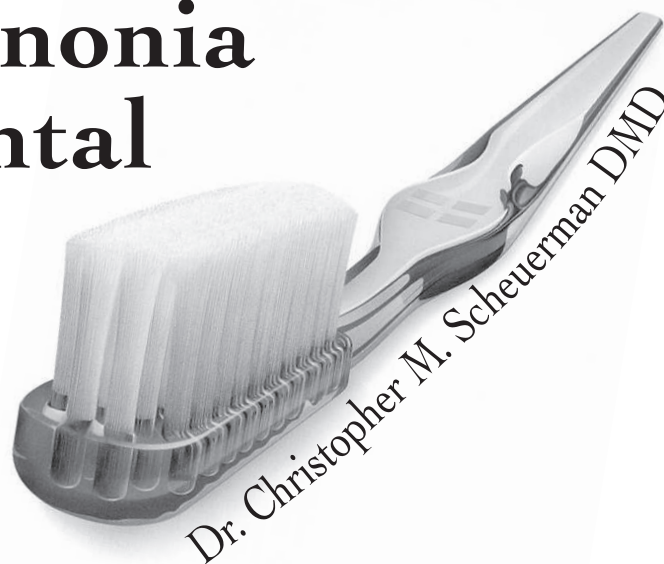
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