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VERNONIA'S Voice

Reflecting the spirit of our community

Free

# The Archie Dass Dog Park: Calling all Canines

**Story and Photos By Justin Woomer**

On the corner of Highway 47 and east Ivy Street on the north side of town sits a shady little park. This park isn't a place you'll find basketball courts or children screaming, but instead a beautiful fenced in patch of grass that is waiting for your four-legged furry friend.

The Archie Dass Dog Park opened in May of 2019 and gets its name from a member of the community who passed recently; he was known for his love of animals and had been beloved by many in the community. "His family has lived in the Vernonia area since before time," said Holly Vaughn, a Vernonia resident and moderator of the Friends of Archie Dass Dog Park Facebook group. Archie Dass seemed to be an easy choice for the park's namesake.

As many can remember, it got a little wet around Vernonia in 2007. There was widespread flood damage and many people had to make a choice of whether to raise their houses above the highwater line in order to make their homes insurable again, or to relinquish their properties to FEMA for a percentage of the property's value the day before the flood. FEMA, then later the City of Vernonia received 40 lots this way. The Archie Dass Dog Park sits in the flood plain, meaning that no permanent structure can be built on the grounds and still be insured.

Let's talk about some of the features of this dog park that have been procured through a mixture of fundraising in the community and a Oregon State Parks grant written by Vernonia City Administrator Josette Mitchell.

The first and most important feature for a dog park is the fencing which was installed by a contractor named John Swart. The fencing is break-away chain link meaning, that the bottom is not attached and in the event of another flood, debris will not get stuck and potentially damage the City's investment. The park is separated into two sections. On one side there is an area for dogs that are 30 pounds or less. The other side is for big dogs.

Recently, a dog drinking fountain was installed, and this has added convenience for many patrons of the park. Before, many people would just bring their own water, and once it was gone then that was it. Now dogs can get fresh water, make a complete mess of it, and get more.

There are multiple benches that were installed so that even the humans can relax while enjoying the quiet shade of the park. There is even a bench under a recently installed covered area to allow for the humans to stay dry, while the dogs have a blast getting wet. Grass has been planted and gravel laid to help mitigate the mud, but the dogs don't care, they love mud.

The park, as are many in Vernonia, is maintained by Tim McLeod; he handles the mowing and general maintenance. We could all help this man out by picking up those warm little presents our dogs like to leave in the grass. Picking up poop has been made easier at the Archie Dass Dog Park, with the installation of dog waste receptacles that include environmentally friendly poop bags.

Upon entering the park, while deciding if you're 30 pounds or less, take a look at Ottoman's Stick Library, where the finest sticks in all of town can be found. This fun kiosk was built by a local contractor Whelan Easley in honor of Ottoman the Dachshund. This is a neat doghouse shaped bin that holds sticks that have

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# Is Vernonia's Ambulance Service Meeting the Needs of Their Citizens?

***Vernonia Deputy Fire Chief Rob Davis is raising concerns about a lack of medical transport options in the community.***

**By Scott Laird**

Here in Vernonia most of us expect that if we were to have a medical emergency, all we need to do is pick up the phone and dial 9-1-1 and a crew from Metro West Ambulance and some Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District personnel will quickly show up to help us.

But what would happen if you had a major medical emergency, like a stroke or a sudden cardiac arrest, and the closest ambulance was more than 30 minutes away?

In Vernonia, the ambulance service and fire district are two separate entities. A private company, Metro West Ambulance, provides the service and staff, and partners with members of the Vernonia Volunteer Ambulance Association (VVAA) to run emergency medical calls. The Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District (VRFPD) provides fire and rescue protection with four paid staff and local volunteers, and will often respond to medical calls to assist Metro West and the VVAA.

Staff from VRFPD, including Deputy Fire Chief Rob Davis, have been concerned for years about the continually rising number of medical emergency calls in the Vernonia area. Coupled with a drop in both fire and ambulance volunteers, it's becoming a real problem.

This is not a problem that is unique to a rural fire district that depends on community volunteers like Vernonia does, says Davis – the medical system is being swamped everywhere, while available volunteer hours in small communities are dwindling. But Davis does have an additional concern that is unique to Vernonia, the community he is pledged to protect – unlike other Columbia County fire districts, the VRFPD is currently not allowed to transport medical patients.

That can be a real problem if the Metro West crew takes a call, and there are no VVAA staff available to respond if a second call occurs before the Metro West crew is back in the District. It's a problem most Vernonians are not aware of, but should be, says Davis.

Davis attended the Columbia County Board of Commissioners weekly meeting on Wednesday, October 26, along with Fire Chiefs from most of the other fire districts in Columbia County, to talk about the county-wide ambulance coverage plan. Davis took the opportunity to also address the Board of Commissioners during the Visitor's Comments portion of the meeting to request a change to the agreement the County has with Metro West Ambulance to provide medical transportation services. Davis had previously made the same request at the Board of Commissioners June 1, 2022 meeting. Both times Davis was not satisfied or pleased with

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# Voice's Choices for Best Halloween Costumes

Left–right:

Publisher's Choice – Alyce Stevens

Cutest – Claire Davis

Most Creative – Bailey Wegner, Kyle Hilger and Presley

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