

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Progress impossible without direction

To say that the City of Vernonia is spinning its wheels is an understatement.

Two city council members who took office in January are trying to make progress, but lack guidance and direction, and have little cooperation from city employees.

Councilor Tom Buffington has tried to build accountability into purchasing and bid procedures, but the changes are routinely circumvented because "we never had to do this before."

Councilor Mario Leonetti has tried to get progress reports on problems the council has dealt with, but there's no follow-up by city employees. The problems return when citizens complain again.

After months of wrangling there's no resolution on CATV complaints. Serious, longstanding drainage problems on B and C Streets were looked at, not solved. The nuisance abatement program has ground to a halt, with the worst buildings still standing. Random enforcement is the standard in weed and grass fire hazard control. The city is saddled with law suits that have resulted from lack of informed direction.

Perhaps it's time for the citizens of Vernonia to insist on having a city administrator. It can no longer be argued that the existing system works; it doesn't. Without good administration, without leadership and direction, this city's going nowhere.

United Way works

"People Helping People...Help Themselves" is the well known theme of United Way, and it works.

The benefits of several thousand dollars of United Way contributions come to the Vernonia area through Vernonia Cares, Senior Citizens Council, Energy Assistance, Boy and Girl Scouts, Family Counseling, Salvation Army, Red Cross and Women's Resource Center, to name only a few.

What the area returns is the problem. In 1985, \$320 from local donations went to United Way; in 1986 it was \$681. One reason for low donations was a lack of volunteers to do the soliciting. Another reason is that people who live here, but make donations at work in other counties, need to specify that their donations are for United Way of Columbia County.

Whatever the reason, we need to do more than belay up to the trough; we have to start putting something into it.

When United Way volunteers come your way, don't turn your back; pledge a monthly amount or make a generous lump sum donation. Become part of the "People Helping People."

Between the Bookends

By Dan Sevig,
Vernonia Schools Librarian

The main reasons for reading a book are for self-discovery, enjoyment, or information. Yet sometimes the excitement of participation in a school-wide program which offers incentives will reach students who will not read on their own.

Early in October we will begin a reading motivation program at Mist and Washington Grade Schools. The theme of the program is "Around the World with Books." As students read books and turn in vouchers

indicating pages read, their markers will move across a large outline map of the world. Students will receive a series of awards as they journey on this world tour. The top award will be a gold medal and participation in a spring field trip.

All participating students will also be eligible for prizes in a raffle. Washington Grade School and Western Auto are sponsoring the prize, which is a bicycle. A sample bike will be on display at either WGS or Mist during the five months of the contest.

The "Reading is Fundamen-



tal" program, which provides students in grades K-6 with 3 paperback books each year, will be continued. Funds for our fall and spring Book Fair provide local matching funds for this program. Of course, providing 3 paperback books for a personal library is only a beginning. Books are an excellent birthday or holiday gift, or just a way to tell your child that you think reading is important.

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

I walked to my mail box today and to my surprise, there was The INDEPENDENT. Some wonderful person from Vernonia sent it to me. I really enjoyed reading it and am looking forward to the next issue. Thank you.

I have some good friends in Vernonia that I miss a lot. No matter what the distance is between us, I will never forget them. We recently were in Vernonia and there were a lot of you I didn't get to see because of poor planning on my part. For this I am truly sorry.

Pat Larson
Kingman, Arizona

To the Editor:

In response to the question of the month -

I didn't realize a person had to run for office to have input to City affairs.

I know of nobody who has the answer to all the City's problems. It takes communication and a lot of footwork to perform any job well. Operating on hearsay instead of facts is creating City problems.

When the elected officials egotistical problems are solved, maybe they can settle down and do the job they were elected to do.

Leonard Simmons
Vernonia

To the Editor:

I'm writing to explain why I sent my 12 year old to Seattle to attend school for awhile...

My husband and I have 4 boys and have lived here for 2½ years. We moved to Vernonia for two reasons. First, for a business opportunity, and second, so we could live

a life style where we could be home for our children.

Beyond this, we've found it's the people of Vernonia who make the difference, who make Vernonia a desirable place to live.

As I live through my children's adolescence I remember how hard it is to grow up. I remember the desire to be accepted, not only by peers but also as an adult. I recall how difficult decision making was as my parents gave me more freedoms and long-term consequences were not always a part of this process.

In Vernonia, the problems for my son Nick, as well as so many of our children, were too much free time and too few positive activities to participate in. What do we offer our children except to stand around on street corners, ride in older teen's cars, and attend beer parties? We offer no sex education to elementary children through 9th grade, and very little in communication skills with parents or dating relationships.

One example of positive reinforcement through activities was the baseball program offered last spring. It was a very good example of how a few interested adults made use of our children's time. I believe each player, coach and fan came away feeling good about themselves. Thank you.

I do have an optimistic view for the future. Just as I know it is the people of Vernonia who make the difference, I know we can. We need to work with our school system. We need to organize and support activities and sports for our children. Teach them to have fun through participation and accomplishments. Help teach them and ourselves com-

munication skills, to share ideas and dream. We need to prepare them for the world, for college and life beyond Vernonia.

Let's build together a community atmosphere with positive alternatives for our teenagers, so my toddler and 1st grader and your children can find their growing needs met in Vernonia.

Barb Fulmer
President, Vernonia
Booster Club
Vice-Pres. Parent-Teacher
Club

To the Editor:

I'm writing in response to a letter in the August Independent in which an opponent of the proposed linear state park compared its siting to the siting of metropolitan Portland's mega-dump just outside of Vernonia.

In my opinion, there is no comparison at all unless you want to compare fresh fruit with rotten, dead meat. In my opinion, state parks are wonderful places where my family has spent lots of happy times together; I cannot say the same of a mega-dump. State parks do not pollute the air and water but, as a rule, try to preserve the natural environment whenever possible.

I support the movement to site a state park in and around Vernonia. I believe it will benefit Vernonia in many ways, not the least of which will be to preserve the beauty of our land, and not trash it.

Patricia Jensen
Vernonia

