

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

It was the right way to show our pride

There was a lot of company in Vernonia last weekend, but the streets were clean, the sidewalks were swept and the flowers were fresh. Vernonia has never looked so good—and probably never felt so good about its appearance.

Vernonia Pride has started something, something good, and it won't be easy to derail the movement. At first, it was simply a matter of waking people up to how nice the town could look, then getting them to start working on it.

Then an earnest drive to raise enough money for a community center started taking off. People are buying bricks that will show their names as donors toward a community center. The Cycle Oregon committee has approved a donation of \$10,000 toward the community center and other fund raisers are scheduled. There is already enough money to put up a fair match for grant funds.

With the work of other people, restoration of the Shay locomotive is now well underway; grants have been secured and dreams of an operating engine with a track no longer seem so distant.

The excitement has reached many merchants; some have applied fresh coats of paint and several have installed window boxes for flowers. The colorful flowers are delightful now, but don't forget that window boxes can also be put to imaginative uses during the Christmas season.

Many people have expressed considerable pleasure over articles in the Jamboree tabloid that highlighted a few of the artists in the community. Some are now talking about a spring festival of the arts, with categories for arts, crafts, music, drama and more.

Such a festival wouldn't hurt Jamboree at all; it would only remind people that Vernonia is an active community because of the people who live here. It would make the town and its celebrations even more attractive.

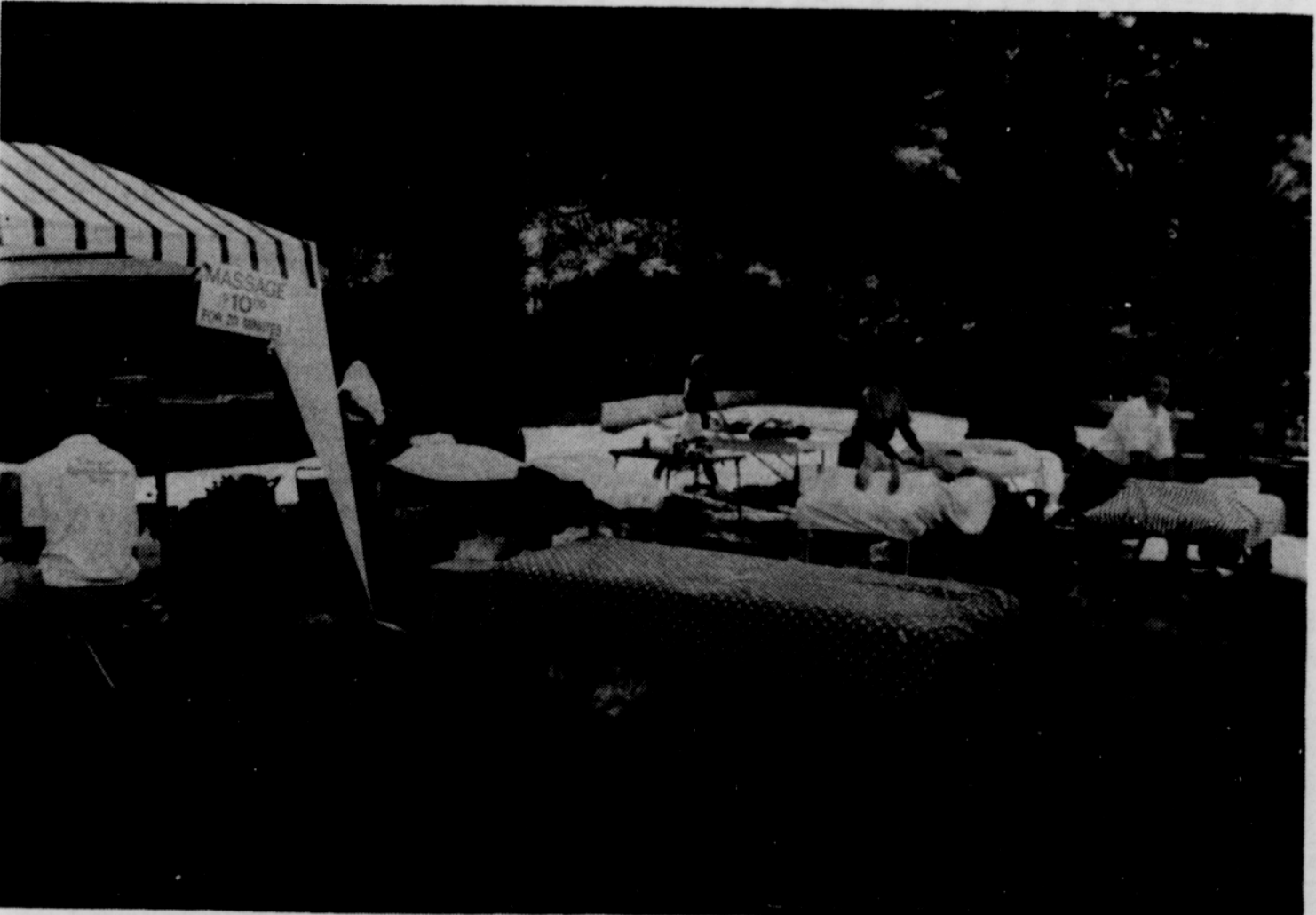
Yes, this is an exciting time; even more exciting, though, are the multitudes of possibilities that tomorrow has in store.

Once there is a community center, what potential will that provide? There can be activities for all ages, ranging from athletics to crafts to great books seminars—the possibilities are, literally, endless.

When Cycle Oregon came to Vernonia two years ago and challenged us to make dinner and breakfast for more than 2,000 people, we met the challenge. The people who could do the job were already here, furthermore, they were willing to do it, even when it meant getting up at 4 a.m. in order to serve breakfast.

The people who can meet challenges are still here and others are coming here because, in addition to liking the natural beauty of the Nehalem Valley, they like the spirit of the people and the community.

Sure, we have our naysayers, every community has. We also have a long way to go. But as long as we keep striving, as long as we retain the spirit, as long as we keep trying to make our dreams come true, we can truly say, "Getting there was half the fun."



After the MS 150-mile bike ride, July 30-31, riders enjoyed massages, a refreshing squirt of water and a barbecue in Hawkins Park. The event was sponsored by the Oregon Chapter of the Multiple Sclerosis Society.