

Training for Business Assistance Teams held here

Eight Vernonia business people, plus groups from Forest Grove and Clatskanie, attended a five hour training session at the Scout Cabin last week to learn how to develop a business assistance team (BAT).

The primary objectives of the program developed by Rural Development Initiatives (RDI) are to train Business Assistance Teams in small, primarily rural communities so they can

- Help other businesses in their communities grow and create new jobs;

- Stabilize jobs and retain businesses to provide economic security in the community;

- Create an efficient outreach mechanism that involves local people;

- Better connect local businesses with public and private resources to help them succeed; and

- Build capacity within the

community to help its businesses.

The program works by combining local volunteers with professional business consultants and programs. The Business Assistance Team's function is to assess the condition of local businesses and the type and extent of assistance needed; broker public and private sector resources to small businesses; help business owners obtain business planning assistance, help busi-

nesses apply for financing; identify aspects of management or operations where business owners may need help to find appropriate assistance.

The Vernonia BAT has scheduled a meeting for all local businesses, Oct. 26 at 7:00 p.m., in order to fully explain the program. Prior to the meeting, business owners will be contacted with the location and more specific information about the program.

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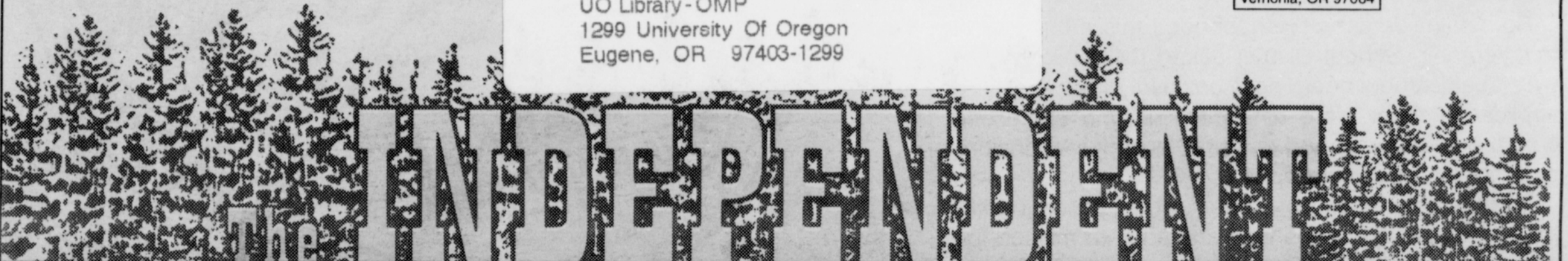
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Another step forward...



Installation of a ceramic tile mural on the entry wall to the Vernonia Library required many hands. Setting a screw in the specially constructed wall is Dan Brown of Hardwood Creations. He was assisted in putting the heavy mural in place by, from left, Brian Gustafson, also of Hardwood Originals, and three members of the city Public Works crew, Scott Rethwill, Jim Gido and John Trent. Brown will design and build a frame for the mural to provide a finishing touch. Read the story behind the mural, below.

Senior center hearing draws a large crowd

Senior citizens and their supporters turned out in large numbers Monday night to express their thoughts and ideas on a new senior citizens/community center for Vernonia. The public hearing held Sept. 18 before the Vernonia City Council was part of the process leading up to application for a technical assistance grant to determine the feasibility of the project.

The existing center has a number of problems. Among them, it is too small, has insufficient parking and is in the flood plain.

During their regular meeting following the hearing, the council authorized City Administrator Mike Sykes to pursue the grant.

Many park plans are nearing completion

The Public Works Department of the City of Vernonia is busy finalizing plans for several different projects in the city parks.

Public Works Director Robyn Bassett told the city council Monday night that bids will be opened soon for both the rock hauling and paving of the Banks-Vernonia State Linear Trail extension between Anderson Park and Lake Vernonia. Bassett is not handling the bids directly, but is working through the Oregon Department of Transportation.

Design for the trail extension includes trails for both walking/biking and horses. Councilor Shirlee Daughtrey expressed concern that some trees would have to be removed for the project. Bassett assured the council that the grading has already been done and no trees had to be removed.

A new fence around Shay Park will use poles and cable similar to those used in Hawkins Park. Instead of one cable, however, there will be three, Bassett said. The chain-link fence will soon be removed. A design has been submitted for the informational kiosk at Shay Park, also. It must be approved by the state as part of the requirements for the grant funding. A shelter to protect the Shay locomotive is still planned, but hasn't yet been designed.

Anderson Park improvements are in the preliminary design phase. The city Parks Commission is working on the project.

Library fees tabled

The council considered a request from Vernonia Librarian Nancy Burch, who requested permission to institute small fines for past due library materials. Mayor Art Parrow expressed a concern that if the fees are instituted at this time and Ballot Measure 93 is approved in November, the City would be required to either pay for a special election or return the fees. The council agreed with Parrow that it would be prudent to postpone instituting the fine system until after the election.

In other business, the Council:

- Asked Sykes to do a study of costs, comparing a municipal court with the existing justice court.

- Agreed to a workshop with the Planning Commission on Oct. 5 regarding possible ordinance changes.

- Agreed to a workshop with the Parks Commission on Nov. 13 regarding Anderson Park plans.

Flood experiences were turned into art

Among the most traumatized victims of the catastrophic Flood of '96, were children whose parents were occupied with the necessary clean-up work and whose schools were closed or changed because of the flood. They didn't say much because, after all, they were children and didn't really know how to express themselves.

Into this turmoil came the Hands-On Art Center. HOAC, under the direction of Luna Braun and Michelle Kunkel, providing not only a place for children to be, but a safe, non-

threatening atmosphere. There was drawing and painting and music and drama, and the children could use any of it - or all of it - to work out their anxieties.

A year later, the community came together for a commemorative potluck party. A mural of ceramic tiles, designed on paper by children at HOAC, had been started, and at the potluck, children and adults decorated ceramic tiles donated by Georgie's Tiles. Back at HOAC, children contributed more ideas and drawings for

the tiles: A dog floating on a piece of furniture, slugs (kids love them) in lots of places, and rainbows galore! As the children had more and more ideas for the mural, there were more and more happy suggestions. The buoyancy of childhood had returned, defeating the negative experiences.

The tiles were fired in March, 1998, and mounted on heavy plywood in April and May of '98. The mural was then stored in a barn owned by Karen Mask, until it could be

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