

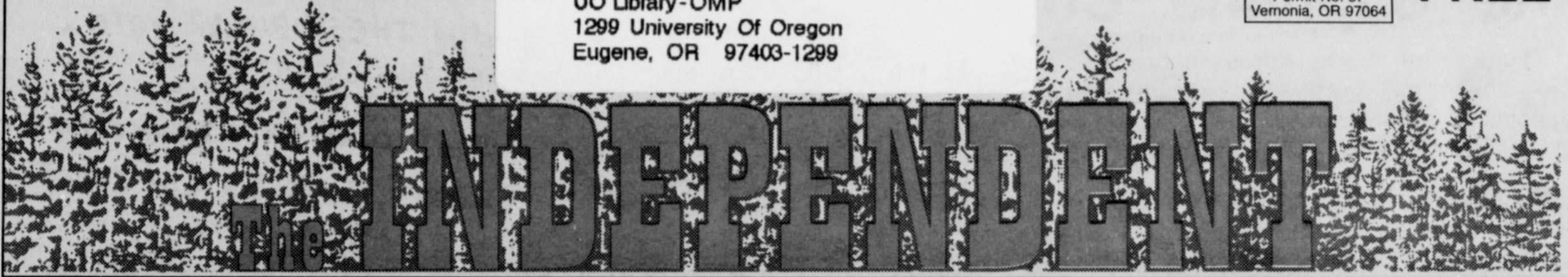


# Merry Christmas Happy New Year

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## Dedication of trail extension draws crowd of happy participants

By Noni Andersen

It was a long time coming, but a feeling of real accomplishment was obvious in the faces and attitudes of the many people who were involved in completion of the Banks-Vernonia State Linear Park extension from Anderson Park to Lake Vernonia.

Among those needed to complete the job were two state agencies – the Oregon Department of Transportation, which provided rock for the trail, handled the bid process for the paving and provided most of the funding for the bridge across Rock Creek, and the Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation, with many responsibilities and great cooperation.

Closer to home, Columbia County provided assistance with funding for both the bridge and the trail, and supported Vernonia's bid for grants from the state agencies.

Nehalem Valley Development Corporation, the private partner in the public/private venture, owned most of the property needed for the trail extension and worked with the City of Vernonia to reach an arrangement acceptable to all parties.

The City's Public Works Department and administration spent uncounted hours putting together all of the elements needed to accomplish the project, working – successfully – with each of the other groups in whatever way was needed.

In addition to an all-weather recreation trail that joins the lake to Anderson Park and the downtown core, a trail has been added adjacent to the road behind Vernonia High School. This addition completes a route that can be safely used by bicyclists and others to go from the lake to the schools without using Hwy. 47



The weather was gloomy, but the mood was just the opposite, as smiles brightened the day at the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Banks-Vernonia State Linear Park extension in Vernonia last week. Completion of this public/private project brought together many of the people involved, including from left, Casey Mitchell of Nehalem Valley Development Corp (with unidentified youngster), B-V Park resident Ranger Mike Shannon, Vernonia Public Works Director Robyn Bassett, state parks Recreation Trail Coordinator Sean Loughran, Sykes Mitchell of NVDC, state Parks Grants Project Officer Marilyn Lippincott, Ann Mitchell of NVDC, Columbia County Commissioner Tony Hyde, Vernonia Planning Director Julie Koontz, Vernonia Mayor-elect Mario Leonetti, Dale Webb of the Izaak Walton League, Sam Hunaidi of Oregon Dep't of Transportation, Vernonia Parks Committee member Donna Gehrke, Brenda DeLorenzo of ODOT, Vernonia City Administrator Mike Sykes, ODOT District 2A Manager Ronald Kroop, Vernonia Parks Committee member Darlene McLeod and several others who can't be seen.

at O-A Hill. It provides the same safety when used from Weed Avenue, through Anderson Park and on to the school.

Considering all of these improvements, one more group must be added to this list: This group is composed of the many

Vernonia residents who supported the trail extension regardless of the obstacles, which were numerous. Without that kind of community support the project would never have gotten off the ground, much less have been completed.

### INSIDE:

- Local woman honored by state.... pg. 8
- Green will lead co-op group..... pg. 8
- For the love of music..... pg. 9
- Audit report cautions Banks..... pg. 13