

Letters to the Editor

Lions seek help with gazebo construction

To the Editor:

Several years ago, the Vernonia Lions constructed a multi-purpose covered picnic

facility at Hawkins Park. Unfortunately, because of deterioration and vandalism over the years, it had to be demolished.

At the request of several citizens, the Lions Club is planning to replace the structure

with a gazebo to be located near the Scout Cabin. Plans for the building are complete, but the cost of materials far exceeds the resources available.

To successfully complete this project, community assis-

tance is essential. The club is hopeful that individuals, businesses and organizations will be willing to assist. The cost of materials will exceed \$7,400. The club will use available funds and provide labor but, without broad assistance, the project will not get done.

Please call Lion President Larry Doppke, 503-429-6705 or project manager Jim Prpich, 503-429-3315, if you can assist with materials and/or labor.

The club is also looking for people interested in joining the largest service organization in the world. Contact any Lion or come to a meeting on the first and third Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at Lew's.

Art Parrow
Publicity Chairman
Vernonia Lions

A challenge to help educate our children

To the Editor:

How many times have you been in a group of people chatting when the subject of our schools comes up? Invariably there follows a series of complaints from large class sizes, inadequate curriculum to poor teaching. Since coming to Vernonia last year, I have had the privilege of observing firsthand how our schools function. I have witnessed the challenges that face our teachers and have noted many deficiencies, none of which are due to any lack of effort on the part of our faculty and staff.

I was pleased to find that our teachers in this district are among the most frugal people I have met. They covet their resources and are careful not to waste anything, an effort I applaud, given our disposable society.

Our teachers and staff in Vernonia are the most involved. If you attend one of the sporting events in town, you will find that the people who are encouraging our children to excel at school are the same ones sitting in the bleachers cheering them on to victory. They often spend entire days devoted to the children in their classes, our children. From bus drivers to janitorial staff to teachers, they are all there.

Many of our teachers and staff commute an hour or more each day to teach in Vernonia. Nayan Fleenor, a second grade teacher at Lincoln, even keeps a sleeping bag in her car in case she is working late and the weather prohibits her from going home. Now that is what I call "devotion." Even our bus drivers will work into the wee hours transporting our kids to school functions and sporting events.

So, here is the challenge for us, as citizens of Vernonia: When the subject of our schools comes up, ask those who would complain what they are doing to make it better.

There are many opportunities to improve our schools. One of the ways is to volunteer in the classrooms. There is no training required and there are

many benefits. You might find yourself becoming a hero to a child, be the recipient of a work of art, or you might find yourself with the arms of a grateful child around your neck. Now *those* are benefits.

There are many ways you can make a difference. You could sponsor a party for a class, share a skill or donate materials. Did you know that monetary gifts to our schools are tax-deductible? If you have construction expertise, Lincoln school is trying to organize a project to build stairs from the upper parking area. Many companies, such as Intel, offer "matching-funds" programs that will double or even triple your financial gift to the schools. Some companies will even donate money if the employee spends time volunteering at the school. Check with your employer.

Last, but by no means least, one of the best ways to support our schools is to know what your kids are learning at school. Help them to remember their homework and spend time reading with them. Take time around the dinner table to discuss what is going on with them. Those few minutes are an investment in the future and the returns are awesome.

Jill Wiseman
Vernonia

Let's put activities on local access TV

To the Editor:

Many of you are aware that Vernonia has a television cable company. As part of our cable service, we receive Channel 7 for public access. Currently, Channel 9 in St. Helens sends us a tape with their news and [Columbia] County Commissioner meetings, etc. I asked them how we could get Vernonia programs on Channel 7 and their response was, "Film it and send it to us; we will send it to your cable service for airing. I have begun filming City Council meetings, sporting events and other areas of interest to Vernonians. It has become apparent, though, that I need help if we are going to cover all of these events. If you are interested, please contact me at 503-429-5201.

I am still working out details for transport of tapes and timing of viewing schedules on Channel 7. Currently, the schedule for viewing County and local news is as follows: Sunday, 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., Monday, 4:00 to 8:00 p.m., Tuesday, 12:00 to 4:00 p.m., Wednesday, 5:00 to 9:00 p.m., Thursday, 5:00 to 9:00 a.m., Friday, 10:00 to 2:00 p.m. and Saturday, 9:00 to 1:00 a.m.

Please tune in and check out what is going on in your community. Remember, most of the filming is done on a volunteer basis. If you cannot donate time, how about donating some money so we can expand this service in Vernonia.

Donna Gehrke
Vernonia

Between the Bookends

By Denise Holmes, Librarian
Banks Public Library

Looking for a good read for a dark winter's night? How about *A Star Called Henry*? Billed as an epic, a love story and a portrait of modern Irish history, this novel by Roddy Doyle was named Editor's Choice by *The New York Times* and a Notable Book by the American Library Association. If you're thinking of a weekend getaway, check out *Quick Escapes Pacific Northwest*. It contains 32 weekend mini-vacations which are easily reached from Portland, Seattle, or Vancouver, British Columbia. Whether you prefer hot springs, high desert or city delights, this guidebook provides suggested activities, restaurants and lodging, travel directions and maps, shopping tips and listings of special events for each destination. Or if you want to stay home, try out some of the 1,200 collected recipes in the new *Martha Stewart Living Cookbook*. Compiled from the first 10 years of *Martha Stewart Living Magazine*, this collection contains something for every occasion and taste.

If you live in the Banks area and are interested in supporting the Library, mark your calendars for Tuesday, March 6th at 7:00 p.m. That is the date for the next meeting of the Friends of the Banks Public Library. The Friends always welcome new members. Membership donations, along with other projects, are part of their ongoing fundraising efforts. The Friends' contributions make possible many of the Library's vital functions such as Pre-School Story Time, monthly recycling and tons of best-selling books.

The Friends also purchase items for the Library such as book-ends and step stools. You can become more familiar with the Friends' mission and activities by stopping in the Library lobby to read the minutes and notes from their most recent meeting which are posted there. You may also pick up a membership application from the Library Circulation desk.

One of the Friends' major activities of the year is the annual Book and Plant Sale, held at the end of April. It's not too early to begin thinking about items you may want to contribute to the sale. If your spring-cleaning includes books that you'd like to donate, or if you have plants that you will be able to provide from your yard, please call the Library.

It's getting closer to tax time, and new federal and state forms are in. The Library is a convenient place to get your tax forms or to make copies while you are here. You may also access the IRS website for any forms not available locally.

Don't forget to take all your recyclable items to the SWATCO Service Yard on Sellers Rd. on Saturday, Feb 10th. Volunteers and Friends of the Library will be glad to assist you between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Banks Public Library: 111 Market Street.
Hours: Tues., Wed., Thurs., 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.;
Fri. and Sat. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Preschool Story Time, Weds., 10:15 a.m.
Phone: (503) 324-1382
Internet: www.WILnet.wccls.lib.or.us.

Salem Report

By Rep. Elaine M. Hopson
Second District

Three weeks into the session, things are moving ahead. Although not everyone agrees about everything, the feeling of cooperation and respect is continuing as we plow through some very difficult issues.

My committee assignments this year are Agriculture and Forestry, Vice-chair of Student Achievement and School Accountability (formerly known as Education) and the Education subcommittee of Ways and Means. Since these were what I had requested, I felt very fortunate. These are areas of importance to our District and about which I know enough to make a contribution to the deliberative process.

Of course, the budget looms over everything and is of major concern. The Governor's proposed budget (By statute, the Governor has to publish a balanced budget by December.) provides a basis upon which we all focus as a starting point. Initial work on the Education Budget is in progress. As the item that uses the largest portion of the state budget, this "elephant" will receive close scrutiny. In addition, there are several areas of particular concern in District 2, including funding for county Fairs, reductions in senior services and transportation, hatchery closures, reductions in OSU Extension Services and other extremely important services.

The big news is that the Ways and Means Co-chairs (that's the money folks - Rep. Ben Westlund, R-Redmond/Sisters area and Senator Lenn Hannon, R-Medford/Ashland area) have released what is called the "Co-chairs Budget." This budget comes out after the session starts and, with the Governor's budget, establishes the platform and format from which a final budget will be developed.

The fact that the Co-chairs' Budget is out so early provides great optimism for the process. Although the two budgets do not agree, there are many similarities and areas of agreement. Everyone is concerned about allocating the State's resources in a way that best meets the

needs of the people. There are many good programs that need to be funded and not enough money to fund everything, so difficult decisions will need to be made.

HB 2047, providing funding for County fairs, moved out of the Agriculture and Forestry subcommittee, but will still need some careful watching to see that it continues to receive support and makes it through the process. It was a great help to have fair directors and students attend the hearing and participate in the process.

In Education Ways and Means, we have been working with a number of licensing agencies to support them as they license their members. Included were Naturopathic Examiners; Licensed Professional Counselors and Therapists; Clinical Social Workers; Occupational Therapists; Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology; and Radiologic Technology. Other licensing agencies will be reviewed next week.

Bills regarding private school student participation in public school activities, location of one school district within another, implementation of the Quality Education Model and other issues are being heard in Education - now known as Student Achievement and School Accountability.

There have already been a number of visitors and I encourage you to come to Salem. Although I have an open door policy and an appointment isn't mandatory, it does help me schedule my availability to meet with you. Of course, always feel free to call, write and/or e-mail me with your thoughts, ideas and concerns. Representing you is what I want to do, please keep in touch and let me know your concerns.

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