

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Community concerns reflected in projects

Small community governments spend a lot of time balancing fiscal obligations; juggling available funds with community needs for public works, law enforcement, fire protection, schools, libraries, planning and administration. There is usually very little left over for discretionary spending, which often results in the unintentional neglect of less "vital," quality of life considerations. It also results in strong, caring organizations run totally by volunteers who step in where government is insufficient.

Banks, Vernonia and Mist-Birkenfeld must all deal with fiscal restraint, but that doesn't discourage volunteers.

Vernonia, the largest of the three communities, also has the most volunteers and is able to take on a lot of projects, with volunteers taking the lead, and in many cases doing most of the work.

The annual city-wide clean-up day usually involves about 200 volunteers who spend about four intensive hours working - planting flowers, picking up and hauling debris, cutting weeds and grass, helping senior citizens, painting, or whatever else is needed - and an hour or so enjoying lunch and satisfaction. Anyone who hasn't been involved should participate this coming Saturday, April 14.

The Banks clean-up day, April 28, will be more focused on trash pickup, because many volunteers will be working at the annual community auction. This 28-year-old event raises large amounts of money for scholarships, school needs and community projects. It also requires a lot of effort on a year-around basis, and it is all done by volunteers.

Rural Mist-Birkenfeld does a remarkable job of meeting special needs in their community through the Helping Circle, a volunteer organization that has done just about everything, from feeding people to raising scholarship funds to weeding the cemetery.

Vernonia Pride, which organizes the clean-up day, has supplied trash receptacles, flowers and other amenities in the downtown area, but this year will "plant" many artificial flowers because of the pending water shortage. It may not be quite the same, but it is really just a different way to demonstrate responsible citizenship.

All of these organizations have events planned and all of them can use more helping hands. If you haven't done it already, it's a good time to get involved with others who care as much about your community as you do.



Letters to the Editor

Parent feels wronged by school district

To the Editor:

In April of last year, many of your children watched as I was escorted from Washington Grade School by the police. Mrs. Brock, the crossing guard lady? Mrs. Brock who played the guitar and sang with us? Mrs. Brock who did Science Club and had field trips out to her house? Yes, that Mrs. Brock.

What was my heinous crime that made the Administration call the police? I went to observe my eighth grade son's core classes without the permission of the principal. I tried to follow the procedure any other parent would. I called and left messages for the four teachers to call me, but only one of them did. I went to the office and tried to check in and get a visitors pass, but was denied. I was told I had to talk to the Principal. I was there for my son, and had nothing to discuss with the Principal.

First I had received a threatening letter from the Superintendent stating that I was not to be on any school district property or the police would be called and I would be removed. This was because of something I allegedly said or did. I have never been told what I said or did, or to whom I said or did it. I was accused by someone of something and found guilty by the Administration. I responded with a letter of my own to the Superintendent saying that I would go where I wished and see to my children's education as I saw fit. I then received a letter from the school district's attorney modifying the threats from the Superintendent to only keep me from Washington Grade School. Once again, there

were only vague accusations, nothing specific, and nothing to which I was given a chance to respond. I did not and do not recognize a letter from an attorney as a legal document. Why didn't they get a restraining order? Why? Because they had no grounds. Had they approached a Judge to restrain me from a school that one of my children attended, they would have been forced to give their reason, and I would have been afforded the right to respond. The Superintendent has never spoken to me directly about any problems, he has merely made vague accusations in writing. Provided with a law firm at District expense, he has punished me for questioning his authority and competence in other matters. How? By trying to limit my involvement with one of my children's education, one of the greatest punishments that can be given to a concerned and involved parent.

I pled not guilty to the charge of Criminal Trespass II. The word guilt implies wrong doing, and trying to observe my child's classroom was not wrong. It is both the right and responsibility of all parents. I did "disobey" the letters from Mr. McClellan and the School District's attorney, but I am guilty of no wrong doing.

At my trial, Mr. Sherrill informed the court that this year, there are new rules governing parents visiting the school. He said that now it is necessary for all parents to obtain his permission before they go into the classroom. I would think that as the Principal of Washington, Lincoln and Mist, he would be far too busy to discuss every parent's reason for being in their child's classroom. Remember, if he "doesn't approve of the purpose of your presence," he will be duty bound to

call the police and have you removed.

Apparently, the authority of the Vernonia School District outweighs the rights for all citizens guaranteed by the United States Constitution. To me, this entire incident was a blatant abuse of authority.

We do live in a changing world, but I for one am not willing to give up my rights and responsibilities as a parent. How about you?

Alice Brock
Vernonia

(Ed. note: Ms. Brock was found guilty in court; the charge will be dismissed after one year probation if all court-imposed conditions are met.)

Others help success of Easter cantata

To the Editor:

We would like to express our appreciation for the gracious cooperation shown by Washington Grade School Principal Kirk Sherrill, David Van Meter and the rest of the staff in allowing us the use of the WGS auditorium for our 2001 Easter Cantata.

Other contributors to the success of this year's efforts were Ron Welch, John Cahill, Jessilyn and Jenifer Thomas, L.V. Schoonover, Nicolas Phelps, Dave and Bryan Benes, Mary Lou Beach, Jacqueline Ramsey, Fran Fletcher and The Independent for the great pictures and story.

Special recognition to Marc Douglas, who brings his own sound equipment, installs it and runs it for dress rehearsals and performances.

In His Service,
Lynda Cahill and
The Vernonia Community
Choir

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