

Letters to the Editor

Community displays generosity – again!

To the Editor:

Well done, Vernonia!

Because of your generosity, Vernonia Cares Food Bank distributed ninety holiday food baskets! Some of you sent money directly to Vernonia Cares and others dropped off food or meat to our facility. Two pinocle groups gave to the food bank instead of exchanging gifts or earning prizes. Several churches provided canned food and funds. St. Mary's Catholic Church and St. Vincent De Paul purchased all the

fresh produce. The Salvation Army also donated funds to help meet food needs. Two Christmas tree farms (Mike's Tree Farm and Marvin Meyer's Tree Farm) placed cash donation receptacles out to receive money for the food baskets. Vernonia Sentry kept the canned food donation barrel available in their store so people could contribute food items. Many, many more people, businesses and organizations contributed in similar ways! Thank you!

Beside the donation of food and money, twenty volunteers

came and helped assemble the boxes (which contained forty food items, including a turkey). Those ninety food baskets contained groceries for a Christmas dinner for 295 people.

Thank you, Vernonia, for showing that Vernonia cares and shares!

**Sandy Welch, Director
Vernonia Cares Food Bank**

Concern is fine, but participation better

To the Editor:

I read the letter to the editor by M. Silverman, sharing her

outrage about the listing of the KKK being established in Vernonia in 1922. This historical fact was displayed on the kiosk at Vernonia Lake. I agree with M. Silverman's opinion about the KKK. Hate and prejudice have no business in any community. The truth is that the KKK did exist here in 1922. It certainly isn't an event in history that Vernonia is proud of, but, like many communities around the nation, the KKK did exist in Vernonia in 1922. Does listing this historical fact mean that this practice is supported today? Of course not. Vernonia is one of the most friendly, non-prejudiced communities you will find anywhere. In any case, the City and Vernonia Pride agreed that this reference to the KKK should be removed from the kiosk.

The City received two kiosks as part of a state tourism grant. The City of Vernonia asked Vernonia Pride to develop information to place inside to help share Vernonia's history. We also wanted to highlight some of the visitor attractions we have here. The primary goal was to give tourists a sense of Vernonia's past and information to encourage them to spend time and resources in our local community.

If M. Silverman had taken time to attend a Vernonia Pride meeting and met this group of ladies, she would understand how blessed Vernonia is to have people who are dedicated to our community. Instead, without asking them for their rational, she decided to condemn a group of volunteers for simply stating a historical fact about Vernonia's past.

Vernonia Pride is a group of volunteers who spend hundreds of volunteer hours making Vernonia a better place to live. I don't know of any group who works harder for their community than Vernonia Pride. Planting flowers, coordinating the annual community cleanup day, the annual July 4 parade and fireworks display, and doing whatever it takes to make Vernonia a better place for residents and visitors alike is their main mission.

I am glad that M. Silverman is concerned about where Vernonia is heading. We need everyone to step forward and help build a healthy and vibrant community for ourselves and our families. We have celebrated many community success-

es, mainly because we have had many people who will give hours of their time for the benefit of all of us. If we have differences, let's resolve them with respect and open communication. We face many serious challenges in our community. We will only be successful if we work together.

**Mario P. Leonetti
Mayor of Vernonia**

Slanderous remarks are upsetting

To the Editor:

The other day, while at work, I got somewhat of a surprise. There, on the front page of the *Daily Astorian*, was the headline, "Mention of Klan upsets town." The town was Vernonia, my home. I had read the letter to the editor in *The Independent* the week prior from M. Silverman, in which he/she voiced concern about the listing of the KKK in a roster of firsts in Vernonia. I was not aware of a great concern in our community. While I support a person's right to object, I felt that this situation was getting carried away, if it was getting press in Astoria.

I wield a pen to inform people of injustice, but I never do so without giving the person that I am attacking an opportunity to explain their actions. It appears that the letter to the editor was the first contact made on this subject, otherwise M. Silverman would have understood that Vernonians do not support racial prejudice, but were only listing an interesting occurrence in Vernonia's past. I was quite surprised to learn that the KKK had organized here in Vernonia. I, however, am not surprised that it no longer exists. Are there racists in Vernonia? Probably, but no more than anywhere else in Northwest Oregon.

What troubles me the most is the apparent effort to portray Vernonia as racist. I could possibly understand an outsider getting a wrong first impression, but not someone who has lived here for any time. It has been suggested that spreading this story into the *Daily Astorian* and the *Willamette Weekly* is not the work of M. Silverman, but others in our community. Of course, these people are hiding their identity, which would suggest we have devious and slan-

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Between the Bookends

By Nancy Burch, Librarian
Vernonia Public Library

A New Year always brings reflection on the past year and bright hopes for the year that is just beginning. One brand new and exciting event this past year was the organization of The Friends of the Library. Their membership drives and fundraisers were successful, the benefits of which are reflected in the library in the form of a family pass to the Children's Museum for patrons to check out and in an assortment of new books for beginning readers. A first-time project, *Give a Christmas gift to the Library*, was presented to the public during December. This resulted in 19 books being purchased and added to the library's collection. A new board member, Schann Nelson, was welcomed to assume the position vacated as good-natured, hard-working, Larry Doppke moved from Vernonia. A generous donation from Lorna Poetter of Farm Woman's Nursery and a grant from SOLV added plants and barkdust to nearly complete the landscaping at the library. The goal of entering 10,000 items in the computerized library system was realized by June and has now reached nearly 13,000.

Oftentimes activities that were innovated one year overlap into the next year and just get better and better and this is the case with the library. The after-school reading/activity program, which was initiated by Orissa Burghard last year, is now being funded through a grant and is under the supervision of Trish Maldonado. In an effort to revitalize the pre-school story time, a craft related to the story has been added to each of the

Monday programs. Record-setting attendance occurred during the past Summer Reading programs, with this coming year's theme of "Don't Bug Me I'm Reading" expected to draw large audiences and to encourage many youngsters to read during the summer. Circulation of library materials has increased dramatically each year since the move to the new building and the number of registered library patrons is also at an all time high. The use of library computers for word processing, Internet and educational games continues to increase and a potential grant from the Gates Foundation should provide an additional computer later this year. The meeting room is used regularly; people use the library. With a program celebrating National Library Week being planned by The Friends and with the prospect of having a presentation in the near future by an established Northwest author, the year 2002 has all the indications of offering some more *bright hopes* to the community.

Tax forms are also available in the library and don't forget to check the special display table featuring a Winter theme, or the new book section with newly released novels by Dean Koontz and Lilian Jackson Braun.

Vernonia Library 701 Weed Avenue
Hours: Mon., Wed., Fri. 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Tues., Thur. 2 p.m.-7 p.m.
Sat. 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Preschool Story Time, Mondays, 10:30 a.m.
Phone: (503) 429-1818

Salem Scene

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grams that have been approved but not yet implemented.

There is a debate between "across the board" cuts – where every program is cut by the same percentage — and "targeted cuts" which specify programs or services. However, interest in performing across the board cuts seems to have waned, in part because the Legislature and Governor are interested in maintaining control over where cuts might take place.

The most likely outcome of a special session will be a combination of agency cuts and some revenue generating strategies. How deep the cuts will be and from what programs they will come is a long way from settled.

It's reasonable to anticipate that there will be additional opportunities for public input, especially as the Legislative Leadership begins to narrow the lists of options for spending reductions and revenue sources.

I will need your help to know what citizens in our newly-designated House District 31 want to see as outcomes. Please share your thoughts with me as we move through this process.

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