

Letters

From page 2

grade levels to match state wide testing. Obviously this was not an option as it forced the formation of at least one blend in town.

I believe the consideration of curriculum changes or hard line positions should only occur after considerable thought and research. Documentation on the subject of blends is inconclusive. There is no significant evidence supporting one practice over another.

Board discussion on this was one of adamant condemnation. I had never before heard talk of this as a problem within our district at the board level. Reasoning was based on limited personal experience or hearsay from "friends in education," without providing any evidence showing that one practice is better than another. Most notably lacking was information from within our district. I felt this was very unprofessional. Our children deserve better.

My disappointment over this whole issue lies not in the decision itself, but rather the process. Much had been made of [Vernonia Superintendent Mike] Funderburg's availability and willingness to listen to groups or individuals. For that we can all truly be thankful. I have seen him as very upbeat with many positive ideas and actions. I have found him to be easy to talk with and can actually say I kind of like him.

His three-option analysis of

Mist Grade School was an utter failure. He presented three unworkable solutions that were biased and unequally weighted. The statistics and surveys were written to convey an unfavorable message.

All meetings were advertised, but the agendas were only lead-ins to decisions of greater magnitude and impact. The deception was that a true plan actually existed. Grass root efforts lacked time to organize and build a campaign.

I also believe there was a failure to seek and consider input from the teachers, students and parents most affected.

The most disturbing point is the communication between individuals who strongly inferred a decision on Mist was already made, while the superintendent and board claimed that all options remained open. It is with this that I personally have lost all trust in them.

The board of directors, which you elected, share in this debacle as well. I realize that we need to do what is best for all, but by cutting a highly successful, self-sufficient educational element within the district, while leaving extracurricular athletics or non-benchmark fine arts programs unscathed is just wrong. I am not suggesting that these are bad programs and should be cut, but that other options exist. I will never argue against the benefits of athletics, but will remind administrators, coaches, players, parents and fans that these activities are privileges. Extra-curricular is just that and in tough economic times I do not believe education at any level should be sacrificed over athletics.

At the first special meeting we were told it was all about declining enrollments and lack of funding; the second meeting, it was stated that it was much more complex than money. I believe the second meeting only occurred due to the presence of highly concerned parents demanding a degree of accountability.

This is the same board of directors that vigorously tried to tell you and me to pass a school bond levy two years ago. One reason being that our buildings are unsafe and our children would be harmed in the event of an earthquake. If this remains true, consider that Mist Grade School is probably the most structurally sound building in the district. Lincoln

Grade school should raise serious concerns of safety.

These are the very same people who will likely ask you for more money in the future. I say NO. The school boards and state legislators will then say it is you and I hurting education. I contend it is quite the opposite and until these people can gain the trust and spend wisely, tax measures will continue to be defeated in this state. With very limited exception there is not a tax increase that I would currently support.

I want the best for all the kids in this district. Leadership starts at the top and filters down. I believe it is an embarrassment to this district to have about 15 students attending Jewell School, but I am beginning to gain a greater understanding of why.

What is best for all? Remember the district's vision, "We will open doors for all to discover the world of endless possibilities."

For fair, honest, responsible leadership, write in Thomas Jones for position #7, 47J school board. Thank you.

**Thomas Jones
Mist**

Youth drama lacked support from school

To the Editor:

For three nights in May, a drama production entitled "I Hate Hamlet", was presented by the Vernonia Youth Theatre and held at the Grange in Vernonia. The Vernonia Youth Theatre was formerly known as the Vernonia High School Drama Department. A month after rehearsals had begun, an employee of the school district took an unedited copy of the play to the Superintendent and insisted that it was inappropriate.

Never mind that the principal had been given a copy of the play in the very beginning, and never mind that a couple of possibly inappropriate lines had been edited. Never mind that the actors had been working on their extensive lines and a very complex and choreographed sword fight. After perusal by the "English department," the play was deemed inappropriate for the high school. The decision was made to do the play anyway, and with the help of Robb Wilson, the Grange Hall was selected.

Please see page 16

Between the Bookends

By Nancy Burch, Librarian
Vernonia Public Library



Thanks for being flexible in connection with Whitney Otto's unexpected illness, which resulted in her not being able to make the scheduled appearance. Saturday, June 21, is the date that has been tentatively reselected for Ms. Otto to come to the library.

She sounds delightful on the phone, so plan on having a great time. She has also offered to bring the beautiful handmade quilt, which was given to her and was featured in the movie version of her book.

Pat Gold's program about the Chinookan Nations will be the following Saturday, June 28 at 2:00 p.m. Ms. Gold is a very versatile, talented lady who conducts workshops in addition to her numerous presentations through the Chau-tauqua program. Mark your calendars for these two upcoming special events at the library.

There's still a little time to read the monthly choice for the book discussion group. The book being discussed is John Grisham's, *The Summons*, and the discussion will take place Tuesday, May 20, at 7:00 p.m. in the library. All interested in joining this informal group are welcome. Next book for discussion will be *Seabiscuit, An American Legend*, by Laura Hillenbrand. The library has two copies of this book for anyone wishing to get started reading for the June discussion meeting.

The library was recently given a nice selection of James Bond videos. These have been added to the rather extensive video collection and are now available for circulation.

Latest acquisitions include *A Cold Heart* by Jonathan Kellerman, *All He Ever Wanted* by Anita Shreve, *Dirty Work* by Stuart Woods and *The Second Time Around* by Mary Higgins Clark. Of these, *The Second Time Around* is the only one that I have had the chance to read. Having read every one of Ms. Clark's books over a period of many years, I've been somewhat disappointed in some of her later novels. While each is an enjoyable, nice read with characters that reflect the changes occurring over the years, they don't seem as suspenseful as her very early novels. This one, I feel, is one of the better of her later offerings. This novel is narrated partly from the third-person perspective of a mass murderer, and partly from the first-person point of view of Carley De Carlo who is a target of this killer. Carley is the stepsister of Lynn Spencer, whose

charismatic husband, Nicholas, presumably died in the crash of his small plane. It is assumed that Nicholas looted the medical company he founded and that he was fleeing arrest when the plane crashed. A newspaper correspondent, Carley is hired to do a feature on Nicholas Spencer and the cancer cure he claimed to have developed. Carley asks questions that uncover clues to a conspiracy within the medical company and to the possibility that the cancer cure really worked. With this knowledge, Carley comes to the realization that someone does not want this information revealed and is willing to kill her to prevent it. Fans of Ms. Clark will be able to predict the ending, but still this is a nice book to read.

My recommendation for the month is a novel by Nanci Kincaid, entitled *Verbena*. This book will make you laugh and make you cry. When Verbena's first husband dies in a car wreck, she is left with five children and a big empty place in her heart. She and the mailman, Lucky McHale, develop a very special relationship and marry. Then, Lucky disappears, leaving an even bigger hole in Verbena's heart and many questions in her mind. This is a great story of a strong, emotional, headstrong, sexy, loving, and funny woman.

When in St. Helens, be sure to check out the St. Helens Bookshop. It has a wonderful selection of books, many with personal comments from the staff of the store, librarians, and other readers. The owner, Luanne Kreutzer, has been the person responsible for providing names and contacts for potential authors to make appearances at Vernonia's library, for ordering books to have as these authors visit the library, and for the selections that have been available for purchase as gifts for the library at Christmas time.

The Friends of the Library have two days scheduled as drop-off days for those of you who have books to donate to their annual book sale during Jamboree. These are June 21st and July 26th—both Saturdays—from 10-12 a.m. This has been a most successful fund-raiser and its success depends on having books to sell and buyers for them. All money raised by The Friends is used to support the library and its programs. Help with this sale or any other project of The Friends will gladly be accepted.

Vernonia Public Library: 701 Weed Ave.
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, 10:00 a.m., when school is in session.

Phone: (503) 429-1818