

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Rampant ignorance does actual harm

Oh well, what does one more biased and incredibly ignorant article by *The Oregonian* have to do with real life?

Unfortunately, a lot.

Most people's perceptions about communities they don't know develop from secondhand exposure – what they read or hear about the community. Take a look at the letters on this page.

One writer read that article by Jerry Boone, believed every word of it, and passed judgement on the whole community as having a "pervasive attitude that it's all right for kids to drink."

That's about on a par with Foster Church, who came to Vernonia to write a travel article for *The Oregonian*, did all of his research from bar stools and concluded that Vernonia is a heavy drinking town!

It's a puzzlement: Vernonia has one library, one lake, one magnificently restored Scout cabin, two handicapped-accessible fishing piers, three schools, three adult drinking establishments, six city parks and twelve churches.

For young people, Vernonia also has summer baseball and softball, soccer, kids' football, year-around library programs, an arts program that includes both visual and performing arts, and much more – all run by volunteers.

Jamboree is also far more than a time to play. The Jamboree Committee has given approximately \$15,000 to nonprofits in the past five years. Boosters, churches, Lions Club, volunteer firefighters and the senior center all make money during Jamboree. Many Jamboree events give directly to nonprofits; just look at Sandy Welch's letter on page 3.

Yet, the only conclusion *Oregonian* reporters Boone and Church can reach is that Vernonians spend all of their time, money and effort on booze!

Ed. note: The "12,000 people" cited in Lynn Chiotti's letter came from the article (*Big protest in small town*, Aug. 6, 2003) by Jerry F. Boone, who is either factually or mathematically challenged, and totally unfettered by editors. He also claimed attendance of 30,000 people for the weekend, which left the Jamboree Committee gasping with envy.

LET'S GET WITH THE PROGRAM PEOPLE!!

250 FOLKS STORMED CITYHALL BECAUSE A BEERHALL CLOSED AT "JAMBOREE"

THAT'S OK... but...

... LESS THAN A DOZEN OF YOU WENT TO A SCHOOL BOARD MEETING!!!*



*LOOKIT WHAT'S HAPPENING TO OUR SCHOOLS + KIDS EDUCATION!

Letters

Chief was right, two officers not enough

To the Editor:

Let me see, two officers for 12,000 people who do not live in Vernonia. That means that the town expected these two gentlemen to Preserve and Protect their personal safety and property from a crowd of alcohol drinking individuals. And to patrol the narrow two lane road called Highway 47 for drivers who had been drinking. Sounds like a recipe for tragedy being brewed up.

Chief Cahill should be commended, not condemned, for having the foresight to call in extra law enforcement personnel. And the Fire Marshall was looking out for the safety of the community by limiting the number of people who could be in the various facilities that serve alcohol. All it would have taken is a small fire in the kitchen to have led to a disaster. Look at the recent club fires on the east coast to see what happens when facilities are over crowded.

One alcohol poisoning of a 16 year old, is one too many! This was only the tip of the ice-

berg and was not the first alcohol poisoning incident in the last two years in Vernonia. The six MIP's were only a reflection of the pervasive attitude that it's all right for kids to drink. The six DUI citations probably saved a few lives. The strong presence of law enforcement did protect the right to have a good, safe, sober time celebrating the uniqueness of Vernonia. Friendship Days is just one of many community celebrations in Columbia County. And one of the biggest.

Perhaps Vernonia should follow the lead of other community festivals in Oregon and leave the alcohol out. Become more family-oriented and the people will come for the fun. I used to attend every year, but stopped going, partially because of the alcohol issue. Driving Highway 47 sober is a challenge. Driving it with other drivers who have been drinking is dangerous.

Lynn Chiotti, Coordinator
DUII Victim Impact Panel
MIP Class Coordinator
MADD Columbia County
Chapter
St. Helens

Vernonia was like a ghost town this year

To the Editor:

I wish to comment on your Jamboree. My husband and I used to be vendors at your event.

We made a run up there, expecting the same fun-filled festival that we had had in the past.

We were horribly disappointed, there was not even a shadow of the holiday spirit of the past.

Not only was the event poorly arranged, the vendors in one spot, then you have to walk a couple of blocks to get to the food!

Something surely has to change or you might as well cancel next year. I feel the new rules and regulations put upon the town have a bad effect on your festival. We felt we were visiting a ghost town, we couldn't believe it!

If removal of your town Chief of Police will return the festival to what it once was, you better do it! We used to look forward to setting up in your town, I am glad we didn't this year.

Donna Crawford
Banks