

Letters

47J decision-making policies need review

To the Editor:

This letter is to the parents of children enrolled in the Vernonia School District 47J.

There are some parents that feel Superintendent Michael Funderburg has recently made some poor choices about implementation of a new cafeteria program. These include the following:

- Deceptiveness:

A. The date of the purchase order for the finger pad was September 16, 2004. That evening, a school board meeting was held, where it was stated that "options are being looked into...options are cards or thumb print systems."

B. Mr. Funderburg informed curious parents the total

cost of the touch 'n go finger pad was \$429.00. The actual purchase order was \$450.00.

C. According to the Attorney General's office, Mr. Funderburg did not have the right to implement such a system without board approval by a formal vote. That was not done prior [to the purchase order].

D. The original letter sent home with students on October 7, 2004, did not give students or their parents the option to not participate in this program.

- Poor Interpersonal Skills:

Some concerned parents feel they were spoken to in a harsh and derogatory manner. One parent was even hung up on. We feel this behavior is unacceptable.

We as parents truly care about our children (their rights and their best interest), our

schools (monies being spent wisely, no matter how minimal) and our community. We would much rather work peaceably with our superintendent, however, feel that he needs to meet us half-way.

Sincerely,

**Tammy Jennings,
Liz White and
Kinnell Steward
Vernonia**

Policy on Letters

Letters to the editor must be signed with a verifiable name and address. They may be subject to editing for clarification or space considerations. *The INDEPENDENT* will not publish personal attacks, though comments on public figures and policy are acceptable.

Between the Bookends

By Ann Krutsinger, Library Assistant
Banks Public Library



Banks Public Library open hours have been reduced by one hour a day. We open at 12 noon instead of 11 a.m. on our regular open days. We are still open Tuesday - Saturday and will continue to be closed Sundays and Mondays. We are sorry for any inconvenience.

Do you want to save 20 percent off the list price of all your holiday gift books? Pre-order and plan to shop at the third annual Friends of the Banks Public Library Holiday Book Fest! If you are a current Friend of the Library or bought books at last year's sale, you should receive your order form in the mail. If you are neither, but want to save money on your holiday gifts, pick up an order form at the library. Or email <anwsk@hotmail.com> and receive your form by email. Please turn in your order forms by Thursday, December 2. Shop the selection of gift books at the Holiday Book Fest from 3-7:00 p.m.

This event is a nice time to browse, enjoy a cookie, and avoid holiday crowds. The proceeds from the Holiday Book Fest help fund the ongoing programs sponsored by the Friends of the Banks Public Library - the Summer Reading Program, Preschool Storytime and the purchase of adult bestsellers.

Speaking of bestsellers! There are more than several new books of note but I'll only mention three. Alice Hoffman's latest, *Blackbird House*, is a book of stories all connected because they are set in the same farmhouse. This book marks a change for Hoffman who usually writes about strange individuals who inject a bit of magic into their routine lives. *War Trash*, the newest novel by the National Book Award Winner, Ha Jin, opens the door on the little-talked-about subject of the

Chinese POW's held during the Korean Conflict. In the author's typical style, this book is an unflinching and intimate portrayal of conformity and dissent.

Light on Snow is the latest from Anita Shreve. Shreve has written many best sellers, including *The Pilot's Wife*, *All He Ever Wanted* and *Sea Glass*, to name a few. Shreve constructs plots that have both sympathetic characters and emotionally resonating plots. The reader is drawn in immediately when twelve-year-old Nicky Dillon and her father come upon a squalling abandoned baby as they snow shoe through the frigid woods on a late afternoon outing. As the story unfolds, Nicky's awareness of the grown-up world around her unfolds, as do the questions about the secrets that surround her life.

Don't forget about the Cultural Pass Program! Banks has added a new museum to the list. Below is a list of passes that the Banks Public Library has available for check out. Each pass has its own rules for use.

- Portland Art Museum
- Oregon Historical Society
- Oregon Garden
- Children's Museum
- Washington County Museum
- Rice Museum
- Pittock Mansion
- Portland Chinese Garden
- Forestry Center
- Japanese Garden

Banks Public Library: 111 Market Street.
Hours: Tues., Wed., Thurs., 12 - 7:00 p.m.;
Fri. and Sat. 12 - 5 p.m.
Preschool Story Time: Wednesdays, 10:15 a.m.
Phone: (503) 324-1382
Internet: www.WILInet.wccls.lib.or.us. to browse library resources or to reserve materials electronically.

Fingerprint/scan proposal upsets Vernonia School District parents

Parents of children attending school in Vernonia were caught off-guard October 6 by a letter informing them that a computerized system that uses a fingerprint for identification would be implemented for all third to twelfth grade students purchasing food in the cafeteria. Existing policy had students enter their four-digit identification number in a keypad after selecting items.

The intent of the change was to upgrade the meal program's accounting system and to speed up meal service. The letter explaining the system said "students will use a finger-

print to identify themselves and use deposited funds for...purchases." It added that the system does not store an image or photo of the fingerprint, but examines a few points of a fingerprint and generates numerical data called a "string." The string cannot be converted into a fingerprint image, according to the letter, and fingerprints cannot be reproduced from the numerical data.

Parents were also asked to contact the district if they had questions about the changes - and they did. According to parents who spoke with *The INDEPENDENT*, they asked about the cost and legality of the program and why it was implemented without a vote by the school board. But their greatest concern was the feeling that children's fingerprints should not be in anybody's database without prior consent of the parents. Their comments clearly indicated fear of identity theft and/or government intrusion on individual privacy.

In response to parental objections, the district sent another letter, October 18, rescinding the fingerscan system. "Although we could move forward with the finger scan," Superintendent Mike Funderburg wrote, "we have listened and decided that it is not worth jeopardizing the support of anyone over the use of this technology." The district will institute a card system, instead.

Finger-scanning is used by many school districts in cafeterias and libraries. It also has many commercial applications and, until recently, has been considered one of the most accurate biometric security methods available. In 2002, according to *Biometric Technologies* (August, 2002), a Japanese researcher and his students were able to trick fingerprint scanners from 11 different manufacturers more than 80 percent of the time, using common household materials to make gelatin cast fake fingers. They also were able to take fingerprints from common objects, such as a glass, and make gelatin fakes that could be wrapped around a finger and discarded after a scan had been taken. The success rate for these was also 80 percent.

Election returns

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Columbia, Washington and Clatsop Counties made the same choices as the majority of voters in the 1st Congressional District and the rest of Oregon, choosing Representative David Wu over his Republican challenger Goli Ameri, and John Kerry and John Edwards over George Bush and Richard Cheney.

Ron Wyden was the overwhelming favorite for another term in the U.S. Senate, and Democratic incumbents were favored for Secretary of State, Attorney General and State Treasurer.

Area balloting on statewide measures also reflected consensus with the rest of the state.

Vernonia Cares

From page 1

After all, what is Christmas without a Christmas meal?

United Way, which helps fund the food bank (supplying approximately one-third of their budget), is also actively seeking donations throughout the county. All financial contributions, either directly to Vernonia Cares or through United Way, are tax deductible.

Contributions to Vernonia Cares may be sent to P.O. Box 126, Vernonia, OR 97064. For more information, leave a message at 503-429-1414. Those wishing their contribution to be designated for the Christmas food box, are requested to indicate that preference on the memo line of their check.