

# The INDEPENDENT

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"Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley"

August 18, 2005

*It's that time again...*



Typical of action at the Banks Tractor Pull is the V12 Allison driven by Clay Johnson in a previous year. Last year's event was rained out, which isn't a threat this year. Please see page 16 for a full schedule of events.

## Park & Rec grant will help City buy mill site property

The City of Vernonia has been awarded a grant of \$285,000 from Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD) to purchase property at the old mill site. The Vernonia grant is part of more than \$5 million OPRD is awarding to help buy, develop and improve parklands and outdoor recreation facilities in Oregon communities ranging in size from Adams (pop. 320) in northeast Oregon to the Portland metropolitan area.

The lottery-funded "Local Government Grants," will help finance 22 large projects ranging in cost from \$54,952 to \$500,000, and 15 small projects costing from \$15,000 to \$50,000. The grants were recommended by OPRD's Local Government Advisory Committee and approved by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission based on criteria that included recreation needs

and planning, the formation of partnerships, public support, timeliness, sustainability and the availability of other funding sources.

## Hwy. 47 closed this weekend to replace culvert

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) will be replacing a culvert on Hwy. 47 with one that will allow fish passage. The culvert is located at milepost 67.36, on Hwy. 47, approximately 10 miles north of U.S. 26 and five miles south of Vernonia (one mile north of McDonald Road). During the culvert replacement, Hwy 47 will be closed at milepost 67.36 from 10:00 p.m. Friday, August 19 through 5:00 a.m. Monday, August 22. Through traffic on Hwy 47 will be directed to use

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## 47J employee quits with public comments

Long-time Vernonia School District employee Rena Titus read an emotional letter to the Vernonia School Board at their August 11 meeting that left several audience members in tears. Detailing her frustrations and bitterness after 16 years in the district, Titus had many complaints about staffing decisions and charged that "tests were watered down to make the district appear to comply" with No Child Left Behind standards. Titus told the board that she felt let down by the district

and concluded by resigning from her position as teaching assistant and custodian for Mist Grade School.

### Board Workshop

The meeting began with a workshop presented by Oregon School Board Association (OSBA) representative Greg McKenzie concerning board roles and responsibilities. Though the board engaged in lively discussion throughout the workshop, new board member Kim Wallace expressed disappointment, after the meeting, that some procedures – such as the appropriate way to respond to public comment – had not been covered.

Contractors have assured him that the new middle school building will be complete for turn-over on August 28, Superintendent Mike Funderburg told the board. Principal Nate Underwood said that the company that manufactures the playground equipment will com-

plete the installation.

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## Vernonia man, friend die in plane crash

Matthew Giles, 32, of Vernonia, and Gary Harkins, 39, of Columbia City, died August 5 when their plane crashed just south of Cavanaugh Bay Airstrip, at the southern end of Priest Lake, near Coolin, Idaho.

Giles was piloting an RV4 experimental aircraft from Scappoose to Idaho, when, according to witnesses on the ground, the plane suddenly dove straight down, about 100 to 200 yards from the airstrip.

Atmospheric conditions may have contributed to the accident.

Mr. Giles is survived by his wife, Heather, daughter, MacKenzie, and an unborn child.

The MacKenzie M. Giles College Fund has been set up at any branch of US Bank.

A complete obituary may be found on page 25.



Matthew Giles with his daughter at Vernonia Airport.

## Blood Drive Monday at Community Church

A Red Cross Blood Drive will held Monday, August 22, from 2:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the Vernonia Community Church, 957 State Avenue.

Positive identification is required to donate. To sign up, call Melissa at 503-528-5608 or Pastor Grant at 503-429-6790.