

The INDEPENDENT

Published on the first and third Thursdays of each month by The Independent, LLC, 725 Bridge St., Vernonia, OR 97064. Phone/Fax: 503-429-9410. Publisher Clark McGaugh, clark@the-independent.net • Managing Editor Rebecca Mc-Gaugh, rebecca@the-independent.net • Editor Noni Andersen, noni@the-independent.net

Opinion

Vernonia students being short-changed by strife

It has been obvious for a long time that most Vernonia School District staff members are unhappy because of what they perceive as an administration that belittles their ideas and their efforts. That would be bad enough, but they are also afraid to speak out about oppressive tactics because they fear they will lose their jobs.

They have reason to be afraid.

The superintendent treats with indifference, contempt, and sometimes anger, ideas or suggestions that may differ from his point of view. If that approach isn't sufficient to quell any differences, he finds ways to make employees who dare to differ with him so miserable that they leave the district.

If parents or other community members make suggestions that differ from his approach, he won't return phone calls. The people who support local schools are also treated with either indifference or contempt.

This situation did not occur suddenly; it has gone on for at least three years and is only getting worse. It is past time for the Vernonia school board to put the district back on track. Their failure to act while staff morale and community support continue to decline is an abdication of responsibility.

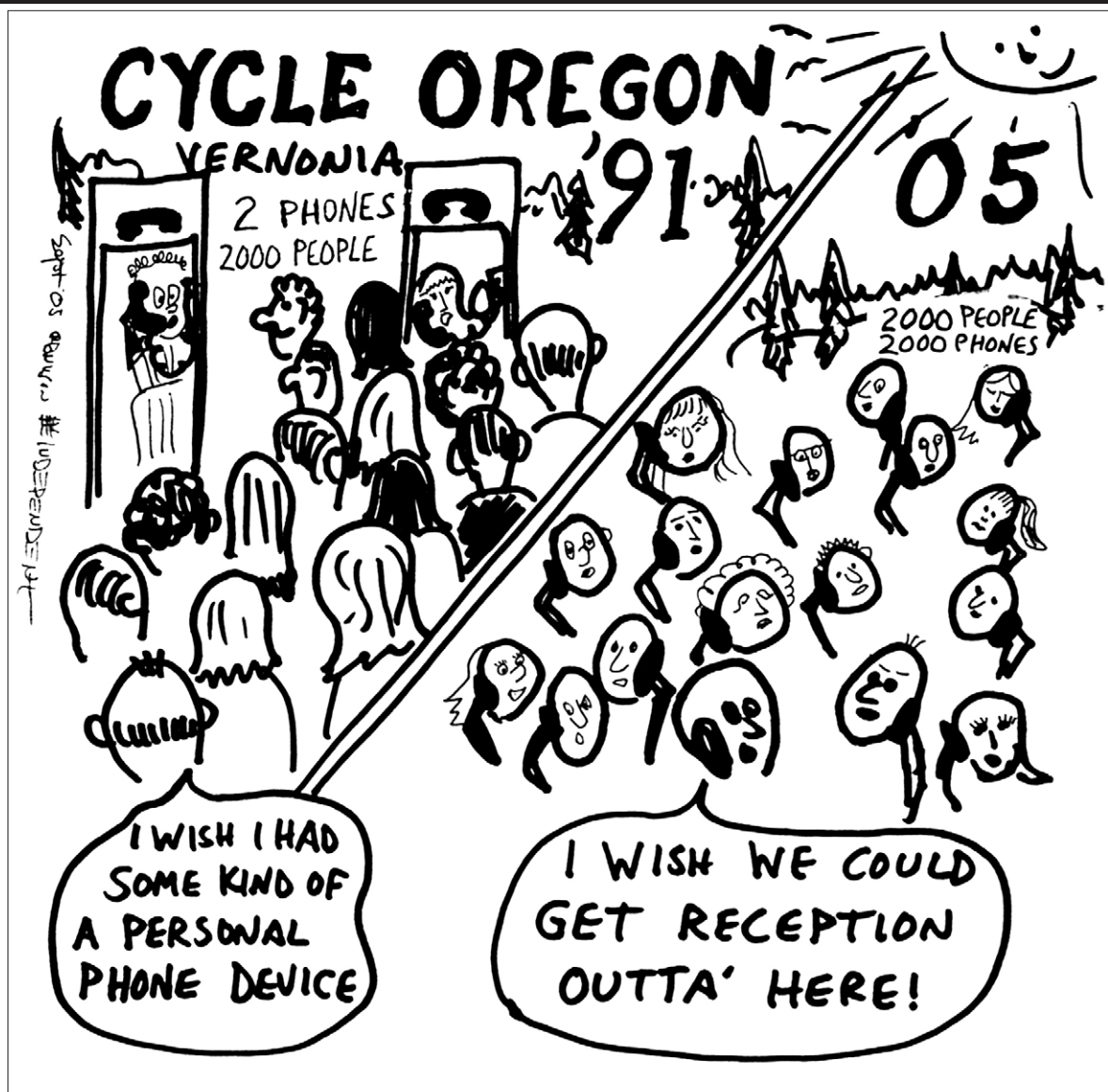
The job of the school district is to EDUCATE our children. Everything else is optional.

Welcome, Cycle Oregon, we've missed seeing you

It has been 14 years since Cycle Oregon came through Vernonia. The visit was a lot of fun, providing an opportunity to meet many new people and stretch our image of ourselves by feeding and caring for more than 2000 visitors.

Interestingly, the rewards of that visit are still being used, though most people aren't aware of it. The community received \$10,000 from Cycle Oregon in 1991 and the committee that was to designate how the money would be used eventually donated it to the rebuilding of the Old Scout Cabin in Hawkins Park.

Let's give this year's visitors a great big welcome. They are appreciated.



In retrospect, Vernonia was lucky in 1996

When 60 percent of the homes in Vernonia were flooded in 1996, we were severely shaken. Most of the people with undamaged homes opened their doors to take in neighbors for as long as needed – from two days to a year.

Having watched Katrina's damage, we now know how lucky we were. Here, the water came in and left within 24 hours. Though we had no phone lines, ham radio operators provided necessary communications.

We had a doctor, physician's assistant and emergency medical responders. There were no deaths.

Our drinking water was not contaminated. We could use bathrooms that weren't flooded.

We didn't go hungry because food from the school cafeteria, the senior center and Vernonia Sentry was donated before the water was too high at those locations. Aside from one night in the evacuation center at Washington Grade School, volunteers made sure hot meals were available, breakfast through supper.

When our mayor asked for federal

help, we got it (not until we asked, though), and the Red Cross set up facilities a few days after the flood.

FEMA sent inspectors to evaluate conditions so we could start the cleanup. And clean up we did...tons of ruined carpets, furniture, appliances, household goods, clothes and more...were hauled to "Mt. Trashmore."

School was closed but the state sent people to keep kids occupied with other activities (This was when Hands On Art started.)

Yes, it was hard, but we were so much better off than most of Katrina's survivors.

Now, we take our lives for granted, but perhaps we shouldn't.

Let's take a moment to appreciate that first cup of coffee, having gas in your tank even if it is \$3 a gallon, hearing your kids laughing in the next room, knowing that your house will be there when you come home at night.

Let's take time to tell the people we love how important they are to us. And let's take a moment to express our gratitude, in whatever way we choose.