

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 Editor Rebecca McGaugh, rebecca@the-independent.net Assoc. Editor Noni Andersen, noni@the-independent.net

Opinion

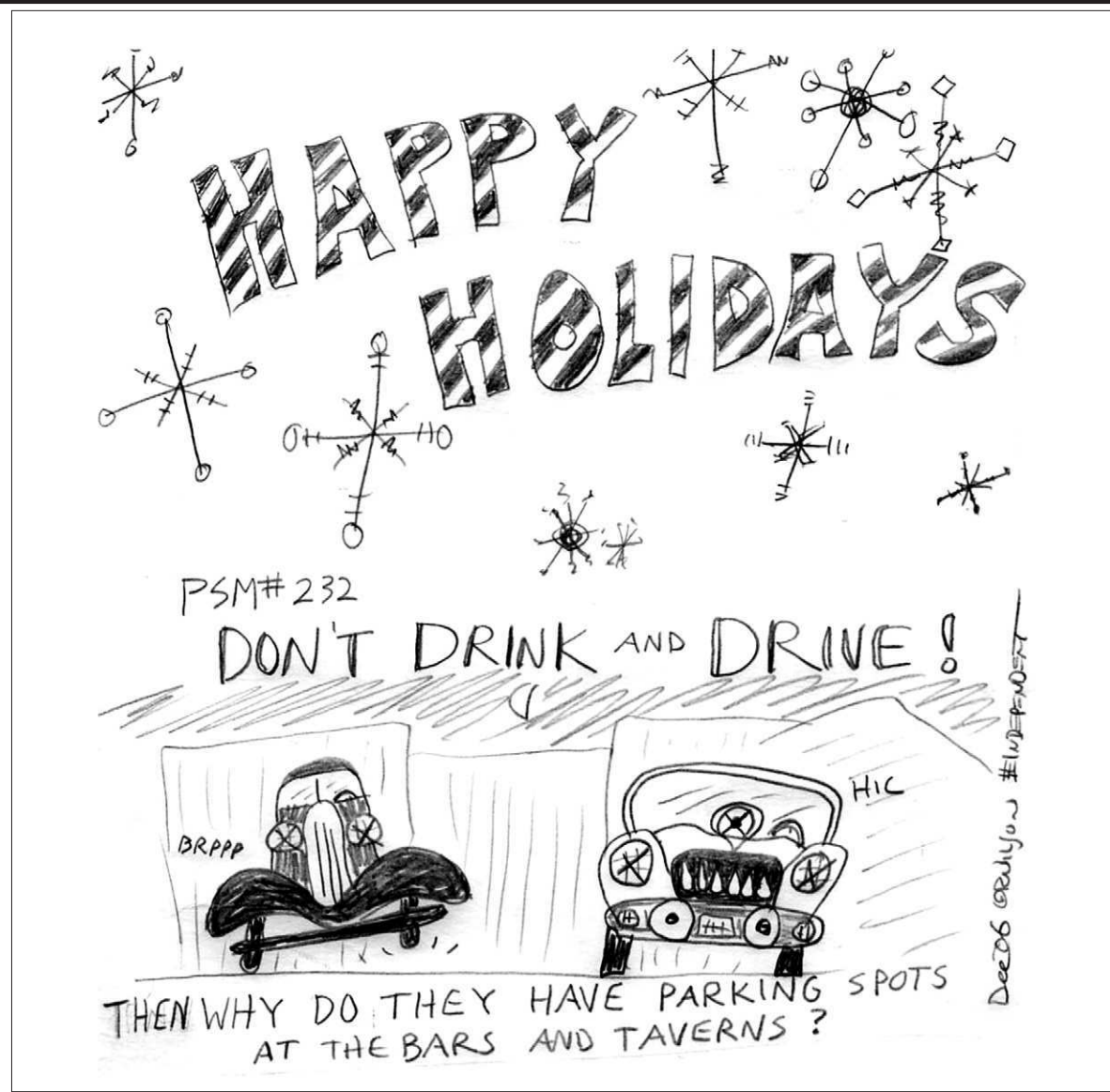
Caring communities work to keep everyone safe

At this time of year, most people are thinking of Christmas and the New Year. In the northwest, however, we have been distracted by power outages resulting from nature's greater power.

The violent wind storm of a week ago toppled trees and power lines in huge quantities. In this area, power was restored to a few people within 24 hours. Some had electricity in approximately 48 hours, and most were restored within 60 hours. Some are still without power, not just in the Nehalem Valley, but throughout the northwest.

In trying times like these, people have again displayed remarkable strength of character and generosity. We have been battered, but we have many reasons to be grateful; among them are the following:

- The Vernonia Senior Center and Vernonia Cares, for combining forces and providing a warm haven with hot meals;
- Volunteers with chain saws who cleared the roads;
- Merchants who opened their doors and worked without electricity so people could buy batteries, lamp oil and other needs;
- Student volunteers who accomplished many tasks;
- Free emergency fire wood supplied by volunteers;
- EMS volunteers who repeatedly made welfare checks;
- Vernonia public works and police department employees who worked as long as needed;
- Vernonia's CERT team, volunteers whose training is invaluable during a public crisis;
- Wilcox & Flegel for bringing fuel in trucks because the pumps couldn't be used;
- Metro West for maintaining medical service in an emergency;
- Fire Department volunteers who did whatever was necessary to keep people safe, including hauling generators and fuel to people with life-threatening medical conditions.
- Vernonia School District for providing space for the Red Cross shelter;
- Red Cross volunteers for manning the shelter;
- Vernonia Community Church for providing more shelter space,



Opinion, continued

- All of the volunteer cooks;
- Not enough can be said of the West Oregon Electric line crews who spent untold hours working in dangerous conditions, or of the office staff working around the clock so members' phone calls were answered by local people, not an answering service.

Though it is always risky, because some deserving people will be missed, there are a few people who should be specifically thanked for outstanding performance under stress. These include VPD Sergeant Michael Kay, who kept on

top of every situation and prevented some well-meaning missteps; 47J head cook Gretchen Lindauer, a real professional; CERT volunteer Helen Johnston, who remained cordially business-like while answering phone calls for many, many hours; and Vernonia Fire Chief Paul Epler, who supervised the entire emergency operation, a huge responsibility that was well done.

Most important, there was no loss of life. Our community was again spared that anguish. Best of all, we reaffirmed our commitment to our neighbors.

Out of My Mind . . .

By Noni Andersen

'Twas the week before Christmas
and through all the towns,
not a light bulb was gleaming
to illumine the frowns...

(with apologies to Clement C. Moore)

That little bit of doggerel may be fitting, but some others have something much more important to say about this special season of the year.

I heard the bells, on Christmas Day,
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

I would rather have peace in the world
than be President.

*President Harry S. Truman, Christmas
Message, December 24, 1948*