

Letters

Thanks for support of fireworks display

To the Editor:

Thanks to all of you who contributed to this year's fireworks, either in response to our letters, donating in the cans at the businesses, or after the fireworks.

Though many donated it is apparent the community can no longer support the 4th of July fireworks. This is the second year in a row that we have come up short.

In addition to these donations Vernonia Pride has always done a fund raiser, in the past it was a spaghetti feed, this year we provided 400 desserts for Cycle Oregon. We were fortunate to have several young girls, who are working towards their trip to Washington, D.C., help us out. They did a marvelous job and we couldn't have done it without them.

Because we are such a small group we feel we can no longer sponsor this event. We have in reserve enough to do one more year and then we will be through.

We hope some other group will step in to take this over, as we feel we have provided a great fireworks show that the community will surely miss.

DeLoris Webb
Vernonia Pride

School district again displays favoritism

To the Editor:

I was conflicted when I saw the news story about Principal Miller being cited for possession of marijuana. First, because of the old standard of innocent until proven guilty, followed by his admission to the police and their release of this information. Second, because the Superintendent was seen saying Miller was very sorry for what he'd done. What? When students show lapses in judgement they are dealt with very harshly. I'm sorry doesn't cut it. Some high school students get hammered for infractions committed while they are off campus when school isn't even in session. Some. Those in leadership roles. The third problem I had was with Superintendent Cox saying he had decided Miller would keep his job. Unless things have changed, the

Superintendent works for the School Board and serves in an advisory capacity for most issues. The School Board hasn't even met yet, though I'm sure the phone lines have been busy.

Finally, this is the same School District that went to the Supreme Court regarding random drug testing of students for no cause. This community was so concerned about drug use in the schools it was willing to kiss off the Bill of Rights for students.

Few things in life are black and white and most events exist in a grey area, to be decided on their own merit. This is not one of those events. How can educators in this community look their students in the eye and say "don't use drugs, even though the Principal of the grade school did and has the support of the community and the Administration?" What message are we going to send to the students in this District? Unfortunately, it's the same message they have heard over and over again from this and past Administrations – rules will be enforced, depending on who you are.

Alice Brock
Vernonia

Use local situation to teach about choices

To the Editor:

First I must state that I do not condone the actions of Mr. Miller, but I do support both Mr. Miller and subsequently Dr. Cox's decision to "retain Mr. Miller in his current position as principal". I would also like to add that if Dr. Cox had decided to dismiss Mr. Miller from his current position, I would still support his decision because I know he did not make his decision based on how he feels towards Mr. Miller. Dr. Cox based his decision on the letter of the law or bylaws that he has sworn to uphold as the Superintendent of our school district.

I would also like to remind those of us who don't think Mr. Miller will be held accountable for his actions, that not only will he be made accountable in a court of law answering to the State of Oregon for his actions, but there will also be disciplinary action taken by the Superintendent which, by law, neither

the school board nor the Superintendent is allowed to disclose. All we know is that "Mr. Miller will be dealt with in a fashion similar to, but more severe, than that which we deal with students. (And that) If a student is caught using drugs they face consequences – but being summarily expelled from school is not one of them."

I've heard people saying what message does this send to our children if he is kept on as principal? My response is what message does firing Mr. Miller send? To me it sends the message that you should lie and hide mistakes and not take responsibility. Maybe, we as community members and parents need to send the message that if you do make a mistake, and you do take responsibility, and you've shown that you are otherwise doing well, you will be punished, but you will also be given a second chance to prove yourself.

I ask every community member, parent or not, to examine their own poor choices and look at how we might fail our children or neighbors' children as role models on any given day. We are human, and thus are going to make mistakes and use poor judgment. But more importantly, is the question of what will we learn from our mistakes. If we don't give Mr. Miller the opportunity to make amends and learn, how are we as Vernonians going to learn and grow as a community.

In conclusion, we as Vernonians have a wonderful opportunity before us to show our community and children, who may have loved ones struggling with substance abuse, that there is an opportunity for change, forgiveness is possible, and help is available. Our community also has the opportunity to take this situation and use it to teach our children right from wrong and turn this into a positive and productive learning experience at the expense of someone else's mistake. I do believe that out of adversity comes strength, but only if we are proactive and choose to make it so.

Thank you,

Penny Costley
Vernonia

Miller good for two

years, now he's bad

To the Editor:

A thesaurus can be a handy tool when you simply can't find the words to say. Take for example the word "principal." It says, "Headmaster, a person in authority, superior, cardinal, greatest." In the previous two years these words described Principal Aaron Miller. As of July 6, 2007, we can add one more: illegal drug user. Over and over during the past week we have heard that Mr. Miller made "a big mistake" and that he deserves a second chance. Mr. Miller did not make a mistake. He made several conscious decisions: first, to obtain an illegal drug, second, to obtain the paraphernalia to consume it and third, to do so in a public park. In doing this, he erased the good reputation he had justly earned during the previous two years and in one selfish moment replaced it forever with the label of drug user. This poor choice of judgment has been further expanded by Superintendent Cox and the Vernonia District School Board by supporting Mr. Miller and continuing his employment with the district. Mr. Cox in his statement said, "I believe, however that I have set a higher standard for Vernonia administrators than for other staff members."

We as Vernonia parents and citizens deserve a better standard. How are we to explain this to our children and why do we have to under these circumstances? How will Superintendent Cox and Mr. Miller explain this to our children? Most importantly how are we to trust Mr. Miller with our children's safety again?

As a community, we have been placed in a negative national spotlight by Mr. Miller, Superintendent Cox and the school district. And in the process they have figuratively stuck a thumb in the eye of all the groups and individuals who have worked hard to keep drugs out of our schools. These include (and are certainly not

limited to) the Vernonia Drug Free Coalition, OSSOM, Vernonia Police Department, in particular Officer Kay, and all others who have worked hard for our schools and community to be drug-free only to be shown that their work can be overruled and negated by Superintendent Cox.

We also feel that the district's action and those of Mr. Miller have sent a negative message to our children that are counterproductive to the efforts of Vernonia parents and anti drug groups. Mr. Cox had the rare opportunity to show our children, Vernonia and the nation the consequences of illegal drug use, to show that even the greatest have to accept the consequences of their actions.

Instead we got one final word which the thesaurus once again explained. "Whitewash:" to excuse, downplay, gloss over, cover up, to make allowance for.

The message we have sent to our children and our community can be best explained by a recent quote from a Vernonia teen to the Oregonian, "It's just pot." If this is the "higher standard" that our Superintendent is setting than we have fallen far indeed.

Eric and Nicole Larke
Joel and Jennifer Glass
Don and Kelli Schulte
Vernonia

Former volunteer is no longer involved

To the Editor:

Vernonia Cares: If you had informed one of your volunteers that this was a public entity and to not bring her private life to work you would have at least one man.

As it now stands, Columbia County Courts and this volunteer now have the ability to ban a private citizen from entering your building, except by appointment.

Please see page 21

Policy on Letters

The INDEPENDENT will not publish letters that include personal attacks on private citizens. Because of space limitations, preference will be given to brief letters, 300 words or less.

All letters must be signed and include a verifiable address or phone number, and all letters are subject to editing for clarity or length.