

## Thank you

Thank You:

Those of us at the Bridge Street Mini Mart would like to thank all of those that offered a helping hand to us during this untimely event in the community of Vernonia. Specifically: Our own employees, who worked tirelessly to get the store up and running; Our Family – Alauna, Mario, Willow, and Heather; Amy, Alex Barton and Dean Smith; ODOT with their helpers and Watts Construction for hauling all the merchandise and equipment to the city dump site – that was a big relief and helped us to focus on the important things; Scappoose Fire Dept. for spraying all the mud off the entire parking lot and having patience with us; the youth who I am told helped Tony and the employees get stuff off the floor before the wa-

ter came in, who knew it would get so high; I wish I knew your names, but the nice man who took all the metal shelving away from the front of the store; last but not least, our customers who had the patience and understanding to give us time to get the store back up and running so that we could serve you in the manner that you have come to expect.

Sincerely,

Matt, Celice and  
all of the employees at  
Bridge Street Mini Mart



Thank you Darrell and Judi Gwin, and the teenagers with you, for being a beacon of hope on Tuesday, December 4. Seeing you first thing that morning at the schools picking up fire-

wood (because somebody needed some) and cleaning up the piles of flood debris as you went, helped me get past that 'flood-stunned' point.

Rebecca McGaugh



Until December 3rd, I lived in Vernonia. I arrived in May, lived with a daughter and son-in-law and then found a house in late September. I loved the town that much. After the flood I needed to relocate. I received debris removal help from two prison inmates – fantastic workers (thanks, Gordon) and packing help from Happy Valley, Milwaukie and Newberg families who were amazing. Then Dale Webb and several other men helped load the U-Haul on December 9th.

Without my daughter and son-in-law (Catherine and Scott Helmer, who had a devastating loss at 542 Jefferson), I wouldn't have made it. I also have had the most fantastic show of love and support from St. Mary's, my new parish home. Also the Red Cross, and Melissa at Community Action in St. Helens.

Thank you to everyone throughout Vernonia. We're coming back as soon as possible because...we love Vernonia!!

Pat Phillips  
formerly of 675 Jefferson  
Vernonia



Like others, I have received help from many volunteers – local people, those from other communities and other states – but I want to especially thank the Vernonia residents who have spent hundreds of hours in volunteer positions behind the scenes. While there are employees of various govern-

ment agencies involved in the recovery effort, they could not meet people's needs without these many volunteers.

The work of data entry is vital, but very few people see the hours these volunteers spend in front of computers to ensure that the needs of flood victims are met.

Other volunteers patiently guide us through the paperwork needed to obtain so many things – cleaning supplies, heaters, furniture, clothing, household goods, building materials, and more. They have been there day after day.

The Vernonia and Scappoose school districts, and local churches deserve great thanks for finding places that allow students to continue their education while local schools are unusable.

Others have provided free lunches for flood victims and the many people who are helping.

I hate to think what life would be like without all of you.

Noni Andersen

## Ike Says . . .

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have all been since 1990. The science is highly debated and, quite frankly, even if a change in forestry was adopted we could not expect any noticeable change for decades. Besides there have been developments here at home that may have caused the most profound effects.

Floodways are areas where high waters flow when they come out of the main channel. Whenever we build new buildings in these areas, we potentially cause the waters to back up when they're trying to flow through. I believe we have several of those examples in town. The area between Washington Grade School and Vernonia High School used to be approximately 131 yards wide; since the addition of the covered play area and the new Middle School there are only 39 yards of gap left. Some people say that there was no current flowing through this area and that was probably correct while they were there. But I would guess that changed once the water filling the old mill site started flowing over Webb Way and back into the Nehalem River.

More blockage was created with the new buildings at the Blue Heron complex, where there was a gap between the sewage lagoons and the base of the hill of around 150 yards, a good share of it is now

plugged by buildings which (I have videographic proof) were holding back the water. You could actually hear a river running between the buildings and the hillside. Another restriction is the new bridge over Rock Creek at Anderson Park, which obviously was holding water back. We should learn from these mistakes, we can not afford to continue making them. Even the slightest changes, such as paving a road or trail, can have an effect on flood water heights.

Vernonia though, has a more serious problem. The Nehalem River and Rock Creek have a major constriction just below their confluence. The sewer lagoons and the hillside on the south side of the river combine to restrict the river to a width of 75 yards, which continues downstream until the river bottom opens up across from Vernonia Lake. It is my belief that this bottleneck and the additional restrictions that have been placed in the floodway around the schools was what caused the increased water heights in downtown Vernonia. Many say that the river bottleneck has been there for years and that is true, but the obstructions in the mill site floodway have all been placed there since the '96 flood.

What many of us were not aware of, was that the mill site floodway actually flows over

Webb Way and back into the Nehalem River. I didn't know this until I saw a photograph on the internet. I then explored the area of the photograph and discovered that a wide area of Webb Way had erosion on the river side of the trail, a true indicator that the water was flowing from the mill site back into the river. Looking further at the high water marks, it appears that the river levels downstream of the lake pump station were significantly lower than upstream. This may provide an opportunity for the City of Vernonia to help alleviate downtown flooding, but a solution for flooding on the east side of town is going to be far more complicated.

Many people may not know that, at the height of the flood, water actually flowed *into* Lake Vernonia at the west dock and eroded the gravel away from the trail at this point. The reason I bring this up is the proposed new Senior Citizen Center that will be sited close to this area, I would think now this may be a very bad idea.

What is most important for now though, is that everybody is safe and we have time to look at options to help mitigate future events.

**Izaak Walton League,  
Nehalem Valley Chapter**  
meets monthly on the 3rd  
Thursday at 7:00 p.m. Call  
503-428-7193 for location.

## Letters

### Royal visit was good for everyone involved

To The Editor:

Before the holiday break I spent a day going to all the K-5 classrooms to visit with the kids. I thought that maybe my visit could help them in some small way. What I didn't expect was how much they would help me. Their smiles and infectious enthusiasm was great. To the 2nd grade boys that wanted my phone number, you made me smile. To the youngster that had me autograph his forehead (with washable marker), you made me laugh. And to all the girls who couldn't get enough of holding my hand or looking at my crown, you warmed my heart. I'd like to thank Principal Miller and all the teachers for letting me invade their space on this day.

To the community of Vernonia – thank you to all of you that

applauded and cheered during the holiday parade. You somehow made it feel not quite so cold. That night seems like it was months ago. We've all been through a lot since then. I don't know about you but I'm ready for something positive and a night of fun. Therefore, I'd like to invite you to my official coronation festivities on Saturday, January 5, at the Columbia County Fairgrounds starting at 6 p.m. There will be auction items to bid on, a yummy dinner, and live music from the band "Concrete Cowboys." For discounted pre-sale tickets please email [ccrodeo@hotmail.com](mailto:ccrodeo@hotmail.com) or tickets can be purchased at the door.

Thank you Vernonia. Your support means a lot.

**Mackenzie Carr**  
**2007 Columbia County**  
**Rodeo Court Princess and**  
**2008 Columbia County**  
**Rodeo Court Queen**

## 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; all letters are subject to editing for clarity or length.