

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Vernonia needs your help

There is a group of people in Vernonia who are on the scene at traffic accidents – whether caused by ice, deer, alcohol, fatigue or any other reason – at every call for medical help; chest pain, trouble breathing, broken bones, cuts, bleeding or any other acute medical need. They show up to help our children, our elderly and everyone in between, including you. That's a lot of people. The fire volunteers also support law enforcement on calls when needed.

There are a lot of people who need help and only a limited number of volunteers. When someone you care about needs help because of a fire, accident or medical emergency, there are only 12 volunteers to cover calls 24/7. On average, it takes 10 minutes for volunteers to show up at the fire station, get needed equipment and arrive on the scene. If there aren't enough volunteers available here, assistance may be available from Mist-Birkenfeld or Banks, but that will add about 30 minutes to the response time and that may be too late.

These volunteers are just like you, they have lives, they may work out of town, they may be at the hospital having a baby, or on vacation visiting relatives in Wyoming. How can you be sure someone shows up when needed? The answer is simple, you can volunteer, too. Not all the volunteer positions require the ability to go into a fire or lift heavy equipment. For example, they can use people to fill air bottles, flag traffic, take over a vehicle at the scene so the driver can perform other duties.

All it takes is time and training. You give time and get the tremendous satisfaction of helping your loved ones, friends, and neighbors in times of great need.

To find out how you can help, call the fire department at 503-429-8252, stop by and talk to Fire Chief Paul Epler (a really nice guy, in case you don't know him), or attend one of the drills as an observer. The drills are every Monday, from 7-9 p.m. at the Fire Hall, 555 E. Bridge St.

There is one more thing we can all do; when you see a member of our volunteer fire department: say Thank You. To those of you who already volunteer...THANK YOU.

A last word on city volunteerism. The final day to apply for the position of city councilor or mayor is August 27. All the information is available at City Hall. You could be one of the people who helps shape the city. Our community runs on volunteers, please help.



Out of My Mind . . .

by Noni Andersen

Another married politician has admitted to an extramarital affair, this time it's John Edwards, but what's new? Like a long-running play, the names of the cast change and the settings are updated, everything else is the same.

The usual condemnations and expressions of shock and dismay have been amplified, in this case, because Edwards was a candidate for President. So I ask again, what's new?

Other presidential candidates whose affairs are public knowledge include Gary Hart, Rudi Guiliani and John McCain. The only one whose presidential aspirations were derailed by exposure was Hart, although both Guiliani and McCain have acknowledged multiple infidelities.

Here is a *partial* list of U.S. Presidents with one common activity – extramarital affairs: Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, James A. Garfield, Grover Cleveland, Warren Harding, Franklin Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and Bill Clinton.

Many other politicians are, were, or will be following the same path. The list is far too long for this space, but two who made it to the top of my personal list of hypocrites are former Congressmen Henry Hyde and Newt Gingrich, who both loudly condemned Clinton's transgressions. Asked about his own five-year affair with a younger woman, Hyde loftily dismissed it as a "youthful transgression," although he was in his forties. Gingrich made the list because he was

carrying on an affair *at the same time* he was leading the charge against Clinton – and it wasn't his first, or last, affair.

We already know that those listed are faithless liars whose supporters have, and will continue to excuse their behavior. Admitting to affairs after being caught doesn't erase the behavior.

Yet when a reporter wrote that McCain "may not have been" in a cone of silence, as Pastor Rick Warren said during Barack Obama's questioning by Warren at Saddleback Church, before his own appearance, a McCain spokeswoman said "The insinuation...that John McCain, a former prisoner of war, cheated is outrageous." An odd statement because the reporter wasn't insinuating anything, and McCain was not isolated, he was in a car enroute to the church during Obama's appearance, with possible radio, phone and TV coverage. In any case, it's too late to pretend he doesn't cheat, but what did his experience as a POW have to do with that?

Despite the odd response, this is a pretty typical reaction by someone who supports a particular candidate. Most people's expressions of shock and dismay mean very little beyond an opportunity to point fingers at someone else for behavior that is both reprehensible and common.

Most often, the fingers point only at someone the pointer doesn't like – at the Democrat or the Republican – but are securely tucked in the palm of the hand when the transgressor is someone they like. That is when the accuser needs a mirror, to point to the hypocrite in front of him.

Again I ask, what's new?