

# 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  
Mentor Noni Andersen

Printed on recycled paper with vegetable based dyes

## Opinion

### Christmas is a time for...

Christmas time is the time for giving. This year more than last, many are in need. Many people have lost jobs, more jobs will probably be lost before the economy takes a turn in a positive direction. If you have extra money, or time, someone can probably use a hand. Think of it as Christmas giving. If your needs and your family's needs are met, find a way to help others.

Christmas is also a time of great stress for many people. It's a time of expectations. Everyone is expected to be happy and joyous. At the same time, a recent report said that the average family spends \$800 on Christmas. There are lots of families that don't have that to spend and either go into debt, or more debt, or feel they aren't 'making' it. Unfortunately, this time of year also sees an increase in suicides, domestic and other types of violence, possibly due to the pressure of expectations. The number of calls to suicide prevention lines has been going up in the past months and that is attributed to the economy. Whatever the reason, if you or someone you know seems to be less than happy and joyous, there are resources available. Please don't hurt alone and please don't hurt others. Call one of these numbers; Oregon Partnership's Suicide Prevention Line (1-800-273-TALK), another Suicide Hotline number is 800-784-2433. Columbia County Mental Health can be reached at 800-294-5211.

For crisis prevention, including alcohol and drug counseling and treatment referral, call the Helpline at 1-800-923-HELP. A peer-to-peer crisis line for teens is available at 877-553-TEEN.

### Our Christmas wish list

We wish the City of Vernonia would buy local. Just a few of the items that we've noticed the City buys outside of town, that are available here, are tires, snow tires, holiday lights, even legal notices. Considering the time it takes to shop around, go out of town to get items, wait for items, etc., a modest price difference is inconsequential and, when time and gas are considered in the equation, it often causes the out-of-town purchase to cost more than buying locally.

We also wish our government in Washington, D.C. would bail out those in need, rather than those in greed.

And, finally, we wish you all a happy holiday season.



# Ho Ho Ho

Let ME Tell you  
Something  
Kiddo...

# Ho Ho Ho

... Tell your Mommy  
That I Will have to  
START charging a delivery  
fee this year...

# Ho Ho Ho

... IF I Can't get a MILLION Dollar Buyout!

**HAVE A Merry** and a **Happy New Year!**



### Out of My Mind...

by Noni Andersen

If you have a job, you are more fortunate than nearly two million Americans (and counting) who have lost theirs in the past year. Yet, during the past few weeks, we have watched the spectacle of some self-righteous U.S. Senators saying no to a LOAN of \$15 Billion to the auto industry because "they brought it on themselves."

Yes, they did, with help from people who wanted big, gas guzzling SUVs and trucks, until high gas prices cut into those high profit models. But I don't recall that a lack of responsibility was a problem when the financial sector — Wall Street and banks — asked for a BAILOUT, not a loan, of hundreds of billions of dollars because, "without it there will be a recession."

So far, 87 companies have received \$250 Billion of our taxes, and all but \$15 Billion of the first \$350 Billion is pledged. Despite that, we are in a recession.

The cause of the financial meltdown was greed, from mortgage brokers who duped naive home buyers, to unregulated hedge funds happily selling bad loans bundled with a few good ones and, oh yes, those politicians who chanted the mantra of "deregulation" in exchange for donations.

Possibly the most maddening element of the financial bailout is the total lack of control on how our tax dollars are used. We were told the bailout was needed to maintain business and consumer loans, and we should trust the financial markets to do the right thing. Yeah! So far, half of the bailout has gone not for loans, but for dividends

to shareholders.

The basest corporate attitude is exemplified by performance bonuses paid to executives of companies that would fail without a bailout from taxpayers. American International Group (AIG) received a loan of \$85 Billion from the Federal Reserve Bank before getting an additional \$40 Billion from the bailout. In return, their execs have received \$503 Million in bonuses, presumably for their skill at shaking down the taxpayers.

The senators who oppose loans to the auto industry say that one problem is exorbitant pay to members of the United Auto Workers, who average \$26 per hour. Because of wage concessions in 2007, newer UAW hires get \$14 per hour. Yes, there are some very well paid workers, but the average annual salary of UAW workers is about \$54,000.

In the past 18 years, salaries of U.S. Representatives and Senators have gone from \$97,500 per year to \$169,300, and will be \$174,100 in 2009. That's an increase of \$76,600 from 1991-2009, or about \$4,255 per year. Additionally, about half of the Senators are millionaires.

I know this is the Christmas season and I should be sharing joyous thoughts. But I can find nothing joyous about a ruling philosophy that dismisses the needs of average people as "irresponsibility" while AIG-type millionaires enjoy their ill-gotten gains.

Abraham Lincoln said it best: "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's true character, give him power."