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Letters

Community will fail without our schools

To the Editor:

What would Vernonia look like without its schools?

Families would move out, and as a result property values would go down. There would be no sporting events, which are such popular entertainment events for our community. Due to lack of population, the health clinic would close, and our market would likely be gone, along with other local businesses we depend on every day.

We can have a beautiful new school that would attract new families to our community. Of course, grant providers need to see community participation in projects before they dispense any money. That is why it is so important to pass our school bond measure – we need that grant money!

We realize that times are tough right now for everyone, but we can tighten our belts and do what's right to keep our beautiful community alive and vital.

We urge everyone to attend

the Town Hall meetings to ask questions and learn more about the plans for new schools, and the school bond we must pass. A Town Hall meeting is planned for sometime in August, please watch for the date.

The Vernonia Health Center Board is committed to providing health care to our unique community. Passing the school bond issue is vital to that commitment.

Let's work together to keep what we are blessed to have.

**Vernonia Health Center
 Board of Directors
 Carolyn Keasey, Chairman
 Barbara Ervin
 Marie Krahn
 Darlene McLeod
 Wendy Sears
 Debbie Snook
 Robert Wagner**

A great summer with local Midget Baseball

To the Editor:

How's Your Summer Been? Well ours has been great! We have had the great pleasure of watching the Vernonia Logger

Midget Baseball team all summer long. What a thrill it's been to watch these 10 year-old athletes show us their stuff! They have so much skill and knowledge at this young age about the game due to the coaching provided by coaches Morrison, Butcher, Tolonen and Cieloha.

The much improved team was undefeated in their league this season which in turn sent them to the "Midget National State Tournament" in Eugene where they finished 4th out of the 12 teams playing. Pretty great for a little town like Vernonia!

Thank you to all of our boys for such a fun and skillful season!

The team was: Trask Zook (#70), Jake Patton (#20), Clay Sullivan (#10), Jarod Shaw (#24), Hayden Elton Cieloha (#14), Tristan Adams (#16), Baily Morrison (#2), Jacob Butcher (#1), Jason Foutch (#27), Brett Elliot (#9), Chase Tolonen (#22), and Daniel Fletcher (#18).

Special thanks to #14 for making us proud and showing good sportsmanship (and not losing any teeth inside 3rd).

Keep up the good work, next season will be here before you know it!

GO LOGGERS!

**Larry & Shelley Elton
 Vernonia**

Help is needed to get man on transplant list

To the Editor:

My name is Darrold Mushatt and I grew up here in Vernonia. I graduated from Vernonia High School and then worked different jobs before joining the Army where I served for five years. My wife, Teresa, and I are the parents of two boys and two daughters and we live here in Vernonia. We are in need of your support and assistance.

I am 32 years old and have always worked hard. In April of 2007, I started feeling sick. One day I would feel fine and the next I would have no energy and feel sick to my stomach. Tests were done here at the Vernonia Medical Clinic and after taking what seemed to be all of my blood, Dr. Gilmore broke the bad news that my kidneys had failed and she already had a room set up for me at Providence Hospital in Portland. My world immediately turned upside down and inside out.

Three surgeries and five days later, catheters were placed in my thigh, chest, and wrist for kidney dialysis. Going back to work was difficult at best as I worked swing shift and would have to coordinate two-hour trips for dialysis. I would go in for dialysis from 6:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., then be at work at 3:00 p.m. which made for extremely long days. It was proving to be too costly financially and physically, so my doctor suggested doing dialysis at home. This required another surgery to install a catheter in my abdomen. This worked out well as I could re-

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An Oregon Perspective

By Senator Jeff Merkley



Lowering Health Care Costs and Providing Choice

At the beginning of July, I held town hall meetings in Umatilla, Polk, Clackamas, Linn, Marion, and Multnomah Counties. At each meeting, the most prominent issue of concern was health care.

People of all walks of life are paying dramatically more for health care than they used to. These high costs are hurting our families and our small businesses. Last year, we spent 17 percent of our gross domestic product on health care; in the last nine years, costs have doubled for the average family. In May, Oregon's largest insurer announced that the average small business premium was going up 14.7 percent – on top of a 26 percent increase last year. Health care costs are an increasing drag on our economy and the pocketbooks of working families.

In my role on the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, I've been working with my colleagues on a plan for health care reform that will lower costs, provide consumers with more choices, and increase competition.

The change would work like this: Americans who are happy with their current health plan can keep it. But if you don't like your plan and you

want to look at other options, we're going to make sure you have a choice of quality, affordable health plans. This will lower costs and it will also force insurance companies to provide better services to their customers.

One of those options will be a community health insurance plan offered by the federal government. This public option will be an additional choice to increase competition, lower prices, and keep insurance companies honest, so families won't be entirely at the mercy of the insurance companies. Most Oregonians I've talked to – and about three-quarters of Americans according to the polls – like the idea of having a choice of what type of plan they want rather than having the federal government make that decision for them.

Over the next few months, we'll be engaging in a nationwide discussion about the direction of health care in our country. We'll have before us a choice between a system that gets more and more expensive every year, leaves middle class families one pink slip from losing their health coverage, and makes our businesses less competitive, or an improved model that increases health care options, expands care, and lowers costs. I don't think we can afford to do nothing.

We have a once in a generation opportunity to remake our health care system for the better. I invite you to contact my office and talk to your friends and family about your opinion because we can only enact real change if you make your voices heard.

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.