

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

What are you thankful for?

Here it is, Thanksgiving time again. This year instead of letting you know what we are thankful for, we thought we would write about things to do so others will be thankful.

Got money? Perhaps you can give some of it to one of the organizations (there are many) that provide a Thanksgiving dinner to those with nowhere else to go. Or, give to Vernonia Cares to help them fill a holiday box.

How about going into West Oregon Electric Cooperative and giving some money to be put against someone else's bill, anonymously. Or, send a gift card to someone, just because.

No money? Invite someone to dinner or help serve lunch at the Vernonia Senior Center. There are plenty of other volunteer opportunities in your community, too.

Got some time? It's amazing how much impact you can have on someone by just listening.

Find something to be thankful for and share it. Happy Thanksgiving.

We'd be thankful for truth

City Administrator Bob Young started work in Vernonia on June 22. Since then we've noticed what appears to be a propensity for untruthfulness. It started with him telling us in a letter that a young man in this community had been convicted of assault. When we pointed out that this wasn't true, he repeated it and said he believed those who told him that (hmm, was he calling us liars?). At about the same time, he said if he made a mistake, he would correct it, but he didn't – so there's another whopper.

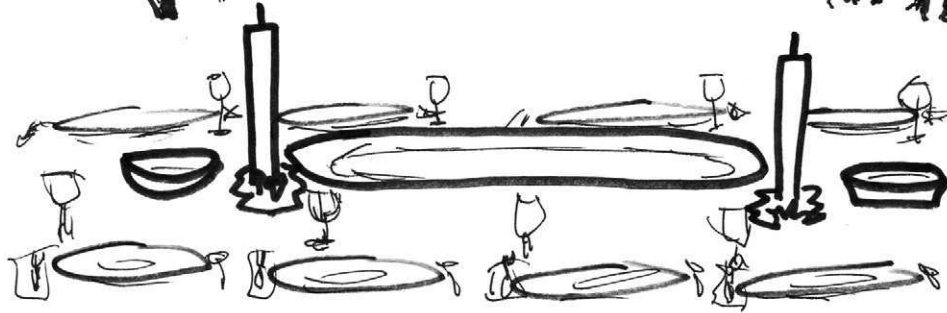
More recently, he told council that he spoke to DPSST (see page 1 for more details) and was told there was no current investigation against Mike Kay. But DPSST says they never spoke to him and there is an open investigation. That's three and four. Yesterday, Young told us he informed each council member, individually, about a recent lawsuit against the city and the settlement, but the council member we spoke to knew nothing about the matter. That's five.

If the city's top administrator lies to his boss (the council) how can he be trusted to do the city's work? What kind of example does that set for his employees?

The City of Vernonia needs strong, honest, ethical leadership. Only the council can discipline or fire this employee. We urge them to do the right thing, soon, before the credibility of the City of Vernonia is further damaged.

THE WORLD'S MOST AFFLUENT NATION...

THANKSGIVING TIME



HAPPY T-DAY

...AND THOUSANDS STILL GO HUNGRY!

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL FOODBANK

Out of My Mind . . .

by Noni Andersen



Voters in the Vernonia School District approved (by nearly 2 to 1) a \$13 million bond issue for new schools. We voted to increase our property taxes by \$1.90 per \$1,000 of assessed value and, yes, we knew how much it would cost us. The amount of the tax increase was made very clear by everyone involved in the campaign, in every public meeting, and in the campaign literature. Even though the tax rate was omitted from the ballot, anyone who didn't know what the tax rate would be must have worked hard to remain willfully ignorant.

While pleased with passage of the measure, many of us who voted for the bond issue are keeping our fingers crossed that what we voted for is what we will get...new schools out of the flood plain. We didn't vote blind and are fully aware that the \$13 million bond issue is not enough to reach our goal, and that much more fund raising is needed. Hopefully, that effort will be equally successful, but it is part of what makes us keep our fingers crossed.

The lack of whole-hearted enthusiasm for the bond measure stems from what we *didn't* vote for. We *didn't* vote for cosmetic or short-term fixes. We *didn't* vote for a new building in the current location. We *didn't* vote for improvements to Washington Grade School, temporary or other-

wise. We *didn't* vote for more modulars. We *didn't* vote to raise the middle school.

Speaking of the middle school, the school board must not forget that *we didn't* vote to build the middle school, either. That was a board decision and, since many of the members who made the decision to build a school in the flood plain are still on the board, the trepidation felt by many district residents is understandable.

If, or when, new schools start to become a reality, there is another element of great concern. During early efforts to get the attention of, and gain support from, the community, there were statements that project bids would be structured in ways that would allow participation by local contractors. I don't recall any such statements in the campaign materials, which came later, but district superintendent Dr. Kenneth Cox, who could not campaign but provided much factual information, has repeatedly expressed that goal as part of the project. Many of us feel that local contractors and local workers deserve all the work they can handle, because their property taxes help pay the bills for local schools.

There are no rose-colored glasses here. This area has been hit hard by the economy, especially when so many are still struggling with flood damage, and we are painfully aware that large projects rarely include the workers who help pay for them. It is vital that this element be somehow included in the overall contract for project management. Without it, there will be negative reactions to the school board and future plans.

We said "yes", but our fingers remain crossed.