

Between the Bookends

by Nancy Burch, Librarian
Vernonia Public Library



Holiday memories don't always come in cookie-cutter shapes or conform to the idyllic scenes shown on Christmas cards, as Vernonia residents know all too well. None of us will forget the Christmas of 2007 as citizens struggled to maintain a semblance of celebration in the midst of calamity. Nor will we ever forget the generosity of the populace as they gave, gave, gave to help in our recovery.

This past month has been an especially rewarding time for those of us associated with the library. We were able to accommodate a slide presentation that featured pictures of local residents associated with logging in the area during the years 1976-1985. It was a most enjoyable evening, with Cory Colburn narrating the slide presentation, and with the audience participating as they recounted stories relating to those featured in the pictures. On November 29, we were pleased to have author Cathy Lamb discuss her writing process and read from her newest novel, *Such a Pretty Face*. These events were supported by the Vernonia Study Club (refreshments), Friends of the Library (refreshments and overnight lodging), Brooke Van Meter (overnight lodging) and, of course, by the citizens who attended and made them successful.

The book fund drive to raise \$1,000 has reached nearly \$750.00 to date. One family has been giving to the fund each month when paying their water bill.

Books are now available for the library's annual holiday "Adoption". These books, ranging from *At Home* by Bill Bryson (\$23.16) to *Museum of Thieves* by Lian Tanner (\$13.56) to *Simply Sara* by Hillary Lodge (\$8.80), may be purchased by patrons to become part of the library's collection.

My recommendation for the month is *Rose in a Storm* by Jon Katz. When an epic blizzard hits the region, Rose, a border collie/shepherd—a working sheep dog, has to rely on her own resourcefulness and courage to save as many of the farm animals as she can. Katz consulted with animal behavior scientists to create this unique and convincing view of the world as seen through the eyes of Rose. If only a small portion of the behavior attributed to Rose in this novel could truly happen, these dogs must be absolutely amazing.

A new acquisition to the library's collection of novels with a holiday theme is *Christmas at Harrington's* by Melody Carlson. A rather intriguing plot begins when Lena, recently released from prison, is unexpectedly hired as Mrs. Santa Claus in Harrington's Department Store. An unemployed mother escaping her abusive past, an empathetic youngster battling leukemia, and an affluent widow are just some of the characters who make this an appealing holiday read.

This month's regular movie night will be Thursday, December

16 at 6:30, with *Christmas in Connecticut* being featured. During winter break from school, the library will be showing additional movies for youngsters, all at 2:00 p.m., as follows:

Monday, Dec. 20 – *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*

Tuesday, Dec. 21 – *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*

Thursday, Dec. 23 – *The Polar Express*

Book Discussion will take place Monday, Dec. 27 at 5:30 p.m., with Jack London's *Call of the Wild* being this month's topic.

The memories associated with the Christmas of 2007 will never be forgotten by me – the heartbreaking and the uplifting – and I will compare those memories with those of 2010. I will be reminded that the library was available to Head Start during the rest of that school year and the exuberance of the Head Start youngsters as Santa arrived to pass out presents; I will also remember this past week, when they listened to holiday stories here in the library. I will never forget the devastation of the schools, with youngsters waiting for buses to take them to Scappoose, and I will remember this year as the year of new hope for Vernonia through the rebuilding of the school. My treasured memories of this year will include Linda Johnston spending hours making gingerbread houses for the preschoolers to decorate and Jennifer Moloney, with help from Lisa Pihl, reading and creating crafts for the after-school program. I will remember this season as residents are searching for jobs and few having results, but also for the hopefulness that tomorrow they might be successful. I will remember the generousness of people who continue to give money and support to the library and its programs.

The library staff wishes happy holidays to each and all of you with the hope that the memories you create during the season will be ones to be treasured for a lifetime.

Vernonia Public Library: 701 Weed Avenue

Hours: Mon., Wed., Fri. 10 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Tues., Thu. 1:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Sat. 10 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Preschool Story Time: Mondays, 10:30 a.m. when school is in session.

Phone: 503-429-1818

Is your child ready for a phone?

by Jason Alderman

If your preteen child hasn't hit you up yet for a cell phone, you're among a rare breed indeed. Studies have found that roughly 70 percent of 11- to 14-year-olds now use cell phones. Closer to home, our 10-year-old has been hounding my wife and me for months to get his own phone.

My initial reaction was, "no way." But upon investigation, I see why many parents eventually give in. Here are a few pros and cons for giving your preteen a phone, and some safeguards you can take:

Safety. Anyone who's ever had a flat tire or gotten lost can attest to cell phones' safety advantages. On the flip side, unless you install parental controls, your child could access inappropriate content or be more vulnerable to bullying and predatory behavior.

Expense. Cell phone use, including calls, text messaging, web browsing and application downloads, can be wildly expensive. You have two payment options:

- Prepaid plan – buy minutes "pay-as-you-go." Plans vary widely in terms of fees and per-minute calling and text rates. Advantages: No locked-in service contract; know exactly how many minutes they're using. Disadvantages: Parental controls usually don't apply; phones more expensive than under a service contract plan.

- Family plan – sometimes it's cheaper to add a phone to your existing plan. Some plans allow unlimited calls/texts between friends and family or those using the same carrier. Advantages: Generally cheaper if your kids make lots of calls/texts; most allow parental controls. Disadvantages: Parental controls may cost ex-

tra; some plans don't allow usage caps, so undisciplined kids may rack up large bills; tied to service contract.

Parental controls. One of the best ways to protect your kids is to subscribe to your carrier's parental controls plan. Plan features vary widely, but look for these when comparison shopping:

- Cost (free to \$4.99 a month)
- Ability to cap phone minutes and text messages.
- Allow emergency calls, even if over monthly usage allowance.
- Cap and/or block entertainment downloads (costly/inappropriate ringtones, music, video, etc.)
- Block mature content websites from Internet-enabled phones.
- Restrict time-of-day usage (e.g., block during school hours or after bedtime).
- Block calls/texts from specific or unknown numbers (helps prevent stalking, bullying and inappropriate contact).

- Track your child's physical location (requires GPS-enabled phone and typically costs \$5 to \$10 a month).

Parental control programs generally are not available with prepaid plans. And, since no filtering tool is completely foolproof, it's important to regularly discuss safety issues with your kids. Make sure they're comfortable coming to you with any questions or details of inappropriate contact they've received.

Not every child is ready for cell phone responsibilities. Set ground rules and be prepared to withhold privileges if they cross boundaries, such as not abiding school regulations, exceeding curfews or usage limits, using to bully others, repeatedly losing or damaging the phone, etc. And make sure they kick in part of their allowance to help pay.

With my son, it's not a question of "if" but instead of "when." And when the time is right, he'll bear the costs of the handset and adding a line to our family plan. This of course will allow him to hound me remotely for the latest must-have item.

Jason Alderman is a financial expert who directs *Practical Money Skills for Life* (www.practical-moneyskills.com), a free, award-winning financial education program.

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