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Letters

Thanks from Vernonia Lions for a stellar year

To the Editor:
 The Vernonia Lions club would like to say "Thank You" to the people of Vernonia. By putting your spare change in our Gales Creek Camp collection cans around town, we were able to give an extra \$250.00 to Gales Creek Camp. (The camp provides experiences for children, youth and families affected by Type 1 diabetes, this helps them gain confidence to manage their diabetes and achieve the goal to grow toward living independent lives.) This shows us that if everyone gives a little we can accomplish a lot. Good Job Vernonia!

The Lions would also like to thank the stores and restaurants that have participated this last year. We hope to get new cans out this year and in a few more places.

Also, the Lions are especially proud we were able to help our community and a little bit of the world this last year with our fundraising efforts (BBQ sandwich booth during Jamboree, Texas Hold'em and selling raffle tickets and plant sale). We have been able to donate over \$15,000.00 this year. Some of our donations were maintaining trailers for families who were lifting their homes, having the Mobil Screening Unit come to the grade school, being able to provide 17 pairs of eye glasses, and nine scholarships to graduating seniors. Donations also went to Camp Wilkerson, Oregon Sight and Hearing, Vernonia Cares Food Bank; the list goes on. But, we could not have accomplished this without the support of our community. Thank You!

We hope you all have a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Sincerely,
Randal Harvey
 on behalf of the
Vernonia Lions Club

Nicks' efforts also deserve thanks

To the Editor:
 We would like to add a postscript to the letter recently submitted by Marilyn Nicks about the Vernonia Spirit of Christmas festivities.

Kudos to Marilyn for all of her efforts in spearheading this

great event.

Vernonia has a wonderful memory to look back on for 2010.

Best wishes for a happy and prosperous 2011,

Pat Phillips and Catherine Helmer
 Vernonia

United Steel Workers donations valuable

To the Editor:
 Thank You USW 1097.
 Thanks to the members of United Steel Workers Local 1097 for their support of the Holiday Food Box programs in

Clatsop, Columbia, and Cowlitz Counties.

They donated a total of \$4112.

Donations helped here:
 1. Turning Point Community Center, HOPE, Inc, and Vernonia Cares in Columbia County

2. Community House on Broadway – Lives in Transition Program in Cowlitz County

3. Pioneer House in Clatsop County

Your support helped us put a smile on the faces of many people in need in our communities.

Thank you for all you do to

make life better in the communities where you live and work.

Kathye Beck
 Executive Director
 United Way of Columbia County

Policy on Letters

The INDEPENDENT will not publish letters with personal attacks on private citizens. Preference will be given to brief letters, 300 words or less.

All letters must be signed and include a verifiable address or phone number.

Salem Scene

By Representative Brad Witt
 Oregon District 31



The beginning of the 76th Legislative Session was marked by the customary rituals involved with swearing in the members of the House and Senate, as well as our new Governor. But it was also marked by some historic events:

- The first time the House of Representatives has been evenly split 30 Democrats and 30 Republicans.
- The first time the Legislature joins 45 other states in meeting on an annual basis.
- The first time a Governor has been sworn in for a third term.
- The first time the position of Speaker of the House has been shared equally by members from each party.
- The first time committee chairmanships have been co-shared by members from each party.

Under the circumstances, you might think that things would be in disarray, but on the contrary, everyone is focused on the enormous job that lies ahead. With a looming \$3.5 billion budgetary deficit, we recognize the need for cohesion and cooperation. Our Co-Speakers, Rep. Arnie Roblan and Rep. Bruce Hanna, have set the pace, and they have dedicated themselves to maintaining an environment that will help everyone accomplish the tasks ahead. I am enormously optimistic about this session, and I look forward to plunging into the work ahead.

Speaking of what lies ahead, I received my committee assignments this week, and here is what I will be working on come February 1st:

- Co-Chair, Veterans Affairs
- Member, Transportation and Economic Development
- Co-Vice Chair, Ways and Means Subcommittee on Transportation & Economic Development

I see these as great committee assignments for our district. The movement of goods and services is essential to the economic development of any community and we in Columbia and

Clatsop Counties have good basic infrastructure that includes road, rail, water and air, much of which would benefit from additional investment. I hope that the information gleaned from my Transportation Committees will help us revitalize these assets for the benefit of our entire region.

The Veterans Affairs Committee also promises to be very interesting. We have many veterans in the district, many of whom are newly returned from tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. The needs are great, especially with regard to health care, so I plan to make sure that the Committee is a forceful advocate for our veterans. They serve without reservation and so should we.

Items of Interest...

I want to pass along information about a new program that will allow Oregon homeowners to go solar for as little as \$20 a month, with no up front costs. It may sound too good to be true, but it is an approach offered by a private company with assistance from state and federal tax credits and the Oregon Department of Energy. The following link explains more about the program; http://www.oregonlive.com/business/index.ssf/2011/01/oregon_homeowners_can_now_go_s.html

One of Gov. Kitzhaber's first acts in office was to direct the Oregon Department of Energy to use \$2 million in unused ARRA funds to proceed immediately with energy audits on 500 Oregon schools. Conducting energy audits will create immediate private sector jobs, and is the first step in the Governor's commitment to create thousands of Oregon jobs through school weatherization retrofits.

In the District...

Finally, I want to take a moment to express my deepest sympathies to the family of Sheriff Ralph Painter, and to all the citizens of Rainier, who have suffered the terrible loss of an outstanding public servant. His loss has been recognized far beyond the borders of Columbia County, even during our opening ceremonies at the Capital. His great warmth and devotion to his family and community will never be forgotten and he will be kept in our thoughts and prayers.