



PRESORTED STANDARD  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Vernonia, OR 97064  
Permit No. 37

**FREE**

# THE INDEPENDENT

Vol. 27, No. 1

*The Voice of the Upper Nehalem River Valley for Over 27 years*

January 4, 2012



The new wetlands on the old mill site continues to fill as the rains provide water. The fencing will come down after the final planting is established later this year.

## New health provider coming in February



**Dr. Brian Miller, D.O. of the Verdura Family Wellness.**

The Vernonia Health Board has completed negotiations with Verdura Family Wellness, which will open their second location in the Vernonia Medical Clinic building that had been contracted to Providence Clinic. Providence's last day in the clinic was December 30.

The Verdura Family Wellness clinic, owned by Dr. Brian Miller, D.O., has operated in Hillsboro since 2004. Currently, in Hillsboro, Dr. Miller and two Physicians Assistants see patients four days a week. They take Medicare, Medicaid, most private insurance and private

pay patients.

The staff of Verdura Family Wellness will begin moving into the local clinic this month, with an expected opening in early February, after new staff is hired and trained (see their Help Wanted ad on page 18 of this issue).

More information will be available later in January about the new provider's hours, days of operation, etc.

For more information on Verdura Family Wellness, go to [www.verdurafamilywellness.com](http://www.verdurafamilywellness.com).

## Conner promoted to Police Chief

The City of Vernonia has announced the promotion of Police Sergeant Michael Conner to the position of Police Chief effective January 1, 2012. Chief Conner took his oath of office during the January 3 Vernonia City Council meeting.

Conner has been a police officer in Vernonia since September 1, 2005. He has held

the positions of officer, sergeant and interim chief in Vernonia. He had previously served as a police officer in Madras, Warm Springs and Toledo.

The new chief lives in North Plains with wife, Katrina, and three daughters.

**Right, Vernonia Police Chief Conner taking oath of office.**



## Vernonia 2011 Year in Review

- Jan. 3 – Mayor Sally Harrison and Councilors Cindy Ball and Catherine Helmer replaced by Mayor Josette Mitchell and Councilors Willow Burch and Marilyn Nicks. Bill Haack's contract as Pro Tem City Administrator extended to June 30 (with Nicks abstaining).
- Jan. 5 – Rainier Chief of Police Ralph Painter shot and killed.
- Jan. 6 – The Independent starts 26th year of publication
- Jan. 13 – Announcement that Vernonia schools will get \$11.2 million from FEMA.
- Jan. 18 – City Councilor Kevin Hudson, red-faced, loudly demands K9 contract be added to agenda. Mayor says, "No, it's a personnel issue."
- Jan. 23 – House being moved gets stuck on green steel bridge temporarily.
- Jan. 31 – \$50,000 grant by G-P to new school announced.
- Feb. – Vernonia Country Kitchen, previously the Pine Cone, torn down after being flooded again in 2007.
- Feb. 7 – Donna Webb given Certificate of Appreciation, by Mayor Mitchell, for her years of community involvement.
- Feb. 10 – Vernonia school board approves 30-hr per week School Resource Officer from Vernonia Police Dept.
- Feb. 22 – City council establishes Emergency Preparedness Committee. Council splits 3-2 against hiring Bill Haack as City Administrator.
- Feb. 28 – City council agrees to continue \$12 sewer loan repayment fee for 20 more years to pay off another DEQ loan.
- Mar. 5 – Vernonian Mackenzie Carr crowned 2011 Miss Rodeo Oregon.
- Mar. 12 – VHS Alumni basketball game.
- Mar. 21 – Haack tells council that a Vernonia police officer was put on paid leave today and that DPSST is conducting a review of that officer based on their investigation.
- Mar. 29 – Governor John Kitzhaber comes to town to help celebrate the \$11.2 FEMA grant announced in January.
- Apr. 9 – Vernonian Noni Andersen wins State of Oregon Senior Spelling Bee.
- Apr. 16 – Make Vernonia Shine Day, Vernonia Pride

**Please see page 2**