

Vernonia Students Return to School in Scappoose

By Scott Laird



Students waiting bus travel to Scappoose

In what some parents considered a controversial decision, the Vernonia School Board worked out a plan with the Scappoose School District to share facilities for nine days until the school Christmas break, allowing Vernonia's students to return to classes and studies only eight days after the Flood of 2007.

"We understand the plight of the community," said Vernonia High School Principal Nate Underwood on the second day of classes, "But it's good that they see the value in our plan. It's good to see so many kids here."

School Administrators and the School Board worked out the plan, where Scappoose students would go to class in the morning. This then allows Vernonia middle and high school students to arrive by bus in late morning, be served lunch, attend half day classes in the afternoon, and be returned by bus to Vernonia by six p.m. Student athletes were required to travel in the morning by bus to Scappoose for practice, and then join their classmates for classes. Elementary students stayed in Vernonia, attending classes at a number of church facilities.

Attendance the first day was surprisingly high. Middle school was at 88%, high school a little lower, according to Principal Underwood. "And we are seeing new faces today that we didn't see yesterday," said Underwood. Washington Elementary principal Aaron Miller reported mixed numbers for his elementary students, from over ninety percent for kindergarteners to a low of seventy per cent for second graders.

Students had mixed ideas about going back to school so soon after the flood and about attending a different facility. Kendall Grady, aged 11, in sixth grade said she used to live in Scappoose. "I saw old friends. I'm happy to have something to do, and be with my class." Kendall's house was flooded with a foot of water, and her family is staying with her uncle. Cole Harbour, also 11 and in sixth grade, was not a flood victim. "I would rather stay here and help," said Cole. Tyler Burnett, 10, and in fifth grade said, "It's kind of weird going to a different school." Tyler's house was flooded and his family is staying in St. Helens with his aunt. That means Tyler has to be driven from St. Helens to Vernonia each morning, to get on the bus to go back over to Scappoose. "It's a lot of time in the car each day," said Tyler.

Need Help??

Vernonia High School students are required to complete a minimum of 20 hours of Community Service as a graduation project. Do you need some volunteers to help with your business, charity or community project?

Please contact Rachel Wilcoxon at rwilcoxon@vernonia.k12.or.us or Peter Weisel at pweisel@vernonia.k12.or.us, or call Vernonia High School (503-429-3521).

Our students are eager and willing to help our community.



A sea of text books lines VHS driveway



VHS gym floor a wave of hardwood



Salvaged school desks, chairs and furniture fill parking lot.

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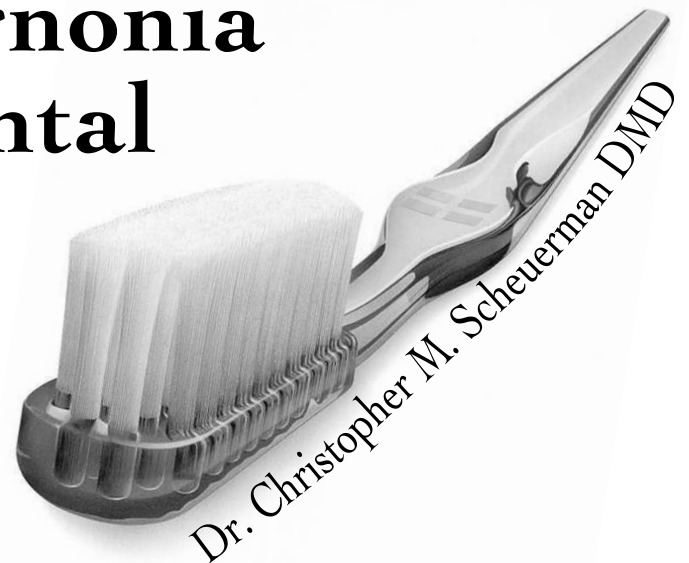
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