

VHS Seniors Are Goin' to Disneyland!

By Scott Laird

The Vernonia High School Graduating Class of 2008 is going to Disneyland for their Senior Trip!

This was the year, as seniors, that was supposed to be their chance to swagger down the halls as big men and women on campus. Instead, after the Flood of 2007, the year has turned into a disaster that includes ruined buildings, time spent on another campus as guests, and the end of the year attending classes in modular manufactured buildings.

But now comes a bright spot for this year's senior class. Thirty-three of the fifty-six class members, along with seven chaperones, are set to head off for a trip of a lifetime. The group leaves on Wednesday May 21 and returns on Sunday May 25; they will visit Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm, and Medieval Times. The group will spend Thursday night in Disneyland enjoying "Grad Night" when the park is closed to the public but open all night only to graduating high school senior groups.

The class of 2008 is the only Vernonia class to have attended school through both recent floods in the community. These seniors were in kindergarten in 1996 when Vernonia experienced a similar disaster. "These kids deserve something fun after all they've been through this year," said Barb Carr who is not only the administrative assistant to the superintendent of the school district but also the mother of a graduating senior, her daughter Mackenzie, and a chaperone for the trip.

The students, many of whom experienced personal loss at home, were bused to Scappoose for over a month to attend classes, then returned to Vernonia to find a high school building that was not usable. "They have really missed out on what is supposed to be a special year for them," said Carr.

At times the trip which had been planned since the beginning of the year looked like it might not happen. After the flood of 2007, fund raising for the trip came to a standstill as families dealt with their more immediate needs. Concerns were raised almost immediately when the enormity of the devastation to the community became apparent. "I had a student come up to me with pleading eyes and ask 'Are we still

"If I Were Mayor, I Would..."

The Oregon Mayors Association (OMA) has begun its annual "If I Were Mayor..." student contest. This statewide contest involves middle school, high school, home school, and college students by asking them to design either a poster, write an essay or prepare a PowerPoint presentation answering the open ended question "What does a Mayor do?" Statewide winners will each receive a lap top computer. The State contest deadline is May 31.

Vernonia Mayor Sally Harrison has begun the local contest with winners in each category being chosen and then submitted to the statewide contest. Local contestants will be judged by their local city councils and will receive a cash prize. Statewide winners will be judged by a panel of mayors and notified in mid- July. They will be invited with their parents to attend the Oregon Mayors Association Annual Conference banquet in Pendleton on Saturday, August 2, to be recognized and receive their prizes.

"I think it is important for students to think about and understand just what it is that a mayor does," said Harrison. "Not only does the mayor run city council meetings and keep track of other city committees, but they are also the face of the city to the outside world."

"I want our students to get involved in politics, especially on the local level because we are not by ourselves here," continued Harrison. "We are dealing with people and agencies on a state and even federal level. We are making big decisions about the future of this city, and I would like the input of our young Vernonians."

"Even if they can't vote, their ideas still count," concluded Harrison. "This contest is a good place to start getting involved. Things are changing here, and I will value what these students have to say."

Middle school aged students will compete in the poster contest, high school students can compete in either the essay or PowerPoint contest, and college students are eligible to submit in the PowerPoint contest. Submissions will be judged on creativity, clarity and sincerity of thought, and proper use of grammar and subject relevancy.

Official entry forms must accompany each submission. Rules and entry forms are available at the Vernonia middle and high school office.

going on our trip?" said Shelley Cota, another parent of a senior and chaperone as well. "I told her we would do everything we could to make it happen." At that time the trip was about \$18,000 short in funding.



Cota helped organize some 50/50 raffles in Scappoose that raised some money. Carr and Cota also put together a letter campaign to businesses and friends all over Oregon asking for ideas and help. "These kids have lost a lot," said Cota. "I just thought their senior year should end with some good memories."

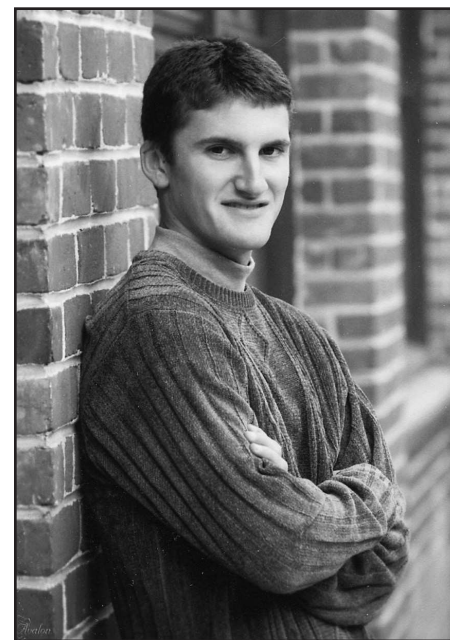
Some real help arrived when the Oregonian featured a story about the plight of the Vernonia seniors in their Sunday edition. That's when the donations started pouring in. "We received \$8,100 the Tuesday following the Oregonian story," said Barb Carr, "and the checks haven't stopped arriving. We received anywhere from \$2,500 at a time from some foundations to five dollar checks from people who said they just wanted to help in some

way." The students were just a couple of hundred dollars away from their goal at press time. "We'll hold a few more fund raisers this spring and make this happen," said Carr.

The senior class has scheduled a bottle drive fund raiser for Sunday April 6, a garage sale/bottle drive/spaghetti feed for April 26-27, and another bottle drive for May 11.

"The kids are so excited to get away," concluded Cota. "Whenever they tell anyone they're from Vernonia, the flood is all they want to hear about. It's really starting to wear on them. This is a chance for them to get away and just be regular kids."

VHS Senior's Poem to be Published



Vernonia High School senior Michael Calhoun has been selected to have a poem he wrote entitled "The Old Cemetery on the Hill" published in the Anthology of Poetry by Young Americans. Calhoun, known as "Sunny" to most of his friends and family, submitted the poem at the suggestion of his Honors English instructor, Erica Bell.

The poem was part of a class assignment that in part required the students to write a poem about a Vernonia landmark. Calhoun chose the Pioneer Cemetery and spent time there photographing tombstones and getting a feel for the place.

Ms. Bell was impressed by Calhoun's work and helped get him the paperwork to submit his poem for the anthology. "I knew

Michael was a good writer," said Bell. "I am really excited that he is having it published."

The 2008 edition is the nineteenth year that the Anthology of Poetry by Young Americans has been published. Congratulations Michael!

The Old Cemetery on the Hill

**Faded dates of long ago
Engraved on stones
Where moss now grows.
Who are these pioneers of yesterday,
That rest in peace both night and day?
True life stories that are left untold.
Family members loved by all,
Where tears of sadness gently fall.
A beautiful garden, to call one's own
The old cemetery on the hill.
One should not forget
Our due respect
For those pioneers no longer here.
Once in heaven, we shall rejoice
The old cemetery on the hill.**

By Michael Calhoun