

Congratulations Class of 2008! Oregon Solution Project

Receives Grant

By Scott Laird

The Vernonia Schools Oregon Solutions Team received a \$20,000 grant from the Verizon Foundation at its June 23rd meeting.

Renee Willer, External Affairs Director for Verizon, presented Oregon Solutions co-conveners Tony Hyde and Tom Kelly with the check, noting Verizon's continued commitment to helping the Vernonia community since the flooding in December 2007. Willer mentioned previous donations of funds for unmet needs and equipment that assisted the community immediately after the floods. Recently Verizon returned to Vernonia, asking what else they could do to help. "Because the Verizon Foundation focuses its giving in two areas- K through twelve education and literacy, and safety and health, the Vernonia Schools Oregon Solutions project is a perfect fit," said Willer. "We want to help you quickly find solutions and help keep families and kids in this community."

The Oregon Solutions Team, made up of local community leaders, public and private sector interests, local politicians, and members of local and state government agencies, has been charged with identifying a site and finding funding for a new school campus for Vernonia. The team is currently evaluating potential sites, looking for possible partner agencies to locate on the new site, researching funding sources, developing a budget, and creating a project time line.

At the June 23rd meeting, the team heard a report from members of the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) about a possible Transportation and Growth Management (TGM) agreement between Oregon Solutions and DLCD and the Oregon Department of Transportation. The TGM agreement provides grants to fund initial engineering and studies, looking at location requirements for roads, infrastructure and development around a new school site at no charge to the project. The team also discussed the presented time line that showed kids in new schools by September of 2009. The team agreed that, though optimistic, September 2009 was a good goal to work towards and that mid-year 2009 was a more realistic target.



Tony Hyde and Tom Kelly receive a check from Verizon's Renee Willer.



Vernonia's Voice congratulates all graduates this year. See Pages 13-16 for a special Vernonia High School Graduation Section.

Compassion First - Helping Vernonia One Home at a Time

By Scott Laird

Over the last six months, there have been many groups that have stepped up and helped out those affected by flooding in Vernonia. One of those groups that has very quietly but effectively assisted some of those in the most need has been a group from Beaverton called Compassion First.

Compassion First is affiliated with the Beaverton Foursquare Church and was founded out of their response to the Hurricane Katrina disaster in 2005. Only three weeks after the hurricane hit, the folks from the Foursquare Church had established a permanent base in Biloxi, Mississippi, in partnership with Medical Teams International, the Salvation Army and a number of other churches and organiza-

tions. Compassion First, which was formed during the Katrina response, provided laborers and helped hurricane victims with home repairs. That base in Biloxi just closed on June 1, 2008, almost three years after being established.

Jim Pringle, who spent a year in Mississippi along with his wife Nancy, are now in Vernonia as part of Compassion First, bringing what they learned during their time helping Katrina survivors. Also in Vernonia is Michael Do who at twenty-one years old is an experienced veteran of the Katrina relief efforts. "Because of our proximity to Vernonia and the skill set we developed in Biloxi, it was natural that we would come here and help," said Pringle.

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Columbia County Fair Donates Tickets to Flood Victims

The Columbia County Fair has donated 200 day passes to victims of the flooding this past winter. Columbia County residents who have registered with Columbia County Flood Relief (CCFR) are eligible to receive these passes through their case workers.

Henry Heimuller, a member of the Fair Board, presented the Tickets to Jill Hult of CCFR, noting, "Most people that were flooded have a lot they are trying to accomplish this summer. We hope this will be an opportunity for them to take a day and come enjoy themselves on us."

Henry Heimuller delivers Fair passes to Jill Hult of Columbia County Flood Relief.

