

Restarting The VSHAC

By George Spaulding

The primary function of a school is to provide students with the learning experiences necessary for maximum intellectual development. The success of this process is limited by the child's emotional, social, and physical health. For this reason, the purpose of a comprehensive school health education program is twofold: first, to consider the total human being in the educational process, and second, to motivate students to help themselves and others to live healthy, productive lives. To help achieve this goal, we created the VSHAC (Vernonia School Health Advisory Committee), an advisory group made up of parents, community members, students, and school staff working together to improve the health of all students and families through coordinated school health programs.

As you may know, our district received a grant from the Oregon Department of Public Health last year to initiate the development of the VSHAC and examine the school health index, conduct a needs assessment, evaluate data, and draft plans to improve health and wellness. This committee is intended to provide advice and will not become part of the administrative structure of the schools, nor do they have any legal responsibilities within the school system.

Research shows that healthy children do better in school- from attendance and behavior to academics and overall performance. The Vernonia School Health Advisory Committee (VSHAC) will work with the district to help school communities support good health and academic achievement. I think that is why you are reading this today. You believe in this. We need your expertise and consultation to prioritize, guide, and develop interventions to provide students with the knowledge and skills that enable them to adopt and maintain healthy attitudes and behaviors throughout their lives. The health of our children doesn't depend on major medical breakthroughs, but on everyday practice of good health habits. School Health Advisory Committees (SHACs) provide an efficient, effective structure for creating and implementing age-appropriate, sequential health education programs, and early intervention and prevention strategies that can easily be supported by local families and community stakeholders.

In our first year as a committee we did the following: Pedometer Project, healthy prizes for participation, staff massages, air scrubber (for Washington Grade School), PE equipment, promotion of healthy snacks in class parties, healthy breakfast for staff every Friday, walking club after school, rhythm/dance class after school, purchased heart monitors for high school/junior high PE class, and made water available in modular classrooms.

We did a great job last year, and I look forward to another full and productive year. We are here to decide what our goals and objectives are. Where do we want to go? What do we want to do or change? If you would like to be a part of this, please contact Mr. Spaulding at Washington Grade School at 503-429-79411. The VSHAC's next meeting is Thursday, December 11th 2008 in the Washington Grade School library from 4-5:30pm. We meet once a month. I look forward to seeing and working with our community. Take care and thank you for the support and time. Remember "Healthy Kids Learn Better, Healthy Teachers Teach Better, One Step At A Time."

Mr. Spaulding is the Washington Grade School K-5 Physical Education teacher.

VHS Fall Sports Recap

The Vernonia High School fall sports teams for 2008 had a variety of successes. Some of them included the re-emergence of the cheerleading squad coached by Cassandra Ashby, the second year in a row for the football team to qualify for the state playoffs, a top finish in the district cross-country meet that qualified that runner to the state meet, and a new coach to lead the volleyball team this year.

To start off, the cheerleading squad had been practicing all summer and during the fall to develop some exciting routines. They wowed the crowd with their performances. On many occasions, they tossed their teammates high in the air and caught them as part of their routines. The team went to almost every football game and were very supportive of the Loggers. For their first year, the girls did an excellent job and, next year, may enter some cheer competitions.

The cross-country team, under the direction of Mr. Brookins, competed well but did not have as many members as it has had in the past. The team had some outstanding individuals, including all-league stand-out, Timothy Pillow. Timothy is a foreign exchange student and has not only excelled on the cross-country team, but has also been an excellent scholar. Timothy qualified for the state meet this year, and led the Loggers all season with his outstanding effort on the course.

The Lady Loggers volleyball team struggled in the win-loss column this year, but played some very exciting volleyball. They were in every match and competed very hard. The girls gave it everything they had and just came up short in a few games. The Lady Loggers were led by new head coach Brooke Van Meter, who was assisted by Teresa Williams. Under the new coaches' tutelage, two girls made the all-league team-- Senior leader Trisha Levensellar was an honorable mention athlete and Sophomore Kaitlyn Carr, an outstanding defensive player and athlete at the net, was also named an honorable mention player.

In football, six athletes made all-league first team. The Loggers finished second in the league and competed in the state play-offs for the second year in a row. The strong finish was a result of the hard work these young men put out in their quest for athletic excellence. On the line, Taylor Smith and Levi Timmerman received first-team honors. Alex Lende was a first-team defensive back, while Seniors Byron Schorzman and Blake Moeller were first-team quarterback and first-team receiver, respectively. Rounding out the Logger selections at all-league was outstanding Junior running-back Trevor Gwin. The Loggers were second in the conference despite their 3 and 7 record and, in their state play-off game with Willamina, came up just short of victory. The team had twelve seniors this year, and they will be hard to replace.

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