

Vernonia Students Get Books-- Increase Reading!



Glenda DeLemos, Washington Grade School Librarian with some of the books donated last year after the flood.

Vernonia students at Washington Grade School (WGS) have received a wonderful gift-- actually, a whole bunch of gifts, and are making great use of them.

Donations of books poured into the community from schools and other sources after the floods of December, 2007. WGS Librarian Glenda DeLemos has made the most of the donations, replacing about a third of her book stock with newer, cleaner and gently-used replacements from the many boxes of books that were received. "Most of the books we took off the shelf were worn and tattered," said DeLemos. It was a time-consuming job

to sort through the donations, but students are reaping the benefits of having nicer and newer books in their school library.

"We went through and kept the best books for the library," said DeLemos. "Then we let the teachers go through and pick out anything they would like to use in their classrooms." There were still so many books left over that the school decided to let each student pick out and take home ten books for themselves. "My goal is to encourage reading and this allowed us to get books into the hands of our students," DeLemos said. "Also, some of our families that were flooded may have lost their home libraries, so this helped get some books back into some homes." With about 250 students in the school, that means about 2,500 donated books went out into the community.

DeLemos noted that the value to the library was probably "...in the tens of thousands of dollars," and also commented on the new types of books that the library added to its collection. "We added beginning level books, and also non-fiction books about dinosaurs and science that this age students really enjoy," she said.

DeLemos extended a big thank you to all the people who made donations and especially to Andrea Keifer at the NWRES D who spearheaded the donations of the books for Vernonia.

DeLemos also organized this year's reading theme for WGS-- "Route 66," a very successful program which rewarded students with miles for reading books and chapters. The program included a highway theme with classic cars, road signs and a map created by the High School Art Department on a hallway bulletin board that allowed students to chart each class as they progressed across country with each book they completed. A total of over 30,000 miles were "traveled" by the school. DeLemos kicked off the contest by bringing nine classic cars to the school, and also having the high school art students decorate windows at WGS. Trophies were given to the winning classes who completed the journey, and a lot of books were read in the process.

Vernonia Prevention Coalition Offers Youth Leadership Activities

Beginning in December, high school and middle school youth were offered an opportunity to work with County Prevention Specialist, Leeann Grasseth, on a Leadership and Resiliency Program. This Program is sponsored by the Vernonia Prevention Coalition and is shown to have positive results increasing internal strengths such as:

- the desire and ability to feel and understand the needs of others
- the desire to help others
- the ability to delay gratification
- a perspective focus on the future
- an internal locus of control
- the ability to genuinely accept one's circumstances
- a strong sense of self-efficacy
- a sense of humor
- the ability to take appropriately managed risks

There are three main components of the program: in-school groups (held every Wednesday), community volunteer experiences (locally and at the humane society), and alternative adventures. Numerous research studies validate the impact animals can have on people's lives by boosting the immune system and reducing stress levels. Other community volunteer opportunities offer youth a sense of pride and bonding within their community that increase protective factors. The alternative activities provide the youth with an opportunity to participate in a healthy activity that will lead to discussions that relate to the experiences. These activities are targeted to increase resiliency and strengthen skills for positive development.

Twenty-seven youth signed up for the program and have attended a summit to assist in the planning process. Allowing the youth to create their program gives them ownership in the program functions. We are requesting that anyone who has any volunteer work within the community please contact Leeann Grasseth at 503-728-2659 or leeanng@ccmh1.com.

High School Calendar of Events:
February 6th: Community Service
February 28th: Alternative Adventure (Snow Trip)
Middle School Calendar of Events:
February 13th: Community Service
February 16th Alternative Adventure (Ice Skating)



Roger Whitton (top left) presents a check from the Vernonia American Legion Post 119 for \$200 to Jerry Butcher for Vernonia Youth Basketball. Vernonia Youth Basketball play as part of the Forest Grove League on Saturdays from January through March.

Vernonia HS Band's Big Day

"Has it been two years since Vernonia flooded?" one person sitting along the parade route asked her companion. "No, it's only been a year!" the man answered. Such were the comments all along the parade route of the Macy's Holiday Parade in Portland, Oregon, on the day after Thanksgiving. Not only were parade watchers amazed to see a band from Vernonia in the parade, but even more amazed considering where the town and school were just less than a year prior to this day-- under several feet of water.

But let's get back to the parade. The day began early on Friday, November 28, 2008, for members and parent chaperones of the Vernonia High School Marching Band-- a group that did not even exist two years ago. "It has been one of my visions for this band that people know where Vernonia is and that we have some pretty talented kids out here," said band director Rob Izzett. "I wanted the kids to experience marching because, not only is it a lot of fun, but it helps to build teamwork and unity among the kids."

But the day began at 5:00 AM for many, if not most, of the students. They arrived at the school in their newly purchased marching uniforms, with instruments, music, and-- oh yes-- Santa hats! As the bus pulled up to the front of Lincoln High School in Southwest Portland, the parade staging area was already bustling with activity. The kids poured out of the bus with instruments in hand and bombarded Mr. Izzett with hundreds of questions, all of which he answered. "This event took a lot of preparation, not just in teaching the band to march and play at the same time, but in making sure everything went off without a hitch. And if I did not have the group of parent volunteers that I have, this would have been a chaotic nightmare," said Izzett. Parent volunteer Betsy Miller had spent Thanksgiving evening baking fresh muffins for the kids to eat on the way in. "My son informed me a few days ago that granola bars would not fly with teenagers that early in the morning," stated Miller.

After all the kids had all that they needed, and uniforms were completely ready to go, Mr. Izzett formed them up on the lawn of Lincoln High School. They warmed up for a few minutes, played their song once or twice, worked on the drum cadence and roll-off, and then simply waited their turn to step onto the parade route. All of the band entries were forming in the same area, so the kids got to hear other larger high school bands warm up. One of the VHS flute players told Mr. Izzett that he should teach a drumline class next year. "That sounds so cool," was one of the comments. And since receiving a donation of marching percussion instruments over the summer from Clackamas High School, "that's really more of a reality," Izzett stated. "The truth is, that we probably would not be marching in this parade were it not for the generosity of schools around the state of Oregon. Through donated funds in conjunction with fund raising efforts, we have the necessary uniforms and equipment to even field a marching band."

Finally, the moment arrived. The parade marshal instructed the band to get into place. They barely had time to get lined up when they were instructed to start marching. They marched up SW 14th Avenue, playing the song twice (once more than Izzett had anticipated. He and his son had walked the parade route a week before, humming the song and cadence in their heads to determine about how many times they would have to play the song), before turning down SW Alder. At every block, it seemed, total strangers were cheering for the kids from Vernonia. But there were many familiar faces in the crowd as well. "I saw several sets of band parents, our school counselor, and even the band teacher that I did my student teaching under," commented Mr. Izzett. Oh sure, things went wrong. But they were things like drummers getting their sticks caught in the sleeve of their uniform and dropping the stick. Fortunately, there were parent volunteers who swooped in to retrieve them and get them back into their hands within a few seconds.

At the end of the 2 ¼ mile parade, the band headed back to the bus, where they were dismissed. A huge roar arose from the kids-- a mixture of pure pleasure, relief, and likely a little pain (the last third of the parade route was a steady uphill climb). And after all was said and done, and after the band had played their song at least fifteen times, many continued to play their instruments. Drummers started up a spontaneous cadence. It had been a long day, and it was just past 11:00 AM.

After handing off some students to parents who were there to take them home, or to some family gathering, or, perhaps, to get in on part of "Black Sunday," Izzett loaded up the kids onto the bus and headed back to Vernonia, having experienced a sense of accomplishment.

Note: For their part in the parade, Macy's donated \$1,000 to Vernonia High School Band that will go towards their trip to perform at Disneyland this Spring Break. If you would like to make a donation to help make this trip affordable to all students, please make that donation to Vernonia High School Band, and enter Disneyland Trip in the comments section, and drop off or mail to Vernonia High School.

