

John Underwood Brings *Beyond the Field* to Vernonia

John Underwood has dedicated his life to finding ways to keep kids from using drugs and alcohol. It's an extremely tough battle, but Underwood is creating some useful tactics that are having an impact in the communities and states where is working.

In mid-November, Underwood brought his message, *Beyond the Field*, to Vernonia. Sponsored by the Vernonia Prevention Coalition, Underwood was in Vernonia for two days, meeting with area sports coaches and school staff, interested citizens and young adults, and finally with all students in the Vernonia School system, talking about taking a tough stand against drug and alcohol abuse by children.

Underwood, President and Founder of the American Athletic Institute, is a former NCAA All-American distance runner and a World Masters Champion. He has coached two dozen Olympians, including a number of Olympic medalists and has studied sports science. The American Athletic Institute's primary focus is on the education of athletes on the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Underwood now travels around the country working with schools, parents, communities and police discussing how to combat drug and alcohol abuse among youth.

"The goal of these programs is to maybe change peoples perspectives, give them some ideas so

they might reconsider using," says Underwood.

Underwood says his work has led to a number of studies that he now references throughout his presentations. Underwood's message contains a mix of scientific facts, actual crash and news photos of tragic occurrences, and changes in law enforcement that have occurred in New York State. He shows images of the damage that sustained use of alcohol has on the brain and a series of facts and statistics about levels of use and abuse by teens and pre-teens. He also discusses gene trait markers that can indicate a predisposition to alcoholism, and the effects of drugs and alcohol on mental and physical performance. His presentation is a cross between Scared Straight and the Discovery Channel and can be an effective tool in reaching impressionable young people.

"The bigger problem is that kids now-- the center of their socialization is pot and alcohol," says Underwood. "They can't just get together, have fun, go to movies, have a team dinner, and go out with their buddies and do something constructive. Somewhere in the mix is '...where and how are we getting the booze and the marijuana.' It's connected with every negative kid behavior there is."

In addition to trying to instill an understanding of the effects of drugs and alcohol on athletic per-

formance, Underwood also stresses the social impacts of abuse. And he has taken an approach to combating underage drinking by encouraging the enactment and enforcement of stricter penalties for adults who provide alcohol to minors.

Underwood suggests some ways a community can start to get a handle on the problem. He suggests surveys among students so that the school district understands the prevalence of abuse among students. He discussed the effectiveness of team meetings that include the mandatory attendance of parents where awareness information is discussed. He talks about how important it is to start abuse awareness programs early-- with students in third through sixth grades. He suggests holding law enforcement accountable for charging and prosecuting anyone who provides alcohol to minors. Underwood provides educational materials and resources free of charge to communities that host his presentations.

"What you have to really do-- your community together, not just the school and law enforcement, but everybody has to come together and say, 'We have a problem just like everybody else. But we're going to do something about it because we care about our kids.'"

Junior Salmon Auction

Two art classes at Vernonia High School taught by Linda Allen participated in Vernonia Hands-On Art's Junior Salmon project last school year. Each student was given a blank salmon of about 19 inches by 4 inches cut out of masonite created by HOA volunteers. Their teacher, Ms. Allen, included the salmon as a class project with the only restrictions being that the students would have to donate the completed salmon back to Hands-On Art as a fundrais-

er for HOA and the Vernonia High School Art department.

The so-called "Junior" Salmon (dubbed "Junior" because they are less than half the size of the salmon projects completed for auction during Salmon Fest) were auctioned off as part of First Friday events last summer. This project brought in \$250.00 for the art department.

Vernonia Hands-On Art is an all-volunteer non-profit (501 (c) 3) organization sponsoring cultural events and classes in town since 1996. If you'd like to donate or volunteer, please contact: Tobie Finzel at 503-705-2173 or VernoniaArt@aol.com.



(L-R) Bonnie Birkemaier, Zach Shaw, Jed Douglas and instructor, Linda Allen, display the junior salmon they created.



Randy Parrow of the Vernonia Sentry presents VHS Band Instructor Rob Izzett with a check for \$593.63. The check represents the amount that Sentry patrons rounded up their receipts in support of the Vernonia Band. (Left) Ashley Loomis shows off the chimes that were purchased with the donation.

The Vernonia Alumni defeated the VHS Girls Varsity in the Annual Alumni Volleyball Match on November 20th. The match is organized by Kathi Fetch and raised \$540 for the Zach Rumboltz Scholarship Fund.



Destination Disneyland 2010!

Vernonia High School Class of 2010 Senior Trip to Disneyland is scheduled for May 27, 2010 to May 30, 2010. They will be flying out Thursday early morning and returning Sunday evening late. Many fundraisers are in progress in order to raise money for this trip.

- Jamba Tuesday: Order a Jamba Juice with proceeds going to the senior class trip
- Christmas Bazaar: December 5 & 6 where themed baskets and a Christmas tree will be raffled.
- Rummage Sale: December 12 & 13
- Can and Bottle drives will be held monthly
- Basketball Tournament: January 9, 2010 will include fund raising event.
- Chili Feed: February 11, 2010 (This

is also Senior Night for basketball)

- 50/50 raffle, bake sales, 3-point shooting fundraisers at home basketball games. **First home game is on December 8.**

All seniors that participate in a particular fundraiser will earn an equal portion of that fundraiser's proceeds to be applied to the cost of their trip.

If you have any questions, comments, concerns, suggestions or donations please contact:
Kari Moeller: 503-429-7941 (WGS) or kmoeller@vernonia.k12.or.us or Michelle Gilbertson

Updated information about events, fundraisers, meetings, and due dates can also be found at: www.vernonia.k12.or.us. Click on the high school page and you will find a link on the left hand column labeled SENIOR Trip.

2009 Holiday Giving Tree for Vernonia Schools!

The Vernonia Community PTA along with US Bank wants you to help us help our kids, teachers and staff.

Pick an ornament from a tree at WGS or US Bank. Purchase the item requested. Wrap it and return it to the tree with the ornament attached by December 17th.

All holiday gifts will be delivered to WGS, Mist, VMS & VHS on Friday, December 18th by current PTA members.

Contact Amy Cieloha at 429-0745 or Nicole Larke at 429-6271 with any questions.

