

# Governor Helps Celebrate Ground Breaking *continued from front page*

investment was in addition to \$1 million in Federal Stimulus Funds that the Oregon Department of Energy has allocated for installation of a biomass boiler and energy efficiency upgrades for the schools.

"This community is the poster child of what we must do across Oregon," said Kulongoski. "We don't



The ceremonial first shovels of dirt are moved at the new Vernonia School. Pictured left to right: School Board member Ernie Smith, County Commissioner Tony Hyde, State Senator Betsy Johnson, School Superintendent Ken Cox, Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski, State Representative Brad Witt, School Board member Keri Levenseller, FEMA Representative Ken Murphy, The Ford Family Foundation President Norm Smith, and School Board member Bill Langmaid.

have to wait for disaster to strike our communities to work together. It is a testament to you, the citizens of this community that I say to each and every one of you, God bless you-- you are the best of Oregon. God bless Vernonia, and God bless Oregon!"

Also speaking at the ceremony were State Senator Betsy Johnson; Columbia County Commissioner Tony Hyde; Ken Murphy of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); Jessica Balsam of the U.S. Department of Energy; and Norm Smith of The Ford Family Foundation, who recently

awarded the Vernonia school and community center project with a special \$1 million challenge grant to encourage additional philanthropic gifts.

"Vernonia has created a plan to both replace their schools and to revitalize the community," said The Ford Family Foundation's Smith.

"This project will serve as a hub of education and a community center for the whole town, and create connections to colleges, universities and sustainable rural economic opportunities."

The ground breaking ceremony was followed with an address by Governor Kulongoski to the Vernonia student body at the historic Washington Grade School, which was flooded in 1996 and again in 2007, and will be demolished after the construction of the new school campus.

"I just want to let you know that as much as it will be a place to go to school, your new school will be a civic center and a culture center for your community," said Kulongoski to the students. "This is a very important day in your lives and the life of Vernonia."

Kulongoski presented an Oregon State Flag to fly over the new school building to Superintendent Cox and received a book of paintings of the flood created by Vernonia third grade students in 2007.

The School District also hosted a reception, attended by the Governor, at the Vernonia High School Gymnasium.

Several organizations— including the Kelley Family Foundation, the Oregon Community Foundation and U.S. Bank— were on hand to announce that they will each step up to provide grants toward The Ford Family Foundation's challenge. The Kelley Family Foundation announced that it will provide a \$100,000 grant to the project, the Oregon Community Foundation committed \$50,000, and U.S. Bank and the Samuel Johnson Foundation both

pledged \$25,000.

These announcements come on top of a \$13 million community bond that was passed in November of 2009 and additional federal, state and



Vernonia Student Paul Whiteman presented Governor Kulongoski with a book of paintings about the flood created by third grade students in 2007.

philanthropic funding totaling more than \$3 million, bringing the project's total income to more than \$20 million toward its \$38 million goal. The campaign is in the process of completing a FEMA grant request to provide a significant portion of the difference at the end of 2010 or in early 2011, with charitable donations and additional public support funding the balance.

"In tough times, this community has stepped up," said Dr. Kenneth Cox, superintendent of the Vernonia School District. "We are incredibly grateful for the support offered today by Governor Kulongoski and ODOT, and for the grants from The Kelley Family, Oregon Community, and Samuel Johnson Foundations, as well as U.S. Bank and others who have made our project possible. Ours is truly an Oregon effort, a symbol of our shared values and our collective desire to make a better future for our children."



Not just in the  
community,  
but a part of it.

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