

VERNONIA HIGH SCHOOL  
Class of 2011

Good afternoon everybody and thank you all for coming.

First I would like to introduce myself to those of you that don't know me. My name is Marina Mekidiche and I am one of two foreign exchange students from Germany for 2010/11.

I remember coming home from a friend's house and my mom and sister welcoming me with a huge smile in their face, telling me I finally received the letter from EF that tells me where I will spend the best year of my life. When they told me Vernonia, Oregon, my first question was of course "where the heck is that?" But after I found the answer to that question and spending just a week here in Vernonia I knew this was going to be an amazing year.

This year has been a great experience for me. I have gotten to know a completely different school system, another culture, awesome staff and faculty, and of course I tried to improve my English as much as possible.

There are so many people I want to thank. I want to thank Vernonia High school and its students for welcoming me into their classrooms, community, and hearts. I enjoyed Baker's jokes, Mr. Brown's wealth of history and sports knowledge and great coaching, and Mr. Whiteman's incredible skill to teach me things I would never have thought I could understand. I also want to thank Gail Moore, my foreign exchange coordinator that helped me in so many ways and always had an open ear to listen. And of course I want to thank my host family, Kinnell, Jon, and Bridger Steward, for welcoming me into their home, and always trying their best to make this year the best year of my life. But most of all I want to thank them for their unshakeable patience and understanding. They are the reason why I was able to be in Vernonia and get to know all these wonderful people. They gave me a home in the US and are a second family to me. I can't thank them enough.

This experience has changed my life in so many ways and I am so thankful. And last but not least I want to thank my mom from Germany that is here today. She made this unbelievably wonderful year possible and is always there to support me with love and understanding. Thank you everybody.

Marina Mekidiche Germany

