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Be a Piece of the Puzzle: Random Acts of Purpose

By DeAnna Pearl



It has often been the human condition to wonder about ones purpose. Or more specifically, seeking the answer of what does fate have in store for him or her.

Some people believe fate is actually a set of vignettes all playing at the same time. They play simultaneously but when our mind focuses on one, that is reality for that person. How we select which one depends on our conscious goals we have set for ourselves: a kid wants to be a vet--he or she takes every opportunity to work with animals while growing up. A student, whom wants to be a musician, focuses on music. It would be the same as wanting to change a negative goal we have set for ourselves: Stop being a bully or becoming healthier. It behooves us to be purposeful in our actions and to be awake when vignettes are presented.

This year, students in the VSD 47J have become more purposeful. Not just to raise money, not just to have more dances, but to create a sustainable change in the environment in which they learn. What seem to be random acts of kindness actually has been a purposeful movement to change the negative community norm of intolerance. On any given day, sticky notes will find their way onto bathroom mirrors with positive messaging like

“What a great Smile!” On any given day, high fives are shared with teen mentors and grade school kids. Third graders starting an Against Bullying Club to help educate their younger peers. Even greater, motivated groups of youth plan to help bring awareness to the dangers of underage drinking and encourage increased participation in supporting healthier lifestyles.

Acts of kindness are not just being seen in the school. During the



winter break, coats and shoe tags were taken from the Giving Tree and then distributed to 45 local youth. Vernonia churches collected dozens of socks and underwear. Hats and scarves, knitted by Skein Slayer members, were donated to all three schools to help wrap our kids in warmth. Programming was offered to area residents in efforts to allow kids and families to make simple gifts

for one another. Baskets of fruit were delivered to elders in the community by the Lion's. Toiletry items were collected to be donated to Vernonia Cares and Community Closet Dignity Bags. The downtown corridor of Vernonia was decorated for winter by a group of dedicated individuals and foreign exchange students.

These acts of kindness, the ones we know about, are not random but purposeful. Purposeful in the way that just doing them helps effect change in our community: A young person with warm feet will more likely participate in school. Empowering a community member to donate items that serve a specific need to a child or family is powerful. Collaborating with other like minded programs to fulfill their individual mission increases sustainability. Increasing the intrinsic beauty of a community during the holidays encourages cohesiveness.

Acts whether they are random or purposeful, motivate people. Most people want to help, it is human nature. Truthfully when asked, people reply they don't know how they can. Due to our recent economy, many say they do not have the capacity to contribute money. But, contribution can look different for many people; donation

of time, donation of money, donation of ad space, forwarding emails, social website posts, posting flyers, sharing at a meeting, collecting change or hanging ornaments. All these and more have equal value. For the VPC, everything our grant contributes has to be matched dollar for dollar in value whether it is time or goods. Collaboration is the key to finding the opportunities that contribute to match.

In Vernonia, there are many vignettes of opportunities being witnessed every day. Witnessed and documented by people whom have raised their heads out of their various service trenches in an effort to increase their capacity to serve. This didn't happen on its own. It was not a random act and has become a purposeful invitation to like minded people. Through that, organizations are refocusing on their missions and inviting collaboration that better support sustainability. Serendipitously, individuals have randomly gravitated toward purposeful programming if at first out of curiosity. More so, many are staying involved because they see an opportunity to be a part of a solution toward creating a safer and healthier community. These seemingly random acts of purpose are influencing the paradigm shift of healing and growth.

DeAnna Pearl is the Director of the Vernonia Prevention Coalition. You can reach DeAnna at 503-369-7370 or by email at deanna@vernonia-or.gov

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-TALK (8255) suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Are you feeling desperate, alone or hopeless? Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline a free, 24-hour hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress. Your call will be routed to the nearest crisis center to you.

Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline 1-800-273-TALK (8255) Press 1

2001 Vernonia Prevention Coalition Sector Representatives

Position	Name	Sector	Contact	Affiliation
Chair	Josette Mitchell	Government	(503) 429-4232	COV Mayor
Vice Chair	Pete Weisel	School	(503) 429-3521	VHS Councilor
Exec. Board	Dr. Ken Cox	Media	(503) 429-5891	VSD Superintendent
Exec. Board	Sgt. Shaun Carnahan	Police	(503) 429-4232	COV Police
Board Member	Mark Brown	Faith	(503) 961-5281	Vernonia Comm. Church
Board Member	Ashley Swanson	Prevention	(503) 396-2074	Public Health Foundation of Columbia County
Board Member	Heidi Brown	Business	(503) 429-2787	Grey Dawn Gallery
Board Member	Gina Fields	Parent	(503) 429-6306	Parent
Board Member	Lee Anne Krause	Youth Serving	(503) 816-9810	Kiwanis
Board Member	O.S.S.O.M.	Youth	(503) 429-3521	VSD 47J
Board Member	George Tice	Civic Org.	(503) 880-1627	Lions Club
Board Member		Health Serv.	Seeking Representation	
	Heather Lewis	Contractor	(503) 429-4677	Resource Coord.

VPC Mission:

To develop safe and healthy neighborhoods through collaborative planning, community action, policy advocacy and enforcement.

Free Dental Screening

No Insurance Required

Date: February 9
Time: 8:30-2:30 pm
Location: Washington Grade Sch.
Who: All youth *residing* in the VSD 47J Service Area



All youth will receive free dental screening and needs assessment on Feb. 9th provided by Pacific University School of Dental Health. The report can be used to follow-up with the child's dental provider. If the family does not have an established dentist, Vernonia Dental is accepting new patients at this time. They bill most major carriers including Oregon Healthy Kids insurance.

If no insurance, information for application to the Oregon Healthy Kids Program will be included with the report. Every child is eligible ages 0 to 19.

If students are in need of services and are not eligible for insurance, Heather Lewis, will be applying for a small grant to invite the P.U. School of Dental Health back to provide minor filings and sealants.

School Contact
 Aaron Miller, Principal
 Washington Grade School
 (503) 429-7941



Community Contact
 Heather Lewis, Resource Coord.
 Vernonia Prevention Coalition
 (503) 429-4677

What Next?
 Take results to dental provider

Need a dentist?
 Vernonia Dental
 (503) 429-0880

Taking OHP Patients

Need Insurance for Kids
 Healthy Kids Insurance
 Patricia Ortiz
 (503) 396-3834

Local Assistants are available

Sponsored by: Vernonia Prevention Coalition, VSD 47J & Pacific University