

Service Beyond the Call

By Savannah Brown

Vernonia High School requires a minimum of 40 hours of community service to graduate. Most students don't want to offer up that much of their time, including, at one time, me. I used to think that between being busy with sports, homework, and social life, where is there time to help my community?

But it turns out I was wrong. Three years ago when I moved into this community, my father wanted my brother and I to be more involved and have the chance to get to know our neighbors. That summer, in 2010, we headed over to the local volunteer fire department and signed up. Little did I know, Mist-Birkenfeld Rural Fire Department would have me suited up and ready for drills within a few months. I started to realize that this wasn't just a duty as a volunteer fire fighter; it was a duty to my community. A community I've sunk roots into and thrived in ever since.

In the northern Nehalem Valley is the aptly named, sleepy town of Mist. Once upon a time it was a one-horse town, with a general store established in 1874. Unfortunately, and coincidentally for this story, it burned down in July of 2001 and was never rebuilt. Prior to its demise, it was the oldest continuously operating business in Oregon that offered food, hardware, Post Office and unofficial community hub. Inside was covered in historic newspaper clippings and antique logging equipment.

Nowadays, all that remains is a GASOLINE sign where the store used to be, a silent little chapel with adjacent cemetery, a four-room school house built in 1917 and a county gravel lot that stays busy during inclement weather. Also along the way is the largest operating sawmill in Columbia County that employs a few locals.

Through volunteering with my local fire department not only have I learned about the history of the area and the people whom I share geographical location with, but what it's like to be a part of something. I have met people who are honest, hardworking and who inspire me every day to do better.

One such person is my Assistant Fire Chief, Mary Lou Busch, who is the backbone of our department and is always patient with the constant demands of the job.

Volunteers like Merle Noakes and Etta Epling assist MBRFPD in the kitchen and office, sit on various committees and are part of the ladies of the Mist Helping Circle, a foundation established in 1935 that organizes and aids the community in local activities including funding street lights for the school, and providing scholarships to VHS yearly.

The visionary of our department is Chief Dave Crawford who is a grant-writing wizard and always has a smile and good word to say. Over 40 local and not-so-local people that have vacation homes here also give their time, talent, and spirit to this place, attending drills, working during the Hood-to-Coast run, and providing numerous services to this community.

What volunteering at this fire department has taught me (besides how to put the wet stuff on the red stuff) is perseverance- I don't always want to get up and stop what I'm doing every Wednesday night to go and sit through long meetings, but I always leave



there with a sense of connectedness and belonging. Volunteering has taught me responsibility to my job. When our pager and radios sound off, I am responsible to help in times of crisis. I'm on-call to pitch-in however I can and receive ample training to do so. Volunteering has taught me about being a part of a team. More than participating in high school team sports, the people you volunteer with become your extended family, and you rely on them to be there for you—just as they rely on you to be there for them— even in the most miserable of conditions and times.

In this rural, isolated community, we've found a way to be connected. Technology has offered us an ability to stay connected around the globe via social networking sites—which is great, but it lacks the depth and experience of connection I've learned from getting out there and connecting locally. Volunteering, like social networking, crosses sociological boundaries, but it also strengthens our local community. It is also time well spent.

Savannah Brown is a senior at Vernonia High School and an intern with Vernonia's Voice.

VHS Fall Sports Report

Football—Homecoming was a disappointment for the Loggers this year. The Vernonia Loggers that is.

The Knappa Loggers came to town for homecoming on October 19 and defeated the Vernonia Loggers 44-6. The Vernonia fans and alumni did not have much to cheer about, at least on the field. The hometown crowd honored their graduating senior football players, the homecoming court was introduced and the marching band performed during half time, and the Vernonia Education Foundation accepted a check for \$3500 from a group of alumni. It was a great night to be a Vernonia Logger, except for the football result.

After a disappointing 66-21 home loss to Gaston on October

5, the Loggers rebounded on October 12 with a hard fought 7-2 win at Nestucca on a rain soaked evening. The Loggers defense played a terrific game, shutting out Nestucca; the only points the Bobcats scored were against the Loggers offense on a safety. Loggers head coach Gordon Jarmin praised the Loggers defense, mentioning the great play of T John Wolf and Bo Clark at linebacker who each had two sacks of the Nestucca quarterback. He also mentioned the outstanding line play of Dawson Shay, Ethan Johnston and Jonathon Anderson, and Austin Cutright at outside linebacker who had a big interception for the Loggers. "Nestucca was a very,

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Meet the Exchange Students

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and field in the spring. Helena says she has traveled extensively with her parents. This is her third time in the United States; she has been to New York and on the west coast before. She has also traveled to Sri Lanka, Egypt, and all over Europe. "What I like about Vernonia is that it is such a small community and everybody knows everybody," says Helena. "When you come here you are somebody for other people and I like that because in big cities that never happens."

Maina Martin is from France and is living with the Lindauer family. Maina is a senior who is running cross country and says she would like to play basketball and run track. Maina says she has traveled a lot with her parents and has been to the Caribbean Islands five times. This is her fourth time in the United States. Maina agrees that she likes that everyone knows each other in Vernonia. In fact, sometimes people who she doesn't know come up and greet her. "They say, 'Hello—you are Maina?,' and I say 'Yes', but I don't know who they are," says Maina. "It's just so funny, but I like it." Maina says she is worried about all the rain everyone tells her to expect in Vernonia. "It's always rainy here and where I come from it is sunny all the time, so I am afraid of that."

Yuliya Pestova is from Russia and is living with her American sister Brittanie Young and her family. Yuliya also made the varsity volleyball squad as a junior this fall and plans to play basketball and run track. She says in the past she has traveled close to Russia—to Bulgaria, Ukraine, and a few other countries and this is her first time in the U.S. Yuliya says that the American people have been very nice and that they smile all the time, unlike in Russia. "We're like a family here, all of Vernonia," Yuliya says. "Everybody knows you and they are waving all the time and saying hi. It's kind of cool." Yuliya says she has really enjoyed the mild fall weather, because in Russia it would already be cold and raining.

Vardan Grigoryan is a senior from Georgia and is living with Diane Benes and her family. Vardan is running cross country and will wrestle this winter. He says he also plans to join the VHS jazz band and play guitar for Mr. Izzett. Varden, who is Armenian, has only traveled in the past to the neighboring country of Armenia. Varden says Vernonia is much smaller than his hometown in Georgia. "But the level of development and the economy in Vernonia is much higher!" says Varden. "The school and everything is much better here."

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