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Be a Piece of the Puzzle Overcoming Challenges Through Partnerships

By DeAnna Pearl



What does it take to build resiliency in children? What is resiliency? According to Nan Anderson, MSW and President of Resiliency in Action, it is the ability to overcome challenges of all kinds—trauma, tragedy, personal crises, plain old life problems—and bounce back stronger, wiser, and more personally powerful.

It's important because this is what we need to do when faced with life's inevitable difficulties. AND it's important because there is a growing body of social science research that explains how you can bounce back, even from a lifetime of "risk factors" or very painful trauma or tragedy, and how you can help those you care about bounce back.

This is the most useful under-publicized research information everybody should know. There are steps you can take today and every day to make it more likely that you will bounce back from any problem or challenge, "stronger, smarter and with more self-esteem..." and more likely your family and others you care about will bounce back, too. **Fact:** Of VSD 47J students surveyed, 86% feel they can do most things if they try. (Student Wellness Survey, 2012)

Anderson continues, "Can individuals learn to be more resilient, or are some just born with the ability to bounce back from adversity? Both!

Research suggests that human beings are born with an innate self-righting ability, which can be helped or hindered. Their findings are fueling a major shift in thinking about human development: from obsessing about problems and weaknesses to recognizing "the power of the positive—identifying and building individual and environmental strengths that help people to overcome difficulties, achieve happiness, and attain life success."

This quote pretty much sums up what the Vernonia Prevention Coalition has been working towards for the last five years. Developing, partnering and promoting programming that develop resiliency in youth, families and adults. Prevention programs for adolescents and their families are designed to reduce youth problems and promote positive development by addressing assets and risk and protective factors at the family level are key to success. **Fact:** Most VSD 47J students, up to 85% of Vernonia students, feel there are lots of chances to be involved with activities outside of class. (Student Wellness Survey, 2012)

There are five key supports developed by the America's Promise Alliance, that are essential in any program: having caring adults around, providing safe places, include a healthy start and healthy development, effective education and an opportunity to help others through service. The VPC has had the opportunity to partner with many programs and agencies here in Vernonia that do just that. One great example of this is the Summer Meal program.

In its first year, the Summer Meal Program

prepared over 4100 meals. The second year was a bit less. Less kids to feed? NOPE—less number of volunteers needed due to the length of time individuals were able to give! (an average of 25 hours a week). An even greater aha was the partnerships and volunteers that collaborated to make it so successful. So unique,



the group was actually honored at a statewide event highlighting summer meal programs.

The success of the partnerships developed through the SMP carried the volunteers to plan a winter break event to help support youth and families out of school: Celebrating Families. With a hope and zeal, the group planned and successfully implemented the first Celebrating Families during the 2011 Winter Break. An average of 175 tickets was collected from each activity: cookie decorating, card making, candy cane art, cocoa mug gifts, holiday photos, pet toys, and more. Youth were excited to bring back their families for a holiday family photo and to make additional gifts for extended family members. It was amazing how a small opportunity can empower kids to feel important.

On December 20-22nd, we are about to do it again! This year, the Celebrating Families' location has changed to keep it in the middle of town for easier access by youth on foot. The Vernonia Community Church has donated its gym for the volunteers to host this three day event. The VPC is partnering with eight other partners supporting this event: Summer Meals Program, Girl Scouts, Vernonia School District, Head Start Parents, Lyons, VRFPD, Hands on Art, and the NW Parenting HUB. Added bonus, the event is free to all who come!

However, the program wasn't just thrown together. It was developed to be purposeful and intentional in its efforts utilizing

the five keys to support system. Like the Summer Meal Program, all volunteers have had background checks, a safe and accessible space was provided, and each youth was greeted and walked through a selection process to choose the perfect gift for family members. Further, there was encouragement of youth to mentor others during the three days.

What a great way to build resiliency in, not only our youth, but our community. Plan, donate, implement and celebrate successfully programs that support healthy community norms: healthy mentors, safe spaces, meaningful programs, and opportunities to give back to your community. Vernonia Prevention Coalition has had the privilege to partner with amazing groups who share similar missions to provide these opportunities.

Community resiliency cannot be sustained by one entity, group, government or church. It is the collaboration that will build sustainability of resiliency in us all. Do you want to be a part of the puzzle in making a sustained difference in Vernonia? **Fact:** Most VPC members, 90%, feel they have an equal opportunity to provide input to the coalition. (VPC Performance Scale Survey, Oct. 2012) Can't physically make the meetings? We can bring it to you via telecommunication! Or look for us on the web, www.vernoniapreventioncoalition.com or like us on Facebook.

Volunteers are needed to bring their voice to the table to address how to keep Vernonia a safe and healthy community. Regular meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the Month at the VCLC starting at 3:00 PM. Please contact DeAnna Pearl, Director, at 503-369-7370 or DeAnna@vernonia-or.gov.

Celebrating Families



2012



PET TOYS
COOKIE DECORATING
HOLIDAY CARDS
COCOA MUG KIT
CANDY CANE ART
& HOLIDAY PORTRAITS
PICTURES WITH SANTA
Saturday ONLY

Who is Invited?

Family, Friends, Moms, Dads,
Grandparents, Cousins,
Uncles and Aunties

Bring the kids and yourself
for one, two or three days of
fun!

Contact:

Nic Welch, SMP/CF Coordinator
vpcpartnerships@gmail.com
(503) 748-9193



Vernonia Community Church
Lions—Girl Scouts—RFPD
Summer Meals Program—Hands on Art
Head Start Parents—Community
Volunteers
Vernonia School District 47J
NW Parenting Education Hub

Location:

Vernonia Community Church
(State and A Street)

11-4pm

Thursday Dec. 20th
Friday Dec. 21st
Saturday Dec. 22nd

From the volunteers that brought you the Summer Meals Program & in partnership with the Vernonia School District 47J!!!

BECAUSE LIFE ISN'T
**WARM &
FUZZY**
ALL THE TIME

youthLine

1-877-968-8491
oregonyouthline.org

Or



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teen2teen
to 66746

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Teen Stuff

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