

# An Opinion: These Teachers Will Be Missed

By Scott Laird

Last year, when autumn rolled around and the new school year started, Vernonia High School students had a lot to look forward to with the opening of the new school campus. There was a lot of excitement as a new era dawned on the community. It was a big change for students, teachers, and families.

This year, when the school year starts again in September, there will be some different changes for the students at Vernonia High School. I would venture to guess that the students won't be quite as excited this coming school year.

At the June 13, 2013 Vernonia School Board Meeting, Superintendent Dr. Ken Cox announced, and the School Board accepted, the resignations of three staff members: band instructor Rob Izzett, social sciences teacher Brad Baker, and administrator James Brookins.

All three of these men have been popular among students, have had an impact not just in the classroom, but also outside it, and each of them will be missed by the students, the staff and the community.

Rob Izzett came to the Vernonia School District seven years ago and took a struggling music program and completely turned it around, qualifying his high school band for the State Competition the past three years and even winning the State Championship in 2012. He is a consummate professional, an outstanding instructor, and a student favorite. He has taught our students and our community that hard work and perseverance pay off and showed our students that they can compete with the best programs in the state. He is leaving Vernonia to tackle a new challenge, rebuilding a program in Klamath Falls.

James Brookins is leaving Vernonia after twenty years to

become the Superintendent/Principal for the Blachy School District. Brookins taught math and science before recently moving into administration. He is an educator that always expected high results and pushed his students to excel. He worked to provide a well-rounded education for students and led many extracurricular activities, including Leadership, National Honor Society and the recently successful Robotics team. He coached many student athletes over the years in Cross Country, Wrestling, and Golf. Recently he has been studying to obtain his Doctorate and has been mentioned on the short list as a possible Superintendent candidate in Vernonia in the future. He was a teacher because he loved to teach, he worked with students because he loved to help young people reach their goals, and he was a member of our community because he loved Vernonia. We could not have

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# Voices From the Crowd: We Need to Support the Arts in Our Schools

By Doug Tesdale

Let me first start by saying that I know times are hard and money is scarce, but it's not going to get better any time soon. Excuses can continue to be made, but it's time to bring back the support for the arts in our community before they are cut all together. Our community use to thrive on the Arts, from community theatrical Melodramas to outstanding artists.

Many of you know or remember me as the Art teacher in Vernonia from 1977 – 2004. I was teaching there when the Arts were supported on every level from the School Board, superintendent, principals and community. Darrel Proehl, superintendent at the time of my hiring, went out of his way to make sure that Vernonia had one of the strongest art programs in Oregon, if not the nation. I will be tooting my own horn here a bit and may sound as if I'm bragging (which I am), but from 6<sup>th</sup>- 12<sup>th</sup> grades our program gave the student's everything when it came to mediums in Art.

When I arrived, I was given a room at Washington Grade School in the basement that was the size of 3 classrooms. The size of the area was great. We were able to do pottery, but only had one potter's wheel. Darrel came to

me towards the beginning of the school year and said that the government was funding a program for new curriculums. They were providing equipment and construction for these programs. We started photography by building a darkroom at one end of the art room. We were able to get a developing table, six brand new enlargers and a darkroom door that revolved so no light could get in. I already had an enlarger of my own, which made seven and one was donated later giving us eight. The Black and White program in Vernonia was born and ran until the day I retired. Next we were also able to get six new potters wheels through the grant and our pottery ceramics area was at the opposite end of the room with the main classroom in between. This program also thrived until the day I left.

6<sup>th</sup> Graders were introduced to drawing and painting. 7<sup>th</sup> Graders were introduced to Black and White photo and Calligraphy, and 8<sup>th</sup> Graders continued painting, drawing and pottery. HS Art I had several mediums because I had them for a full semester. We had a HS Photography class that switched at the semester so I could run two semesters of students a year. Each semester we went on two field trips, one to the coast and one to Portland. I took both the photography and advanced art on these trips. These

students entered photo contest and many went on to do their own photography after graduation. The instructor's permission was a prerequisite to take advanced art.

I took the students who truly had a love for the Arts and ran them through programs that would ready them for college arts. We had several students who went on to college and other art schools to continue their training. I'll talk about that more in a bit. These students worked in painting, pottery, print making, stain glass and air brush. We also did projects in computer graphics as computers came on the scene; I needed to modernize my curriculum to include computer graphics. The computer graphics class was set up to create posters, business flyers, school projects, etc. The students even did projects for the community businesses in Vernonia and Banks. When digital photography burst onto the scene, we added that to the photo program. So as you can see Darrel Proehl's vision for the arts came to life. I just happened to be the instructor honored with the job.

In 2002 I had a student come to me who went through the program and said she wanted to be an Art teacher.

This was Kim Morrison, or when she was a student in Vernonia, Kim Oblack. Kim was one of my best advanced Art students and went on to work for the Hillsboro Argus in graphics. She subsequently decided she wanted to be an Art teacher. She attended Pacific University and completed her student teaching with me in the 2003-2004 school years. I had decided to retire so the timing couldn't be better. Our vision was that Kim could drop in and take over the program that I had set up through the years, and continue the course that began under Darrel Proehl's administration. How perfect was it to have one of my students replacing me.

Camelot was King Arthur's vision and Vernonia Arts was mine. As Camelot came crashing down, so did the Vernonia Arts. When I left the powers to

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