

Jacob Levenseller Memorial Swing Set Dedicated

On December 12, 2013 family and friends of Jacob Levenseller, as well as school staff and students, gathered at the Vernonia Schools for a ceremony to dedicate the swing set that has been installed at the school in Jacob's honor.

Jacob, a 2012 graduate of Vernonia High School, died tragically in June of 2012, just days after his graduation. Jacob loved to swing and the new swing set has been installed at the new school to honor his memory.

A plaque has been installed at the base and was unveiled by the Levenseller family. State Representative Brad Witt was introduced by Superintendent Dr. Ken Cox and spoke as part of the ceremony. "Jacob, for whom the simple pleasure of sitting on a swing during recess meant so much, could be seen so often enjoying that pleasure and being fulfilled by it," said Witt during his remarks. "As we know, Jacob

will bring to generations of Vernonians."

Witt went on to recognize the numerous people who helped make the swing set project



Clockwise: Jonathon, Alisa, Rebecca, Cari and Tricia Levenseller at the dedication of the Jacob Levenseller Memorial Swing Set.

possible, including Susan Ely and the Vernonia PTA, Casey Hunter and JE Dunn Construction, and all the volunteers. Witt ended his remarks by reminding the young students in the audience to remember and reach out to those in need. "While these swings are a sign of hope, happiness and community solidarity, let us not forget, especially during this holiday season, that many of us have needed, at some point in our lives, a warm and helping hand. Perhaps we just needed someone to talk to. Maybe we needed a guide or a mentor. There are many people today who need a hot meal on a cold night, a warm winter jacket, or perhaps a pair of shoes for school. I ask each of you to look around. If you truly look you will know by your humanity for whom and when that help is needed."

Following Witt's remarks, members of the Levenseller family unveiled the plaque. Family members then spent some time sitting and swinging on the swings, just like Jacob used to enjoy.

Council Fires City Administrator

The Vernonia City Council voted unanimously to terminate without cause their contract with City Administrator Bill Haack.

The vote came following a Special Executive Session on December 10, 2013 at City Hall.

Terms of Haack's dismissal were not immediately available.

On December 12 Council voted to install Mayor Josette Mitchell as City Administrator Pro Tem until February 3, 2014. Mitchell will handle the day-to-day operations of the City. City Council President Randy Parrow was also named City Administrator Pro Tem and is responsible for any disciplinary actions.

Haack has spent an active three-and-a-half years as the Vernonia City Administrator. He was appointed to the position as Pro Tem in June of 2010 following the resignation of former administrator Bob Young. In May of 2011, Haack's contract with the City was suddenly terminated by the City Council by a 3-2 vote during a City Council meeting; the three City Councilors who voted to terminate him were subsequently removed from office by the citizens of Vernonia in recall elections. Haack was rehired as the permanent City Administrator by the newly appointed City Council in September of 2011. That Council was made

up of Mayor Josette Mitchell and Councilor Randy Parrow along with new Councilors Bruce McNair, Kim Tierney, and Donna Webb. All five made up the Council that voted to terminate Haack's contract on December 10.

Haack has overseen a period of tremendous change in the City of Vernonia. He has moved the City forward in planning for the Wastewater Upgrade Project and the planning of the New Spencer Park facility. He was instrumental in laying the ground work for the Rose Avenue Project, which will relocate the Vernonia Health Clinic, Senior Center and Vernonia Cares Food Bank. He has been an integral part of the City's rebuilding efforts following the 2007 flood and was an active participant in the Oregon Solutions process that helped build the new Vernonia Schools campus. He initiated a Brownfield Program in the City. He was also involved in the firing of controversial Police Officer Michael Kay.

In recent months Haack and the City Council have had difficulty moving forward and working together on numerous issues, including a project to remove biosolids from the wastewater lagoons.

The City Council met three times in Executive Session during the two weeks prior to Haack's dismissal to discuss Haack's job performance.



left us early, tragically and far, far too early. And so in respect and honor to him and his family and his friends, we dedicate these swings today with an eye towards the simple pleasures, the youthful exuberance, and just plain fun that these swings

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BCA Students Donate Blankets to Project Linus

Students at Banks Christian Academy donated fifty-five handmade blankets for babies, children and teens to the Linus Project on December 11, 2013. Students made the blankets over several months and held an assembly to present the blankets to representatives of the Portland/Vancouver Chapter of Project Linus.

Project Linus is a national, volunteer, non-profit organization with chapters in all fifty states. Project Linus has a two-fold mission: first, to provide love, a sense of security, warmth

and comfort to children who are seriously ill, traumatized, or otherwise in need through the gifts of new, handmade blankets and afghans, lovingly created by volunteer "blanketeers. Second, it is their mission to pro-



vide a rewarding and fun service opportunity for interested individuals and groups in local communities, for the benefit of children.

Banks Christian Academy (BCA) got involved in Project Linus this past fall. The annual Harvest Carnival used the popular cartoon characters from Peanuts as a theme this year. Staff at BCA stumbled upon the

Linus Project while researching costumes for the Harvest Carnival and students became interested in participating as volunteer blanket makers.

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