

Health Center Partnership With Pacific University Growing

The Vernonia Health Center Board recently partnered with the Vernonia Senior Center to host speakers from Pacific University for the first in a series of three conversations on wellness. Ruth Zuinga PHD, from Pacific University School of Psychology, joined a diverse group of community members to discuss "Motivation for Healthy Living".

For an hour over a dozen community members shared barriers and successful strategies to make healthier choices and how to re-evaluate past experiences to provide motivation for self identified goals. "It was very

engaging and enjoyable. I was happily impressed." said Marie Kran following the session. Tobie Finzel agreed. "Excellent presentation."

According to Heather Lewis of the Vernonia Health Board, these conversations are being offered in response to a recent community survey in which the Vernonia Health Center Board asked patients and community members how they could better provide for the needs of the community. "Offering Community Education on Health Related Topics" was high on the list. So we approached our partners at Pacific University and this three part

series is the first of many we will be offering."

"They are an enthusiastic and invested partner," shared Lewis about the relationship with Pacific University. "This is also being reflected in the primary care services at the Vernonia Health Clinic. The P.A. Student rotation has begun and community feedback is overwhelmingly supportive."

Lewis added that in the last five months, the new partnership between the Vernonia Health Board and Pacific University has brought services at the clinic from two days a week to five. Daily appointments have increased as

well, going from five to eight clients a day up to twelve to eighteen. "I think this shows the community is just as excited as we are with the addition of Pacific University to our operations team," said Lewis. "With seven Health Professional Schools at the University we look forward to being able to work with them on many levels for additional services for our clients."

The next Community Health Conversation will be February 24th, 1:00 PM at the Vernonia Senior Center. Watch for fliers and postings on Facebook for more details.

CAT Offers Innovative Home Ownership Program

Community Action Team (CAT), in partnership with USDA Rural Development, is launching an exciting new program which will assist low and moderate income individuals and families to become homeowners. CAT is one of a handful of nonprofits in the United States selected to run this new Self-Help pilot program which assists low and moderate income persons and families become homeowners. This program, referred to as Self-Help, will allow low-income families and individuals to purchase and renovate foreclosed, short-sale and/or vacant homes throughout Clatsop, Columbia or Tillamook counties. This program renovates homes one at a time, which differs from the standard group Mutual Self-Help model.

CAT will work with the participants to find the right home with the location, size, cost and amenities to suit their needs. Families and individuals will work under the guidance of a CAT construction supervisor, using "sweat equity" and sub-contractors to complete a remodel and deep energy retrofit of their new home. The result will be new homeowners with a newly remodeled and energy efficient home. Sweat Equity requires the new homeowner (with the help of friends or family members) to complete 30 hours of labor per week for the duration of the project – an average project will last between four and six months. Disabled persons may have volunteers partner with them to complete the required sweat equity investment. Typical sweat equity tasks include demolition, painting, carpentry, landscaping and finish work. Work such as plumbing and electrical are completed by a licensed subcontractor. Each of the homes in this unique Self-Help model will receive a deep energy retrofit. The money used to complete the deep energy retrofit is a grant, and as long as the homeowner remains in their home for a minimum of two years, it is not required to be paid back. There is also the possibility of a grant to be used toward the down payment! Homes in this program will range from 800 to 1600 sq ft. The mortgages on these homes will be between \$80,000 and \$160,000.

CAT will complete 15 homes in the three Northwest counties of Oregon in the next 24 months. This innovative Self-Help model will enable modest

income families achieve homeownership, and help neighborhoods recover by filling vacant homes. Self-Help housing combines financing from USDA and sweat equity provided by the future homeowner. The benefits of the USDA 502 loan products are that the interest rates can be as low as 1% and the term can be as long as 38 years. Loans for this program are currently available and there is **no** waiting list for these funds. Another benefit of USDA 502 loans is that there is no down payment or payments during construction. After the home is completed, USDA will work with the homeowner to keep them in their home in the event the homeowner experiences financial hardship.

Some of the requirements for this program including having a consistent source of income, such as a regular paycheck, Veterans benefits or SSI/SSDI, decent credit and the willingness to contribute sweat equity. For folks that may be disabled, a volunteer or volunteers are able to step in and help with the sweat equity. The family must have a modest income based on Rural Development's income guidelines.

Anyone interested in participating in this program should contact Sally McLaughlin, the Homeownership Specialist with Community Action Team, and fill out the one page pre-qualification form to determine their eligibility. If eligible to participate in the program, CAT staff will work with participants to fill out the formal USDA Loan documents.

Participants who have qualified for the program will look through an inventory of houses that fit their needs. Once a home has been identified, a detailed scope of work will be developed to determine the repairs and upgrades

needed. After the home has been appraised and approved by USDA RD, it will be purchased and rehabilitation of the home begins. Each home will receive an energy audit which will be used to develop a scope of work to reach maximum energy savings for each home.

CAT staff will help to manage the budgets, contracts and the construction process to ensure that things are done correctly and to maximize value. Once the work is completed the family moves into their new home.

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Vernonia Police Blotter January 1-31, 2014

Arrests/Reports/ Criminal Citations

- January 03, 2014 – Police responded to the 1600 Block of Heather Ln on a report of a Civil (Custody Dispute). Report will be forwarded to Columbia County Courts for review.
- January 14, 2014 – Arrest on a Misdemeanor Warrant in the 400 Block of North St.
- January 17, 2014 – Arrest on a Misdemeanor Warrant in the 900 Block of Madison Ave.
- January 22, 2014 - Police responded to a reported theft of prescription medication in the 1000 block of Columbia St.
- January 22, 2014 -

Police responded to a reported cold burglary in the 1300 block of East Ave, miscellaneous jewelry items were found missing from the residence.

- January 25, 2014 – Police transported a juvenile to an area hospital due to a confirmed threat of self-harm.

Traffic/Other Citations

- January 16, 2014 – Issued a traffic citation for Driving While Suspended on Bridge St. near California Ave.
- January 18, 2014 – Issued a traffic citation for Failing to Change Address on Registration on Bridge St. near Weed Ave.

Vernonia's Voice is
published on the
1st and 3rd Thursday.
Our next issue will be
February 20th.

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