

Schools Update: The Need For Substitutes

By Aaron Miller

Substitute teachers and other substitute employees are a daily part of life for students and school staff. Each day there is some position that needs to be filled due to illness, scheduled appointments or other life happenings. The issue, however, is usually not whether or not a substitute employee will be needed in the building, but whether or not there will be a person available to fill this need.

Currently there is a real shortage of people available to fill the need for substitute employees in a variety of positions within the Vernonia School District. These same issues are being felt in neighboring school districts as well.

The number of people willing to substitute in schools is dwindling, whether it be as a teacher, an assistant, a custodian or an employee in the cafeteria. This problem is even larger for a community like Vernonia, given the distance from here to other communities of size where more substitutes may live. Substitutes in the education field are becoming harder and harder to come by these days.

The Vernonia School District (VSD) is in need of dedicated, quality people willing to substitute in our schools. As the largest employer in town there are 82 regular employees, who at one time or another are in need of a substitute. We are looking for dedicated people willing to sub in all departments, at all levels: teachers, assistants, custodians and food service work-

ers, kindergarten through 12th grade.

If you are interested in learning more about subbing, or obtaining a restricted substitute license, please contact Superintendent Miller at 503-429-5891.

Substitutes in the VSD are hired by the NW Regional Educational Service District (NWRES D), and are called through an automated system run through their offices. Anyone interested in subbing for the District needs to register through the NWRES D Human Services department, who can be reached at 503-614-1428. You can also call the District Office at 503-429-5891, if you have questions you would like answered about potential sub jobs here in Vernonia prior to applying through the ESD.

School Board Grants Riley Unpaid Leave

The Vernonia School Board met in a Special Public Meeting on Thursday, January 15 and voted unanimously to grant popular high school science teacher Jean Riley unpaid leave until February 12, 2015

Riley's teaching license expired on December 31, 2014. She told the board she is only weeks away from completing a Master's Degree and applying to have her teaching license renewed.

Riley has been a teacher in the Vernonia School District since 2003.

Superintendent Aaron Miller placed Riley on unpaid leave, according to District policy, when she was unable to complete the needed work to renew her license in time to meet the December 31 deadline imposed by the State of Oregon. Riley then made a request for Emergency Leave in order to complete the renewal of her license. Miller denied the Emergency Leave request based on the fact that without a teaching license Riley was no longer covered under the rules of the District's collective bargaining agreement. Riley appealed Miller's decision to the School Board, which led to the Special

Meeting. According to the agenda for the meeting Miller was prepared to bring forward to the Board a recommendation to terminate Riley.

Twenty-eight people spoke on behalf of Riley at the School Board meeting, including current and former students, other teachers, parents of students and community members. Riley spoke last and tearfully apologized to the audience, her students and the School Board, explaining that she had numerous personal issues over the last year which kept her from completing her license renewal.

The Board discussed Riley's appeal and asked several questions of Riley, her union representative Steve White, and School Board legal counsel Rebecca Jacobson.

White told the Board it should only be a matter of weeks until Riley is able to complete her work and have her license renewed.

The School Board then recessed to meet in Executive Session under ORS 196.660 (2)(f) to consult with their legal representative.

Upon returning to open session, School Board Vice President Jim

Krahn made a statement reminding the audience that this situation was not caused by the actions of Superintendent Miller or the School Board, but by Riley's inability to meet state requirements to renew her license. Krahn noted that Riley had already been given an emergency extension of her license by the State of Oregon when it expired in 2013 and was given until December 31, 2014 to complete her work.

In a dramatic and tense few moments the Board voted unanimously to uphold Miller's decision to deny Riley's request for Emergency Leave. The Board then unanimously approved a motion to direct Miller to grant Riley unpaid leave until the next School Board meeting on February 12, 2015. The Board followed that by unanimously approving another motion to delay until February 12 any decision on Miller's recommendation to terminate Riley.

Parent High School Survey

Vernonia High School's last Accreditation visit was April of 2009. Our next review is scheduled for April 2015 and the process has changed significantly. Through AdvancEd, a world leader in school improvement efforts, all accredited schools participate in a rigorous evaluation process that involves internal and external review. One valuable element is feedback from stakeholders.

In an effort to improve system practices, Vernonia High School is conducting a Parent Survey. We value your opinion and ask that you take the time to complete this survey. In order to complete the survey, please go to: <http://www.advanc-ed.org/survey/public/4205849>.

Please be assured that your responses to this survey will be anonymous. Your honest opinion is appreciated. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. A paper version of this survey will be available at your request.

West Oregon Electric Cooperative 2015 Scholarships

Two \$1,000 WOEC Sam Hearing Scholarships will be awarded this year

High school seniors throughout the West Oregon Electric service area are eligible to apply for the WOEC Sam Hearing Scholarship program. Seniors looking to further their education by attending any college, university, community college, or trade school can apply for one of two \$1,000 scholarships.

The West Oregon Electric Cooperative Sam Hearing Scholarships are given in the memory of Sam Hearing. Sam served on the WOEC board of directors for 35 years, and his commitment to the co-op and community are symbolized in the continuing effort of WOEC to help further the education of our youth. Sam and his wife, Alvilda, shared a strong commitment to education – Alvilda as a school teacher in Vernonia, and Sam serving as a member of the Vernonia School Board and Columbia County Education Service District. This commitment led the WOEC board of directors to establish the Sam Hearing Scholarship fund in August of 2003 when Sam retired from the WOEC board. Sam passed away in 2004, and so the scholarships will remain to remind us of his dedication to our Cooperative and the community that he lived in and served.

This year the applicants will be judged on academic performance, overall essay information, as well as their commitment to their community through their community service. Applicants are asked to complete a brief application form that will give a personal profile, two essays, and activities chart.

The applications will be reviewed by a scholarship committee of co-op members who donate their time to evaluate them and award the scholarships. The WOEC board of directors memorialized their appreciation of the excellent and valued work that has been done by our volunteer Scholarship Committee by passing a resolution at the January board meeting acknowledging them for a job well done. The committee is another great example of our cooperative members' values and commitment to the community.

To apply, contact your high school counselor or West Oregon Electric. The application form as well as all instructions are now available, please visit our website at westoregon.org (go to the news tab and click on scholarships) to print the forms. The information and forms will also be available at the front desk in the WOEC office. The deadline for receiving completed applications is April 15th by 5:00 PM.

Vernonia Students of the Month

January 2015



Jenna Romaine Grade 5

Jenna is a great example of a Vernonia Elementary School scholar. She is a focused reader, concentrates on her studies, and does her best. She is known as polite, hardworking, helpful, and friendly. Jenna is becoming a self manager again after she moved away for a short time. Her favorite subject is art.

Sean Coffey Grade 8

Sean is a good student who says his favorite subject is math; he is currently taking high school geometry. He plays clarinet in the school band. He also plays basketball and baseball. He says he likes working outdoors in his free time.



Nicole Glass

Grade 12



Nicole is a member of National Honor Society and is the Student Body secretary. She says she loves reading and her World Literature Class. She is in Leadership, Robotics, is on the Forestry team, and is a big supporter of the Equestrian team. She is currently serving in the Army National Guard. This is her ninth year raising a steer for 4H. Following graduation Nicole is heading to Army basic training, enrolling at PCC and then going on to Oregon State University.

Sponsored by State Representative Brad Witt