

Schools Update: Sustainable Building Design

By Aaron Miller

The Vernonia Schools building has earned national recognition for its sustainable, green-building design and technology. The LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification program rated the building LEED Platinum, their highest rating, and the first in the nation awarded to an integrated K-12 school building.

The Green Building Initiative's Green Globes Certification also awarded the new building high marks, rating it 3 Green Globes, their second highest rating. Green Globes Certification is an emerging alternative to LEED that is favored by many of our timber and forestry partners, and has recently been approved by the U.S. General Services Administration for federal ratings. Our school is one of the few projects to attain dual certification.

Designing the new building to be energy efficient and environmentally friendly was a major goal of the district,

and these certification levels are a reward for those design efforts.

Points were earned through these rating systems for utilizing renewable energy resources, re-using and recycling of building materials, improving the efficiency and performance of the building to reduce environmental impact, improving sustainable practices within the building after construction is complete and many other efforts.

In order to celebrate the achievement of these goals the Vernonia School District would like to invite you to our LEED/Green Globes celebration. This event will take place inside the Vernonia Schools building starting at 10:30 AM on Saturday, May 9. This event will include the unveiling of our new awards, recognition from local dignitaries and a tour of the building.

We hope you can join us for this special occasion to celebrate these significant accomplishments.

School Board to Make Charter School Decision *continued from front page*

Steering Committee identified several advantages to becoming a Charter School. Miller said one advantage was the ability to expand the Natural Resources curriculum that the District has already made a priority as well as expanding programs like engineering, math and art. "We feel like we've done a good job but the Charter School option comes with some extra funding that would provide resources and supplies we need to keep moving them forward and

also provide professional development for teachers to implement new and innovative programs," said Miller.

Miller said another advantage is the way the State currently funds Charter Schools. Currently Charter Schools are double funded, which Miller says would allow Vernonia to implement new programs as well as address the long term debt the District is dealing with from the construction of the new school campus. "We still have a sizable amount

of money that we still have to pay off," said Miller. "But everyone needs to remember that we have a \$42 million building for our community which we paid \$13 million for." Miller emphasized that the new campus is a wonderful asset for the District and the community.

Miller said the biggest point of contention during the Steering Committee discussions was whether to include the Mist School in the application. The Steering Committee considered two models, one that would include the entire District in a Charter, but would require all students to be under one roof and therefore require the closure of the Mist School. The second option would leave Mist School separate from the rest of the District. Miller said that through the discovery process the District learned that they were not eligible to become a Charter District because the District is too large. That left the Steering Committee to move forward with creating a charter that would leave Mist School separate.

Miller said the disagreement over the possible closure of Mist School early in the discussion led to the Steering Committee choosing to begin creating applications for both models - the Charter District and the Charter School with Mist separate. Miller says choosing to begin two applications allowed the process to move forward and it wasn't until ten days into the process that the District learned they were not eligible to become a Charter District.

One of the drawbacks of becoming a Charter School is the need for extra administration, including the formation of a second School Board,

prohibit discrimination in all USDA programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability.

The Vernonia Center is located at 500 California Avenue next to the Blue Heron Hollow Apartment complex. Families who live in the Mist, Birkenfeld and Vernonia areas may phone (503) 429-9243 or (503) 369-7249 for more information.

The Clatskanie/Rainier Center is located behind the high school in Clatskanie. Families in the Clatskanie, Quincy, Westport, Knappa, Rainier and Goble areas may phone (503) 728-2940 for more information.

Students in the St. Helens area attend class at the center on Columbia Blvd. next to McBride School. Families may contact (503) 397-4114 for more information.

Head Start is an agency of Community Action Team, Inc., serving Clatsop, Columbia and Tillamook counties.

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the creation of a separate bookkeeping system and a second budget process. Miller said it would also require a separate annual audit of finances. Miller says there is concern that the State Legislature is considering making changes to Oregon House Bill 2150 which regulates Charter Schools that could eliminate the double funding mechanism. Miller says if that happens the District will not move forward with the charter application.

"We are looking at this entire process as a school and District improvement process," explained Miller. "Whether we become a Charter School or not we are going to utilize the information that we've gathered. The areas we are currently focusing on: science, technology, engineering, arts and math, as well as expanding our Career and Technical Education programs and building our partnerships with local business, organizations and agencies - those are also things that are the focus of the charter. We're going to continue to develop them. If the money from the charter is available, then it's worth our while to go through and do those double governance systems. If the funding is not there we can still use the input we've received from the community and implement those initiatives. It will take us a lot longer but we'll still move forward. But it's not worth it to put in place all those requirements if the funding is not there."

Miller said attendance and input at the public hearings was helpful. "The community input process helped us develop a better application and create something that is ultimately going to work for the community."

Miller said if the School Board approves the Charter application, then the District has sixty days to process paperwork with ODE to form the Charter. Miller says there is no acceptance process needed on the part of the state; once the School Board decides to submit their application and completes the paperwork, they become a Charter School.

Vernonia Students of the Month

March 2015



Elizabeth Gonzalez Grade 2

Elizabeth is a very enthusiastic student who always tries her best. She is known as a caring and good friend and a good helper in the classroom. Elizabeth says her favorite subject is math. She plays T-ball, likes to play games and read books in her free time, and enjoys being a big sister to her two younger siblings.

Camren DePue Grade 7

Camren is a student who is always on task, completes his work on time and who participates in classroom discussions. He is described as a leader with a great attitude who is not afraid to ask questions and is willing to help other students. Camren says his favorite subject is language arts. He plays football, basketball and wrestles. He also enjoys caring for his two dogs, Chopper and Willie and his two cats Chloe and Bear.



Brittany Young Grade 12

Brittany was recently inducted into the National Honor Society. She was a First Team All League volleyball player who just signed a Letter of Intent to play for New Hope Christian College next year. Brittany said she enjoyed taking a writing 121 college course last year at VHS. She says she would like to study counseling at college next year.



**Safe Kids
Columbia County
Car Seat Clinic
Saturday, May 2nd
11:00 AM - 12:30 PM
Vernonia Fire Station
555 E. Bridge Street
For more info call:
503-556-3736**