

CASA for Children Named One of Oregon's Most Admired Companies

CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) for Children of Multnomah, Washington, and Columbia Counties has been named the fifth Most Admired Company (nonprofit category) in Oregon for 2016.

The results come from a survey sent to 3,000-plus CEOs and business owners. The 400-plus respondents selected three companies, in order of priority, which they most admire in eight industries. Respondents were not required to answer in all industries — just those they felt comfortable in their knowledge of.

As CASA plans for the future of the agency the primary objective continues to be providing more children and young adults with the benefits of a CASA. This year 489 active CASA volunteers will serve 1,100 children in the foster care system with the ultimate goal of quickly and effectively securing a safe and permanent home for these young people.

"We are honored to be included in this group of phenomenal

non-profits in Oregon" said Betsy Stark Miller, Executive Director of CASA. "It is especially meaningful to be included alongside our fellow honorees, who represent our state's impressive array of non-profit organizations doing such valuable work."

As an organization, CASA will continue to focus on three main areas to achieve these goals: Increased and improved training and support for volunteer CASAs so they can advocate effectively for the educational needs of children and teens in foster care, organization-wide commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and sustained program growth in a decentralized rural county that is experiencing great economic and social stress.

If you are interested in learning more about how to become a CASA volunteer, upcoming trainings, or future fundraising events, please contact Anne Marie Johnson, Director of Development and Communications, at (503) 988-4170 or ajohnson@casahelpskids.org.

School Board Approves Another Bond Attempt *continued from front page*

million in debt the school is still obligated to pay from their general fund from the construction of the new school campus. Those funds that would be used to retire debt are not eligible for matching funds from the state. The District will ask for an additional \$2.3 million to finish the school campus and make needed repairs at the Mist Grade School; those funds would be matched by the state if the bond measure is successfully passed by the voters.

Miller told the Board that the May election provides another golden, and possibly final, opportunity for the District to pass another bond and receive matching funds. He said the Governor's office had initially indicated that the final round of funding scheduled for the May 2017 election had been temporarily removed after the November 2016 election, but was just recently added back into the state budget. In addition, while the VSD did not qualify for the Priority List, they were the first District picked in the Lottery Process and are guaranteed access to matching funds.

Miller noted that the original \$13 million bond measure was approved at \$1.90 per thousand dollars of assessed value, but has been reduced to about \$1.70 due to increased property values within the community, more properties on the tax rolls, and VSD's initiative last year to refinance

the debt and save taxpayers about \$0.12 per thousand.

The new bond would increase the total obligation to taxpayers back to the originally agreed upon rate of \$1.90 per thousand and extend the levy for an additional 10 years from 2036 to 2046, but could potentially be reduced if Vernonia continues to experience growth.

"Our community is biting at the bit right now to grow," said Board member Ernie Smith about the possibility that the rate might come down over the life of the bond. "We lost a lot of homes after the flood. We have a lot of people looking for homes to rent and homes that are for sale are not lasting more than a week."

There will be four positions on the School Board up for election on the May 16 ballot as well. Position 1, held by Susan Wagner, Position 4, held by Smith, Position 5, held by Cari Levenseller, and Position 6, held by Board Chair Brett Costley, will all be put to the voters. Costley has said he plans to run for re-election. Smith has said he is not going to run again. Neither Levenseller nor Wagner have made their intention clear yet.

"This is going to be my last term on the Board," said Smith. "My goal when I started was to see new schools and I want to see it get done."

What's Happening at the Vernonia Library

Upcoming Events

The Solar Eclipse Experience

Thursday, February 2, 6 pm
Presentation by Jim Buxton on the Total Solar Eclipse coming up on August 21, 2017. Includes a slideshow, things to look for, tools to use, where to be, and information on the physics of the eclipse as well as eclipses of the past.

Beginning Knitting for Kids

Tuesdays, 4-5 pm,
February 14, 28, March 14, 28
Free and all materials provided for children ages 8 – 17. Classes taught by Caitlin Hunter. Contact boylandknitworks@gmail.com for more information.

Author Visit: Willy Vlautin

Tuesday, February 21, 6:30 pm
Willy Vlautin is a nationally recognized author of four novels including *Lean on Pete* and *The Free*. He founded the band Richmond Fontaine in 1994 and put out a debut album in 2014 with his new band, The Delines. He currently lives in Scappoose, Oregon. His Vernonia visit will focus on the book *Lean on Pete*, with a Q&A about his novel and song writing. He will be bringing his guitar and books to sign.

3rd Annual Cat in the Hat Event

Thursday, March 2, 6 pm
Story read by The Cat in the Hat. Pictures, door prizes, cake, and Seussish activities. In honor of Dr. Seuss's Birthday. For children and families.

Family Movie Night

Thursday, February 23, 6 pm
(Family Movie) Featuring: Storks!
Relax and enjoy a movie and popcorn at the library.

Ongoing Programs

Writer's Group

Thursday, February 16, 6-7:30 pm
3rd Thursday of every month. For writers with all levels of experience.

Book Discussion Group

Monday, February 27, 5:30 pm
Last Monday of every month, 5:30 pm. Book selection for February: *The Friday Night Knitting Club* by Kate Jacobs

Storytimes

Baby and Toddler Time

Mondays, 10:30 – 11:15 am
Songs, rhymes, books, toys, and bubbles! For ages 0 – 3. Older siblings welcome.

Preschool Storytime

Fridays, 10:30 – 11:15 am
Stories and a craft/activity for children up through age 6.

Library Hours & Contact

Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 10 – 5
Tuesday, Thursday: 1 – 7
Saturday: 10 – 4
Closed Sundays

Phone: (503) 429-1818

E-mail: library@vernonia-or.gov

Avila Sentenced in Shooting Death

Kirk Avila, a resident and former business owner in Vernonia, was sentenced in Columbia County Court on January 18, 2017 for the shooting death of Jesse Depue, also of Vernonia.

On January 3 Avila (53) pled no contest to criminally negligent homicide and felon in possession of a firearm.

On January 18 Avila was sentenced to 80 months on the count of "criminally negligent homicide" and 60 months on the count of "felon in possession of a firearm." The sentences are to be served consecutively, for a total of 140 months (or 11 years, 8 months). Avila was given credit for time already served on his sentence.

Avila's sentence was incorrectly reported by Portland news agencies following his sentencing.

Avila has remained in custody in the Columbia County jail since his arrest and was originally charged with murder, before pleading no contest to the lesser charges.

The shooting occurred at Avila's home on the 900 block of Riverside Drive. The two men were involved in a confrontation prior to the shooting. Depue died from a single gunshot wound to the stomach.

Depue was 31 at the time of his death and left behind his partner and two young sons.

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The IRS does not endorse any particular individual tax return preparer. For more information on tax return preparers, go to www.irs.gov.