

Where Are They Now? *continued from front page*

in flood recovery mode, being bussed to school in Scappoose immediately following the flood and then attending classes in modular class rooms for her final three years. Kristina was active in school, participating in cheerleading, cross country, basketball, and track, as well as leadership class, but says the flood did impact her education at VHS.

"I didn't have the opportunity to take AP courses because the school didn't have the resources to provide those following the flood," says Halverson about her Vernonia school experience. "When I got to college, everyone in my classes would say, 'Oh, I learned that in my AP Biology class in high school,' or stuff like that. I didn't get the chance to take those college level classes in high school. At first I felt like maybe I didn't belong and I really struggled with that."

Halverson says she feels like she got a good education at VHS and that the instructors did the best they could given the circumstances and with the resources they had, it just wasn't as much as she would have liked. "We lost so much school time our freshman year and I felt like we were always trying to catch up. We were all so far behind and I felt like that continued into the following years."

Despite those obstacles Halverson did find ways to succeed at OSU. "I did have a lot of people who helped me in college and I had a slogan I used that I learned from a TED talk, 'Fake it till you make it,' and that helped me get through," says Halverson with a laugh.

Halverson started out majoring in Civil Engineering, but on the first day of classes, she says she learned that it wasn't going to be for her. She changed her major to Chemical Engineering, and then changed again in her third year to Chemistry. "Chemical Engineering was really interesting to me, but it wasn't something I could see myself doing for the rest of my life and didn't fit where I wanted to end up. I found I wanted to do something more biology related and had the idea of working with cancer, so I changed my major to Chemistry."

At OSU Halverson started working doing outreach to middle school students, especially students in rural schools, encouraging them to go into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) educational studies.

After that she took a job in a toxicology lab, where her project involved analysis of data collected ten years ago that looked at the impact of smoking and obesity on the micro RNA of the lungs in mice. "It was not directly related to cancer but some of the other research that was going on in the lab at the time had to do with cancer," explains Halverson. "I'm hopefully going to have that work published sometime soon."

Halverson graduated from OSU this past June and was excited to find out she had received a job offer from OHSU at the Knight Cancer Institute, where she officially starts on February 21. At OHSU she'll be working on Leukemia research and looking at gene mutations in cancer and how that impacts

treatments. "I have not been placed on a project yet, so I don't know what I'll be doing exactly," says Halverson. "I'm still not sure which kind of cancer I want to study, but different cancers are similar in certain ways, and different in others, but a lot of it can still be applied."

Halverson says her goal is to use the research and the experience she gains working in the lab to go to grad school at OHSU and get her PHD so she can eventually work in pharmaceuticals and study drugs that are being considered for treating cancer. "I felt like I needed a little more experience, especially since my previous project wasn't directly correlated to cancer."

When she's not studying or working in the lab, Halverson and her boyfriend enjoy hiking. She has a cat and also enjoys working with her hands; she likes to sew and do crafts. She says she would like to take a shop class because she missed out on that in high school.

As an accomplished scholar, Halverson offered some useful advice to current high school students: learn good study habits while in high school and before heading on to college; learn good time management skills because those are also important at college; when in college, don't be afraid to develop a personal relationship with your professors and get to know them and don't be afraid to ask them for help – they will be more likely to offer assistance or extensions on assignments and work with you if they know who you are. She

also understands that a four year degree or university education isn't for everyone. "Community colleges are great and way cheaper," says Halverson. "Trade schools are also really awesome and better for some people than a four year degree program. Not everyone can sit in a classroom all day long and learn. Not everyone is the same."



Kristina Halverson was awarded the Senior Cup at her VHS graduation in 2011.

For Halverson, that last item was particularly relevant. She learned in college that she is much more of a hands-on learner and really got engaged in her education when she started working in labs. "In high school I thought I really like learning in school," says Halverson. "In college I realized that I didn't just learn from reading a book, I learned more from hands-on things I was doing at work and in my labs for school classes."

Halverson looks back on her time in Vernonia fondly and as a real stepping stone that has helped lead her to the success she has had in college and in her just-beginning research career.

"A lot of the teachers in Vernonia were really helpful and very supportive all through high school and helped me stay on track and get me where I am today," says Halverson. "I owe them a lot of credit."

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Sunday School & Primary: 11:20 am
Relief Society, Priesthood and
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Roger Cook, Branch President
1350 E. Knott Street
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Grace Family Fellowship
Sunday School: 9:00 am
Worship Service: 10:30 am
Thursday Prayer: 6:00 pm
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Worship Service: 10:45 am
Tues. Ladies Bible Study: 9:30 am
Wednesday Service: 7:00 pm
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Grant Williams, Pastor
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Wednesday Religious Education:
3:15-4:30 pm
Sunday Mass: 12:00 pm
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Vernonia Christian Church
Sunday School: 9:45 am
Worship Service in Youth &
Family Center: 11:00 AM
www.VernoniaChristianChurch.org

Sam Hough, Pastor
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Vernonia Foursquare Church
Sunday Worship Service: 10:30 am
Children's Sunday School
Carl Pense, Pastor
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