

Schools Update: With a Little Help From Our Friends

By Aaron Miller

A little help from our friends: that is one thing the Vernonia School District has to be thankful for now, and throughout the year.

In late fall the District learned that several large, old trees on the Mist Grade School campus would need to be removed due to safety concerns. Working with Mist resident Ray Kyser, and the Oregon Department of Transportation, we were able to have the trees safely removed, but what a mess with all that wood and branches! Fortunately, the Mist/Birkenfeld Fire Association came to the rescue.

One Friday the playground was

littered with tree parts, and the next Monday it was all cleaned up. Special thanks to Brian Woods, Brent Dass, Chris Dass, Roger Mills, Deputy Chief Don Beck and Fire Chief Joe Kaczinski for their efforts in cleaning up the downed trees, and turning it into firewood for local community members in need.

Another helpful, continuing, local partner of the District is L.L. Stub Stewart State Park. Vernonia Elementary and Mist Grade Schools both visited Stub Stewart State Park on April 28, thanks to a "Ticket2Ride" grant provided by the Oregon Parks Foundation.

Twelve current park hosts, volunteers from the Friends of Stub Stewart State Park and all Stub Stewart park

staff were involved in the day's activities which were planned in conjunction with Park Specialist Betsy Miller in coordination with the Vernonia Elementary teaching staff.

Kindergarten, first and second graders studied bugs, which included a story, activity and guided hike with a ranger.

Third graders studied birds with park volunteers and retired Vernonia School District Administrator Anne Bee-son and her husband Vern, while fourth and fifth graders studied forest stewardship through a ranger-led hike into the forest.

The day ended with a campfire, and s'mores for everyone.

Several local volunteers have also been working diligently after school and on weekends to construct dugouts at our new softball venue, Alumni Field. The facilities are looking great, and were built to last a lifetime. Thanks to all those who showed up to help!

While these are only a couple of ways the Vernonia School District partners with local people and organizations, we receive help and time from so many. We are truly thankful for the support from our community and its citizens. If you would like to be involved in helping or volunteering at the school, call Superintendent Aaron Miller at (503) 429-5891. We would love to get you started.

Bigger People. Better World. It's Working.

Vernonia students raise money for Myanmar orphans

By Kailia Jackson

One Dollar For Life (ODFL) is a non-profit organization that uses people's loose change to build clinics, schools, and homes for those who can't afford them in countries like Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Myanmar, and many more.

Robert Freeman, who addressed a group of high school leadership students in Seaside this past fall, created this organization nine years ago. Since then he has finished 79 projects. 100% of the donations he receives from schools and children went into making these things possible. Outside of Mandalay, Myanmar, a Buddhist Temple named Kyause is currently hosting more than 230 orphans who were abandoned by their

family to die alone on the streets.

Vernonia High School (VHS) Student Body President Payton Wolf has decided to base her Presidential Challenge on raising money for the construction of a much needed health clinic for the orphans living in the Kyause Temple.

A Presidential Challenge is a school wide service project that has a goal of making a difference in the world. It is chosen by a school's Student Body President. The goal of Payton Wolf's Presidential Challenge is to give to those with less and help them get what they need.

Part of Wolf's Presidential Challenge is a fundraising competition between the high school grades. Whichever grade raises the most money will get a prize. The elementary and middle school grades will have donation boxes available to bring as much money as they please, but will not have a competition themselves.

"Our town does a great job of coming together in times of need when it comes to our friends and family. I hope we can come together to help these kids who only have each other," says Wolf. "I listened to Robert Freeman, the ODFL Founder, at a leadership conference in Seaside. His presentation really moved me, and made me realize that every little bit helps. I want to help as much as I can."

Wolf's Presidential Challenge is not just for school students. Anyone can participate and there will be donation boxes located throughout town. You can buy a paper globe for \$1 that will have your name on it and will subsequently be hung up in the school. All proceeds go to the ODFL cause.

"ODFL Week" will be May 8-12. ODFL Week is a week where the Student Body President and her peers will help raise awareness for the ODFL cause.

For any questions contact Payton Wolf at paytonwolf805@gmail.com.

Let's Not Pass the Buck, Let's Pass the Bond

This town has survived through a disaster or two
We've always been proud of the things we can do
We can pull ourselves up and face a new day
When you live in our town, you'll learn that's our way

If things don't turn out just like we have planned
We might get angry, but we've come to understand
We must look to the future of our school and our town
Now is our chance to turn things around

We can't let matching lottery funds slip through our fingers
As mistakes go, that would be a humdinger
This is our chance for us to move on
Let's not pass the buck, let's pass the bond.

~Kala Cota

Break Down the Walls *continued from page 10*

"Phil Boyte made us forget that people usually judge you, especially in a small town," said junior Kailia Jackson, a Leadership student who also served as a group leader during the exercises, and who was recently elected Student Body President for next year. "It was really immersive and people really took it seriously. I've never seen our student body be so cohesive and engaged. It really opens up your point of view and perspective."

The impact has been subtle yet noticeable across the school landscape. "People say hello to people they never talked to before," said Ely.

Jackson agrees. "People are actively trying to make change and be more welcoming towards one another. People are acknowledging people, maybe not as their friend, but at least as a person."

Jackson says she thinks Unity Week was

good for Vernonia students. "I think people in this community may not be very open minded. I might know everyone's name in my school, but I may not know their story and I may assume things about them. I think we needed this to show that assumptions are not always correct and a lot of times they are wrong."

"Now we know each other better and we're starting breaking down the barriers between social groups and we're making everyone more comfortable talking with each other," said Ely. "It really was a super successful experience."

Ely mentioned that she is also kicking off an additional project through the Project Based Learning Class, which will fundraise through a Go Fund Me account, to create 100 homeless baskets for Vernonia Cares, filled with hygiene supplies and clothing and, "...anything that can help you feel and look better."

Register Now for Early Childhood Screening Fair

The Early Childhood Health and Education Screening Fair is being provided for all 2, 3, 4 and 5 year olds of Columbia County. This free screening fair will provide parents and guardians information about their child's development as it relates to current health and education guidelines.



Friday, May 19th

Sunset Park Community Church
174 Sunset Blvd, St. Helens
Parents and guardians are requested to make appointments by May 12 so materials can be mailed and completed before attending the screening fair.

Please call the NW Early Learning Hub
for an appointment
(503) 614-1443 or (503) 366-4100



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