

Vernonia Wrestlers Already Preparing for Upcoming Season

Coach Chris Barnes is excited to defend VHS's District Title and grow the girls wrestling program

The two-time District Champion Vernonia wrestlers will be busy this summer with workouts and fundraisers as they prepare to defend the District Title they won in dominating fashion last year.

Head Coach Chris Barnes has a strong returning contingent of wrestlers, including two returning state placers from last year in Wyatt Jones who finished 4th and Joshua Rice who finished 3rd. Also returning this season are state qualifiers Hepner Forster and Josh Sholes, along with Patrick Fletcher, Austin Sicard, Byron Cook, Cutter Barklow, Eli Thompson, Isaiah Thompson, Jacob Pasko, and Zach Larke.

Last year the Loggers won the District going away, scoring 305 points to 2nd place Monroe's 148, while sending six wrestlers to the State Tournament. Coach Barnes was named District Coach of the Year.

While Barnes is looking forward to defending the District Title, he is also passionate about the progress girls wrestling is making at the state and national levels. Oregon had two national champions in 2018 at the collegiate level.

According to Barnes, there are presently six states that have added an official state girls championship, recognized and run by their state scholastic governing body: Hawaii 1998, Texas 1999, Washington 2007, California 2011, Alaska 2014, and Tennessee 2015.

Oregon has been in the process since 2009, working with the OSAA for several years to promote and sanction a girls state high school tournament. In 2018-2019 Oregon will add a girls division to the OSAA High School Wrestling Championships and become one of the first eight states to sanction girls wrestling. And, due to the emerging status of women's wrestling, there are many scholarship opportunities as colleges and universities continue adding women's wrestling programs.

In 2018-19 there will be an

OSAA sanctioned girls season schedule. Girls will have different weight classes than boys. At the State Tournament there will be eight-person girls brackets.

Barnes says girls wrestling is catching on fast in Oregon and continues to grow. "The first year Oregon held a girls exhibition at the State Tournament they had 70 girls participate – the next year there were 150," says Barnes. "They have been running numerous middle school and high school tournaments for girls throughout the season in recent years and they've continued to hold the girls exhibition at the State Championships. This year it will be a full tournament just for the girls."

Barnes has had several girls compete with his team over the last several years, including graduated senior Kailia Jackson, who won the boys District Title two years ago and placed 4th at girls state in 2018. "We have many girls in our youth program and I'd love to see 15-20 girls show up for the 2018-2019 high school season," says Barnes. "Warrenton currently has one of the big-

gest girls teams in the state and it would be fantastic to get a north coast rivalry established with them!"

Barnes says the summer schedule for practices is Mondays and Wednesdays from 6:00-7:00 pm. Practice is open to middle and high school athletes. "It's a fast paced practice and we're having fun," says Barnes.

The wrestling team will also host several fundraisers this summer, including the annual 'The 24.' "This one is open to anyone who wants to participate, says Barnes. "We ask for a \$50 donation and we go from 8:00 am Friday to 8:00 am Saturday, performing a workout every hour on the hour for 10 to 20 minutes in length. No sleep allowed. For non-team members we ask a \$50 donation to participate and you get a T-shirt and food." Event and date will be posted on Vernonia Wrestling Facebook page.

The team will also hold car washes on July 7 and September 1 starting at 9:00 am at Holce Logging behind Bridge Street Mini Mart.

Summer Meals Program Helps Bridge the Gap

Summer Food Service Program offers nutritious meals to combat childhood hunger

When school lets out for the summer, thousands of Oregon children lose access to breakfast, lunch and after-

school meals that are available during the regular school year. Many children and families rely on these school meals to supplement what is available at home. The Summer Food Service Program helps to fill this gap by providing free, nutritious meals to children and teens over the summer months. Free meals and enrichment activities are offered at par-

ticipating summer sites including many schools, parks, and other non-profit organizations.

The program is currently under utilized with many families unaware of the free meals and activities in their communities. Nationally, only one out of six children who receive free or reduced price meals during the school year continue to receive meals during the summer months. Increasing awareness of and access to these programs can have a significant impact on combating childhood food insecurity.

Locally the Vernonia School District sponsors the Summer Meals program, which started on June 18 and runs through August 24 at the Grace Family Fellowship Church, 967 State Avenue. Meals are available for free to children under the age of 18, Monday through Friday from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm.

"We know the important role that child nutrition plays during the school year and it's just as crucial in the summer months when children don't have access to school meals," Colt Gill, Director of the Oregon Department of Education, said. "We encourage families and caregivers to take advantage of this

opportunity to help ensure the children they care for have access to good nutrition over the summer."

Families can look up other meal locations in their area by calling 2-1-1, or texting "Food" or "Comida" to 877-877, or visiting the Summer Food Oregon website. Meals are available for any child 18 and under without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability.

"The Summer Foods Lunch Program in Klamath Falls allows us to provide lunches to kids who would otherwise go hungry," Integral Youth Services Outreach Programs Director Craig Schuhmann said. "Over the course of the summer we serve 24,000 lunches at 30 different sites, rural and city, over a ten week period. This affords us the opportunity to combine our efforts with local community partners to provide education and enrichment activities while the youth are gathered to eat. Many appreciative parents have told us that this program helps to stretch an already tight food budget."

Please help spread the word about the free summer meals and activities to families in your area.



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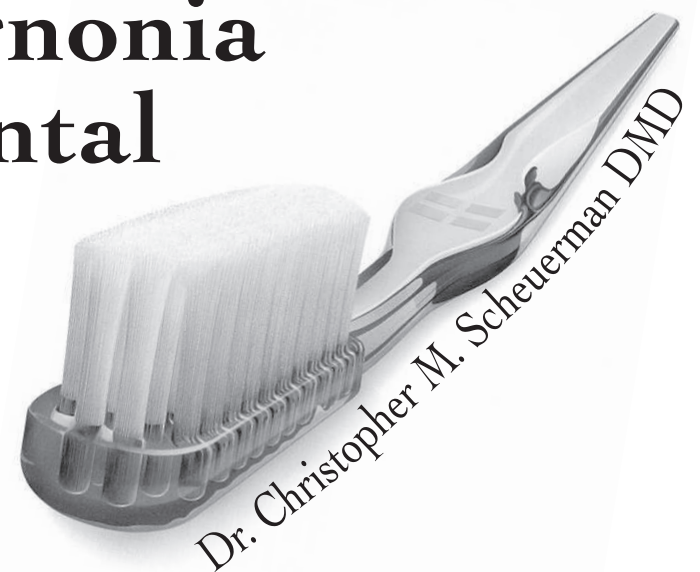
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