

Opportunity Rooms Offer Alternative Discipline Model

School District is taking a positive and caring approach to students with behavior issues

By Scott Laird

The Vernonia School District (VSD) is broadening its program to find better ways to deal with discipline issues in the classroom and on the school campus.

The Opportunity Room, OR for short, is a place where teachers can send students who are causing disruptions in the classroom so they can get refocused on learning, and a place where students can go to self regulate. This year the District has split the Opportunity Room into two sections, OR I for students in the Elementary School and OR II for middle school and high school students.

"These are students for whom classroom interventions haven't worked – things like asking the student to get back on task, moving their desk, those types of things," explains Rachel Wilcoxon, the District's Vice Principal for K-12 who is in charge of discipline. "So, if it's time for them to take a break, they go to the OR."

This year OR II has a certified instructor in the room – former middle

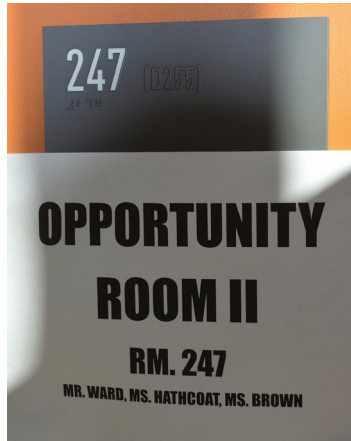
school language arts teacher Justin Ward – along with two instructional assistants. Ward works with teachers to make sure students in OR II get lessons to work on while they are out of the

classroom, so they are not missing too much instruction. He also works with parents to address behavior issues, and with students to help them take responsibility for their actions and find ways to make better choices in the future.

Students spend as much time as necessary in the OR so they can get back on track and be ready to learn. Wilcoxon says usually students do not go back to the class they were sent from, but wait until the next period before they return. In-school suspensions are also served in the OR, along with students who have earned a lunch time suspension for being excessively tardy or absent.

"In the past this would have been considered the detention room," says Wilcoxon. "But our goal is not just to punish them, our goal is to find out what the lagging skill is and figure out what we can do to help them be successful in the classroom. This gives kids a chance to get back on track instead of having their behavior derail their whole day."

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The Nehalem Divide Tunnel

The hidden tunnel is just one historically significant site along Columbia County's Crown Zellerbach Trail

By Scott Laird

nomah Channel at Chapman Landing near Scappoose to the outskirts of Vernonia. The trail is currently undergoing a series of upgrades, initiated by the CZ Trail Advisory Committee, that include trailhead improvements and interpre-



Vernonia and the surrounding region is loaded with historical sites of interest, especially sites pertaining to logging, railroads, and early pioneer history. The Vernonia Pioneer Museum and Columbia County's Historic Court House Museum in St. Helens, both document the vibrant history of the region and are great resources for anyone interested in learning more about Columbia County's fascinating legacy.

The Crown Zellerbach (CZ) Trail is a 25 mile hiking, biking, and horse trail which runs from the Mult-

nomah Channel at Chapman Landing near Scappoose to the outskirts of Vernonia. The trail is currently undergoing a series of upgrades, initiated by the CZ Trail Advisory Committee, that include trailhead improvements and interpretive signage and displays that will focus heavily on the historic significance of the logging and railroad operations along the trail. Trail improvements are being funded through grants awarded to the County by Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and Travel Oregon.

Casey Garrett is the Director of Parks and Facilities for Columbia County and is a member of the advisory committee. Garrett says there will be six designated trailheads with parking areas, kiosks, and interpretive signs, with several other historically

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Voices From the Mill Pond Cover Photo Winner: Kari Anne Budge

Beginning in February, photographers heeded our call and submitted images for the coming book about Vernonia, *Voices from the Mill Pond*. One photo would land on the book's cover.

Over a hundred fabulous images poured in, and when the submission peri-

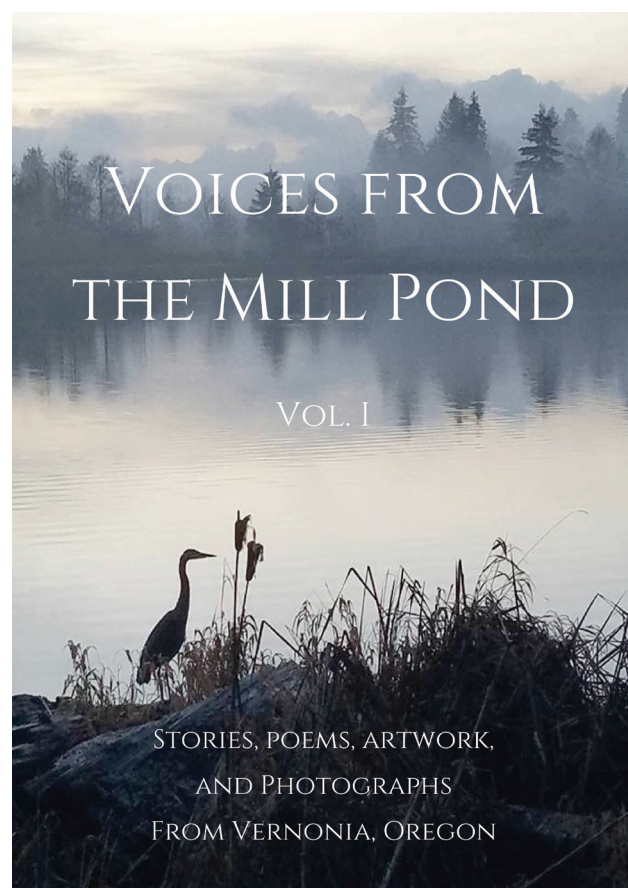


Photo by Debby White

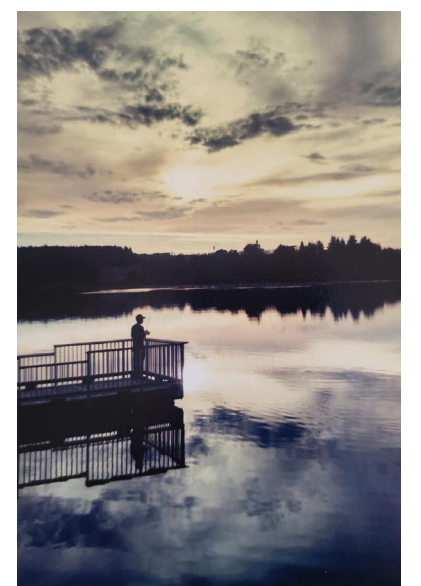


Photo by Cassandra Armstrong

od ended, it was time to choose a cover. Important elements were the pond, of course, but also the photo's composition. Orientation and size mattered. Would the title and subtitle be clear

Art are delighted to present the cover of *Voices from the Mill Pond*. Kari Anne Budge sent in this exquisite photo that met every condition. It was the perfect

choice for the book.

We would also like to acknowledge two photographers whose submissions came in a close second. Thank you to Debby White and Cassandra Armstrong for their stunning images.

The 180-page book of photos, writings, and artwork from Vernonia residents will be available locally and on Amazon in early December. The perfect gift for the holidays.

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