

Growing Gardens for the Community

Several groups are creating landscaping projects and growing food for their fellow Vernonians

By Scott Laird

Several hardworking individuals are donating their time and a lot of energy to beautify the Vernonia

Last year the garden area was finally fenced, cardboard was collected and put down as weed barrier, old garden boxes were repaired and filled with donated soil with the help of Glen McWhirter and his tractor, wood chips were laid down, starts were donated by community

district, and taking part in the OSU Master Gardener program provided by the Columbia County Extension Service. As part of that program, all graduates must donate 60 hours of community service work; the Community Garden became Lynn's service project, although she's racked up well over her



L - R: Jaycee Manning, Lynn and Barney Hayes, and some helpers at the Vernonia Community Garden on the Vernonia Schools campus.

community and provide fresh fruits and vegetables for the Vernonia Cares Food Pantry.

The Vernonia Community Garden, now located on the Vernonia Schools campus, has had a long history, but recently found some dedicated champions to provide the needed upkeep. Originally conceived almost 15 years ago, and with a dedicated space on the school grounds, Lynn and Barney Hayes have been overseeing the space for the last two years, with help from other community members, and they're seeing great results.

members, and the Community Garden was back in business. This year a load of horse manure was donated by Dale and Susan Pedersen and added to the boxes. Students from the school woodshop program built several new beds this spring.

The Community Garden has numerous beds with a variety of veggies, herbs, and flowers. There's a compost bid on site, bird houses, running water, a shed to store tools, and room for even more garden beds. A fairy garden and two small benches are set up for children to enjoy just inside the front gate. Featured vegetables include potatoes, peas, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, onions, red and golden beets, yellow squash, cucumbers, melons, pumpkins, lettuce, kale, spinach, radishes, bush beans, carrots, and tomatoes. There's a bed of strawberries, blueberries, and raspberries. Sunflowers, cosmos, dahlias, and a butterfly bush add some color and attract pollinators, and a scarecrow stands watch over the area. Barney is even trying to grow some corn this year.

Lynn got interested in gardening after retiring as a teacher from the Vernonia School Dis-

required 60 hours.

Lynn says she was inspired to design the Vernonia Community Garden to resemble the Exhibition Garden at the Columbia County Fairgrounds, which is maintained by the Master Gardeners from the county. "I've always loved to garden, but we live up in the trees and can't grow much, so this is kind of my dream come true," says Lynn.

A Board of Directors oversees the Community Garden operations; Lynn is the President, Katie Garcia is the Vice President, Jana Swedo is the Secretary, and Penny Costley (who was involved in the original start of the Community Garden) is the Treasurer. Their goals include:

continued on page 7

School District Releases Tentative Plan for Fall Re-Opening

Vernonia School District Superintendent Aaron Miller provided the School Board with an initial plan for re-opening schools in the fall at their July 9, 2020 monthly meeting. The District plan calls for a mix of both distance and on-site learning during the upcoming school year. Miller emphasized the plan is tentative and may need to be adjusted.

While Miller was clear that re-opening guidelines from the state are still being finalized, and there are still details that need to be worked out, he said the daily schedule he presented is what the District Administration and staff are currently planning for.

The tentative plan calls on proper physical distancing, with student groups, or cohorts, having minimal overlap.

- All elementary students will attend on-site school on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. This will help decrease school as an employment barrier for families.
- Middle School students will attend on-site school on Thursday and Friday, and remotely on Monday and Tuesday.
- High School students will attend on-site school on Monday and Tuesday, and remotely on Thursday and Friday.
- On Wednesdays all students (K-12) will work remotely from home. All staff will work on-site or remotely, supporting students and parents, planning and preparing lessons, and performing professional development activities.
- All on-site school days will be shortened with a slightly later start time and earlier release time.
- The District is working on a bussing plan that can reduce contact between students, but is encouraging all families to provide alternate transportation to and from school if possible.
- The Vernonia Family Academy has expanded to include grades K-12 and is an option for families to consider. This alternative education classroom helps support home-school parents and students.
- Fall sports teams are not able to meet at this time.

Miller also released a revised school calendar for the school year. In the new calendar, the first full day of school for all K-12 students will be September 14 at the earliest and the last day of school will be June 10, with graduation scheduled for Saturday, May 30.

Miller told the Board the District has ordered Chromebooks for the upcoming school year for all students that can be used at home and at school, and is working toward providing wireless access for all students at home.

School surveys to provide input to the planning process are available on the District's website at www.VernoniaK12.org.

inside

9 fish & wildlife adopts climate policy

10 baseball during the depression

13 good ol' days dewey pool revisited

