

Boots on the Ground Stomps Christmas Offering Goal!

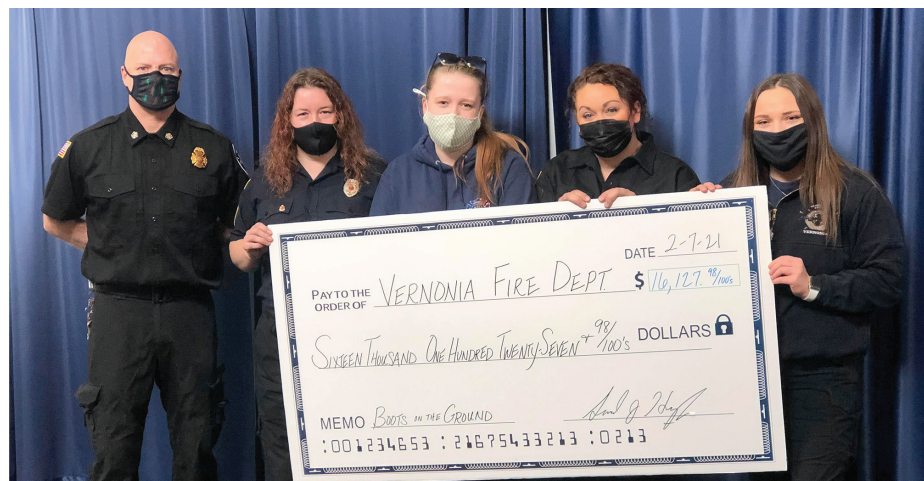
Funds will support local firefighters with new equipment

By Scott Laird

When Vernonia Christian Church Pastor Sam Hough announced his plans to use this year's annual Christmas Offering to support local

acle Goal" of raising a total of \$9,000, which would purchase a new turnout set (pants and jackets firefighters wear) for VRFPD, and an additional "Miracle, Miracle Goal" of \$12,500 which would purchase three sets of turnouts.

Hough invited the entire Vernonia community to join in the offering, which ran from Thanksgiving un-



VRFPD Chief Dean Smith (left) and volunteers received a check from the Vernonia Christian Church's Boots on the Ground campaign on Sunday, February 7. The funds, part of the church's annual Christmas Offering which raised over \$18,000 will be used to purchase new boots, helmets, turnouts, and fire hose nozzles for the department. Photo courtesy of Vernonia Christian Church.

firefighters, he had no idea just how successful the campaign would be.

Vernonia Christian's Boots on the Ground campaign set a goal of raising \$7,200 to purchase eight pairs of new boots and 10 new helmets for volunteers with the Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District (VRFPD); that goal would also allow the congregation to support International Disaster Emergency Service (IDES) Oregon Fire Relief to help families effected by the Labor Day wildfires this past year, along with support for the mission work of New Church Plants in Oregon, which helps establish new churches in the state. Vernonia Christian set a "Mir-

acle Goal" of raising a total of \$9,000, which would purchase a new turnout set (pants and jackets firefighters wear) for VRFPD, and an additional "Miracle, Miracle Goal" of \$12,500 which would purchase three sets of turnouts.

Hough invited the entire Vernonia community to join in the offering, which ran from Thanksgiving un-

til January 31. "In a time when we're all so divided in our country, this was something we wanted to do to bring the community together, for a good cause that serves everyone," said Pastor Hough. "This season we all needed something to feel good about."

The church reached its initial goal quickly, and just kept going, passing both Miracle Goals and raising over \$18,000 before they were done. While the majority of the funds came from the church congregation, several thousand dollars were contributed by community members from outside the

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Re-opening From COVID

Dropping COVID case numbers are allowing life to begin to return to normal in Vernonia and in other parts of Oregon.

On Tuesday, February 9, Oregon Governor Kate Brown announced a relaxing of restrictions in 10 Oregon counties, including Columbia and Clatsop, and Portland's tri-county region (Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas), as they moved out of the "Extreme Risk" category, beginning Friday, February 12.

Those reduced restrictions, allow bars and restaurants to resume in-door dining, and gyms, churches, museums, and theaters to re-open, all at 25% of capacity.

Prior to Governor Brown's announcement, the Vernonia School District was already allowed to move forward with plans to re-open, and welcomed kindergarten through 2nd graders for in-person learning on

Monday, February 8. The District is currently on-schedule to expand that opening to 3rd through 5th graders on February 22.

While restrictions are being relaxed it's still important to continue to follow good practices: face coverings, frequent hand washing, and physical distancing.



Vernonia Schools welcomed back kindergarten through 2nd graders for in-person learning on February 8, almost a year after COVID restrictions required distance learning.

VSD Exploring Starlink Internet for Mist School

The Vernonia School District's Mist School could become the first school in Oregon to begin receiving broadband internet service through the new Starlink technology.

Superintendent Aaron Miller told the Vernonia School Board at their February 11 meeting that the District is close to finalizing a deal with Starlink, a satellite internet constellation being constructed by Elon Musk's SpaceX company. The constellation will consist of thousands of mass-produced small satellites in low earth orbit, working in com-

bination with ground receivers.

"While not inexpensive, it will provide equitable, excellent service," Miller told the Board in his written report. "Mist will likely be the first public school in Oregon to obtain this newly developed service," he added.

According to their website, Starlink is now delivering initial beta service both domestically and internationally, and will continue expansion to near global coverage of the populated world in 2021. During these beta trials,

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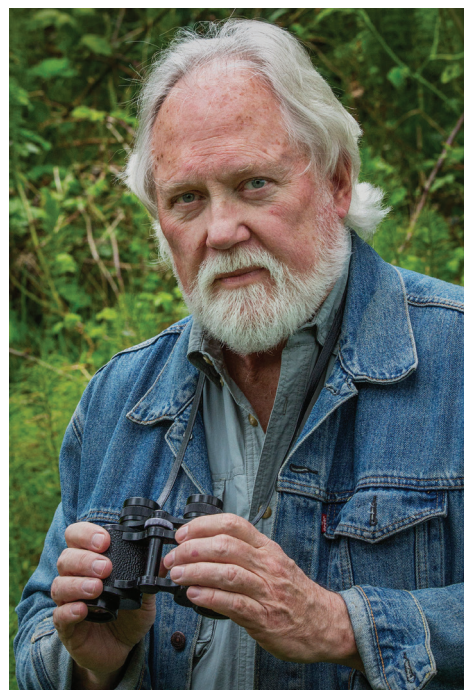
The Dark Divide: A Conversation with Robert Michael Pyle

The renowned naturalist and author talks about seeing himself portrayed in a fictional movie about his life, which was partially filmed in Vernonia

By Scott Laird

Robert Michael Pyle is a Pacific Northwest treasure, famed for his work in natural history and biology, and his books that document life and all the living things that inhabit our region. He has called the quiet town of Grays River, Washington, across the Columbia River in the Willapa Hills, home for the last 45 years.

Well known in specific academic circles for his research into his specialty – butterflies, he is also known for being approachable and community oriented; he's a regular contributor to the Columbia River Reader, a monthly publication out of Longview. Across a



storied career he has taught, lectured, led field trips and natural history seminars, and authored an impressive list of

work, including 25 books of nonfiction, poetry, short stories, and his first novel, *Magdalena Mountain*, published in 2018, along with magazine columns. He even collaborated with former Nirvana bassist Krist Novoselic, his neighbor in Deep River, Washington, on *Butterfly Launches From Spar Pole*, an eleven-track audio album of acoustic music with spoken word song-poems inspired by the natural world. His best known books are *Wintergreen: Rambles in a Ravaged Land*, which lovingly describes his adopted home region while also discussing the perils of too much logging, and *Skytime in Greys River*, which has just been released in a new edition.

Now Robert Michael Pyle and his work are reaching a new audience and becoming better known – his other well known book, *Where Big-foot Walks: Crossing the Dark Divide*, *continued on page 8*