

## Vernonia hosts training session at Scout Cabin for STARS mentors



Judy Hill/The INDEPENDENT

Students from Vernonia, Clatskanie and Knappa and their instructors pose for a photo during a break in STARS leadership training which took place Monday and Tuesday at the Scout Cabin in Vernonia. First row: Jennifer Bernardi, CJ Martin, Tabitha Ratten, Amanda Griffith; second row: Bonnie Buchan, Megan Penra, Sarah Gregg, Sarah Finnell, Nina True; third row: Juanita Dennis (Vernonia coordinator), Alishia Buffum, Jason Weber, Eric Edmonds; back row: Roz Godwin (Clatskanie coordinator), Patrick Davison (STARS trainer), Ele Seibold (STARS support), Melissa Thorn (Americorp volunteer), Pam Powell (Columbia County Public Health).

The Vernonia Scout Cabin was again in use by students Monday and Tuesday, when STARS (Students Today Aren't Ready for Sex) Teen Leader training took place.

Twelve high school students from Knappa, Clatskanie and Vernonia participated in curriculum, over two days, which prepared them to work in pairs in sixth grade classrooms.

Based on the premise that kids will listen to other kids more readily than to similar messages from adults, the trainees will deliver a lesson per week, over five weeks, to middle school students, teaching them that saying no to early sexual involvement is the best choice. Newly-trained leaders will begin work at Washington Grade School on Monday, February 7.


What makes the STARS program effective is that the lessons show students how to say no, said STARS coordinator Juanita Dennis of Vernonia. Students learn, through their own analysis, just what the risks of early sexual involvement are. They are made aware of social and peer pres-

ures to have early sex and participate in finding out how to assertively, rather than aggressively, resist those pressures.

STARS Program trainer Patrick Davidson and support specialist Ele Seibold consistently emphasized to the trainees that answers must come from the students themselves and not be handed down as ultimatums. The trainers also said that the process should be fun, even though the subject matter is serious. In fact, the final class, which reinforces skills learned, takes place in a game show format. And everybody wins a tee-shirt.

The STARS program is coordinated by the Oregon Health Division and uses state, federal and privately-donated funds to train local teens and adult leaders. The program is part of a middle school's comprehensive health education program and does not provide information on birth control. Student must take a school-sponsored sex education class first and have parental permission to participate in STARS curriculum.


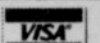
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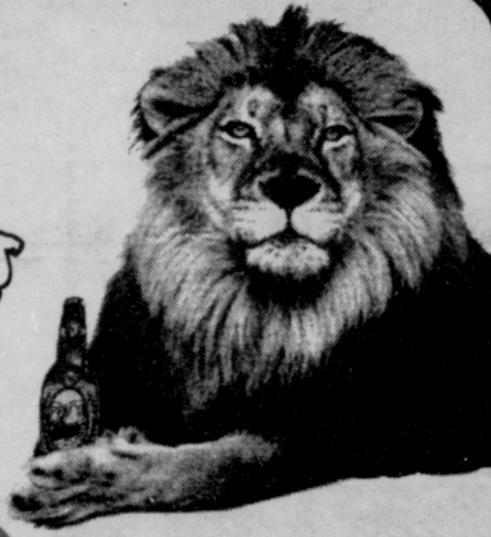


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