

Vernonia Head Start meets the needs of both children and families

Story and photos by
Judy Hill

Vernonia Head Start Center Manager Ruth Donaldson is living proof that the program works. The product of a low-income and abusive family, she found herself married with three young children before she was twenty-one.

"I had no parenting skills. Becoming a Head Start parent turned my life around and gave me training and a career," she said. Today, all three of her sons have graduated from college and are doing well. Donaldson is close to completing her own Bachelor degree in social services, although she jokes that retirement may come before the degree does.

In between tasks and visitors and obvious excitement about a trip to Anchorage for the Regional Head Start Conference, Donaldson talks about Head Start.

"When I came to Vernonia eight years ago to develop the

program here, I had to go door-to-door explaining Head Start to people. Few knew what it was," she said.

Now Vernonia's Head Start is housed in a bright new building dedicated in March, 1998, and paid for by a Community Development Block Grant. Several play areas, a kitchen, offices, study and instruction areas cluster around a large central room filled with light. One senses industry and purpose and lots of positive energy here.

There is tremendous need in some of the counties in the Columbia-Pacific Head Start region, said Donaldson. "We are not seeing 45 percent of eligible kids in these counties. The pre-school waiting lists can be 30-40 names long. The situation is better in Columbia County. But there is never enough money."

The Vernonia Head Start pre-school operates 12 hours a week, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, 8:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., and serves three- and four-year old low-income and



Vernonia Head Start Staff pose together with their 1999 Community Partnership Award. Presented by Head Start's Community Action Team at the annual CAT dinner in November 1999 in St. Helens, the award recognizes outstanding collaboration with the community and other social service agencies. Left to right: cook Wendy West, teacher Karla Long, center manager Ruth Donaldson, family advocate Carol Roberts and teachers Kathy Kelly and Charolette Ziegler.



Jacob Titus, left, and Christopher Curtis, both 5, engage in a fierce game of Bingo at Little Loggers Pre-School, held Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons at the Vernonia Head Start Center. This new program is open to the public and costs \$65. per month.

special-needs children. The school is free to qualifying children and is federally funded for 18 students. Bus service is provided, as well as USDA approved breakfast, lunch and a snack. Lead teacher Kathy Kelly, assistant teacher Carla Long and aides Kerry Schaumburg and Charolette Ziegler make up the teaching staff of the program's pre-school. Volunteers are always appreciated and do not need previous training.

Head Start is a family program, Donaldson reiterates. Parenting is a big part of the Head Start curriculum, she

said. Parents can tap into all kinds of help, from parenting classes and talks to becoming parent volunteers.

Through the Even Start program, Parents-in-Training can learn about goal setting and career training, complete their Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) and increase knowledge in math, reading and life skills. Many parents find the skills and confidence to get jobs or make career changes. Family Advocate Carol Roberts is on staff to help parents.

An upcoming parenting class is free to anyone and will run four Wednesdays, 10:00

a.m.-12 noon, beginning March 15. The four classes will cover "You and Your Child", "Preventing Problems", "Encouraging Positive Behavior" and "Overview."

"Temperament Talk" and "Managing Your Time", part of an ongoing series of talks, are unscheduled but will be presented in the near future. "Shopping and Cooking on Low Budgets" is an event which is practical and lots of fun. Participants get to have a feast at the end of class.

Call Head Start at 429-9243

Please see page 10

Community Calendar

MARCH							APRIL							MAY							JUNE						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	7	8	9	10	11	12	7	8	9	10	11	12	8	9	10	11	12	13	14		
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	13	14	15	16	17	18	14	15	16	17	18	19	15	16	17	18	19	20	21		
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	16	17	18	19	20	21	21	22	23	24	25	26	16	17	18	19	20	21	22		
29	30	31					22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31			18	19	20	21	22	23	24		
							28	29	30	31									25	26	27	28	29	30			

VERNONIA

Al-Anon	Mondays	6:30 p.m., Head Start Bldg.
Alcoholics Anonymous	Mondays	6:30 p.m., Head Start Bldg.
Alcoholics Anonymous	Saturdays	7:00 p.m., Head Start Bldg.
Boosters	2nd Wednesday	7:30 p.m., VHS Library
Boy Scout Troop 201	Tuesdays	7:00 p.m., Head Start Bldg.
Boy Scout Troop 860	Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., LDS Church
Cemetery Beautification Comm.	2nd Thursday	7:00 p.m., City Library
Chamber of Commerce	2nd Wed.	Noon, Lew's Place
Doll Club	4th Tuesday	1:00 p.m., Senior Center
Friends of the Scout Cabin	4th Monday	7:00 p.m., City Library
Girl Scouts	Thursdays	6:30-8 p.m., Christian Church
Izaak Walton League	3rd Thursday	For location call 429-7193
Lions Club	1st & 3rd Tuesdays	6:30 p.m., Lew's Place
Nehalem Valley Car Club		For Info Call 429-4074
Preschool Story Hour	Wednesdays	10:30 a.m., City Library
Senior Center Directors	1st Friday	1:00 p.m., Senior Center
TOPS	Thursdays	6:30 p.m., 1st Baptist Church
Upr Nehalem Watershed Council	4th Thursday	For location call 429-2401
Vernonia Airport Committee	3rd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., City Library
Vernonia Cares Directors	1st Thursday	For location call 429-1414
Vernonia City Council	1st & 3rd Mondays	6:30 p.m., City Library
Vernonia Comm. Dev. Corp.	2nd Monday	7:00 p.m., Head Start Bldg.
Vernonia Grange	2nd Friday	7:00 p.m., Grange Hall
Vernonia Health Center	2nd Wednesday	6:00 p.m., 854 Grant Ave.
Vernonia Planning Comm.	1st Thursday	7:00 p.m., City Library
Vernonia Pride		For Info Call, 429-1204
Vernonia Ridge Riders	Last Thursday	7:00 p.m., VHS, Rm. 6
Vernonia RFPD Board	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Fire Station
Vernonia School Board	2nd Thursday	8:00 p.m., District Office
Vernonia Volunteer Firefighters	2nd Monday	7:00 p.m., Fire Station
WOEC Directors	3rd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., WOEC

MIST-BIRKENFELD

M-BRFPD Board	2nd & 4th Tuesday	7:30 p.m., Main Fire Station
M-B Ambulance Assoc.	1st & 2nd Thurs.	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
M-B Firefighters Assoc.	1st & 2nd Wed.	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
M-B Rescue	3rd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., Main Fire Station
M-B Helping Circle	2nd Wednesday	10:00 am, 755-2346 for info.
Natal Grange	2nd Wednesday	7:30 p.m., Grange Hall

BANKS

Alcoholics Anonymous	Fridays	8:00 p.m., Methodist Church
Banks City Council	2nd Tuesday	7:30 p.m., City Hall
Banks Planning Commission	Last Tuesday	7:00 p.m., City Hall
Banks School Board	2nd Monday	7:30 p.m., Jr. High Library
Banks Youth Group	Sundays, Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., UMC Youth Bldg.
Chamber of Commerce	1st Thursday	12:30 p.m., Brown Derby
Citizen Participation Org.	3rd Monday, odd months	7:15 p.m., City Hall
Friends of the Library	1st Saturday	10:00 a.m., City Library
Lions Club	1st & 3rd Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., Methodist Church
Sunset Park Assoc.	3rd Wednesday	8:00 p.m., Gun Club
TOPS	Wednesdays	7:00 p.m., Jr. High Library
Tri-City RFPD Board	2nd Wednesday	7:00 p.m., Station 13

COLUMBIA COUNTY (All meet in St. Helens unless otherwise noted.)

Board of Commissioners	Wednesdays	10 a.m., Courthouse
Citizens for Senior Justice	2nd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Sunset Park Church
COLCO Transportation	2nd Friday	10:30 a.m., Courthouse
County Council of Seniors	2nd Friday	1:00 p.m., Courthouse
County Fair Board	2nd & 4th Mondays	7:00 p.m., Fairgrounds
County Parks Commission	3rd Thursday	6:00 p.m., 1054 Oregon St.
Emergency Comm. Dist. (9-1-1)	3rd Tuesday	7:00 p.m., Courthouse
Historical Society	4th Wednesday	Noon, location call 429-3713
Traffic Safety Commission	1st Wednesday	7:00 a.m., Village Inn

Organizations and meeting dates not listed may be included by calling 429-9410 or by mail to The INDEPENDENT, 725 Bridge Street, Vernonia, OR 97064.