

Miller named OCEA Educator of the Year



Aaron Miller, far left, holds his Oregon Community Education Association (OCEA) award. Also pictured are the other state award recipients. Photo courtesy of OCEA.

Aaron Miller, principal of Vernonia School District's Mist School and Washington Grade School, was named Community Educator of the Year by the Oregon Community Education Association. The annual award goes to an individual involved with a community school, who has made a significant contribution to the success of students.

Miller was nominated by the Commission on Children and Families for his work in the development and management of a successful after-school program for Vernonia students. He is the principal of Mist Elementary and Washington Grade Schools.

The program was started in

1998 by the Commission on Children and Families to assist in decreasing juvenile crime in Vernonia. Younger and younger children were committing crimes during after school hours.

In 2005, it became necessary to find a new contractor for Vernonia's after-school program. Miller completed a proposal to the Commission on Children and Families requesting funds for after-school and summer programs. His proposal was successful and the Vernonia School District was awarded the funds. It remains in place to date.

The program includes homework clubs, twilight school and summer school

classes. It serves an average of 90 elementary through high school students during the school year, and about 90 students in the summer.

One of the program's goals is to increase school success as shown by an improvement in grades. Under Miller's management, the academic program has reached or exceeded this goal. When interviewed, all students in the High School component stated without the program their grades would be lower and/or they would not be graduating.

When the December, 2007, flood resulted in students being displaced, Miller immediately changed the hours and location of the program so it could be continue to provide these services to the students.

Another part of the program is summer swimming lessons. About 35 students, ages 5 - 13, attend classes at Cedar Ridge Summer Camp. The swimming program's goal is to increase child safety. It has consistently exceeded its goal, showing 50 percent of the youth in the program successfully complete the course as shown by course instructors.

As research shows, after-school programs decrease juvenile crime and can increase school success. Both are results of the Vernonia After School program under Miller's management. He has engaged parents and community members in supporting the program and the District. Through his work, the safety and wellbeing of the children and youth in Vernonia and surrounding areas has improved.

Chalk Talk

Chalk Talk is a monthly column of information about Vernonia schools. It is written by various staff members. This column was written by Superintendent Ken Cox, PhD.



We are nearing the end and I think both students and staff are ready for some summer weather and a chance to take a break from a very difficult year. The challenges we have faced as a district and as a community have been difficult both physically and emotionally. We all need to take some time to recharge our batteries, so to speak.

As the school year winds down it is important for us as a district and particularly as administration to look ahead and begin preparations to get next year off to a good start. Planning for effective staff development activities throughout the year is vital for us as educators to be most effective. We need ongoing professional support so that we too can continue to learn and grow as we work with your children.

Earlier this year, I announced at a board meeting that we would change our early release time on Friday afternoons to a late start on Wednesdays. This had been done in other districts, but was met with little enthusiasm and I realized that I had made that decision in a vacuum. Over the past few months I have visited with our administration and they have visited with staff and after gathering their input we are going to try a pilot program next year. We will move our early release staff development days from Friday to Wednesday afternoons in order to strengthen the learning opportunities for our staff.

This will require some schedule changes for you as parents, which is why we are sharing this information now and look to you for input now and throughout the pilot next year. We have also discussed the need to adjust the kindergarten schedule to coincide with early release days so kindergarten students will attend on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. I have heard that many of our kindergartners are very tired after four straight days of attending school and this will help address that concern.

As always please feel free to email me or stop by and visit. I have posted some updated information concerning where we are headed with the high school on our website and give an update in my next article.

Don't Forget ~
Father's Day is June 15.

Ballpark Celebration on June 14

A special Take Me Out to the Ballpark celebration will be held at Spencer Park on June 14 from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Events will include a player and coach appreciation ceremony at 10:00 a.m., Vernonia Slugfest '08 with 10 pitches from a pitching machine for \$1.00, Throwing Heat (test your

throwing speed) with three balls for \$1.00, a baseball BBQ, donation car wash, pop can drive, Red Cross blood drive and bike safety awareness information.

Join in a good time and help raise money for kids and field maintenance.

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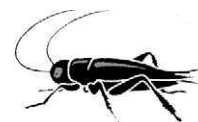
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