

47J Board approves increase in price for most school lunches

After a presentation by Food Service Manager Gretchen Lindauer at the February 12 meeting of the Vernonia School District, the Board of Directors approved a 25 cent increase in most categories of cafeteria meals. Food prices for the cafeteria increased by 30 percent last year, alone, Lindauer reported. Nevertheless, this is the first change since 1998, with the exception of a 2005 increase of 25 cents in the high school lunch price. The somewhat reluctant vote came after discussion of how the economy is affecting families, and assurance that the change will not affect students who receive free or reduced price meals. Lindauer was also directed to track complaints or any drop-off in sales. District Superintendent Kenneth Cox later told the board that a program allowing on-line payment for lunches will soon be available.

Lindauer included two other elements in her presentation. One, a recommendation that the salary for her position be reduced by 10 percent, and that food service be eliminated for adults on In-Service days. In addition to reducing their paid hours, the food service workers are offering to perform some necessary tasks without charge. The second element was to pass on comments from a state inspection complimenting the district on the nutritional quality of its meals.

The board also approved the Northwest Regional ESD's Local Service Plan, which provides many special education, technology, administrative and support services to small school districts in its area.

Business Manager Dawn Plews presented the audit report for the district's 2007-08 school year. The audit firm of Grove, Mueller & Swank, P.C., found all parts of the audit to be in compliance with requirements. Two recommendations were made regarding internal controls:

- Journal entries prepared and posted by the business manager should first be reviewed by another individual. That recommendation has been instituted;
- Payroll "draws" as currently practiced, result in payroll

taxes not being submitted timely under IRS guidelines. Compliance with the guidelines would require two complete payroll procedures, increasing accounting costs, so the district will phase out the practice in negotiations with staff.

Middle School leadership students reported on sports, academics, student recognitions and other activities, including that some MS band students are trying to raise enough money to join the high school band trip to Disneyland.

Approximately 30-40 students at Washington Grade School are participating in a walking circle before school, Principal Aaron Miller reported. The activity was initiated to help improve the health/activity level of students, and give them a controlled opportunity to move and get blood flowing to their brains. Students who are not participating continue to wait in line in the play shed.

Miller also told the board that two fourth grade students at Mist School participated in the National Assessment of Education Progress, a national test much like the Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills. Middle school students have met the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) goal in math. They haven't yet done so in reading, but there is still time to meet the goal.

High school Honors English students are seeking permission to attend the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland this spring, if they can raise funds for the trip. They are asking the district to pay only the cost of a substitute teacher.

Cox reported that some of the grant received by the Vernonia Prevention Coalition last fall (\$125,000 per year for five years) will be used for the services of a Prevention Intervention Specialist to work with school counselors in getting students involved in starting a Students Against Dangerous Drugs (SADD) group at VMS and VHS. Vernonia Police Department Officer Shawn Carnahan, who has trained in the field, will fill the position.

The next regular meeting will be March 12 at 6:00 p.m. in the district office.

Chalk Talk

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

In light of recent economic activities, we are still searching for the light at the end of the tunnel. We will know more this Friday when the next economic forecast comes out, but it will mean at least \$328,000 in cuts to the district this year. The Board has chosen to offset some of this year's shortfall through the use of capital reserves, but we do need to keep as much of that as possible for our new schools. And while the federal stimulus package will provide additional funding, that may not come until next year.

As we look forward to next year, we estimate that we will need to make as much as \$750,000 in cuts. This can only be done through reducing staff, since 80-85 percent of our budget is used for salaries and benefits. We have already announced some cuts and will continue to make more to bring us to a balanced budget as we work through the budget process over the next few weeks.

You may have heard that the Governor has

named our community as one of three priorities for the state in applying for stimulus block grants. To capitalize on this opportunity we will need to move forward quickly in the design of our new schools. To address this need and to specifically discuss where they should be located, the District will be sponsoring a Town Hall meeting at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, March 2, in the VHS cafeteria.

The Oregon Solutions School Site Committee and the engineering firms that conducted the Transportation Growth Management (TGM) study will be there to present their findings. The community will then be given a chance to weigh in and share their opinions on the site location for our new schools. The information gathered from the public at this meeting will then be reviewed by the school board at their regular March 12 board meeting, where they will either make a decision or determine what additional information they need.

We encourage everyone to attend the Vernonia School District Town Hall meeting on March 2 at 7:00 p.m. in the cafeteria.



Can you help Jump Rope for WGSPE?

Washington Grade School (WGS) and The Clever Cricket Toy Store are participating in a project to help raise funds for the WGS P.E. Department (WGSPE), while joining in the fight against the nation's No. 1 and No. 3 killers – cardiovascular disease and stroke.

Jump Rope for WGSPE helps students learn about the benefits of regular physical activity and heart health while raising funds to help the P.E. program. The money raised, combined with funds donated by the Vernonia PTA, will fund a new climbing wall and help buy more P.E. equipment.

Most people don't realize that the roots of cardiovascular disease in adults often begin in childhood, from age 10 and even younger. That's why it's important to make changes now. Help your children have a

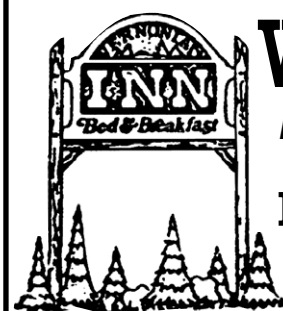
happy and heart healthy future by teaching them to: eat healthy foods, stay physically active and live tobacco-free.

Jump Rope for WGS P.E. Department will take place in instructor George Spaulding's P.E. classes from March 2 to 20.

Families and friends are welcome to support our students' participation by making contributions through the collection envelopes brought home by participating children, and due back March 18 and 19. Mr. Spaulding asks that students

not go door-to-door or ask for donations from strangers. Checks should be made payable to Washington Grade School.

Participants will receive thank you gifts from the Clever Cricket Toy Store based on the donation level. The top three fundraisers will receive two free games of bowling and free shoe rental at Rainbow Lanes in Forest Grove. The top fundraising class gets to pick their P.E. activity for one week. The Jump Rope for WGS P.E. goal is \$2000.



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