

Walk and Bike to School on Oct. 7

On Wednesday, October 7, over 4 million kids from around the world will celebrate International Walk and Bike to School Day. Washington Grade School invites you and your family to join approximately 25,000 adults and children around Oregon by walking or biking to school. Last year, 140 students (over 60% of the Washington Grade School population) participated in this fun event.

Walk and Bike to School Day encourages children, parents, teachers, and community members to celebrate the benefits of walking and biking throughout the community and raises awareness for the need to create neighborhoods that are safe for pedestrians and bicyclists. There are many benefits to walking and biking to school – it makes children more physically active, reduces automobile trips and the associated congestion and pollution, and creates a sense of community.

Encouraging kids to walk or bike to school gives them more than a healthy dose of exercise. It's a great way to teach them about safety, trust and independence, and it can improve their performance in school. "Walking and biking to school can actually make kids

better students. When kids walk and bike to school, they get refreshed, get social time with friends, and get healthy, which leads to better communication, better moods, and a more active brain," said Washington Grade School P.E. teacher George Spaulding, "And best of all, they get to work out some of their nervous excitement before reaching their classroom."

Research indicates that since the early 1970s there has been a steady decline in the number of children walking and biking to school, even among those children living a mile or less from school. Reasons for this trend include increasing concerns for child safety, traffic along pedestrian and bicycle corridors, and in many cases, students attending schools far from their homes. Walk and Bike to School Day can help students, parents, educators, and community leaders reverse this trend by identifying and working to solve many of these barriers.

Small prizes will be given as incentives, including one Nutcase helmet provided by the Oregon Safe Routes to School Program.

Put more feet on the street on October 7.

Outdoor school gets kids out in nature

September 22 through 25, fifty sixth graders and thirty-nine high school counselors participated in Vernonia outdoor school. Outdoor school provides educational experiences which foster connections with plants, animals and habitats in the Pacific Northwest, while deepening students' knowledge and appreciation of nature. Students also took part in creative classes, which in-

cluded boat making, outdoor cooking, tie dye, photo frames, origami and nature egg drop.

The classes were taught by community experts, who volunteered their time to support our students. This outdoor school was held at Cedar Ridge at a greatly reduced price, which helped the continuation of this great program. This was a great experience for sixth graders as they spent the night

Chalk Talk

Chalk Talk is a column of information about Vernonia schools. This column was provided by Superintendent Dr. Ken Cox.

If you take 50 sixth graders, add 39 high school students acting as counselors, mix in 13 adult volunteers, and two very dedicated teachers, what do you get? Four days of memories that will last a lifetime!

Last week I visited our Outdoor School Camp at Cedar Ridge just as they were assembling for the morning flag ceremony. Most of the students had droopy eyes and some still damp hair. Each line of sixth graders had a couple of high school counselors with them and they were all surprisingly quiet (it was just before 8 a.m.). I asked them what had they been doing, some girls said they had been swimming, and the boys said it was their turn that day, since the girls swam the day before.

After the flag ceremony I was invited to join three different groups for breakfast and spent the next fifteen minutes going from table to table visiting with these kids who were just now starting to wake up. I spoke with the leaders, asking how it was going and was pleased to find that in two full days and nights the only issue that had come up was a couple of boys squirting each other at the drinking fountain.

We don't need to be part of a big district to find a highly successful educational program for our children. We have one right here in Vernonia! Due to funding concerns this program was on the chopping block during the budget-

away from their parents, and bonded not only with each other but also with the middle school staff. Outdoor school was a terrific way to start out their middle school experience. A big thanks goes to Curl's Transportation and to all of the people who volunteered their time to make this program a huge success.

Final Columbia County Fair 4-H awards

Following are partial results from 4-H competition at the Columbia County Fair. Due to space limitations, only results within *The Independent's* circulation area are included.

HORSE AND PONY

Horse, Gaming, Figure 8, Senior: White Award – Chelle Grabhorn, Scappoose; Brianna

Carr, Vernonia; Ashley Paleck, Vernonia; McKenzie Tarkalson, Vernonia.

Horse, Gaming, Barrels, Junior: White Award – Taylor Halverson, Clatskanie; Madison Dreyer, Deer Island; Natalie Cook, Rainier; Azaya Holmes, Rainier Michelle Sass, St. Helens; Megan Tarkalson, Vernonia; Morgan Tarkalson, Vernonia.

Horse, Gaming, Barrels, Senior: White Award – Ashley Paleck, Vernonia; McKenzie Tarkalson, Vernonia; Rose Brady, Warren.

Horse, Gaming, Key Race, Junior: White Award – Taylor Halverson, Clatskanie; Madison Dreyer, Deer Island; Megan Tarkalson, Vernonia; Morgan Tarkalson, Vernonia.

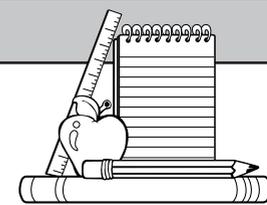
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ing process, but was saved in the last round of add-backs at the budget committee's recommendation. Last week I was reminded why this program is so vital to the well-rounded education of our students.

The two teachers who have run this program for the past few years are Geoff Schwartz and Justin Ward. They have been supported in their efforts by all of the middle school staff and many community volunteers. Together, they have contributed over 300 hours of their time to make this program a success. I cannot say enough about what a great job they are doing. In three and a half days last week they provided at least 35 hours of activities, which not only included campfires, night hikes, crafts, and boat races, but also field studies and kitchen duties.

As a community we are very blessed to have such dedicated teachers and volunteers who, year after year, spend countless hours preparing for, coordinating, and implementing this program. They do this because of their dedication to our kids and the personal growth that can take place in each student in less than a week.

On a side note, remember that there is a bond election coming up and if you have questions about how this will impact you there is a tax calculator on the district website at www.vernonia.k12.or.us.



Vernonia Community PTA Urges You to Vote YES on Bond Measure 5-197 Save Our Schools

