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Co-Conveners Commissioner Tony Hyde and Tom Kelly receive a \$20,000 check from Verizon Foundation, Renee Willer

Oregon Solutions receives \$20,000 for Vernonia Schools Project

On June 23, at the Oregon Solutions team meeting, Verizon Foundation representative Renee Willer presented a \$20,000 check to Commissioner Tony Hyde and Tom Kelly, co-conveners of the Oregon Solutions – Vernonia Schools project. These funds will support the collaborative work of the federal, state, and community partners as they re-site the schools and build a funding package to implement the project.

Collaboration among diverse team members is needed in Vernonia because of the flood that devastated downtown Vernonia in December 2007, damaging and destroying homes, businesses, and essential services. Vernonia's three schools were inundated with water and debris. Recently, the Army Corps of Engineers issued new flood plains maps, placing the schools squarely in the high-risk zone, making it impossible for the schools to obtain private insurance on the buildings in their current location.

The Oregon Solutions team began meeting in April of 2008 and has quickly moved into action. This summer, the team will finalize the site and begin to work on the funding necessary to get Vernonia's school children out of the floodplain.

The philanthropic arm of Verizon, the Verizon Foundation, is dedicated to K-12 education as well as community safety and health issues. In December they also gave a \$12,000 grant from their 'unmet need fund' to help the Vernonia community.

“This most recent Foundation contribution of \$20,000 to the Vernonia Schools Project has been pledged because Verizon is passionate and dedicated to education. We felt the community needs our support and want to help to work quickly to provide safe, healthy schools. We were concerned over reports of declining school enrollment and want to make sure people come back and keep the community thriving,” Willer said at the Oregon Solutions team meeting.

The mission of Oregon Solutions is to develop sustainable solutions to community-based problems that support economic, environmental, and community objectives and are built through the collaborative efforts of businesses, government, and non-profit organizations. Governor Kulongoski appoints community conveners to lead the projects. By using a community governance system, the partners reach agreement on what they will do together to solve problems or opportunities they face. Oregon Solutions leverages and integrates public and private resources, engaging communities in solving local problems. Since 2001, Oregon Solutions has assisted over 40 communities throughout the state.

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