

VCMS shelter home to many during blackout

By [Steve Smith - Staff Writer](#)

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Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman speaks with Ryan, 9, and Kejuan, 10, at the town's shelter at Vernon Center Middle School on Nov. 3. Photos by Steve Smith.

Many Vernon residents sought aid during the power outage caused by the Oct. 29 snowstorm at the shelter at Vernon Center Middle School. Emergency Management Director Michael Purcaro said the shelter had maxed out at 200 beds on Tuesday, but an additional 100 cots (and pillows and blankets) came in from the National Guard.

Youth and Family Services Director Alan Slobodien said more than 200 people were staying at the shelter on a regular basis during the week after the storm, but more than 500 have been coming for meals. Many employees of the Town of Vernon and Vernon Public Schools manned the shelter—helping to distribute meals, assist those with special needs, and organizing games and activities for children. There were also electronics charging terminals and a video game station (not surprisingly populated largely by teen and pre-teen boys).



Mayor Jason McCoy periodically visited the shelter, to give updates on the town's power restoration. "There's an estimate of Sunday [for 99 percent restoration]," McCoy said Thursday. "I don't see that happening by Sunday, with the number of power lines we have that are down. We're doing the best that we can, and the shelter will remain open. My estimate is about 14 days from the day of the storm — that's the bad news — but we'll see."

Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman visited the shelter on the afternoon of Nov. 5. "It's amazing... wonderful," she said of the shelter and its volunteers, and gave them a round of applause. "We know how blessed we really are," Wyman said. "While you're here, you've got great company, great people, and — like I keep saying to people — keep the faith."

Wyman also reminded people that if they returned to their homes and used generators, they should make sure they are kept outside, since the greatest danger currently is due to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Northeast School students Kejuan, 10, and Ryan, 9, spoke with Wyman, and said they appreciated her visit. "It's good that we get to see her, and that she took the time to actually come here," Kejuan said.

"It was nice meeting her, and it was nice having her time," Ryan said. "She's doing a lot of good stuff."

Slobodien said the mood of people at the shelter has been upbeat. "Everybody's been real helpful and working together," he said, adding that the pleasant weather saw most people going elsewhere during the daytime.

Slobodien said he also wasn't sure if CL&P's estimates would be accurate, but the shelter would be there as long as needed.

"It may be for a while, but we're here for the duration," he said.