

## NEXT GENERATION | SCHOOL NEWS



Smokey Bear visited K-3 classes in April and gave students important reminders about fire prevention.

## Applegate School activities abound before year-end

BY JEAN HALL

Spring brought a new burst of activities at Applegate School. Gardening, field trips, science projects, and special visitors to the classrooms have involved students in exciting learning projects. With the help of White Oak Farm, K-3 students developed a beautiful garden where they spend time weeding and planting each week. Fourth and fifth graders have been cleaning up the butterfly garden and are planting new milkweeds in the original milkweed bed and flowers in the other bed.

Mrs. Hirschmugl and Mrs. Halsted have arranged for their K-3 students to go on field trips to White Oak Farm, Pacifica, the Applegate Fire Station 1, and the Applegate branch of the Jackson County Library. Fourth and fifth graders read *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and are looking forward to seeing a live production at the Britt Festival in May.

Most middle-school students earned a reward day at the end of the third quarter by maintaining their grades and showing good behavior. They played bunko, watched a movie, had extra time outside, and enjoyed ice cream sundaes.

Eighth graders took a class trip to the coast on May 26. Mrs. Gourley says the exploration of the redwood trees included rope bridges through the trees and a cable car ride to a higher vantage point. Students spent the remainder of the day on the Oregon coast beach where they played games, visited the tide pools, and had a bonfire.

Science projects have opened up new learning for Applegate students. K-3 classes each had an incubator full of eggs, which hatched at the end of April. Students in both classrooms learned about the life cycle of chickens, beginning with a study of the parts of an egg. Some eggs in the incubators were fertilized from a rooster that K-1 students hatched in their classroom last year. Other eggs were donated from Walport Family Vineyards. At Family Science night on April 25, students showcased their project.

In fourth and fifth grades, students have been working through the scientific process with a series of mini experiments having to do with the properties of water.

In addition to these experiments, the class has been studying the ecology and four different local habitats in the Upper Table Rock area. The class will wrap up their study with a hike to Upper Table Rock.

Special visitors to the classrooms helped to broaden the students' understanding. Guests from the Applegate Valley Fire Department and the US Forest Service spoke to the K-3 classes about fire prevention. Smokey Bear visited K-3 classes on April 18 and gave them more reminders about fire prevention. Before he left, he hugged or high-fived each student. A group called "Japan on the Road" visited the K-3 classes to teach students about Japanese customs and culture.

Middle-school students have been doing projects to enhance their new learning. Eighth graders finished reading *The Outsiders* and then created a box diorama for one of the iconic scenes in the book. Then they watched the movie and did a compare/contrast between the movie and the book.

In social studies, sixth graders have been working on a project about the people groups of South America. They studied Central America and the Caribbean and took a deep look at the rainforest. Seventh and eighth graders have done projects on Ancient Rome in which they built a 3D model of the ancient city and labeled significant locations, events, and people. Their latest project is the creation of a display board around early American civilizations.

Other events for Applegate students included spring conferences and state testing for grades three through eight. Track-and-field day was at the end of May. The Moving On ceremony for eighth graders will take place on June 5 at 1 pm. A few students have been selected to give speeches. Those who have attended the school from kindergarten through eighth grade will be honored. Students are creating memory boards to display during the ceremony.

Happy summer to all the Applegate School staff and students!

Jean Hall

jhall80@juno.com

## Where every day is Earth Day

BY SOFIA MACIEL

Earth's awakening, otherwise known as spring, has been long awaited here in the Pacific Northwest after a long winter. In April, students were preparing for warmer weather, exploring outdoors, and tending to more food crops in our growing school garden. Each student, like the blooming plants, gets a chance to flourish in our garden space alongside peers, teachers,



First and second graders in Ms. Neiswanger's class do some work in the garden. Photo: Sofia Maciel.

community volunteers, bugs, lizards, and so much more.

Earth Day is a well-loved holiday celebrated here at Ruch Outdoor Community School (ROCS). This year we celebrated with a spring in our step! Community members from all over southern Oregon came to volunteer their time and teach our students an array of new Earthly knowledge.

Kindergarteners hiked along the Applegate Ridge trail surveying different flowers in bloom. Led by their teacher, the class made observations and collected data about the changes occurring in our new sunny season.

First graders tended to our pollinator garden on campus. They used gardening tools to plant new seeds and prepare new garden beds for future garden projects that support the essential insects, birds, and people at Ruch. They also painted decorative rocks for the school garden with the help of Cheryl Whitney, our artistic community partner.

Second and third graders created natural wood cookie windchimes with Cheryl to hang in their own gardens or homes and then explored riparian habitats at our local park with their teachers.

Fourth and fifth grades rotated stations at ROCS where they learned new skills and practiced environmental awareness with local volunteer teachers. Caleb Galloway, an Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council (APWC) volunteer and teacher, took students on interpretive hikes through the school's nature park. He was impressed by Ruch students and their knowledge of local plants and organisms. In another station, students observed donated carcasses of coho and steelhead salmon and learned what role this creature plays in our rivers and habitats. Another station was led by Jennifer Payne, with Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative, to practice burning different fuel combinations. Students discussed why we practice controlled burning in southern Oregon. Lastly, Ruch students expressed gratitude to the Earth in the garden with Darien Aubinoe, our teaching partner

from White Oak Farm and Education Center. They created artistic heartfelt cards, giving thanks to all that felt special to them about the Earth in that moment.

Middle schoolers ended the day with community service. Sixth graders helped service the ROCS campus and garden while seventh and eighth graders did service at Cantrall Buckley Park. After taking interpretive hikes with Caleb, the APWC vegetation monitor, and Darien, the education liaison at White Oak Farm, half of the middle schoolers removed invasive English ivy along trail systems and the other half removed invasive blackberries along riparian ecosystems. They all used hand tools, protective equipment, and teamwork to accomplish the job.

Each of our community volunteers thought the Ruch students were awesome. We agreed that they are curious, fun-loving, outdoorsy, and adventurous spirits that bring their own spice of life to our teaching.

At the end of this busy Earth celebration, the buzz of bees, the chatter of students, and the fellowship of community filled our school breezeways. Each student was offered a ponderosa pine tree sapling to plant where they felt more nature was needed. As this year's AmeriCorps service member in charge of Rural Environmental Education and coordination at ROCS, I am overwhelmed with awe at how much these students have wondered and observed and how much they have taught me as they learn in nature.

I am also in awe of how willing the community, the parents, and the organizations are to come together to support the values and the mission of ROCS. The Applegate Valley is a beautiful environment inside and out, filled with love of working and learning outside. There is a never-ending list of lessons to be learned from nature, no matter your age. There is always a new mystery, a new challenge, or a new observation to be discovered in the outdoors.

Sofia Maciel, AmeriCorps  
Ruch Outdoor Community School  
julie.barry@medford.k12.or.us

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Have a safe and sane Fourth of July!