

Learning life skills in the garden

By Diane Goble
Correspondent

They love to work, to learn and to help others. That's the spirit of Sisters High School Special Education teacher Josh Nordell's Life Skills class as his students spend time each day working, learning, and having fun outside the classroom.

Nordell and educational assistant Sherri Hermens have been leading this class for the past four years and have seen great progress among their students with teamwork, social skills, and problem-solving. It is their hope these motivated young people will be able to live independently and find jobs to help support themselves after high school.

The group starts each week at Outlaw Martial Arts with a class in Adaptive Taekwondo with Marty Kaczmarek. On Tuesdays, the school bus takes them to the community garden in front of Sisters Airport where Marvin Benson teaches the students about planting and growing their own food.

This week he had them

filling in a 20-foot-long trench that was dug to bring power lines into the newly completed greenhouse to run the lights and cooling fans, watering and pollinating the plants they planted inside the greenhouse, and planting tomato plants along the fence line. "I teach them to care about what they plant in their garden," Benson says, "and about the pride and satisfaction that comes from bringing food from their garden to the table." Benson has also started teaching them wood-working skills in his Intarsia workshop.

On Wednesdays, each student gets to be the chef for the week at Sisters High School culinary class. The chef learns to shop at Ray's for the ingredients on the shopping list and prepare a meal for the group. On Thursdays they get to do their favorite thing, play golf at Aspen Lakes Golf Course.

At other times, they may be at Sisters Athletic Club where they clean the exercise machines and get the room ready for the next class, at Melvin's or Ray's where they help with stocking and



PHOTO BY DIANE GOBLE

Sisters students at work in the community garden.

cleaning displays, or at City Hall where they help clean up around the office and chambers. In all cases, they get to interact with a variety of people, learn potential job skills, and practice their social skills.

In the future, Nordell hopes to connect his class with Harmony Farms, an animal rescue shelter, and Mustangs to the Rescue where wild and abandoned horses are rehabilitated. If you have a business or a nonprofit that could use a

little extra help or if you have special skills you'd like to share with these eager learners, call Josh Nordell at 541-549-3194 to make arrangements.

Nordell says, "It would be great if we could continue these activities during the summer, but right now there are no funds for a summer program for these special students."

Contact him if you have any ideas for developing a summer life skills program or fundraising.

REMEMBERING

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cohesion that was generated in training among people of disparate backgrounds.

"Without exception, every one of those crews worked together like they'd known each other for years," he said.

Williams reflected ruefully on the fate of his unit's new planes when they reached their theater of operations.

"We took our new, shiny airplanes to Wales, where we promptly lost them," he said. "All the old-timers said, 'we'll take the new stuff; you'll take what's left.'"

Williams had two brothers in World War II, and several sons and nephews served in the military during the Vietnam War. A total of 11 family members contributed a total of more than 50 years of service.

Williams continues to serve, now working as a volunteer with Habitat for Humanity.

The observances concluded with the traditional playing of "Taps" by Boy Scout Seth Roy. Lance Trowbridge and Earl Schroeder raised the American flag from its post at half-staff and invited the attendees to join in a barbecue, reflecting on the service and sacrifice of so many over so many decades.

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