

# Science project educates students

By **Jodi Schneider McNamee**  
Correspondent

Sisters Science Club board member Bunny Thompson has been promoting worm composting for years in all of the Sisters schools by providing worm bins, lectures and hands-on participation with the students in the classrooms.

Worms are best-friends to the environment. They create the perfect soil for gardens and yards, and composting reduces the amount of the garbage that is sent to dumps and landfills.

“Red wigglers are great worms for composting; they eat their weight in kitchen scraps every day,” Thompson told *The Nugget*. “You’ll start with a bin of the worms, add peat moss, shredded newspaper and some water and then every about three months you’ll notice that inside your bin will start looking really dark and muddy. That’s vermiculture, or worm poop. Then you’ll separate the worms from the vermiculture. What is left is the best fertilizer you can ever get for any of your plants!”

In early November Thompson dropped off a worm bin full of red wigglers

to Delaney Sharp, head teacher for Black Butte School (BBS) in Camp Sherman.

“Last autumn Bunny and I discussed ways that BBS could be involved with Sisters Science Club. And when she asked if we would like to start a worm bin at the school, we went for it,” Sharp said.

“Students at the BBS have made their own red worm farm ...”

“Since we’ve had the worm bin the students have been putting in food scraps from their lunches that the worms like to eat. And over the course of the last few months our worms have multiplied rapidly and eaten a lot of our excess food. And that led to some great discussions about food and waste and how food ends up at the landfill if we don’t compost it or eat it.”

Vermicomposting — using worms for composting — provides a way for waste management and reduction to

become part of the academic curriculum.

A couple of weeks ago Thompson went back to BBS to help the students, K – 8, separate the worms from the vermiculture.

“The teachers really made an effort to get the whole school involved in the worm composting project,” Thompson said.

A hands-on science project allows the students to take more responsibility for their learning as they make decisions and create solutions to problems that interest them.

“We set up some tables outside, and all the students got to work separating the worms into one pile and vermiculture into another. There was no hesitation, all the students got their hands right into the black goey material,” Sharp said. “The students had a great time naming the worms and marveling at how many there were. We discussed fun facts about worms with Bunny, and how important worms are to healthy soil and plants.”

Once the vermiculture was ready for use, the students planted some seeds and set up an experiment.

Seventh-grader Shelby



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Bunny Thompson leads students in worm composting.

Gould, who attends a journalism class, writes about happenings at school on her blog page. Here is what she had to say about the worm composting project:

“Students at the BBS have made their own red worm farm where we compost certain foods and hope to help our ecosystem. We recently started an experiment where we planted different plants (seeds) in four kinds of soil. The various soils are: Local dirt from the school yard, potting soil from local stores in Sisters, vermiculture, and a special mix between the vermiculture and potting soil.”

The students planted the seeds, watered them and set them out to grow in the school solarium.

“So far after a week-and-a-half the soil with the

vermiculture is growing faster than the others. We will continue monitoring the plants for the rest of the spring to see which soil type does best. We ended up with enough worms to split them into two bins. We put more food in there for them to eat and put them back to work composting our lunch waste and producing more, rich vermiculture.

The project is part of their Field Studies Program and the theme for spring is “Food and Farming.” The program is taught by Ethan Barrows and Delaney Sharp.

“We will be visiting local farms as well to learn about how to grow food and take care of the soil,” Sharp said. “And we plan to continue our worm bins and partner with Bunny Thompson and the SSC on future projects.”

## Quilt Drawing

for  
**FURRY FRIENDS**  
FOUNDATION  
501(c)(3)

100% of the proceeds go to Furry Friends Foundation.

“Friends of Furry Friends” quilt was pieced by Valerie Fercho-Tillery. The bold colors and incredible detail make this a spectacular quilt.

The quilt is currently on display at  
The Nugget office, 442 E. Main Ave.

Bring your pup by for a dog cookie and have a look!

Tickets may be purchased at The Nugget office  
or online at our website  
[www.furryfriendsfoundation.org](http://www.furryfriendsfoundation.org).



Tickets are \$1 each, six for \$5 or  
go for it, 25 for \$20.



Info: 541-549-9941



“Friends of Furry Friends” - by Valerie Fercho-Tillery (46”w x 59”h)