

Sisters students craft ornaments for national tree

Sisters will be well-represented when the Capitol Christmas Tree lights up in Washington, DC this Christmas season.

Fifth-grade students in Sisters participate in a unit of study to commemorate the Capitol Christmas Tree, also known as the People's Tree, coming from the nearby Willamette National Forest this year.

The Sweet Home Ranger District is sending an 80-foot noble fir along with 70 companion trees and thousands of handmade ornaments to Washington D.C. The tree will be cut in early November and will "trace the Oregon Trail in reverse" on a 3,000-mile journey to adorn the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol building in December. Tanya Young, fifth-grade science teacher, and Judy Fuentes, middle school art teacher, teamed up to share this historic event with Sisters Middle School fifth graders.

In science class, students learned about the size and scope of the Willamette National Forest, its special places, and unique characteristics.

"The focus wasn't on the holiday; it was about the Willamette National Forest," Young told *The Nugget*. "We talked about the Cascades and the rainshadow of the Cascades."

The students compared and contrasted the Willamette to the Deschutes National Forest, examining the difference more precipitation can make in a forest ecosystem. They read about the tree selection process and examined the role of the Sweet Home Ranger District and local community in this venture.

Fifth-grade students also had an opportunity to see one of the 200 commemorative ornaments hidden in the Willamette National Forest this summer in class. The hunt was launched by the Willamette Visitors Association to inspire people to explore the trails. Young shared her experience searching for a hidden green ornament on the lush trails of the Willamette — her favorite area to hike. She explained to her students that she failed many times to find the ornament.

"I spent all summer out looking for these hidden ornaments, so I could show them," Young told *The Nugget*. "I must have gone out 14 times. The pressure

was on."

Late in the season, her son, Sisters graduate Rob Marola, spotted one of the green glass ornaments in a tree.

Students created nine-by-12-inch ornaments of their own in art class for the Capitol Tree. They worked on some of them

collaboratively. The large, waterproof ornaments are symbolic, featuring covered wagons, the bald eagle, and the physical outline of Oregon. Sentiments like, "Home Sweet Home," and references to the Oregon Trail make the ornaments a meaningful addition to the tree.

Such collaborative projects are not unusual in Sisters, and Young is used to working with Fuentes, integrating art into other curricula.

"We've been working together on the Studio to Schools Grant through the Sisters Folk Festival and the Sisters School District," she said.

On Thursday, September 27, Young delivered some 40 ornaments to the Sweet Home Ranger District for their long journey to the Capitol.

"Students and teachers are thrilled to support Sweet Home and be part of this memorable event," Young said. "This is

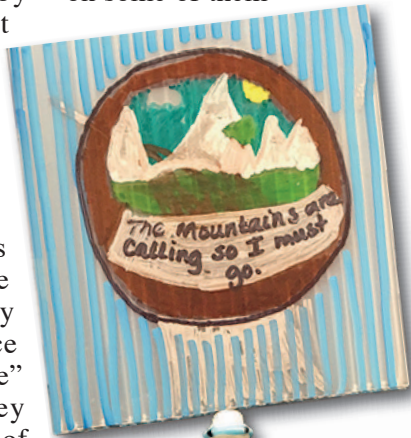


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Ornaments reflected Oregon themes like nature and the Oregon Trail.



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Sisters Middle School students worked together to make ornaments for the Capitol Christmas Tree.

only the second time that the Capitol Tree has come from Oregon. The last time was in 2002 when the tree was selected from the Umpqua

National Forest. It is the first occasion in (the) lives of the fifth-graders that the Capitol tree is coming from their home state."

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