

# Warm Springs second-graders visit Sisters farm

By **Katy Yoder**  
Correspondent

On April 9, 40 second-graders from the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs traveled on a school bus to Sisters. They disembarked on ancestral lands of the Northern Paiute tribe, which is now the home of Seed to Table Farm.

The farm was started by Sisters High School graduate Audrey Tehan. Along with staff and fervent volunteers, she's built a bustling farm on an acre-and-a-half. It's become fertile ground for growing local produce, teaching students about healthy eating and farming — and now cross-cultural exchanges that are growing new relationships.

Last month's visit was the first of many days program director Tehan will be welcoming 200 students from Warm Springs. Seed to Table was invited by tribal members to help expand experiential, nutrition education through gardening and outdoor experiences. During last month's visit, the students tasted food right out of the ground, planted seeds and learned about the five main things plants need to grow. Now a month later, the students returned to reap the harvest they'd planted in April. There were big, red radishes, spinach and salad greens ready for harvest.

Crystal Vogt, Seed to Table's K-8 Education Coordinator, led the group in two hours of activities that culminated in the children harvesting, cleaning, preparing and eating a salad from found greens and those grown earlier.

Joining the enthusiastic group of students and teachers John Brunoe, who's a tribal member and educator with OSU Extension Service, was knee deep introducing students to farming. He joined students finding earthworms used in composting and taught them how to gently pick spinach leaves and pull radishes from the ground.

Brunoe grew up in Warm Springs and is excited about the nutritional benefits of eating food grown on home soil. He's seen how the positive experience of getting young hands in the dirt and watching how hard work can turn into something delicious to eat helps encourage healthier diets and more outdoor activities.

Brunoe met Tehan when they were writing grant requests to the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council (COIC). They both received a Farm to School grant from COIC that helped their organizations realize their goals for improving existing farm-related programming.

Brunoe's job with the OSU Extension Service includes 4-H projects and encouraging agricultural endeavors. He's hopeful with Warm Springs' abundance of water and a longer growing season than areas like Sisters, they could embark on some agricultural business endeavors that are income-producing and educational. "We are looking for ways to generate income, but the main thing now is for the kids to have fun. Time on the farm gives students a connection to Mother Earth and physical, meaningful and engaging activities to do. Long-term he's interested in seeing how agriculture could contribute to a more sustainable, healthy food source that's grown locally.

"Warm Springs gets an extra 20 to 30 days each year in their growing season," said Brunoe. "So I have a lot of respect for Audrey and how she's growing food out here. I'm learning from her, how she's gotten through some of her challenges. We're working together that way, too. We have two different environments, but our goals are mainly the same."

Brunoe grew up in Warm Springs and went to school there. He left for 20 years and lived in Portland and

went to school. That's when he learned more about nutrition. He knows the field trips teach students about nutrition, where their food comes from, and how it is raised. Increased activity is good for students too. "Not to mention," he added, "that eventually their work will be rewarded with a bounty of nutritional food."

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His job at Warm Springs includes integrating traditional foods that are grown and collected locally. Through their culture and heritage department, he's providing a place for foods to be prepared and processed in a greenhouse.

"Right now, we have a variety of food growing there including a root called luksh that's drying in our



PHOTO PROVIDED

John Brunoe with a student from Warm Springs.

greenhouse," he said. "So, we have roots drying, lettuce starts and marigolds growing."

Brunoe remembers as a child being shown how to

gather luksh. Now it's his turn to pass along traditions and knowledge that will provide

healthy, delicious food for generations to come.

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