

Applegaters flash donor and volunteer spirit

BY LYN HENNION

“We get great satisfaction out of making this a vibrant, healthy environment,” say my Applegate friends and neighbors connected to The Oregon Community Foundation (OCF). Here are a few of their stories.

Former resident Priscilla Bixler wanted her charitable giving to be anonymous during her lifetime; it remained so well after her death in 2010. Now the donor behind the original Applegate Library Fund of OCF has been revealed.

The Bixlers had a ranch near the Applegate Library, which Priscilla visited regularly. She was cheerfully hooked on books, and because of that the library gets a significant financial boost. Her permanently endowed fund, established when Priscilla was in her mid-90s, has granted \$10,000 to \$12,000 annually since 2006—a total of \$104,070.

Community 101 gives students an opportunity for real-life learning through philanthropy and volunteering. A class



Priscilla Bixler

gets \$5,000 (from eight quiet Applegate donors) to award to nonprofit groups of its choice. Kids do research to determine community needs and then present the grants.

Led by teacher Jason Straube, Ruch School has one of the most successful of OCF’s 50 Community 101 projects in the state. 2015’s Diaper Dash fun run raised \$900 in diaper donations and \$550 cash.

This year’s team includes 12 students in grades five through eight who will visit the Family Nurturing Center in Medford. The \$750 donated by last year’s group upgraded the run-down “wobblers” area with rubberized floors and specialized toys.

Pat Gordon’s involvement as an OCF donor is part of her “personal affairs in order” project. Gordon learned that a charitable gift at her death could help causes she’s passionate about, so she established the Pat Gordon Fund for Public Libraries and Small Woodlands.

“Stewardship is a basic principle for me,” says Pat. “Through education and modeling, we can honor the earth and the human community.”

In the 1980s Pat was an original organizer of the effort to start a public library and became the first librarian at Ruch Library. She was also deeply involved in woodlands planning efforts during the 44 years she stewarded 80 acres in the Middle Applegate.

Priscilla Weaver has been a volunteer grant reviewer for the Reed and Carolee Walker Fund of OCF for eight years. The fund supports many organizations serving people in poverty throughout Jackson County, including the Applegate Food Pantry, which distributes food boxes weekly in Ruch.

“Serving as a reviewer is one of the most satisfying volunteer efforts I’ve ever made,” says Priscilla. “We’re able to dig into grant applications and provide OCF staff with detailed analysis of nonprofits and their projects.”

Matt and Donna Epstein have been involved in giving and volunteering for two decades. Matt served on the Walker Fund Advisory Committee and as a grant evaluator. The Epsteins founded and managed the Applegate Food Pantry for 14 years. Now Matt works with Ruch School on special projects, volunteers as a SMART reader, and serves on the Applegate Fire District Budget Committee.

“We want to help rural students get expanded learning opportunities and assist people who have trouble meeting their basic needs,” Matt says.

Attorney Alissa Weaver lives

near Logtown Cemetery and chairs the Walker Fund Advisory Committee. Much of Alissa’s legal work involves juvenile dependency cases, and clients receive services from the organizations the fund supports, such as St. Vincent de Paul, the Family Nurturing Center, and Goodwill.

With specialized skills and her observations of social service agencies from her clients’ perspectives, Alissa got involved with OCF because she wanted to know how nonprofits work best.

“There’s a unique Applegate vibe, and people are good at taking care of their own,” says Alissa. “We’re here because of conscious decisions, and I believe that makes our community involvement efforts more intentional, too.”

Tom and Kathy Carstens have been involved with charitable giving since they moved to the Applegate in 2004. Recently, they established a new Donor Advised Fund.

“Donors can give advice on where to direct their resources,” Kathy emphasizes. “We work through OCF to avoid reinventing the wheel.”

Tom has been a volunteer with The Nature Conservancy, Applegate Fire District, Britt Festivals, Applegate Trails Association, the *Applegater*, the Greater Applegate Community Development Corporation, Cantrall Buckley Park Committee, and Northwest Rafting Association. Kathy supports Britt Festivals, CATS, Sanctuary One, and Art in the Garden in Grants Pass.

“We give because we love it here,” Tom says. “I’ve moved around a lot, and this is the first real taste I’ve had of community.”

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Lyn Hennion lives at Buncom. She serves on OCF’s Southern Oregon Leadership Council and is a past member of the statewide board of directors. Visit www.oregonocf.org for more information on OCF.



Ruch School students at the Community 101 2015 Diaper Dash. Photo: Dawn Roelke.



Photo, top left: Priscilla Weaver and Matt Epstein. Photo: Marilyn Hawkins. Photo, bottom, from left to right: Tom Carstens, OCF donor relations officer Heidi Binder, and Kathy Carstens. Photo: Cristina Sanz, OCF.

Community education at White Oak Farm

BY TAYLOR STARR

Nestled in a quiet corner of the Williams valley, White Oak Farm & Education Center is a working organic farm and sustainable-living education center. The farm was established as a nonprofit organization in 2002 with the help of the Equity Trust, a national land trust. For the past 13 years, staff and volunteers have spent their time managing the gardens, fields, and forests, hosting local school groups, holding preschool and summer camps for children, and teaching adult workshops on subjects ranging from natural building to ecological forestry. We are blessed with a great teaching farm with three acres of organic gardens, pastures, an orchard of over 40 fruit-tree varieties, diverse perennial plantings, extensive woods for hiking, and a straw-bale farmhouse. The farm is also home to flocks of chickens and turkeys, a small herd of goats and sheep, and many thousands of honeybees.

This season, in addition to our many children’s events, we are also developing an expanded adult education program. Our goal is to offer a diverse

set of community education classes that help Applegate residents both new and old develop and care for homesteads large and small. One of the great things about life in the Applegate is how folks from different backgrounds can connect around our mutual desire to be self-reliant and take care of many of our most basic needs locally. Many of us strive to grow our own food, raise our own meat, and build our own homes, to name just a few. Our class series aims to support folks with knowledge, techniques, and tricks to make our homesteads more sustainable, productive, and beautiful. Classes will range from half-day forays into herbal medicine-making (March 5), perennial plant care (April 16), and fermentation (May 7), to a two-week Permaculture Design Course (PDC) from March 18 through April 1. This course will offer participants the opportunity to dive deeply into the theories and practices of permaculture, a comprehensive system of agricultural and social design principles centered around simulating or directly utilizing the patterns and features observed in

natural ecosystems. With permaculture, challenges such as drought, pests, and labor shortages can often be addressed through thoughtfully designed systems.

Our PDC is titled “Permaculture in Action!” Lectures, slide shows, discussions, hands-on projects, tours, and student design projects will seek to highlight ways to incorporate

permaculture principles into practical sustainable living. Our teaching philosophy focuses on providing students with the principles, techniques, and skills needed to actually create homesteads, farms, businesses, and lifestyles that are functional, profitable, and sustainable. In addition to the White Oak site, we will also tour an organic herbal medicine farm, an organic bakery and permaculture community, and a working permaculture seed farm. Southern Oregon is a hub of the permaculture, natural building, herbal medicine, and organic seed movements, and as such is an incredible place to see functional established examples of “permaculture in action.” Just think, people will be



Participants in a fermentation workshop at White Oak Farm.

joining us from all over the country to see what is happening right here in the Applegate!

Our broad vision

for our community education program is to help further the growing movement in southern Oregon toward self-sufficiency and sustainability. Our region is famous for many things. Working together, let’s make learning how to

live well on the land one of them.

For the many new residents of our beautiful valley (as well as long-time Applegaters), we invite you to come out to the farm this spring. Join us for a class, sign up your child for preschool or summer farm camp, or just stop in and say “hi” at the Williams Farmers’ Market on Mondays at the Williams Grange from 4 to 6:30 pm starting in May. You can also check out our website at www.whiteoakfarmcsa.org for more information on the farm and all our programs, or email us at info@whiteoakfarmcsa.org.

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