

NEXT GENERATION

Next Generation features the talents of our local students and school news and updates. All schools in the Applegate Valley are encouraged to submit news, art, writing, photography, and any other creative pieces to gater@applegater.org.

Ruch School celebrates communities

#ittakesacomunity

This year Ruch Community School will celebrate the communities that have so graciously supported their small, rural K-8 school. One important way is to provide healthy produce to our community members. Ruch Community School prides itself on the community garden that it has sustained for the last six years. Unlike typical school gardens, Ruch School's garden is planned, maintained, and sustained by students, staff, volunteers, and community members. They are all actively engaged!

In addition to producing fruits and vegetables for our kids, their families, and our community at large, our community garden has many other benefits. The broad support we receive means that the garden is maintained through the summer months when the school is closed for vacation. Because many people benefit from our garden, vandalism, crime, and littering are nonexistent. In addition, the open garden provides positive interactions among individuals of all ages who share a common passion for spending time in the garden.

Our community garden offers our students many opportunities to learn, enjoy nature, and gain valuable life skills outside the classroom. By engaging in the entire process, our students are connecting to their natural world and formulating meaningful questions that facilitate the inquiry process. And, because they actually enjoy the garden activities, they are showing greater achievement in science and math!

"I feel calm and happy when I am in the garden," shared a third-grade student. It is not uncommon for a student who is having behavioral issues in the classroom and is sent to the garden for a short time to come back ready and more willing to follow directions and act appropriately. In fact, studies show an increase in self-understanding, interpersonal skills, and cooperative skills in those students participating in garden programs.

Recycling, composting, energy conservation, reusing, and reducing are



Ruch School community garden helpers.

all behaviors taught at Ruch Community School. In our efforts to reduce all of our environmental footprints and become more sustainable, we feel these lessons are very important! We are very excited to be involved in installing solar panels at the school during its seismic rehabilitation so that the students are able to track energy savings in real time. In addition, they will identify our small, rural school as pioneers in energy conservation.

Why do we do all this? As a community school, we feel obligated to teach our students to act as stewards of this beautiful valley. They will be our future community leaders, and we are all in this together. We live together, we learn together, we thrive together!

Join us by posting your favorite pictures that demonstrate community involvement to #ittakesacomunity.

Grants Pass volunteers at Applegate and Williams schools



At Williams Elementary School, project coordinator Kevin Brown (above) takes down a school sign to prepare for painting, and Monica Brown (right) sands the handrail.



At Applegate School, Megan Powers (right) and James Powers (not pictured) pitch in.



Both Applegate School and Williams Elementary School were recipients of community goodwill in June when volunteers arrived to spruce up our local schools.

At Applegate, volunteers painted a highlight strip in the Cougar gym, while volunteers at Williams painted the entryway and front steps of the historic school.

SERVE Grants Pass, a nonprofit, organizes the volunteer groups and sets aside one day each year for people from Grants Pass and the greater community to provide support for various projects around Josephine County.

"It was humbling to see so many come out to help our schools," said Darrell

Erb Jr., principal of both Applegate and Williams schools. "We are very thankful to all of the volunteers who served that day!"



Artist Jeremy Criswell (far right) and Applegate School students and staff who helped create the tree mural. Photo: Courtney Zimmerman of Carrying Wonder Photography.

Tree mural depicts Applegate life

Applegate School staff and students worked with local artist Jeremy Criswell to create an amazing mural that celebrates the abundant life we enjoy in the Applegate Valley. (See photo on page 23.)

As part of the Artist in Residence program, Jeremy helped students and staff from grades K-8 to create various images to adorn an outdoor mural featuring a tree full of life.

Under Jeremy's tutelage, artists diligently sketched their images, transferred their sketches to clay, then painted their images in glaze. Tree parts were crafted, as well as various animals—fish and four-legged creatures, birds and insects—to adorn the tree. Jeremy baked the ceramic pieces and came back to school for several days to glue and grout the mural.

"This was a great project for our school," said Darrell Erb Jr., principal. "Everyone who wanted to participate had a hand in making this wonderful mural. I envision our kids of tomorrow bringing their kids of tomorrow to our school to show them the wonderful work they did!"

Funds for this program were raised the previous year at a barn event at Fred and Jean Hall's farm, where the Family Carr and Applegate students played music, students read poetry, and art pieces by professionals, enthusiasts, and students were auctioned off.

Many thanks go to Fred and Jean Hall, Jeremy Criswell, and Applegate School's incredible staff members who teamed up to help organize and schedule this very cool project!

Williams Elementary fundraiser to be held in September



Williams Elementary will conduct a bottle and can drive at the school on Friday and Saturday, September 15 and 16, from 8 am to 3 pm.

Organizers ask that people bring bottles and cans to the gym where receptacles will be set up.

Success of an earlier bottle and can drive spurred this event, which is organized by the Williams Viability Committee and supported by the Williams Parent-Teacher-Student Group and the school's staff members. The last drive resulted in over 3,000 cans and bottles collected, which totaled more than \$300 for the school in just a single day.

"We have decided to hold another bottle and can drive, and this time for two days in hopes that we can collect even more than we did last time!" said Bryel Nowack, event coordinator.

The proceeds from this bottle and can fundraiser will benefit after-school programs currently under development at the school. Williams School is located at 20691 Williams Highway, Williams, OR.

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