

NEXT GENERATION | SCHOOL NEWS

Busy spring at Applegate School

The Applegate School community had a busy spring, with students doing felting, clay, gardening, field trips, competitions, outdoor education, and state testing. We have also been enjoying the scoreboard donated by Evergreen Federal Bank.

In March, fabric artist Corbin Brashear gave felting classes to all our students, who created wonderful little fuzzy creatures. Artist Jeremy Criswell spent several days helping students design and create tiles to complete our mosaic mural wall. The newest addition to the wall is a river with numerous plant and animal residents. The Applegate School community is deeply grateful to both artists, Corbin and Jeremy, for their dedication and for being an inspiration to the students.

Mrs. Hirschmugl's K-1 students worked on a class garden in April. Working with volunteer and retired Ruch teacher Ida Lawrence, students planted spinach, lettuce, kale, peas, broccoli, carrots, strawberries, pansies, and sweet peas. In class, students learned about the seed-to-plant life cycle and the parts of a plant and studied what plants grow above ground and which ones grow below ground.

Second and third graders in Mrs. Halsted's class were busy with state testing. But they also enjoyed a field trip to North Mountain Park Nature Center in Ashland, where they explored "Animals of the Rogue Valley" as part of their science unit. To complete their day, they stopped for lunch and bowling. K-3 students visited Applegate Library to learn about the summer reading program, then toured Applegate Fire District's Station 1.

Nine fourth- and fifth-graders from Mr. Scull's class entered the district science fair. Tate Burton, Emily Hall, and Lydia Kurth won participant ribbons. Jordan Wise O'Driscoll brought home a silver ribbon. Mattix Embury received second place and a gold ribbon. Hamza DiBiasi, Elos Cookson, David Cross, and Titus Vidlak all won first place and gold ribbons in their various categories. Congratulations to these budding scientists.

Fifth-grader Joseph Sahr and eighth-grader Rachel Peterson won the Rotary Students of the Year awards for Applegate School. Second-grader Hunter Morrison won third place in the district spelling bee, competing against mostly third graders.

In May school staff welcomed incoming kindergartners at the Kinder Launch and sixth-graders participated in outdoor education at Pacifica, exploring the



District science fair participants.
All photos by Linda Kappen.



Rotary Students of the Year
Rachel Peterson and Joseph Sahr.



Second-grader Hunter Morrison won third place in the spelling bee.

wonders of nature related to this area. Eighth-grade students previewed high school at Hidden Valley High School for a morning and attended an evening open house there with their parents.

Community volunteers enjoyed a tea in May. Middle-school students, under Diana West's supervision, baked goodies, and leadership team members served at the tea. Two volunteers, Sharon and Vince Vidlak, received the Jasmine Williams Service Award for their commitment and volunteer service to Applegate School.

Fourth- and fifth-graders explored the High Desert Museum in Bend, Oregon, from May 29 - 31, and eighth-graders visited Wolf Lodge in Grand Mound, Washington, on May 30 - 31.

Upcoming events include track-and-field day on June 6, eighth-grade graduation and dance on June 10, and Fun Day on June 12, the last day of school. From June 17 - 22, Applegate and Williams Schools will cosponsor "Critter Camp" for prospective kindergartners. This event helps prepare new students for their school experience in September, focusing on the social aspect of school, not the academics.

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Ruch School celebrates Earth Day

All 225 students at Ruch Outdoor Community School gathered in April to celebrate Earth Day. The school is unique in its commitment and approach to holistic environmental education, and students are actively engaged in a hands-on program.

The core curriculum focuses on sustainability, which is incorporated in all aspects of the academic and experiential learning environment. The impact on students is reflected in thoughtful discussions about environmental challenges facing our planet and community. Students offered practical recommendations and suggested actions we can take to help protect earth's vital ecosystems.

Earth Day activities for sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-grade students began with my presentation about Antarctica and climate change. (I recently returned from my third trip there.) Antarctica is the coldest, driest, and windiest continent on earth, holding 90 percent of the world's glaciers and over 70 percent of the world's fresh water supply. It is on this amazing, pristine rock- and ice-covered landmass, over 8,000 miles from the beautiful Applegate watershed, that evidence of climate change is readily visible.

Students enjoyed a slide show of humpback whales feeding, leopard seals hunting, fur seals playing, and inquisitive penguins marching on the ice and swimming in frigid waters. I described Antarctica as a remote, raw wilderness teeming with wildlife, an ice-covered continent that offers magnificent vistas of turquoise reflections in the ice, steely gray waters, icebergs of all shapes and sizes, and a silence broken only by the thunderous sounds of glaciers calving and humpback whales surfacing to take a breath.

Students were fascinated about the reasons that Antarctica, one and a half times larger than the US, is so special. It's the one continent that no country owns. The 1959 Antarctic Treaty dedicated the waters and land south of 60 degrees latitude solely to peace and scientific research. Today there are 48 countries and 66 scientific research stations conducting research on climate change, the ozone, endangered species, aquatic habitats, and other topics essential to the health of our planet. During the peak summer months, from November to March, there are almost



Cathy Rodgers discussed climate change effects on Antarctica with 6th-, 7th-, and 8th-grade students at Ruch School.

4,000 scientists conducting research. During the cold, dark winter months, fewer than 1,000 scientists remain.

The implications of global warming at the far reaches of the planet and here in our community formed the basis for most of the students' discussions. In a questionnaire students shared their opinions on the most significant environmental challenges and offered suggestions on how to help protect our environment.

Students cited greenhouse gas emissions, pollution, deforestation, and loss of habitat as their top areas of concern. Locally, the students overwhelmingly expressed concerns about forest fires and their impact on air quality. Students were equally as articulate about steps that could be taken to help protect the environment. Mireille Caldera suggested forming volunteer groups to pick up trash and reminded everyone to recycle more. Brooke Nix suggested using solar power and reusable shopping bags. She also thought more should be done to develop eco-friendly products. Grace Vinyard-Bakke advocated using less plastic and conserving water. Jaden Leonard wanted people to stop throwing cigarettes out car windows because they can cause devastating fires.

Students also shared examples of what they personally do to help protect the environment. Nikolaus Hemming composts. Cira Peters rides her bike. Evan Wallman likes to volunteer and tries to reduce consumption of natural resources. Olivia Wertich helps pick up trash alongside roadways.

Rounding out Earth Day, students planted a new garden at the school. Along the Applegate River they planted ponderosa pine and willow tree starts, donated by the Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council and Rooted in Hope. The day was a great reminder that each of us can make a difference in protecting our environment.

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Williams School is bustling!

Williams Elementary School has been bustling with activities from statewide testing to field trips, assemblies, and award ceremonies to honor students.

Two fifth-graders received special honors this spring. In March, the Grants Pass Rotary Club honored Kimberly Musack as Rotary Student of the Year from Williams School. During a Rotary luncheon, Kimberly presented her prepared speech and received her award. In April, Savanna Rogers represented Williams School at the district-wide spelling bee and won third place. Congratulations, Kimberly and Savanna!

During March and April, students had the opportunity to visit White Oak Farm and Education Center in Williams, which serves students and communities in Jackson and Josephine counties. During student visits, the program staff helped children develop connections between their food, their local ecosystem, and shared agricultural heritage.

On April 30, 21 students participated in Play It Forward, this year's strings concert in the school gymnasium. This concert showcases students who are learning the violin and guitar, recognizing their efforts and progress in music. Special thanks to Jessie Casey and Amber Guient with the Sugarloaf Community Association for organizing staffing and classes. Additional thanks to Principal Steven Fuller and Mindi Gallegos for the use of the school facility and instruments and their expert advice and partnership support. The school is also grateful for the Cow Creek Tribe Grant, which, in addition to revenue from these annual concerts, makes the Williams Strings Program possible.

Music teachers Willie Warwick and Barbara Torbert deserve special thanks for sharing their joy and talent and for their commitment to teach and inspire the next generation of Williams musicians.

In May, fifth-grade students visited OMSI, the Oregon Museum for Science

and Industry, for an overnight stay in Portland. Fourth- and fifth-grade classes visited Crater Lake and North Mountain Park in Ashland. To welcome incoming kindergarten students, the school held "Kickoff to Kindergarten" to familiarize students and their families with the skills needed by the time school starts. Families received a free kit containing age-appropriate materials—like floor puzzles, colorful wooden shapes, blocks, magnetic letters and numbers, etc.—to use at home. Another May event was the annual Volunteer Tea to recognize and thank family members and community friends who take time to volunteer at our school.

June events will include saying goodbye to fifth-grade students and, along with Applegate School, holding a week-long "Critter Camp" for incoming kindergartners. All Williams Elementary students will enjoy jet-boat rides and lunch at the OK Corral on June 5.

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Savanna Rogers holding her spelling bee trophy.



Ayda Hayden and Stella Cox holding baby goats at White Oak Farm.