

AGA sponsors fun and informative community events

BY MEGAN FEHRMAN

Fire and water were two of the topics that were part of the Elemental Series put on by A Greater Applegate and other community partners earlier this year.

In February, AGA partnered with the Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council to bring to the community the Water Security Education Day, with presentations and discussions around household and landscape-level methods for conserving and storing water. All of the presentations and videos from that day are now available at applegatepartnership.org/watersecurity.

In March, the Applegate Valley's Forest and Fire Working Group brought us the All Things Fire Fair!, an all-day community-focused event that moved us toward becoming a more fire-adapted place, with presentations by Rich Fairbanks, on home hardening and defensible space; by Fire Marshal Brian Mulhollen, about the many resources and new programs available through the Applegate Valley Fire District (AVFD); and by the Rogue Valley Prescribed Burn Association, with a demonstration on "good fire," a beneficial tool to protect your property from "bad fire."

Dan Defenbaugh, of Jungle Tamer, demonstrated how a skid-steer loader equipped with a special masticating head can remove brush around homes by grinding, chopping, and basically chewing up brush or whatever is fed into it and then returning it all to the soil. AVFD has applied for grants totaling about \$6 million for this kind of equipment, hoping to one day be able to do this kind of work for people in our community for free.

The day wrapped up with a presentation on the Douglas fir die-off from Chris Adlam, regional fire specialist with Oregon State University Extension Service, and the Bureau of Land Management.

A Greater Applegate will post presentations from the All Things Fire Fair! on the Applegate Valley Connect website at applegateconnect.org/wildfire-resources to give community members access to these useful resources. It will take all of us working together—agencies, nonprofit organizations, and neighbors—to address this monumental task of returning the Applegate to a fire-adapted ecosystem and to address current challenges. We hope that the All Things Fire Fair! will become an annual event and a model for other communities investing in similar collaborative solutions.

To begin community-level emergency-preparedness planning, A Greater Applegate—in partnership with AVFD, Williams Rural Fire Protection District, Ruch and Williams libraries, Williams



Aaron Krikava with Rogue Valley Prescribed Burn Association demonstrates the use of good fire.



Atlas Battisti from Ruch gets a big hug from Smokey the Bear.

Grange, and Pacifica—has applied for a Resilience Hub Network and Infrastructure grant through the Oregon Department of Emergency Management. Though there is no guarantee that we will receive funding, we have started these important conversations, and we look forward to keeping everyone informed and engaged as we go along.

In other news, the Williams Farmers Market continues from 4:30-7 pm Mondays, and the Applegate Evening Market, now at the Lindsay Lodge, is up and running from 5-8 pm Wednesdays. Stop by these markets to buy local food, have dinner, and enjoy music, kids' activities, and cooking demonstrations.

Save the date!

The second Jacksaphine Count(r)y Fair is coming back to the Applegate on Saturday, September 21. Oregon Arts Watch recently published an article about last summer's fair and AGA's community-building and placemaking work. Read it at orartswatch.org/a-greater-applegate-creating-community-through-the-culture-of-place.

We are excited to make the second year of this community and fundraising event even better than last year's success and look forward to updating you on activities and details in the fall edition of the *Applegater*.

Until then, here's hoping for as many cool and wet days as we can get.

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■ WILLIAMS LIBRARY

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appropriate books will arrive monthly. The first book every child receives is *The Little Engine That Could*, Dolly Parton's favorite. The message is timeless, encouraging children to never give up, do their best, and stay positive no matter what.

To sign up, visit josephinelibrary.org and find Dolly Parton's Imagination Library on the "Children" page under the "Youth/Family" menu.

You can reach Williams branch manager, Amber Guient, at aguient@josephinelibrary.org and 541-846-7020. The library is located at 158 Tetherow Road, Williams. New hours are 1-6 pm Tuesday, Wednesday, and Saturday, and 11 am-6 pm Friday.

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Ed Langley, Katie Byrne, and Jim Terry at the one-room Watkins schoolhouse c. 1912.

Then and now: Upper Applegate History

BY PAUL TIPTON

Have you ever wondered what it was like living in the Upper Applegate Valley in the 1850s and 60s, when white prospectors rapidly inundated the area after the discovery of gold and agrarian families came in wagon trains hoping for a better life in the "uninhabited" West? One hundred and seventy-five years makes a big difference in how we live our lives, and it's hard to grasp how different, and difficult, it was to live in those past times.

Laura Ahearn, president of McKee Bridge Historical Society (MBHS), has put together a comprehensive visual and oral presentation for the Windows in Time series cosponsored by the Jackson County Library System and the Southern Oregon Historical Society. Titled "A Century in Big Applegate," it was presented on Wednesday, May 1, at the Medford Library. Don't despair if you missed it—it will be available in various formats, including on the MBHS website at mckeebridge.org and on YouTube, as are all presentations in the Windows in Time archives. Laura recently presented a preview of her program at Ruch Library for members of MBHS. The audience included Evelyn Byrne Williams and Vern Arnold, descendants of those early families and historians in their own right.

If you were born and raised in the Applegate or have been around for 50 years or so, many of the names and places will ring a bell and bring back memories of your own, related to who and where and when. Those of you who are relatively new to the area might have a less fully formed idea of the history of the Applegate, but Laura's presentation will fill in knowledge gaps for old-timers and newcomers alike.

The sites of now-abandoned "villages" were chosen for practicality, grounded in mining or farming, and often named for a post office or general store located within someone's home. They were also centered around any source of commerce, such as a boarding house or stagecoach stop. Many of those small communities no longer exist—like Watkins, now covered



The Byrne home c. 1910 on what is now called Téel (Yellowjacket) Creek.

by Applegate Lake, but Ruch, Applegate, Murphy, and Williams are still thriving community hubs in the Applegate Valley.

I've worn a number of different hats in recent years with local nonprofits, including A Greater Applegate (AGA), our local community development organization. One of the larger ideas to come from the "visioning" (listening) sessions that AGA organized throughout the valley in recent years is the idea of facilitating "village hubs," promoting the existing community's abilities to fulfill their needs and wants to have more services available within the rural communities, rather than being so connected to more distant cities.

We've gone from horse and buggies to Teslas in 175 years, along with many other changes. What changes will we see in the future with overpopulation and declining resources? No one knows, but "if we don't learn the lessons of history, we are likely to repeat them."

Get involved, be part of the solution! MBHS welcomes new volunteers who would like to help explore, document, and understand our local history.

Please join MBHS at McKee Bridge from 11 am-3 pm Saturday, June 8, for live music, historical displays, and family-oriented activities. Become a member to enter the Chili Cook-off (and enjoy tasting)! As always, you can find more information about our events and Applegate heritage at mckeebridge.org.

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Join MBHS

McKee Bridge transports us back to the Applegate's past.
Join McKee Bridge Historical Society.
Help us preserve and celebrate the lore and heritage of our special valley.
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