

Pacifica projects on display



Dana Ottem, Annuka Brown and Jesse Trott discuss what they learned from working with Sea Turtles Forever/Blue Wave to remove microplastics from beaches.



Seniors Esteban Becerra, Joanna Ramos, Marilu Peon and Xitlali Bello focused their Pacifica project on community gardens. The trio revitalized the school's culinary garden.



Seaside High School seniors Brittany West, Dante Still and Jack Whittle restored a Circle Creek trail with the North Coast Land Conservancy.



Seniors Paige Ideue, Alexander Barker and Abel Ryon helped Providence Seaside Hospital with the fundraising event Festival of Trees.

A way for students to 'reach higher,' leave comfort zone

By Lyra Fontaine
For Seaside Signal

For their Pacifica projects, Seaside High School seniors devoted 50 to 100 hours to a range of activities. They organized events like Cinco de Mayo, plays and the school's centennial celebration. They tutored, coached sports, worked with Foster Club and food banks, spearheaded emergency preparedness efforts and more.

Students presented their work to the community June 1, articulating how they balanced their time and found creative solutions to obstacles.

Pacifica projects are "a place for students to excel, to reach higher, to get out of their comfort zones," Pacifica adviser and social studies instructor Mike Hawes said in his opening remarks.

Hawes thanked "the larger community in which we send our students."

"A community of incredibly gifted volunteers and achievers, ordinary people performing the ordinary acts that make a place extraordinary, that make a place home," he said. "A community of business owners that pitch in, donate, support, promote, volunteer."

Pacifica has been a graduation requirement since 1993.

"The class of 2016 did an amazing array of unique and individualized projects," Hawes said after the presentations. "We are proud of this group and still amazed after 24 years of projects and presentations how moving, vital, and challenging this program remains for our students."

Microplastics removal

Dana Ottem, Jesse Trott and Annuka Brown spent days filtering sand to remove microplastics — formed from larger plastic debris in the ocean breaking down over time — from local beaches. Mentor Marc Ward, founder of Sea Turtles Forever/Blue Wave, guided them.

"Marine animals often ingest microplastics mistaking them as food and cannot digest them properly," Brown said. Toxins from the plastics are passed down the food chain.

The presentation included a photo of a sea turtle with plastic stuck in its nose, and a bird necropsy that contained microplastics.

For their Pacifica project, the students used a static-charge screen for plastic filtration patented by Sea Turtles Forever, which helps conserve marine turtles and preserve their nesting and foraging habitats. The organization has sent screens to California, Australia, Florida, Canada, the Netherlands and Oregon coastal communities.

The "tenacious trio," as they called themselves, removed plastics at Fort Stevens State Park, Manzanita Beach, Crescent

Beach and Short Sands Beach, saving thousands of seabirds from ingesting plastics.

To filter for plastics, the students scooped dry sand onto the screen with a shovel, moved sand to see if plastic was beneath the surface and ran the screen by moving it around to ensure that sand passed through.

After, they dumped the screen's debris into a bucket that collected all plastics, which were taken to a McMinnville landfill.

They made their way up and down beaches repeating the process, often by the high-tide line, where microplastics usually wash up due to storms and ocean patterns called gyres.

"As capable human beings we are, we need to put forth the effort into bettering our world," Brown said, "whether that is doing recycling, beach cleanups or becoming more educated about the problems that plastics are causing."

The project changed the students' plastic consumption and how they view beaches.

"I used to think our beaches were really clean, and now I am down there constantly scanning for plastics," Trott said.

Community garden

From their experiences community gardening and revitalizing the school's garden, seniors Esteban Becerra, Joanna Ramos, Marilu Peon and Xitlali Bello hope to convey that growing your own food can be a fun, rewarding way to learn about plant biology, spend time outdoors and enjoy organic produce.

The students learned about balancing work and school, benefits of organic food and taking proper care of fruits and vegetables they planted, with help from mentor Dorota Haber-Lehigh, English language learning and ethnobotany teacher.

"We learned how to use different materials to enrich the soil and help the plants grow better," Becerra said.

Each student had roots in gardening or farming.

They began working in community gardens like Green Angels Farm and Sunny Pool Gardens last spring, helping with weeding, watering, readying garden plots, planting flowers to attract bees, planting and harvesting vegetables, composting and more.

The students fondly looked back on seeing their hard work blossom into fruits and vegetables they could pick, eat and share with others in the community.

They also transformed Seaside High School's culinary garden, which they noticed was "growing nothing but weeds." They cleaned it up and spent 10 hours weeding the garden, discovering a bird's nest in the process. After moving into the gardens, they planted tomatoes, zucchini, oregano, raspberries, potatoes, chard and more.

"We are hoping that the culinary classes will harvest and use the foods we planted," said Becerra, who hopes to study botany.

Restoration project

Brittany West, Danté Still and Jack Whittle worked with North Coast Land Conservancy, a nonprofit that preserves and manages land and wildlife, to restore a trail.

They worked with mentor Katie Voelke, North Coast Land Conservancy executive director, as well as land steward Eric Owen.

"We wanted to give community members and visitors a place to experience the unique beauty of the northern Oregon Coast," West said.

North Coast Land Conservancy restored Seaside's Circle Creek and made the land available for the public to enjoy through hiking, fishing and bird watching. The area is beautiful, the students said, and home to bird species, elk herds and salmon running in Necanicum River.

However, the overgrown Legacy Trail was not clearly marked, leading to confusion.

"The first time we went to the trail, we had a hard time finding it," Whittle said.

The students cleaned the trail, created 10 trail markers using recycled wood boards, then placed the trail markers in the ground through both digging holes and using a mechanical auger.

They learned about planning and organization, woodworking, outdoor labor and what the North Coast Land Conservancy does. The four are still helping the organization to make posts for the second Circle Creek trail.

"We hope you go out and enjoy the amazing, beautiful place we fell in love with," Whittle said.

Festival of Trees

Seniors Paige Ideue, Alexander Barker and Abel Ryon volunteered with Providence Seaside Hospital to help organize a major event: the 18th annual Festival of Trees gala, a December fundraising event and holiday tradition.

The gala helped raise money for surgical equipment that allows the hospital to perform more complex surgeries.

With help from their mentor, Providence Seaside volunteer coordinator Raven Brown, the students first advertised the event, attended the hospital's board meeting and called business donating trees and other auction items.

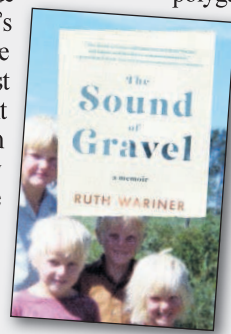
For the event, they helped create the popular "Santa's corner," decorated cookies and trees, ushered guests, helped guard each tree and assisted during the tree auction.

"To create a wonderful winter wonderland and have the public enjoy it made us feel accomplished," Ryon said. "Our hard work and flexibility paid off."

The event raised \$116,000. Ideue volunteered additional hours at the Jason Gooding memorial, handing out remembrance bracelets and asking guests to sign a book.

'The Sound of Gravel'

The Friends of the Seaside Library host Ruth Wariner, author of "The Sound of Gravel," Thursday, June 16, at 7 p.m. "The Sound of Gravel" is the true story of one girl's coming-of-age in a polygamist family. The event will take place in the Community Room and there will be book sales and signings presented by Beach Books.



Ruth Wariner was the 39th of her father's 42 children. Growing up on a farm in rural Mexico, where authorities turn a blind eye to the practices of her community, Wariner lives in a ramshackle house without indoor plumbing or electricity. At

church, preachers teach that God will punish the wicked by destroying the world and that women can only ascend to heaven by entering into polygamous marriages

and giving birth to as many children as possible. After Wariner's father — the man who had been the founding prophet of the colony — is murdered by his brother in a bid for church power, her mother remarries, becoming the second wife of another faithful congregant.

Wariner lives in Portland. Seaside Public Library is located at 1131 Broadway. For more information call 503-738-6742 or visit us at www.seasidelibrary.org.

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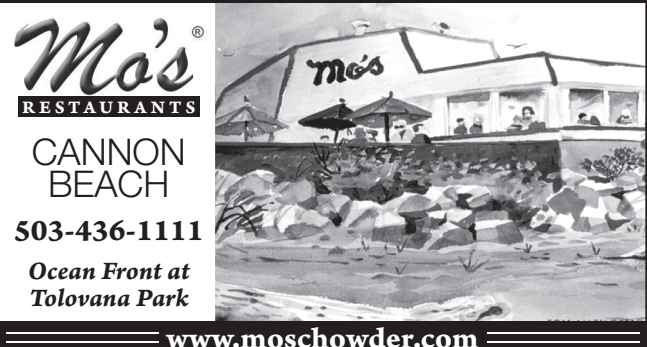
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