

Ruch School looking forward

BY MARGARET PERROW DELLA SANTINA

Like many school districts, the Medford School District (549C) is in the midst of a severe budget crisis. The district's approximately \$4.3-million deficit looms over the school board, administrators, teachers, and ultimately parents and kids. Although the 2012-13 school budget was approved without any proposed school closures, the school board is beginning budget talks for 2013 later this year, and the topic of school closures will inevitably arise.

Now for the good (even exciting) news: a group of parents and community members (Applegate Partners Promoting Local Education or APPLE) is in the process of developing plans to ensure the continued operation of Ruch School in 2013-14 and beyond. Meeting regularly since April in consultation with Ruch School principal Julie Hill, APPLE aims to be as proactive as possible. As a school, as a community, and as a bioregion, we have a lot that is unique—things we see as potentially valuable assets to the district. While we understand that the district faces a fiscal crisis and is looking for places to cut the budget, we are very excited about the educational value that Ruch can provide the district.

In the past months, we have consulted with education professionals, made presentations to the 549C school board, and had conversations with individual school board members as well as district superintendent Phil Long. We have discovered ample research, spanning decades, proving that school closures do not ultimately save districts money. In fact, rural school closures have devastating long-term economic and social impacts on the broader region of which they are a part.

We have the active support and involvement of Senator Alan Bates and Representative Peter Buckley, with whom we communicate regularly about our ideas and progress.

We have demonstrated clearly that Ruch School is not losing the district money; that is, revenues attributable to Ruch School more than cover the direct expenses of the school and contribute to the district's overhead costs. Moreover, we have secured for the district an additional \$52,000 annually in Remote Rural Schools

funding, due wholly to the fact that Ruch School is part of the Medford School District.

Perhaps most importantly, Ruch School already has a highly successful academic program: our students' test scores, daily attendance rates, and later high school graduation rates surpass district averages. Our goal now is to build on those successes. We are currently focusing on two related goals: First, to develop a more enriched educational model that is closely tied to the unique characteristics and values of our local community and unique bioregion. And second, to generate greater revenue for the district through the increased enrollment that will result from such an educational model.

To help envision what such an enriched educational model at Ruch School might look like, APPLE is conducting an online community survey. Results of this survey will also help ensure that Ruch School remains a true community school that engages community volunteers in academics and enrichment programs, while providing services to the community more broadly. Our principal—in consultation with our site council, members of APPLE, and a former teacher from another successful rural community school in Oregon—worked on a preliminary proposal presented to the school board in late August.

We hope you share our enthusiasm for developing a more enriched and robust educational program, closely tied to our community and bioregion, which we believe could be a "magnet" and a model for the district. If you would like more information about the work of APPLE, would like to share ideas to help make Ruch School sustainable, or would like to be included on our email list, please contact Matt Epstein at matepstein@aol.com or 541-899-8644. And if you have not yet completed our community survey online, please take a few minutes to give us your input! Just go to <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JRDQ8VG>.

The strength of the relationship between our local school and our community depends on all of us.

Margaret Perrow della Santina
541-899-9950

contributed their beautiful winery setting, their fabulous cooking and baking skills, their auctioneering talents, the setup crew, the teardown crew, and so many more.

Please show your thanks to everyone whose businesses were involved by patronizing them, and make our treasured Ruch Country Store your first stop for your weekly groceries. Craig and Amber Hamm are the personification of "community," aren't they?

Hooray for Ruch School!!
Priscilla Weaver
priscilla@saltmarshranch.com

APPLEGATE OUTBACK: MY OPINION

Gone fishin'

BY BOB FISCHER

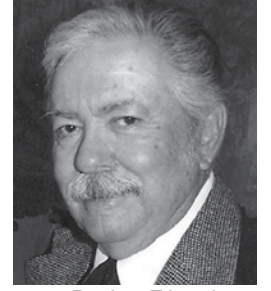


I have decided to go fishing for awhile.

I hope I have brought into someone's life a little humor and some happiness in this troubled world.

Happy trails.

Bob Fischer
541-846-6218



Bob Fischer

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Opinion Pieces and Letters to the Editor represent the opinion of the author, not that of the *Applegater* or the Applegate Valley Community Newspaper. We are a community-based newspaper that receives diverse opinions on different topics. Letters should be no longer than 450 words, and may be edited for grammar and length. Opinion Pieces should be no longer than 600 words. All Letters and Opinion Pieces must be signed, with a full street address or P.O. Box and phone number. Individual Letters may or may not be published in consecutive issues.

Address Opinion Pieces and Letters to the Editor to:
The Applegater c/o Applegate Valley Community Newspaper, Inc.
P.O. Box 14
Jacksonville, OR 97530
Email: gater@applegater.org

To the Editor:

After reading the latest of Chris Bratt's articles, "Safekeeping the lands we share in common," I wanted to write and express my appreciation for his constant vigilance, around our forestlands.

With 36 years in the valley, I've witnessed many "forest battles," and for me, Chris has been a truth beacon I can rely on, sorting out the issues, and compelling common sense, community inclusive approaches.

At the close of his most recent piece, Chris leaves us with a real forest doctrine to live by when he encourages us to recognize "our obligations as citizens to preserve and revitalize them for future generations."

Thank you, Chris.

Paul Safady
Williams

Hi, how are ya?

I'm Bryan Applegate from New Haven, Connecticut, just wondering how on Earth a whole town's got the same name as me! My parents are from New York City and I'm just doing great. I have a bachelors degree from Western Connecticut State University in law administration with a concentration in paralegal studies. My cousin, a Harvard graduate, is a scientist at Oxford. I'm confused, though. Shouldn't I be planting apple trees?

Sincerely,

Bryan Alfred Pope St. Damasus I Applegate
Co-manager at Subterranean Sound Studio, LLC
Waterbury, Connecticut
Keep me in your thoughts and prayers!

June benefit at Red Lily Vineyards

Ruch School scores big

It is with pride, humility and elation that I share the results of the Ruch School benefit at Red Lily Vineyards. Although the number is not quite final, the net amount raised for art, music, and other enrichment programs at Ruch School will be nearly \$30,000. That's right, almost \$30K. Wow!

There is no way to adequately express my personal thanks and gratitude for all the Ruch School students, parents, grandparents, and friends for this outpouring of community support. All of us are grateful for every single dollar contributed. And we are equally grateful to the dozens of people who

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& WATERSHED COUNCIL**

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UPCOMING APWC SPONSORED EVENTS:

- ☞ Friday, September 14th, 1-4pm - Propagating Native Applegate Plants Workshop
- ☞ Friday, November 2nd, 6-8pm - Large Wood for Fish Habitat Enhancement
- ☞ Sunday, November 4th, 1-4:30pm - Tour of Large Wood Projects on Williams Cr.

Elizabeth Murphy,
New Riparian Program Manager
riparianprogram@arwc.org
Janelle Dunlevy,
APWC Coordinator
Phone: (541) 899-9982
www.applegatepartnership.org

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