



The Applegate String Band strumming it up at the Almeda Fund Raiser. Photo: Cathy Rodgers.

Applegaters raise \$7,000 for Almeda Fire victims

BY CATHY RODGERS

On September 8, we felt the wind howl and saw the power go out as the devastating Almeda Fire roared north from Ashland through Talent, Phoenix, and to south Medford. In a matter of hours, areas along Interstate 5, Route 99, and the Bear Creek corridor were ablaze as the fire wreaked havoc and destruction to homes and businesses. Lives and livelihoods have been transformed forever.

In such times it helps to turn our attention to ways to help. In following days, as the board of the *Applegater* considered the challenges facing so many individuals and families in our neighboring towns, board member Jeanette LeTourneux suggested holding a fundraiser to raise money to help with relief efforts for people affected by the fire.

Never was a fundraiser more quickly organized. Seth Kaplan, Ryan Pernell, and Rhianna Simes of A Greater Applegate immediately joined the effort, whirling into action along with *Gater* editor Bert Etling and board Chair Diana Coogle.

Joanna Davis at the Applegate River Lodge & Restaurant joined the excitement by generously donating the venue and, with the assistance of her son, Duke Davis, procuring the musicians (Sonny K, Nick Garrett Powell, and Duke and the Applegate River String Band), who all donated their time.

A raffle quickly came together, with items generously and immediately donated by Wooldridge Creek Vineyard, Red Lily Vineyard, the River Lodge, and Brim Aviation for a 30-minute helicopter ride for three over the area devastated by the fires.

Proceeds would go to Rogue Valley Relief Fund, which provides essentials like food, gas, clothing, and emergency shelter to Almeda fire victims, and to UNETE, an organization supporting our farm workers and immigrant families, many of whom lost their homes and transportation in the fire.

The event took place on October 8, one month after the Almeda fire. Community members who bought tickets to the two-hour dinner and bought raffle tickets and made donations collectively raised over \$7,000 for the fire relief effort, far exceeding its \$5,000 goal.

To increase participation beyond the fifty-person limit allowed by COVID-19 for dinner on the patio at the lodge, the event was live-streamed on Rogue Valley TV and A Greater Applegate's YouTube channel. This allowed local attendees and remote participants to listen to the up-beat live music and to make donations and buy raffle tickets. Virtual participation included donors from Oregon, California, and Nevada.

As AGA board chair, I served as master of ceremonies. Words of support were offered by special guests Pam Marsh, District 5 Representative, and Jeff Golden, District 3 State Senator.

As always, Joanna was a most gracious and generous host, opening the lodge and patio for a wonderful evening on the river under the stars with great food, excellent service, and views that remind us why we all love this area.

The outpouring of support that evening was representative of what this community does, even when many of us are struggling. We come together to help. We support each other, even though we may not know each other. We are community and we do what we can. It is what we do. It is what defines the character and values of the Applegate Valley. Neighbors helping neighbors—not only our immediate neighbors, but people in our neighboring towns—that's what we are all about. It defines us and sustains us in a world where community, civility, and compassion matter more now than ever.

Thank you, Applegaters, for being who you are.

Cathy Rodgers
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APPLEGATE TRAILS ASSOCIATION

A European vacation in our own backyard?

BY GEOFF WEAVER AND NORM YOUNG

Europeans enjoy a strong hiking and mountain biking culture based on local trails with easy access that run substantial distances. It's possible that we will eventually end up with similar hiking opportunities right here in the Applegate—with your help. The nine-year-old, fifty-mile trail that David Calahan envisioned and that he started planning around his kitchen table with a group of like-minded people is off to a great start with the East Applegate Ridge Trail (ART). The East ART is enthusiastically enjoyed by thousands today.

Unfortunately, David passed away this year, but he was instrumental during the last few months of his life in recruiting several new board members to the Applegate Trails Association (ATA) who are passionate about seeing David's dream come to fruition.

The current ATA board is energized (although we need more of us!) and working to maintain and improve the amenities for the East ART. We are working with the BLM to move the second major section of the ART forward. The 13-mile Center ART will start from Highway 238, at the East ART trailhead

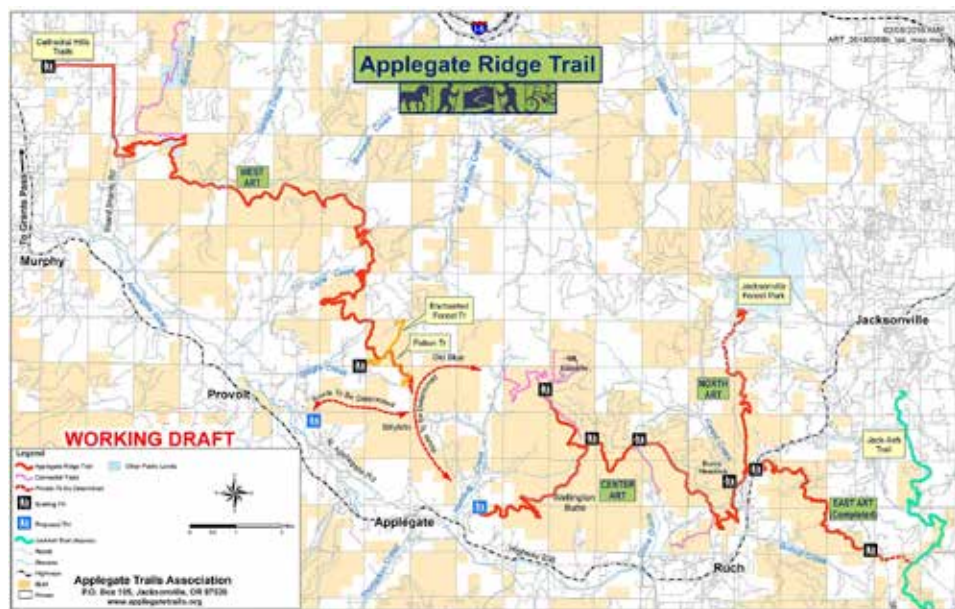


One of many striking views from the East Applegate Ridge Trail. The full ART is envisioned to run from south of Jacksonville all the way to Grants Pass. Photo: Norm Young.

and traverse the slopes north and west of Ruch from Poorman and Forest creeks to Humbug Creek. Like the East ART, it will provide spectacular views of the Applegate Valley.

We need board members and volunteers for public relations and outreach, social media, website development, fund raising, and trail work. We invite enthusiasts of all stripes! Please come join us as we create a legacy that we expect will be enjoyed for generations to come. Visit the volunteer section of our website, applegatetrails.org, or email our energetic chairman, Mark Hamlin, at chairman@applegatetrails.org.

Geoff Weaver and Norm Young
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A working draft of the Applegate Ridge Trail route. Map: Applegate Trails Association.



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