

## NEXT GENERATION | SCHOOL NEWS

## New educational options could enhance valley vitality

Initially, seeking only a little support in the effort to provide our children with individualized, home-based education, we found the public charter school Teach Northwest fit the bill. Our own little branch of TNW-South was established in 2020 and has a rapidly growing waitlist. This process revealed just how many Applegate families utilize education outside the valley and wondered if having more local education options, especially a high school, could be of service to our children and the community. We began dreaming *big* about what we might accomplish.

TNW started in Alaska when a group of teachers opened a “Learning Cafe” on the docks, where many high school dropouts worked. These students began dropping in and finishing their educations. Then the founders opened another program in the rural community of Marcola, Oregon. When we asked if a program was possible here, TNW confirmed their ability to support us.

“As principal of Ruch Outdoor Community School, and more recently moving to and joining the Applegate Valley community, I am firm in the belief that families need options and educators need to recognize that children have different learning styles,” Julie Barry says. “Hands-on, engaging, individualized, relevant, and inspiring education is proven to result in much more academic success and social-emotional and physical wellness when it is delivered in a setting where the students are connected and where the learning can be transferred to their lives outside of whatever educational setting they are in. Providing these best practices and also allowing students to learn in their community is the greatest thing we can offer to our children. Providing a local high school experience also helps mitigate the anxiety and fear that a lot of our students experience when transitioning from a small rural school setting to a large high school.”

Applegate Valley is home to a wealth of skilled movers and shakers. We are writers, historians, agriculturalists and farmers, ecologists and foresters, tradespeople, millwrights, a variety of builders, permaculturists, craftspeople, artisans, musicians, hospitality workers, restaurateurs, owners of cottage industries, and more. We have a full-circle opportunity to design a school for the community based on our needs, interests,

and talents. Students can learn from their neighbors, enhancing local connections and providing further economic and social opportunities here.

“There is a lot of potential to network, partner, and collaborate to the benefit of learning in ways that fit each child’s needs,” said Janis Mohr-Tipton, a community builder, parent, and grandparent. “Let’s explore this possibility and include the voices of our students.”

Could the Applegate become home to an innovative school that facilitates individualized learning on alternative schedules? Can we offer place-based, trade-school type experiences in community partnerships in addition to more traditional (distance learning) paths? Can our children learn through participation in relevant, local projects and graduate with meaningful, community relationships based on training and experience? Our students may eventually leave the valley, seeking meaningful work in new communities, or they might just end up sticking around as contributing members to the vitality of the Applegate. Either way, we serve them well by offering learning opportunities that can lead to purposeful life work.

“As a credentialed teacher, an environmental educator, and a mother, I would like to see educational opportunities for careers in natural resource and wildfire management and a technical high school in the Applegate Valley,” Jennifer Payne says. “I believe it is possible to invite Teach Northwest to expand hands-on science opportunities for all students using a collaborative model that also supports public schools. Our older students need local education options that do not entail long daily bus rides and that also support local forest and wildfire management.”

We would like to hear *your* thoughts and ideas toward our goal of supporting existing schools while creating more opportunities, particularly for our high-school-level students. Our email address is below.

To check out Teach Northwest online or sign onto the waitlist for our existing distance-education option (access to a teacher and \$2,000 per year per student for supplies and local vendors), visit [marcola.k12.or.us/teach-nw/](http://marcola.k12.or.us/teach-nw/).

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## Congratulations in order for resilient Applegate School students

BY JEAN HALL

On February 1, the Applegate School community rejoiced over re-opening for full-day, on-site instruction for kindergarten through grade five. With the hard work of staff, middle schoolers were able to return on February 10.

The resounding word echoing from all staff members is *resilience*. They designated the month of March as Resilience Month, and a student from each grade, displaying strong qualities of resilience, was honored as Student of the Month. These students are: Jimmy Ridenour-Saunders, kindergarten; Joshua Bernardi, first grade; Trenea Saunders, second grade; Emma Guidici, third grade; Teytum Power, fourth-fifth grade; Emary Hanning, sixth grade; Peter Moline, seventh grade; and Lorenzo Duenas, eighth grade.

Other special student honorees are two Applegate students named as Rotary Students of the Year: eighth-grader Josiah Saunders and fifth-grader Madison English. In the past Rotary Students of the Year shared lunch with Rotary members and delivered a speech. This year Josiah and Madison participated by Zoom. However, as in past years, both students received a number of prizes from Rotary Club members.

With their return to in-person school, students joined the staff in welcoming Jessica Hill, a new member of the school team, who has become a valuable member of the Applegate Cougar family.

Mrs. Hirschmugl and Mrs. Halsted, teachers of kindergarten through third grade, have been deeply pleased to have students back on campus. The children are enjoying in-person friendships, and the teachers are enjoying in-person learning.

All the K-3 students are learning gardening skills with the help of Clair Highfield, a teacher from White Oaks Farm. Last year White Oaks Farm obtained a grant to partner with local schools. Clair visits every Tuesday, teaching about plant life cycles, pollination, and farm-to-table opportunities. Students work in their garden, plant seeds, and keep a garden journal. Big thanks to Clair and White Oaks Farm!

In K-1 students have done a number of art projects—directed drawings, a display of perky penguins, crystal-infused pipe cleaner hearts for Valentine’s Day, and green play dough for St. Patrick’s Day.

Mr. Skull, fourth- and fifth-grade teacher, took his students on a virtual field trip in April with Wildlife Images. Linda Kappen has been teaching art to his class, creating line drawings and making color wheels with the use of watercolors.

Recognizing a good opportunity to share with the community what Applegate students are feeling, Mr. Skull asked his class two questions. The first was: “What do you like about being back at school?” A sample of student responses include:

“Back in school is cool. I’m happy not to be stuck in my house.”

“I like being back at school. I felt like I was forgetting all the school skills, like reading and math.”

“I appreciate working with the teachers and friends face-to-face. In-person learning is easier for me.”



Applegate Lions Club members spruce up the track and field facility at Applegate School. Photos: Steve Fuller.

“Online learning is too much screen time, and it gave me headaches.”

The second question was: “What do you look forward to as we continue with in-person learning?” Responses include:

“Allowing students to get within six feet of each other.”

“When Covid isn’t a thing, we can eat our breakfast and lunch in the cafeteria again.”

“Desks being closer together so that we can work with our friends on projects.”

“Having people other than students come on campus to help with parties and stuff.”

“I’m looking forward to a time that we can go on field trips again.”

Middle school teacher Mrs. Daw reports that several students received special recognition since returning to in-person school. Besides Josiah Saunders, Emary Hanning, Peter Moline, and Lorenzo Duenas (mentioned above), eighth-grader Tainn Burton and sixth-grader Christopher Jordan advanced to the district spelling bee, where Tainn took third place. Congratulations to all these winners.

In closing, a big thank you to the Applegate Lions Club for refurbishing the track and long jump pit and renewing the gravel under the swings at Applegate School. Thank you, Lions, from the Applegate Cougars.

Jean Hall

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