

NEXT GENERATION | SCHOOL NEWS

Applegate School students discover how different cultures celebrate the holidays

BY JEAN HALL

Staff members and students at Applegate School brightened and warmed gray and chilly winter days by celebrating the holiday season with songs and activities. In December the school provided a holiday lunch for parents, followed by a sing-along in which students performed songs from around the world. In preparing the program, students discovered different ways other cultures celebrate the holiday season. They explored music of Hanukkah, Ramadan, Kwanza, Diwali, Chinese New Year, and Solstice.

The theme for October-November at Applegate School was “organization,” and for December it was “integrity.” At school assemblies students in each grade were awarded certificates for being outstanding examples of that month’s theme. At the January 26 assembly the staff also gave Rotary Student of the Year awards to two Applegate students: fifth-grader Tyson Frandsen and eighth-grader David Cross, chosen by the staff for their academic achievements, good school attendance, self-discipline, respect for school policies, good citizenship, and demonstrations of maturity and humility in both success and defeat. Tyson and David attended a Rotary luncheon on February 15, where both students gave speeches.

The kindergarten through third-grade students continue to enjoy their partnership with White Oak Farm. Every Thursday, the students look forward to Ms. Darien’s visit, when they spend time outside planting, weeding, playing games, and learning about where our food comes from. White Oak Farm recently received a grant from the Oregon Department of Education to bring local produce to the classroom and promote healthy eating and nutrition. On one Thursday, the students enjoyed local organic carrots from Barking Moon Farm in Applegate.

The second-and-third-grade class visited the Applegate Valley Fire District headquarters in December, a reward for returning the highest number of fire-safety plans. The students toured the station and living quarters and got to shoot the water hose from the fire truck. All the fun was capped with pizza, grapes, lemonade, and cookies.

Middle-school students took a trip to the ice-skating rink in Medford on January 26. Although many of them were nervous because they had never been ice-



Fifth-grader Tyson Frandsen, at left, and eighth-grader David Cross won Rotary Student of the Year honors at Applegate School.

skating before, they received help and encouragement from their classmates and had a great time zipping around the ice and even joined a conga line.

Applegate School’s sports teams had good seasons, learning new skills, demonstrating team sportsmanship, and showing improvement. The girls’ volleyball season ended in eight wins and four losses. The boys’ basketball team’s season ended in one win and seven losses for the junior varsity team and three wins and five losses for the varsity.

The eighth-graders prepared and served an Italian dinner called “An Evening under the Stars” for their families and friends on January 31. These students are raising money to go on an end-of-the-school-year trip to the Oregon coast. They hope to make this an overnight trip, including exploring the redwoods and a nighttime bonfire on the beach. The trip will be a way to celebrate time with each other as they complete middle school and get ready to head off to high school.

Mrs. Linda Kappen and K-3 students recently received exciting news. One of the tagged Monarch butterflies they had reared and then released on September 27 was found 516 miles away in Arroyo Grande, California, just two miles from the Trilogy Monarch overwintering site. Then, to add to the excitement, they received word that a second of their tagged Monarchs was found at Lighthouse Field State Beach near Santa Cruz, California.

Dr. David James, associate professor at the University of Washington, reported the findings and wrote enthusiastically about Linda and her work with Applegate students: “The experience of rearing a caterpillar and seeing it become a butterfly is something every child should experience.... The Applegate children will be talking about ‘their’ Monarch for a long time.... This memory...will likely help them become the conservation champions the future world will depend on.”

In winter’s chill and grayness, Applegate School staff and students have found many ways to create light and warmth.

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The Ruch Outdoor Community School fifth-grade class standing and sitting tall, like mountains, in front of the garden.

What does mindfulness look like in a fifth-grade classroom?

BY NEENA BARRETO

“See how you want to be in your mindful body,” is how Lucy Murray starts the day as a Mindful Leader in my classroom at Ruch Outdoor Community School. Students then make a choice that feels best for them in that moment, which could look like sitting upright, standing tall, or tracing their fingers as they pay attention to their breath. There are little sounds like shuffling of feet and some fidgeting, and then it gets pretty quiet as students observe their thoughts, sounds in the room, or feelings in their bodies. After a few minutes, Lucy always asks, “What did you notice?” and we use the time before math to share what we noticed.

The most common reports are of tiredness, the ups and downs of what it took to get to school that day, and the sense of being settled during those mindful minutes. We listen to it all without trying to change any of it. What my students don’t realize, however, is that each time they recognize the full spectrum of what they feel, they are building their capacity to be with hard things. It is not about controlling the class by calming them down or expecting them to feel relaxed, but about acknowledging the various experiences of being human that can sometimes be hard, boring, or joyful.

A simple definition of mindfulness is paying attention to right here, right now, with kindness and compassion. It’s a mainstream technique that is taught worldwide in hospitals, schools, prisons, and senior and veterans centers and with sports teams and businesses. It has a variety of benefits. Student Jaiden Schwartz-Gravdal says, “We do mindfulness to help with our lives. And sleep. If I do mindfulness one day, then the next day I don’t, I get better sleep the day I do it.”

Numerous studies have proven that a consistent mindfulness routine can also alleviate stress and improve emotional regulation, attention, and compassion. With today’s youth and the adults who serve them facing new levels of toxic stress, a well-developed mindfulness program can be the most impactful way to build

a better foundation of emotional and academic well-being.

Since Ruch is an Outdoor Community school, our classroom goes beyond the building, and so do our mindfulness lessons. For instance, once my students learned how to mindfully listen, they stood silently and listened to the sound of the first snow falling on the grass. After exploring mindful seeing, they looked at the sun shining on the rocks in our playground and found tiny insects in our garden with our Americorps intern, Sofia Maciel.

When I taught my class how to eat mindfully, they took a full minute to eat a single grape that someone brought in for snack, savoring its juice and noting how the flavor changed with time. With mindful awareness, we are learning to interact with more aliveness, attention, and understanding of our own internal and external worlds. As fifth-grader Eli Salas says, “It is a time that you take five minutes and notice yourself.”

If you are interested in more information about mindfulness training and what it can look like in a school setting, please visit innerflourishing.org.

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Mindful anchor tips from student Maddy Kelleher

An “Anchor Spot” is a place on your body that is where you can feel your breathing. At first you put your hand on that place and concentrate on your breathing. There are many spots on your body to put that hand!

An “Anchor Fluff” is basically a pet that you can think of to help you with mindfulness. It doesn’t have to be your pet or even a pet. It can be any animal. Once you have thought of that animal, imagine yourself petting that animal or pet. When I think of my anchor, which is my dog, Nala, I use her to help me for mindfulness. When I think of Nala, I feel her black fur, and my mind settles.



The Applegate School Cougars girls volleyball season ended in eight wins and four losses. Photo: Newcomb Photography.

Food Pantry is here to help

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at 156 Upper Applegate Road
from 11:30 am - 1 pm Mondays
and go home with food when you need it.
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