

## NEXT GENERATION | SCHOOL NEWS

## Applegate School models creativity, beauty, and hope

BY JEAN HALL

In this, sometimes dark, sometimes uncertain, sometimes scary time, we can also find reasons for optimism. Applegate School provides one of those reasons, modeling creativity, beauty, and hope. Teachers have responded with renewed dedication and creativity, finding new ways in the current crisis to stay in touch with their students and continue their learning process. A completed mosaic celebrating life and reflecting the beauty of our natural world gleams in color on an outside wall of the school. The campus greenhouse presents hope and new life through an ongoing program to support monarch butterflies.

Applegate School checked out 77 Chromebooks to families that requested them to help students with distance learning. Wi-Fi hot spots throughout the district allowed students to log in to their school's wireless network. Parents could bring their children to the Applegate School parking lot to reach one of the Wi-Fi hotspots. Every Tuesday between 11 and noon, staff members in masks and gloves handed out packets that teachers had made for students who preferred to work offline. Using school buses, the school delivered meals and school work to families Monday through Friday.

Resourceful and dedicated, classroom teachers stayed connected with their students. Kindergarten and first-grade teacher Karen Hirschmugl stayed in touch with her students by phone and set up a Google Classroom for each grade. She video chatted with her students twice a week and posted videos of herself teaching mini lessons on Google Classroom. Go Noodle videos allowed her students to have some fun and movement, and other online resources, such as Nessy, IXL, Dreambox, Epic, and Books for Kids, provided yet more help for parents and students.

Second- and third-grade students had the opportunity each morning for a Google Meet with their teacher, Mrs. Halsted, and their fellow students. Mrs. Halsted felt that students really missed the social aspect of school, so the Google Meet let them check in with



Jeremy Criswell recently completed work on this mosaic at Applegate School. Photo: Jeremy Criswell.

### Mosaic river rolls on to completion

During the school closure due to COVID-19 Jeremy Criswell finished the beautiful mural begun in the spring of 2017 at Applegate School. Jeremy, then artist in residence, worked with the entire student body, helping children create tiles for "A Tree of Living Things," a mosaic on a wall near the front of the school. In the spring of 2019, Criswell, now a teacher, returned to Applegate School to work with the children once more. Choosing photographs or drawings of river creatures, students transferred their own drawings onto a large slab of clay. By adding a variety of colored glazes and lines to the soft clay, students brought their drawings to life.

This spring Jeremy returned to an empty school and assembled the finished tiles into a river-of-life mosaic to join the tree. Working alone, Jeremy reflected, "While I missed the interaction of and interest from the children, it felt like a privilege to have somewhere so beautiful to work while so much of the world was shut in. In seeing and arranging all these wonderful tiles, it felt almost as if the children were here, giving me great joy as I worked in the quiet." After applying blue grout to the mosaic river, Jeremy left a scene of beauty to welcome students, staff, and the entire community. Our deeply felt and sincere thanks to you, Jeremy.

Jean Hall  
jhall80@juno.com



Jeremy Criswell works on finishing a mosaic at Applegate school. Photo: Linda Kappen.

each other. They continued to work on their reading and math curriculums online. Mrs. Halsted also posted a large number of resources for parents to use as needed. Through Google Classroom, Meet, email and telephone calls, Mrs. Halsted checked in with each family at least once a week.

Like her fellow staff members, middle school teacher Michelle Daw used daily phone calls and emails to ensure that her students were doing well. She also made use of Google Meets and Screencastify to stay connected with her students. Beginning the week of April 27, middle school teachers made home visits to their students. Ms. Daw likely voiced the feeling of her fellow teachers when she said, "My heart aches to be back in the classroom, but I'm happy to do my part to keep everyone safe."

May 4-8 was Teacher Appreciation Week. Our teachers have done some amazing work to help our students learn during these unprecedented times. Please take a moment to thank teachers for their incredibly inspired and creative work.

In the campus greenhouse, staff member Linda Kappen continued the ongoing project to support monarch butterflies. For some time Linda has been leading students through the annual process of planting milkweed, feeding monarch caterpillars, and releasing mature butterflies. Because of such efforts, the monarch butterfly avoided an "endangered" rating in the most recent listing.

While school was still in session, Applegate students planted milkweed in the greenhouse. In the current absence of students, Ms. Kappen planted the new milkweeds in larger pots in preparation for a new season of monarch caterpillars. After cycling into mature butterflies, they will be ready for release to do their beneficial work for our planet. With her impassioned dedication, Linda Kappen and her students have given us a much-needed sign of optimism and hope in these troubled times. A big thanks to you, Linda.

Jean Hall  
jhall80@juno.com

### Williams School meets the challenge

BY JEAN HALL

Along with all other schools, Williams School shifted to distance learning for the rest of the school year after closing due to COVID-19. Teachers made packets of schoolwork for students to work on at home and posted video lessons and worked online. The school distributed 49 Chromebooks to families that requested them and provided Wi-Fi hotspots so students could do their work through the wireless network.

Williams School handed out lunches and breakfasts Monday through Friday from 11 – noon. The school received a generous donation of food boxes, which staff distributed to families. We encourage families or students with a need to contact the school for help.

Congratulations to fifth-grade student Eva Rae Hartline, who the staff chose as Williams School Rotary Student of the Year. Because of current

restrictions, Eva unfortunately did not get to attend a luncheon to celebrate her win, but she received a number of wonderful prizes, thanks to the Grants Pass Rotary.

The new track and field at Williams School are coming along nicely, and the irrigation system is up and running. The staff expects to have beautiful green grass ready for students when they arrive in the fall. The annual Jogathon, originally planned for April, will be re-scheduled in the fall.

May 4-8 was Teacher Appreciation Week. With all the current challenges, teachers have been doing an amazing job staying in touch with their students and providing online learning experiences. Please take a moment to send an email or write a note to thank a teacher.

Jean Hall  
Jhall80@juno.com

### Applegate River Lodge & Restaurant



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