

TEACH-NW academy seeks educational partners in the Applegate

BY AMBER BISHOP

Exciting developments are afoot regarding Applegate's own branch of TEACH-NW (TNW), a K-12 public charter STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) academy that connects former and new homeschooling families with public school resources. We have been an official resource of the Applegate Valley since fall 2020.

Instead of standardized education and testing, TNW uses a proficiency-based approach with weekly access to licensed Educational Facilitators along with a generous yearly allotment of funds for students' use toward educational expenses. Most exciting, however, is that TNW promotes and supports not *only* college preparation, but also trade school experiences and career readiness.

As such, community collaboration strongly serves the key components of TNW's mission for equitable, authentic, and rigorous learning opportunities. Aside from robust home learning environments, there are online learning opportunities and possibilities from a few excellent local vendors such as Pacifica and Rogue Community College. As we grow and develop, we are calling out to *you*, the community, to become our classroom. We are excited to make all manner of skills available to our students from arts and herbalism to shop, welding, and everything in between. You could offer small groups or individual instruction, or perhaps you have a different idea? Please consider applying as a TNW Vendor! (See contact information below).

Furthermore, driven by local TNW families' desires for students to have campus access for more in-depth, in-person, project-based classes, the school is conversing with several Applegate Valley community members, including our existing local schools and a couple of key community nonprofits such as A Greater Applegate. Because TNW is highly innovative and dedicated to the bigger picture, there is a strong possibility that it will collaborate with local school and non-school entities to stack functions by creating our campus *adjacent* to



and *in conjunction* with a local community center and makerspace.

By working together, as a community, we can *all* be stronger *together*. A community makerspace-as-campus would support not just TNW students (including the ability to co-create and implement

a more robust place-based secondary educational experience to students *very* locally), but also enrichment opportunities for students from *all* the local schools, *and* the general public.

While our wonderful local, brick-and-mortar schools continue to play a valuable and essential role in the community, there is a strong movement of charters connecting former and newly homeschooling families with public school resources. The pandemic experience has greatly increased awareness and demand for such highly individualized programs where kids can spend their school years identifying their strengths, exploring their talents and growing their skills in preparation for the modern adult world where not only quality academics are valued, but career readiness, entrepreneurialism, and the trades. More and more, technology and education reform are expanding options to offer greater support and accountability for these families and their communities.

In the words of TNW Director Bill Watkins, "Active, collaborative, home-based learning has the potential to combine the very best of both the homeschool and public education worlds."

When public education joins with the homeschool world in a respectful, collaborative manner (while adhering to state statutes—aka home-based learning) the power to serve children grows exponentially!"

Lastly, I do know that we all agree on the "why": we're here, together, living our lives in service of children. If we keep that belief at the center of all we do, we will *always* work through the "how"!

If you have any helpful considerations toward this project, please reach out to me at the email below.

Amber Bishop
applegateteachnw@gmail.com



EL ARRIERO

MEXICAN FAMILY RESTAURANT

2366 WEST MAIN ST.
MEDFORD, OR 97501
(541) 245-5872

235 BARNETT ROAD
MEDFORD, OR 97504
(541) 245-6778

☎ 541 846 8111

✉ bids@excavationoregon.com

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Through the eyes of a child: ROCS student writing

BY JULIE BARRY

If you were to ask your neighbors why they live in Ruch or the Applegate Valley, you might receive one or more of these responses: for the solitude, for the beauty, for the history, to live off grid, fewer people, more space, community, to be closer to nature.

However, to get an even more colorful perspective, ask a child. Here are a few Ruch Outdoor Community School (ROCS) student sentiments:

Maddy: "The trees are cool because they change color."

Bailey: "We have peace here, and that's why I love the Applegate."

Sadie: "I am on a hill, and I have a view of the cows and mountains."

Christian: "It's quiet, and I like it being peaceful. I can concentrate."

Keris: "I love all the space to run and play. I can do 50 cartwheels in one area."

Kindergarten student: "I luv my valey for the deer, wlfs, kiyodes, bers and fox."

Thomas: "What I love about the Applegate Valley are haying, raising farm animals, harvesting grain, and going to Ruch Outdoor Community School."

Emmett: "Whether you take a nice short hike or a long trek, the Applegate Valley is great for hiking."

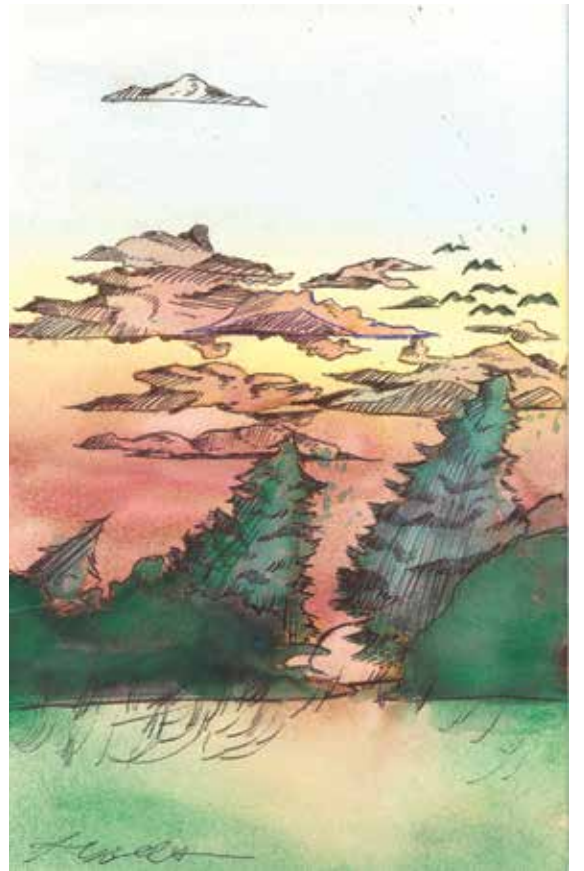
We can all agree that we share one or multiple opinions of these Ruch Outdoor Community School students. And, as much as we love our valley, conversations continue about how we can improve an already incredible place to live.

ROCS's partnership with A Greater Applegate (AGA) has served us in so many ways. They have funded school projects, facilitated resources for families in need, and supported the educational process and mission of staff, students, families, and community members.

One of the greatest practices they have offered the school is to include student voices in their community analysis work. They have assisted ROCS in developing efficacy in our students and proving to them that their voices and opinions matter. The student responses listed above were a result of AGA asking them what they loved about living in the Applegate Valley. Answering that question was a task that all the students enjoyed and took great pride in because they knew that their responses would be used for a much greater good.

A Greater Applegate followed up with our students this year with this prompt: "What are your hopes and dreams for the Applegate Valley?"

Enjoy these responses, and, who knows? You may see some of their hopes and dreams materialize in the future.



Seventh-grader Grace Hanley chose to draw the Applegate Valley from her perspective instead of writing about it.

Isabella: "I would like a dog park because you can take your dog to play with other dogs."

Benny: "We need a stuffed animal store."

Henry: "A corn maze would make our community better."

Sierra: "I would like a butrffly garden because people would be hape and it is beautiful. I maen hoo doesn't like butrfflys!!"

Layla: "I would like a bike track in our community."

Elias: "A skate park. It can help kids with losing weight or training. It could be a park for everyone and have chess tables, benches and trees."

Sawyer: "A bowling alley would be better for our community."

Emmeryn: "I would like to have a cat park because my cats like to snuggle and sleep in the grass."

Andrew: "In this valley I wish for increased farms and fields of crops filled with barley, hay and capable farmers taking care of them. Just think of the ripples of grass in the wind and the smell of fresh air!"

Sam: "An ice cream store or soda shop. Yes, ice cream will make our community better."

We all live, work, and play in the Applegate for many reasons. It truly is a beautiful, magical place filled with opportunities that are seldom found elsewhere. As we get older and set in our ways, my hope and dream is that you are able to see the world through the eyes of a child and see the happiness that a "butrffly" would bring.

Julie Barry, Principal
Ruch Outdoor Community School
Julie.Barry@medford.k12.or.us

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
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