

NEXT GENERATION | SCHOOL NEWS

Madrona Folk School offers a fresh, fun option for homeschoolers

BY DOVE OLDHAM

In the Applegate Valley we have a robust and vibrant homeschool community. There are roughly 400-500 homeschooled youth in the Three Rivers School District alone. To support homeschooled youth and families, Dove and Shandin Oldham opened Madrona Folk School in early 2022. After unchooling and homeschooling their own children for two years on their family farm, they realized it would be fun and rewarding to open a school for other families to join. Dove received training in Waldorf education from Rudolf Steiner College in Sacramento, California, nearly completed her California teaching credential, and started an outdoor parent-led homeschool co-op in Chico, California, that ran for five years. Shandin led the youth and education program at an income-sharing community in Virginia (Twin Oaks), tutored college students in math and sciences, worked as a field botanist, and was raised by a family of schoolteachers.

Madrona Folk School, located in the New Hope Road area of Grants Pass, is a microschool offering supplemental classes in arts, experiential academics, and land-based living skills. Our educational philosophy combines elements of Waldorf education, classical education, and Nature Immersion. After a year and a half of offering six to eight weeklong classes in everything from field botany and Spanish to fine arts, book clubs, and real-world math, Madrona Folk School is growing to offer a yearlong three-day program for fourth- through eighth-grade homeschooled youth for the 2023-2024 school year.

Madrona Folk School is a vendor with three local homeschool charter schools that provide families with funds for classes and school materials.

In October 2022 Madrona Folk School was chosen as a quarterfinalist for the Yass Prize, which honors education entrepreneurs who are offering programs that advance four core principles of education: that it be sustainable, transformational, outstanding, and permissionless. The Yass Prize was awarded to 64 education organizations nationwide in 2022. It was a great honor to receive this award and to learn from the rich experiences of other education entrepreneurs across the country.

Madrona Folk School offers education that centers connection and relationships and encourages students' intrinsic motivation to learn new things, to participate in interesting, new experiences, and to excel in whatever activities they engage in. We do not use rewards or



Class at Madrona Folk School in Grants Pass.

punishment to motivate cooperation and learning experiences. This means we will not take away free time as a punishment and we will not give out candy or other rewards. We believe that positive relationships, group belonging, words of appreciation, having fun, and gaining new skills are the inherent rewards of learning. We seek to inspire and cultivate the learner's inner motivation to learn and gain mastery in the given subject.

Madrona Folk School doesn't use grades or testing to evaluate learners. Rather, learners create portfolios of their work and performances to share with their peers and families as a means of demonstrating their mastery in each area of learning. At the end of each eight-week class session we hold a family potluck with an art show, portfolios, and performances. Last session youth shared poetry they had written, a play they wrote and costumed, and a brilliant display of geometric artwork from our geometry and art class.

This spring Madrona Folk School is offering classes in Greek theater, reading and writing, farming, Spanish, and hand-drumming for youth in third to seventh grades. Classes are small, often with a 1:7 teacher to student ratio, with 14 students in each class. Teachers are able to offer individualized and personalized connection and mentoring to each one. Youth with learning differences or other special needs are able to have their needs met and to thrive in a warm and welcoming environment. Multiage classes make for a noncompetitive environment where students enjoy learning from each other and sharing their knowledge as well.

This summer Madrona Folk School is offering two summer camps. In collaboration with Erin Morton from Elemental Forest School, we are offering a crafts, games, and swimming camp on June 19-22 at Josephine County's Fish Hatchery Park. On July 5-7, we are offering an Herbalist Camp for youth ages 10-14 in collaboration with herbalist Lauren Kemple, which will be held at Oshala Herb Farm and Provolt Recreation area.

Dove Oldham • dovekin42@gmail.com
madronefolkschool.love

Woodland Charter School wraps up a successful school year

BY CHRIS CARMIENCE

Woodland Charter School is wrapping up the successful 2022-2023 school year! There have been many successes and achievements this school year and we would like to thank the support of the families, the community, the amazing teaching staff, and the students we serve for making this a memorable year. We will share some recent highlights with *Applegater* readers.

We are thrilled to announce that Three Rivers School District has voted to renew our charter. We value our partnership with Three Rivers School District and are pleased that we will be able to continue working alongside them in the years to come. It is our hope to make them proud of their charter schools!

In addition, we are officially moving forward with our kindergarten program for the 2023-24 school year! We are pleased to announce that our kindergarten teacher for next year is Misti Lefevre, who brings years of independent early childhood experience using the Waldorf model. With the addition of kindergarten we anticipate serving close to 200 students for the next school year.

In April and May all of our classes put on theater performances for a school audience! This year our classes have been excited to showcase the class community spirit by putting on a production, including set design, costumes, props, and acting. Many of the performances relate to thematic blocks that students study. For example, the seventh grade studied the Renaissance, and this year they performed *Romeo and Juliet*. We all enjoyed many memorable and exceptional performances.



Outdoor School at Camp Gray. Photo: Meg Schreiber.

This spring many of our students were able to attend some amazing field trips. Our sixth grade attended Outdoor School with Lorna Byrne Middle School at OMSI's (the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry) Camp Gray for three days in April. The sixth grade also participated in the Medieval Games in Ashland, a two-day event with friendly

competition between three local Waldorf Schools. Some activities included javelin, archery, siege archery, jousting, and more. The fifth grade took part in another event with other local Waldorf Schools: the Olympiad. This took place at Pacifica and involved Greek Olympic events, including relays, archery, javelin, wrestling, and more. The seventh grade has planned a trip to Newport, and graduating eighth graders will be going to San Francisco.

We continue to provide an in-person, full-time charter school experience that is different from a traditional school through an integration of art, music, and developmentally appropriate thematic learning experiences in a lovely outdoor and indoor learning environment. We are proud of the care and kindness we show in meeting the needs of Josephine and Jackson county families who are looking for something different and appreciate the continued support of Three Rivers School District for sponsoring us.

If you are interested in knowing more about Woodland Charter School or in enrolling, visit woodlandcharterschool.org or send an email to enrollment@woodlandcharterschool.org.

Chris Carmiencke
chris.carmiencke@woodlandcharterschool.org

■ SOLADA

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selecting a more permanent location and day. Check the website for information.

In July and August, Solada will continue with the Death Cafe and Doula Meet-up. In September, Solada will once again begin our more robust class schedule.

Solada is an ever-evolving, dedicated group of caring professionals who are here to help and offer support to members of our community facing the challenges of grief, dying, and death. We offer a supportive environment to discuss the personal, collective, and environmental death that we are all navigating. While we are a fledgling

group and certainly acknowledge the immense contributions of the medical and hospice communities, we see some areas where people are struggling. It is our sincere desire to be of service as you and your loved ones grapple with the topics and process of grief, dying, and death. We are here to engage in these important conversations with grace, compassion, and humility. Please feel free to check out our website, sign up for our monthly emails, and offer suggestions about classes that you think would be relevant.

Hayriya Heidi Hansen
Solada Steering Member
soladaoregon@gmail.com

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