

Outdoor education in the Applegate Valley

BY EVA KING

The Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council (APWC) has worked hard over the last year to enhance outdoor learning in the Applegate Valley. Local students have had opportunities to participate in a variety of ongoing environmental education programs at Cantrall Buckley Park, while APWC gears up for programs to begin at the Provolt Recreation Site this fall. APWC aims to increase its engagement with surrounding schools to build lasting programs that get more kids learning outside throughout the school year.

One program offered is the Applegate Outdoor School (AOS), which is a multiday program for fifth- or sixth-grade students. 2023 marked the pilot year for this new program. It is designed, developed, and implemented by APWC staff and runs for nine consecutive weeks in April and May. It consists of pre- and post-classroom visits and four consecutive field days at Cantrall Buckley Park. The park's 88 acres, located along the Applegate River, provide a beautiful location for students to experience nature in a hands-on, site-specific approach.

Upon arrival at AOS, each class is introduced to its new outdoor classroom,

gets to know the instructors, and builds camaraderie with fellow classmates. As the week progresses, AOS students participate in six place-based field studies rooted in one of the four daily themes: place, water, forest, and fire. The four field days run from 9:30 am-1:30 pm every day to accommodate the schools' schedules. The week ends with a traditional campfire experience around a gas firepit. Instructors and students sing songs, dance, and perform skits in one final celebration together before saying their farewells. In 2023, APWC served a total of 435 sixth-grade students from seven schools in the Medford School District 549C.

Another program offered by APWC is the Grow Youth program, a service-learning program that provides students with hands-on experience in riparian restoration, invasive species removal, tree planting, monitoring, trail maintenance, introductory wildlife management, interpretive sign design, and numerous other projects. The focus of Grow Youth is for students to gain experience in the field of natural resource management through project-based learning.

This fall, four schools are participating in Grow Youth: Ruch Outdoor Community



An Applegate Outdoor School student collects a sample from the Applegate River for water quality testing.

School (ROCS), Woodland Charter School, the Valley School of Southern Oregon, and Grants Pass High School. APWC is partnering with the Bureau of Land Management (the BLM) to deliver programs at the Provolt Recreation Site (PRS) for 16 weeks starting in September. The frequency of participation ranges from weekly to monthly depending on the school. APWC and the BLM are designing and developing the PRS program together and will teach side-by-side.

Grow Youth initially began as a partnership between APWC and ROCS, who will be returning for a third consecutive year. ROCS's involvement in Grow Youth is the most encompassing of all the schools in attendance; it consists of three days of on-campus instruction and one field day at Cantrall Buckley Park, facilitated by APWC's education specialist, Caleb Galloway. This middle-school advisory class has been named the "Applegate Stewards" and integrates multiple disciplines into the curriculum to enhance student engagement and help foster connections to nature and the surrounding community.

APWC also offers single-day field trips to any school interested in coming to Cantrall Buckley Park or the Provolt Recreation Site. These field trips can be modified to meet the needs of any K-12 class and typically consist of terrestrial and/or aquatic ecology lessons. Across all its offerings, APWC's goal is to provide high-quality place-based field instruction in the Applegate Valley. If you are interested in any of the education programs, please reach out to APWC at outreach@apwc.info or 541-660-3585. For more information, visit applegatepartnership.org.

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Fall classes at Pacifica

BY CLAIR HIGHFIELD

I love spring with the joyful exuberance of new beginnings that can be seen in every cheerful yellow flower and every burst of bright bird song. But I love fall too—the tang in the air, the relief from summer's heat, a feeling of curling into a ball and relaxing by a fire.

Fall is a wonderful time to hike at Pacifica, and there's a lot to see...you just have to look a bit harder than in spring, which flaunts its beauty with the excitement of youth. Watch for mushrooms, spider webs, oak leaves changing to yellow or red. The birds we saw migrating in spring will be coming back through on their long journeys, but they're quieter and less colorful. There are a couple of special birds to look for in fall. One is the goldfinch.

The Goldfinch of Fall

Your sweet song, soft as the
thistledown you seek
splits the air with its silken thread
to herald the coming of fall
Your sun-bright wings
join leaves washed in color
to form a dance...
one last celebration
before winter's gentle rest;
one last joyful fling
to dream on
'til spring

Goldfinches grow their eye- (and mate-) catching bright yellow feathers and nest in mid to late summer when the thistledown they use for their nests is ripe. It's a sure sign that the heat of summer, like all else, will pass. Another bird to

watch for in fall is the turkey vulture in its sometimes-peculiar migration south. Vultures are large creatures and smart enough to utilize the tremendous energy of heat rising from the hot valley to carry them over the mountains.

They congregate, sometimes in large numbers, waiting for circling thermals, and then jump on board! Watch for them as they circle up and up with hardly a flap needed. A large group of circling vultures, appropriately called a "kettle," is amazing to see.

Fall is associated with finishing a garden and getting in firewood. But the feelings from years ago still also bring back the feelings of starting school: the new clothes and anticipation mixed with terror about classes and friends not seen since June. Pacifica has great plans for our fall season of educational programs and classes.

Enrichment Mondays and Fridays. The day will be dedicated to outdoor educational learning, project-based learning, and creating with local craftspeople. There is also a Mindfulness class to start the day. Ages 5-13; 10 am-3 pm, September 11-November 3. Tuition: \$200 (\$25 per day).

Youth Choir. The group will work on improving musicality including



Pacifica's ceramics course will ignite your creativity. Photo: Vanessa Redding.



The PALS (Pacifica adventure in learning) Monday class is open to students ages 5-13. Photo: Vanessa Redding.

pitch, rhythm, and harmony, while preparing a wonderful concert program to present at the Pacifica Winterfest. Ages: 8 and up; 3:45 - 5:15 pm Tuesdays, October 3-November 28. Cost: \$50-\$75. There are scholarships and trade/barter opportunities. Contact Harmony Sue at harmonysue23@gmail.com.

Wilderness Skills. This class focuses on nature awareness and self-reliance. These qualities are brought to life through the vehicle of wilderness survival training, earth skills, and fun games. Ages 7-13; 10 am-3:30 pm Fridays, September throughout the fall.

Sewing. Learn how to utilize fabric, cut patterns, and sew on machines. Ages 7 and up; 3-5 pm Mondays, September 25-October 16. Tuition: \$40.

Jedi Training. Learn to harness your inner power using the force of mindfulness and self-awareness. Climb trees, build a secret Jedi camp, learn Qi Gong, work on Jedi skills using the low ropes course and rock wall, harness the power of clear

communication, learn to walk silently in the woods, and do some live-action role play in Jedi Adventures. Ages 7-12; 11 am-3 pm Sundays, September 17-October 15. Tuition: \$103.

Creative Clay. This ceramics class aims to ignite your creativity, teach you fundamental ceramic techniques, and inspire playful creations that will feed your inner artist. Throughout the course, you will learn a range of techniques such as coil building, pinch pot sculpting, slab construction, and sculpture. Ages 14-18; 4-6 pm Tuesdays and Thursdays, October 3-November 2. Tuition: \$180.

Pacifica is located at 14615 Water Gap Road in Williams.

Learn and register:



Clair Highfield
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VOLUNTEER
OPPORTUNITIES ARE ABUNDANT
Cantrall Buckley Park
Provolt Recreation Site

Look for opportunities on our Website, Facebook Page and the Applegate Connect Calendar
www.applegatepartnership.org/upcoming-events
apparks@apwc.info or 541-899-9982
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