Applegate School’s youngest students learn about the butterfly’s life cycle

BY JEAN HALL

Applegate School staff members speak of this year’s “amazing group of students, exemplifying kindness and eagerness to learn.” The Applegate School community has shown proud support for the students through monetary and physical help with the jog-a-thon, Harvest Festival, and class Halloween parties.

Looking at class activities, beginning with Mrs. Hirschmugl’s kindergarten-first-grade class, students found great enjoyment in learning the life cycle of the butterfly. They experienced the excitement of finding monarch caterpillars, placing them in a safe enclosure, watching them form chrysalises, and then seeing them emerge as beautiful butterflies. Their most exciting moment, said Mrs. Hirschmugl, was releasing the butterflies into the wild to complete the life cycle.

Recognizing the four seasons by watching changes in one of the trees by the school pond is another learning activity for these students. They sketched the tree in the early fall and will sketch it again in the late fall, winter, and spring. The class visited White Oak Farms in October. They fed and held chickens and goats and learned about raising different plants. Joining the second-third-grade class, they visited Fort Vannoy pumpkin patch, where they enjoyed the cow train and the corn maze and took home a pumpkin.

Mrs. Halsted’s second-third-grade class has also been learning about life cycles, that of plants. They studied trait variation and selection to increase desired traits. They have also been working hard on place value and multiplication concepts in math.

The class had a very exciting time with the school jog-a-thon when they completed 369 laps, which is more than 61 miles, for an average of three miles per student. One student ran six miles in one hour! Mrs. Halsted reported that her class raised more than $2,000, which can be used for class field trips and special projects. She also spoke of the students’ enjoyment of the annual dress-up for Halloween, the traditional Ghost Walk, and the class Halloween party.

Mr. Scall praises his fourth- and fifth-graders for their kindness and “their leaps of purpose and belonging, through a deeper connection with the community.”

Third-grade students have already started projects rooted in the principles of place-based education. Ms. N’s first-grade students have set up a lemonade stand. The inspiration for this project came from the middle-school students’ Wednesday pizza sales, which earn money for their end-of-year overnight trip. Besides wanting to fill a need in the community, Ms. N’s students are hoping to make enough money to give to a charity in our community that supports people who are experiencing poverty. The money will also be used for something fun, such as going to a bowling alley. The students are working to expand their business to sell lemonade at local events. For this project, the students have set up companies to explore the areas of design, sales, marketing, and production.

Mrs. Brown’s first-grade students are doing a yearlong project of hiking the trails at Forest Park, in Jacksonville, several times throughout the year to observe the seasonal changes. They will document the changes and produce a display for the community during our Art and Science Fair at the end of the year.

Ms. Kritz and Ms. Monk’s second- and third-grade students visited White Oak Farm to learn about sustainable straw-bale-and-cob building practices. They toured a straw-and-cob house built with beams from timber harvested off the land where the building stood. Students then helped build an eye-catching cob wall near our school garden.

Ms. Major and Ms. Barrett’s fourth- and fifth-grade students went to Quadra North, where they explored the ecology of our vineyards here in the Applegate Valley. Students learned about the soil and the weather conditions that produce perfect grapes and had the opportunity to harvest some cab franc grapes at their vineyard. They even enjoyed the process of stomping grapes and testing the juice for sugar content. They met the many people it takes to create a bottle of wine.

Third-grade students also participated in the Salmon Watch program at McGregor Park. They came away from this experience with knowledge of our local salmon and trout species, the history of salmon in the area and their importance to indigenous peoples, riparian zone health, and sustainable practices with salmon.

We are thankful to our community for welcoming our students as we continue to implement our place-based education model of teaching and learning. If you see us around, be sure to ask us what connections we are making and what impact our learning has on our community and, ultimately, on the world around us.

—Alexandra Stoddard, “When you leave a beautiful place, you carry it with you wherever you go.”

If you are interested in more information about the Teton Science School and our partnership with it, please visit their website at tetonscience.org/what-we-do/school-network.

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Multispecies Pinwheels created by K-4 students at Cantrall Buckley Park. Photo: Randy King.