

Building community connections with A Greater Applegate

BY MEGAN FEHRMAN

At A Greater Applegate (AGA), we've been thinking a lot about hubs. What do you see when you hear that word? A center with spokes coming out in multiple directions? Or perhaps it is a location for things to plug into, like a charging station?

The Applegate Valley is made up of the five recognized but unincorporated communities of Murphy, Williams, Wilderville, Applegate, and Ruch—what we are calling our “Village Hubs.” Plus, all the drainage basins and other nooks and crannies that extend out of and into these centers for local business, services, and social connection. As we move into the new year, AGA is interested in working with community members and business owners to explore ways to make these rural commercial centers more connected and supportive of our local economy and social life.

We also know that we lack an actual community center—or a “downtown”—so instead, we must create pop-up or mobile hubs in the form of events (as we did for the Jacksaphine Count(ry) Fair this year) or weekly markets. In 2024, we were pleased to be a part of the Applegate Evening Market at the Lindsay Lodge. This event attracted people from all over the Applegate and Rogue Valleys. It served as a marketplace for our small businesses looking for direct producer-to-consumer relationships, it enlivened the village of Applegate for at least one evening a week, it helped businesses connect with each other, it brought us musicians from our neighborhoods and from as far away as Maui, it entertained families with children's activities, and it allowed us more dinner options, a chance to do some of



our weekly shopping, and to visit with friends. The Williams Farmers Market serves a similar function on Mondays throughout the summer for the western corner of the valley.

At AGA's Ruch office, we are talking about serving as a communications hub in the event of an emergency. We will be working with the Applegate Fire District, the Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council, and other partners to discuss what a Resilience Hub or Hubs look like throughout the valley. This includes mapping resources and identifying helpful assets and gaps in emergency services, supporting neighborhoods in developing or updating emergency phone trees, and maintaining connection to be able to communicate with the community in an emergency so that folks know where to go and what to do.

We also must tend to our valley's existing communication hubs, like the *Applegater*, Jo's List, and Applegate Valley Connect. How are messages and information effectively communicated in a 500-square-

mile valley? How do we reach people from Forest Creek to Carberry Creek, up Thompson Creek, Williams Creek, and all the way to the lower Applegate through Murphy and Wilderville?

I encourage you to check out Applegate Valley Connect (applegateconnect.org) as a virtual community hub, either for the first time or to refamiliarize yourself with the wealth of resources the website offers. There, you will find our newly launched local business directory, educational opportunities, a community calendar, local news and stories, an inspiring list of projects going on throughout the Applegate, and a list of emergency preparedness and response resources that will be updated this winter. Is there anything else that would be helpful for you to see here? You can also sign up for AGA's monthly e-bulletins at agreaterapplegate.org.

The Applegate Valley Business Network is also a hub of sorts, serving as a place where local businesses can connect with resources and technical assistance and be listed on the online consumer-facing directory. Offline, the Business Network also hosts events and workshops that create opportunities to network and learn from other business owners.

In partnership with the Wellington Wildlands Council and the University of Oregon, AGA will be conducting a survey



Jacksaphine Count(ry) Week flyers for multiple events held around the Applegate Valley in August.

of local business owners to capture more information about what is driving our rural economy and how we can better support it and our businesses. Please be on the lookout for this. We'd love to hear from you to better understand your needs!

Thanks again, Applegaters, for your continued support and participation in this wonderfully beautiful and wild valley. We hope to see you at our Holiday Party on December 12 at Vista 222 to celebrate this community. We also welcome your input and contributions as we explore all these ideas, and more, in 2025 and beyond.

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