

New preschool music program brings joy to kids and builds community for parents

BY SARAH GRECO

Friendship is important for people of all ages and can be a lifeline for new parents with young children. When I was a new parent, I would sometimes feel isolated within the day-to-day routine with little ones. Beyond learning how to care for tiny, new humans, I was learning to become the next version of myself, and there were growing pains. I knew it was time to get out of my comfort zone and make new friends. My baby and I became regulars at the neighborhood park and attended storytime at the library. We signed up for baby swim lessons and toddler music classes. It wasn't long before chance encounters turned into planned playdates and birthday parties. Before I knew it, I had a village, an inner circle to lean on and find support with, and my children made their first friendships.

This is why we are so excited to offer a new Music and Movement class for preschoolers at the Jacksonville Community Center. This class, every Wednesday from 11 am-noon, is designed for children two (or approaching) to five years old and their caregivers. The instructor, Ms. Laurie, a certified Music Together teacher, has been teaching in the Rogue Valley for over 15 years. Her class combines singing, rhythm, movement, sign language, and play, and supports children's development in language, coordination, confidence, cooperation, and other areas.



Ukulele is a beginner-friendly instrument for all ages. Join us for a jam session!
Photo: Unsplash.

Early childhood programs are not just beneficial for young children. They also provide a supportive environment for parents, with opportunities to connect with other parents, share experiences, and build a sense of community. We hope classes like these will help spark and strengthen new friendships and supportive villages.

Our programs for school-aged children also continue to grow. Valentine's Day is a great time to celebrate the love we share for our friends and family. In February, participants learned how to make colorful friendship bracelets with embroidery floss. And the Ukulele Jam class learned to play "Love Story" by Taylor Swift using four simple chords. All ages were welcome, and parents who accompanied their kids were free. It was another fun way to make music and learn something new!

And for those who love to learn, Bugs-R-Us presented a natural history talk

What impact can 124 people have in today's world?

The renowned anthropologist Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

Our region and the Jacksonville Community Center (JCC) are both lucky to have such a group of thoughtful individuals! In fact, through the generosity of just 84 local donors and the dedication of our 30 regular volunteers, thousands of neighbors have been able to enjoy music performances, arts and crafts classes, history lectures, author talks, dance performances, children's programs, special events, cooking classes, CPR trainings, woodland trail hikes, and weekly wellness classes of many varieties.

You may ask, "What motivates folks to give and volunteer at JCC—many times without even being direct beneficiaries of JCC programs?"

I think it is a fairly simple answer: nonprofits like JCC engage us all in caring for and belonging to a place that we love. Our supporters experience an uplifted heart and spirit by ensuring that everyone around us is flourishing, learning, laughing, celebrating, recovering, growing, and contributing.

JCC would not exist without the generosity of the 124 people who contributed in the past year—each of whom, through their gifts of time, talents, or finances—helped cover the gaps in operating costs that can't be covered by the minimal, accessible fees JCC charges for classes and programs. Since JCC is not funded by the city or county budget, we have a community center thanks to these 124 people, their predecessors who helped build it through gifts, and a few local organizations and foundations that provide limited support.

Our donors and volunteers see the important impact of supporting a place for community to gather, to learn, to create, to dialogue, to pass along our history and shared values, and to raise and socialize our up-and-coming generations. They understand that the fabric of a healthy community requires some selfless investment, where the "return-on-investment" is generated in the heart and soul, instead of the pocketbook.

In this year ahead, please join JCC in finding ways to create a better community through gifts of your time, talent, or treasure. If JCC doesn't call to your heart, consider joining A Greater Applegate or the folks working on the Food & Friends meal delivery program, or maybe attend a local Rotary meeting. Every gift to these nonprofits makes us all a little richer.

On behalf of our entire community who share in the wonderful programs, classes, and events at JCC, I give thanks to those whose generosity enables all of us to flourish. Jacksonville wouldn't be the same without you!

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and registration, visit the JCC website at jacksonvillecommunitycenter.org.

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