

**NEXT GENERATION**

*Next Generation features school news and updates and the talents of our local students. All schools in the Applegate Valley are encouraged to submit news, art, writing, photography, and any other creative pieces to [gater@applegater.org](mailto:gater@applegater.org).*

**Holiday season at Ruch School**

While the holiday season conjures up images of making time for a cup of hot chocolate, snuggling on the sofa with a favorite blanket and book, making gift lists so no one is left out on Christmas morning, and picking out that perfect outfit for New Year's Eve, students at Ruch Community School are on another mission!

Knowing that there are families out there who are hungry, uncared for, and unsheltered, students are embarking on one of their most important tasks of the year. Beaming with pride and contentment, knowing deep in their hearts they will be making a difference, students are creating, organizing, and orchestrating activities and opportunities to serve their community. Check out what our students are doing!

- Filling backpacks with school supplies and stuffed animals to be sent to children affected by the storms
- Identifying families who are in need of the basic ingredients to provide a Thanksgiving meal and collecting food to distribute
- Visiting elderly residents and sharing holiday stories, while sipping hot chocolate
- Collecting gifts for children to deliver over the Christmas break
- Engaging in lessons about *empathy* to help them understand the plight of some of our families and residents
- Visiting shelters to help serve meals to those who are hungry and homeless

It seems like the holiday season brings out the best in people, but students at Ruch engage in service-learning projects year-round. It is an ongoing process to determine the needs of our community members and groups and identify what it is that we, as a school, can provide.



*Ruch first grader Bowin Pitari visits Pioneer Village residents.*

By focusing on making these kids stewards of their environment and contributing citizens, we are increasing the sustainability, health, and wellness of our area. We are talking real, person-to-person giving, about really reaching out and helping our fellow human beings, about enriching others' lives without worrying about enriching our own.

From Ruch Community School to all of you, *happy holidays!*

Julie Barry

Principal, Ruch School  
541-842-3850

[julie.barry@medford.k12.or.us](mailto:julie.barry@medford.k12.or.us)

**Ruch School and the arts**

Two years ago, a team of educators gathered in Chile to address the world's education crisis. They determined, among other things, that "by the year 2030, less than half of the world's children will be considered educated." Which brings me to my story.

My husband, William, and I recently moved from the central coast of California and bought a home on the Applegate River. We came here with the intention of retiring. We were going to "slow down" and enter into the kinds of things retired folks do.

William had worked 28 years as a creative director with a large advertising firm on Madison Avenue in New York City, and I had spent the last 18 years of my career traveling around the country addressing educators and legislators about the importance of including performing and visual arts in their budgets and weekly curriculum.

In the Applegate, I heard some neighbors brag about a little school, called Ruch Community School, just 10 miles down the road. My curiosity was piqued, so I met with the school's administrator, Julie Barry. I had no idea if they had a current visual arts teacher, but I felt the nudge to find out. This is key: *ask!*

Julie informed me that the school's art teacher was stepping down and they were in need of another. My degree is in K-12 arts education, and when our daughters were young I was the art teacher at their school. This sounded like a good fit.

Julie walked me around the Ruch campus and introduced me to several students. It became immediately apparent to me that this little gem of a school had not only a welcoming feel but also an atmosphere of excitement for learning.

In my previous career, I saw many statistics and graphs concerning which states in our nation spent money on arts programs and which ones did not. Oregon, like California, has a poor track record for supporting the arts on a weekly basis at the elementary level. In middle school, Oregon students have more electives to select from, and some schools actually do have full-time arts educators.

Most high schools are likely to provide a broader arts program. The catch here, of course, is that if students are not given the basic fundamentals of art at an earlier age, their comfort level might be lacking and they may be more likely to select an elective other than art. We all lean toward the subjects in which we feel strongest and tend to avoid the areas in which we may feel deficient. Therein lies our nation's general lack of comfort when it comes to art, art history, and individual creativity.

Many Applegaters are familiar with the story of how Ruch Community School nearly closed. This community rallied to save it and continues to lend its support. Today, this rural school continues to provide a level of excellence to all children



*Second-grade art class with instructor Cheryl Whitney.*



*Ceramic art piece created by first-grade student.*

who live in the greater Applegate area. The school's PTO manages funds from an annual auction that supports unique and needed programs, including the visual and performing arts at Ruch School.

**Applegate Valley welcomes two new school leaders****Phil Centers**

Administrator, Woodland Charter School

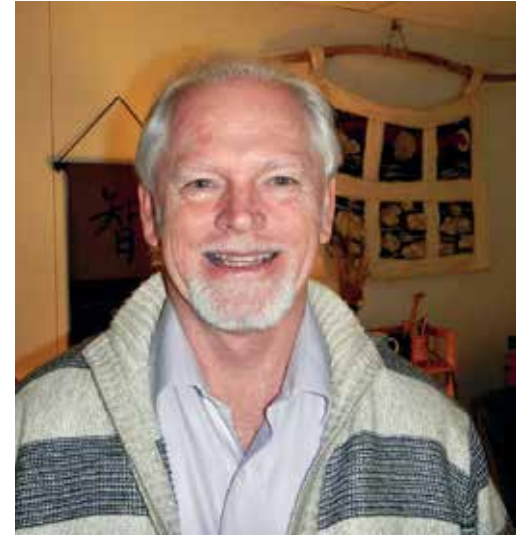
**Background:** A former marine, Phil has spent the majority of his adult life teaching in the Waldorf system, except for a stint in the business world. He has taught many years internationally. He comes to the Applegate from Monterey, where he was a principal at another Waldorf Charter School.

**Family:** Phil's wife, Juliane, is currently teaching in a Waldorf school in Sudan. They have two adult children, both college graduates.

**Immediate Challenge:** Finding additional funding for improving systems and structures.

**Outlook:** With family in Oregon, Phil says he's glad to be back. He finds the beauty of the Rogue Valley "nourishing for the soul," and finds the Applegate to be a great social community, especially the parents and kids.

**Guiding philosophy:** Maintaining a high standard for teachers.



*Phil Centers. (Photo: Tom Carstens.)*

**Steven Fuller**

Principal, Applegate and Williams Schools

**Background:** Steven came to teaching from the financial industry, making the switch at age 40. He's been teaching at Redwood Elementary in Grants Pass for the past 10 years. This is his first administrative position. He enjoys working in the Three Rivers School District, which he says has been very supportive of him in his new job.

**Family:** Steven and his wife, Robin, live in Grants Pass. They have three adult sons, all of whom are college graduates and gainfully employed.

**Immediate Challenge:** Getting to know the community.

**Outlook:** Steven is delighted to be a part of the Applegate. He says he's never seen such robust citizen involvement in community affairs, particularly among the parents and kids. "Working with families is exciting," says Steven.

**Guiding philosophy:** "All kids can learn!"

*Note: Darrell Erb Jr., the former principal of Applegate and Williams schools, is now at Lorna Byrne Middle School in Cave Junction. We appreciated his support of the Applegater over the years and wish him the best in his new position.*



*Steven Fuller. (Photo: Tom Carstens.)*

Every Wednesday, the art curriculum at Ruch School focuses on the basic elements and principals of art, introducing students to a variety of mediums and to famous artists. Each class opens with a song that lists the elements: line, shape, color, value, form, texture, and space. Students must evaluate their artwork and to be fluent in art vocabulary. Individual expression is encouraged and welcomed. At the close of the year, the school invites the community to view the culmination of students' efforts at the Annual Art Fair.

My opening statement about the condition of the world's education might seem like another tough statistic about what bad shape our planet is in. That was not my intention. Rather, it was a cry.

We have an amazing group of parents and volunteers who show up weekly at Ruch Community School. These volunteers come from many walks of life and represent many ages. We also have an amazing group of kids. When we teach to their hearts, their minds will follow. For our students to see the support of this community and feel loved and cared for, is an enormous thing. We need to invite students to use their hearts and souls to continually define and refine themselves. That's how they'll learn to believe in themselves, and in others.

Cheryl Whitney  
Art Instructor  
Ruch Community School  
[artsmartz22@gmail.com](mailto:artsmartz22@gmail.com)