

Applegater

Photo by Linda Kappen

WINTER 2025
Volume 18, No. 4

Applegate Valley Community Newsmagazine
Serving Jackson and Josephine Counties — Circulation: 13,500

Celebrating
~31~
Years

Local streams, lasting impact: Restoration at Cheney and Williams Creeks

BY LUKE WIMMER

This summer, the Applegate Partnership & Watershed Council (APWC) completed two aquatic restoration projects that improved stream function, reduced illegal dumping, and enhanced conditions for wildlife throughout the Applegate Valley. The projects included a culvert replacement on a tributary to Cheney Creek and the addition of over 80 logs in Williams Creek at the Provolt Recreation Site.

These projects are classic examples of the restoration work APWC does every

year, focusing on proven methods that reconnect habitat and make streams more resilient to changing conditions.

The culvert project, funded through the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Good Neighbor Authority and administered by OWEB, replaced an aging, undersized pipe that had become perched above the streambed, blocking fish and aquatic organisms from moving upstream during most flow conditions. The new, partially buried culvert, designed by Stream & Civil Engineering and installed by M&M Services LLC, was built to mimic a natural stream channel. Although this tributary does not flow year-round, it provides important off-channel refuge during high flows, giving fish and other aquatic organisms a place to rest and feed during storms.

In addition to improving fish passage, the Cheney Creek project tackled ongoing dumping and off-road vehicle damage in the

See LOCAL STREAMS, page 14.



Before: Old culvert blocking fish passage on a tributary to Cheney Creek. Photo by Luke Wimmer, Applegate Partnership.



Applegate residents described their goals for the CWPP on October 7, 2025, at the Applegate Community Church. Photo by Amelia Liberatore, SOFRC science communication specialist.

Putting community first in the Community Wildfire Protection Plan

BY NATHAN GEHRES

Over my 45 years in the Applegate, I've watched with concern as larger and more destructive wildfires fill our summers with increasing amounts of smoke. I've also seen a rapid escalation of conifer mortality—thick stands of red or gray trees that are easy to spot from almost anywhere in the valley. These dead trees will readily fuel the next wildfire. Conifer mortality is a significant issue across southern Oregon, but some of the most severe areas of mortality are right here in the Applegate. All these factors exacerbate the risk of an uncharacteristically severe wildfire, which would cause great disturbance to the residents and ecology of the Applegate. Addressing this threat poses a complex set of challenges, and the available resources are limited. Therefore, having a plan that details a strategic approach to wildfire risk reduction is essential.

The Applegate Partnership & Watershed Council (APWC), Applegate Fire District (AFD), and Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative (SOFRC) are partnering to develop a strategy to reduce the risk of uncharacteristically severe wildfires in the Applegate by updating the Applegate Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). APWC secured the essential funding for this effort through a US Forest Service (USFS) Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) and an Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) Stakeholder Outreach Grant.

We began our efforts this year with outreach at the summertime evening markets in Applegate and Williams,

followed by the first round of public meetings in October. While tabling at the evening markets, APWC and SOFRC staff introduced the CWPP update process to the community, and we began asking folks about which areas would be most important to protect from wildfire. Then we hosted public meetings in five neighborhoods of the Applegate to ask residents about the needs and goals for each community. The next round of public meetings will take place in January from 6-8 pm at the following locations:

1. Ruch Fire Station Training Building, 1095 Upper Applegate Road (January 13)
2. Apricity Vineyard, 5719 Jerome Prairie Rd (January 15)
3. Applegate Community Church, 18960 N Applegate Rd (January 20)
4. Hidden Valley High School, 651 Murphy Creek Rd (January 26)
5. Williams Grange, 20100 Williams Hwy (January 29)

Part of the innovative approach we're taking with this CWPP is directly integrating community input into the process. Through interactive mapping exercises, residents marked places they care about—like favorite swimming holes or recreation areas—on local maps. These place-based insights, along with responses to our community survey, will help guide how priorities are set in the plan. Please take the survey at tinyurl.com/avcwpps.

The survey will ask you to rank eight factors (listed below) to inform how fuel-reduction projects should be implemented.

See COMMUNITY WILDFIRE, page 15.

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The Applegater is still going strong—thanks to you! As we enter our 31st year, we continue to rely on our readers and contributors to keep this community newspaper thriving. Every issue is written by Applegaters about the Applegate, for Applegaters. Printing and distributing the Applegater is only possible because of your ongoing support.

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ISSUE

HOLIDAY - ARTS

OBITUARY

Joan Peterson 1940-2025

BY DIANA COOGLE

On November 5, 2025, Joan Peterson died peacefully after receiving a loving massage from her granddaughter, Haley Peterson. She had had minor health problems for a number of years and was still taking daily walks.

Joan Caroline Peterson was born to Elmer and Janice Peterson on January 30, 1940, in Oakland, California. Early piano and accordion lessons stimulated a lifelong interest in music. An accomplished horsewoman as a teenager, she loved riding all her life.

After three years at the University of California, Davis, Joan married Jimmie Weldon Smith in 1960. They moved to Tulelake, California to work in his family's potato-packing business and farm potatoes. She thought it a magical time. Their children, Gordon and Jenell, were born in 1961 and 1962, respectively.

In 1965 the family moved to Davis. Joan finished a BA in English, obtained a teaching certificate, and began teaching at Sacramento Country Day School.

In 1968, now divorced, Joan moved with her children to Inverness, California, where her great-great-grandparents had built a house in 1911. She always spoke and wrote with love about the landscapes and relationships of Inverness.

Joan taught English at Tomales High School from 1969 to 1970 and, later, music at West Marin Elementary School. While at Tomales High, she and the school's woodshop teacher, Christopher Bratt, fell in love. Chris had three children. In 1976, Chris and Joan moved, with two of their teenagers and a niece and nephew, to their farm in the Applegate, where they kept sheep, horses, chickens, dogs, cats, and goats. From time to time, the other children and various family members lived with them. Joan learned to card wool and knit sweaters. She grew vegetables and

flowers, but she was especially good with animals. Reincarnation as one of Joan's horses was considered a lucky draw!

Many Applegaters have enjoyed music at Joan and Christopher's, with Joan on accordion, Chris on guitar, and their singing voices blending.

After earning a master's degree in English at Southern Oregon University (SOU), Joan taught writing at Rogue Community College. Poetry classes at SOU inspired her to start the Applegate Poets, a group she stayed with until she died. She helped found a singing group (Voices of the Applegate) and the Friends of the Applegate Library, where she served as secretary until her death. She was copy editor and writer for the *Applegater* in its early days and wrote *Applegater* articles about Voices of the Applegate until the group's recent disbanding.

Joan published two books of poetry, *Brilliant by the Door* (1999) and *Looking for a Place to Write* (2014). Her poems have appeared in several anthologies.

After Chris died in 2019, Haley; her husband Andy; and their newborn son, Koji, lived with Joan for several years. Koji was the light of Joan's life during that time.

Joan Peterson's talents flowed in many directions, but her greatest talent was the warmth she poured into her friendships.

Joan is preceded in death by her parents and by her husband, Christopher Bratt. She is survived by her son, Gordon Smith; her daughter, Jenell Smith; her stepchildren, Toni Winter, Joshua Bratt, Nick Bratt, and Greg Bratt; her grandchildren, Mehana Smith, Kainoa Smith, Haley Peterson, Levi May, Justine May, Jasper Smith, and Braenn Smith; her step-grandchildren Zachary Winter, Faun Winter, Alexander Bratt, Dylan Kellington, Jesse Bratt, and Abby Bratt; and her great-grandson, Koji Peterson.

A memorial service is being prepared by the family.

Diana Coogle
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What if our neighbors were fed?

BY ALISON SEXAUER

Across the Applegate and the greater Rogue Valley, a quiet movement is taking root, built on the simple belief that everyone deserves good food and that our communities already hold the relationships and creativity to make that possible.

For the past decade, the Rogue Valley Food System Network (RVFSN) has worked to build an equitable, resilient, ecologically sound, and economically viable local food system. RVFSN has served as a convener and connector, ensuring that farmers, food banks, educators, health providers, and businesses work together toward a thriving, regional food network.

Earlier this year, we released the updated Rogue Valley Community Food Assessment and Action Plan, a roadmap for access, equity, and resilience. From that plan, partners across the valley have organized into working groups focused on ensuring access to healthy food for all, supporting local farms, protecting soil and water, and reducing food waste.

Here in the Applegate, we are proud to be working alongside A Greater Applegate to strengthen the local food-and-farm network, connecting farmers, markets, and community organizations to one another and to regional partners. Together, we're identifying opportunities to grow, process, and distribute more of what's produced in the valley, right here at home. This work builds on Applegate values: community self-reliance, stewardship of the land, and care for our neighbors.

Still, the need remains great. More than 23 percent of Josephine County households and 16 percent of Jackson County households rely on SNAP, and food-insecurity rates are higher in these counties than in the rest of Oregon. Even before recent disruptions to SNAP benefits, food banks were seeing a 30 percent increase in attendance over the last year, a number that continues to rise.

The compliance of the US Department of Agriculture with a federal court order to release the full amount of SNAP contingency funds has allowed states to calculate benefits for each eligible household. This welcome news offers short-term relief, but our local food system is still carrying an unprecedented load.

Across the region, food banks are stretched thin, smaller rural pantries are struggling to stay open, and donations are down. Yet, something remarkable is happening here. Rogue Valley residents, organizations, and businesses are rising to meet the moment. Donations of food and funds are increasing, long-standing programs like Double Up Food Bucks

are adapting to reach more families, and new, community-driven solutions are taking root.

One such effort is the Rogue Valley Good Food Fund, a new initiative that allows food banks and partner organizations to continue buying directly from local farmers, ensuring that fresh produce and proteins reach the families who need them most. The fund builds on the success of the Local Food Purchasing Agreement program, which brought more than \$200,000 to Rogue Valley farms over two years. It's a simple, powerful model: keep dollars local, support farm viability, and move healthy food from farms to food pantries.

These efforts echo a deeper truth: food security is community security. It's not just about filling plates—it's about transforming systems. When we invest in local farms, food hubs, and distribution networks, we strengthen both our economy and our resilience. When we coordinate across sectors—agriculture, health, education, and emergency response—we create lasting change.

That's the spirit behind the upcoming Rogue Valley Food Solutions Summit, January 15-16, when community members, farmers, funders, and agencies will come together to continue this work by identifying the root causes of hunger and building collective solutions for a stronger regional food system.

So, we ask: What if our neighbors were fed?

What if all the food grown in the Applegate and across the Rogue Valley could reach those who need it most?

What if we remembered the importance of preserving the harvest—drying, canning, and sharing abundance while it's here?

What if we became masters of gleaning and reducing food waste, ensuring that everything we pour our time, water, and hard-earned dollars into fulfills its purpose?

These aren't distant dreams. Every gleaned apple, every local carrot in a pantry box, every partnership between a farmer and a food bank is a step toward that vision.

Because the question isn't whether we have enough food. It's whether we can move it, share it, and honor it—together.

To get involved, visit rvfoodsystem.org.

Alison Sexauer
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An update from Rogue Forest Partners

BY TOM GRECO

Rogue Forest Partners is a collaboration between six agencies and four nonprofit organizations working together to plan and implement strategic forest health and fuels-reduction projects around the Rogue Basin. Projects use ecologically based thinning and prescribed fire to protect forest values and communities across federal, municipal, and private lands. Partners raise funds for this work from federal, state, and private philanthropic sources and work with tribes, fire districts, landowners, and other community-based organizations to inform our efforts. Here's an update on our work.

The Upper Applegate Watershed (UAW) Restoration Project spans 52,000 acres of land largely administered by the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This long-term, community-informed restoration effort improves forest health and enhances wildlife habitat, while reducing the risk of severe wildfire to the ecosystem.

To date, Rogue Forest Partners' lead implementation partner, Lomakatsi Restoration Project, has overseen 1,600 acres of "surface-and-ladder" ecological thinning treatments in the project area, which means removing small trees and branches to reduce the risk of wildfire climbing into the forest canopy. Working closely with the US Forest Service, Lomakatsi also oversaw completion of about 900 acres of helicopter-yarded ecological commercial thinning, with 1.5 million board feet of small- to medium-diameter trees removed as the byproducts of restoration and sold to Murphy Veneer. The revenue helps to offset the cost of restoration work and supports local businesses.



Ecological commercial thinning at the Shan Apple project area, with a view of the Taylor Creek Fire scar in the background. Photo by Tom Greco.

Through the winter and into the spring, Lomakatsi and the Forest Service will focus on controlled pile-burning of the remaining slash, while working with local biomass facilities to utilize some of the logs that were not suitable for mills.

The Williams Project is designed to reduce wildfire risk for nearby communities and enhance ecosystem health on private and BLM-administered lands. To date, partners have completed 194 acres of

ecological thinning across six parcels of private land and 80 acres of BLM land. Over the summer, Lomakatsi's technical forestry team, working closely with BLM staff, completed pre-treatment monitoring for 275 acres of ecological understory thinning slated to take place this winter and into the spring, located in the Swamp Creek area.

Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative and Lomakatsi are monitoring fuel work by BLM in the Late Mungers area and will present the results during a field trip following completion of the work.

Just over the ridge that separates the Applegate Valley from the Rogue Valley, the West Bear All-Lands Restoration Project spans 27,000 acres of the wildland-urban interface west of Bear Creek and the I-5 corridor, from Talent to Jacksonville. To date, Lomakatsi has overseen completion of over 4,100 acres of ecological thinning, working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to engage 170 private landowners across the project area. This includes restoration within the Jacksonville Woodlands, in close coordination with the City of Jacksonville and local partners. This season, partners will focus

on controlled hand-pile burning across 500 acres, with 1,000 more acres of ecological thinning work scheduled over the next year.

Rogue Forest Partners is also working to reduce the risk of severe wildfire to ecosystems and communities near Grants Pass by thinning overly dense stands of trees. This work is happening at the Shan Apple project site within the Upper Briggs Restoration Project, a strategic ridgeline in Josephine County that separates the Illinois Valley from the Applegate Valley. Over the spring and summer, Lomakatsi co-managed the completion of commercial ecological thinning on 194 acres, under the direction of Forest Service timber staff, through a contract with local timber operator Don Hamann, Inc.

While getting essential work done in forests and neighborhoods, we are also creating opportunities for tribal and rural youth. These projects provide training opportunities through Lomakatsi's Inter-Tribal Conservation Corps and Youth Ecological Forestry Training Program, helping to build local workforce capacity and support pathways to natural resource careers.

Sign up for updates

Rogue Forest Partners provides occasional updates to the community around operations, especially when controlled burning is planned. To stay in the loop, please text "RFPupdate" to 855-594-2793 or follow Rogue Forest Partners at rogueforestpartners.org or on Facebook (@rogueforestpartners).

Tom Greco
Communications Director, Lomakatsi
Restoration Project
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A Lomakatsi crew member conducts controlled pile burning in the Jacksonville Woodlands as part of the West Bear All-Lands Restoration Project. Photo by Tom Greco.

Donate to the Applegater in December
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POETRY CORNER

Long Term Care *For Haley*

By Joan Peterson

A warm room, scent of lavender
your hands pressed against my skin.
Relaxed, I lie still as you work your palms
over my legs, my back along my vertebrae.

You take my arm in your hands
and tell me to "let go." I fade
into music, a haunting echo, remembering.

We have traded places. You were
the small infant placed in my arms
tiny limbs reaching out for the world.
I turned you on my knees, patted
your backside, heard you breathe
felt you relax. My hands pressed
against your skin and you slept.

My daughter's daughter, you rock
me in your arms like a tiny child.
You may carry me to the end of my life
as I learn to let go.

Joan Peterson passed away on November 5. A summary of the high points of her life can be found in the obituary on page 2.

Have a submission for Poetry Corner, either written by an Applegate resident or about the Applegate? Email it to *Applegater* poetry editor Paul Tipton at ptipton4u2c@gmail.com.

BOOK REVIEW

Trail Mix: Food for the Sole

A Non-Runner's Guide to Running
by Catherine A. Rodgers

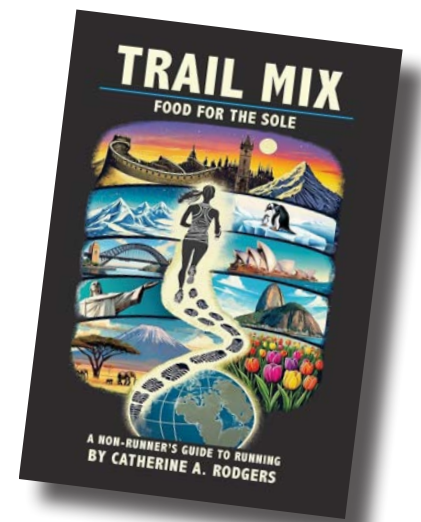
BY PAUL TIPTON

If you remember the book *True Grit*, or its movie renditions, this book is not that. But it *is* a story of true grit, as it tells of Cathy Rodgers's remarkable journey toward a goal, originally inspired by her sister's birthday gift and ultimately expanded to include her sisters and daughters, to become a member of marathoners' prestigious Seven Continents Club.

For Cathy, that goal included three separate trips to Antarctica (the last one to be sure her other daughter didn't feel left out), braving the Drake Passage six times, and miraculously never getting seasick on the crossings! This is a gal who "shows up"—her mantra throughout the memoir—despite feelings of inadequacy. She powers through every trial, every trail, every marathon, never having the dreaded "Did Not Finish" applied to her. Oh, and along the way, while they were in the neighborhood, she and her sister Linda climbed Mount Kilimanjaro.

These journeys began when Cathy turned 50 years old and her sister Linda gave her a gift: "I challenge you to run a marathon." Although Cathy tells us again and again, "I am not a runner. I hate running," she does run, rising to the challenge. Each step of each race seems to take her toward new running goals, whether she likes it or not. Her determination is her true grit, learned through years of persistence as a woman in a man's corporate world, always determined to be not only good enough but better, a grit compounded by her own competitive nature. She shows up. She is there at the starting line, ready to go.

This book is not just Cathy's personal story. It is a wonderful travelogue, well documented with interesting and humorous details of places visited. Consider her visit to the Kingdom of Bhutan, where "there is an unavoidable peace and serenity and an immersive self-imposed solitude that is calming." She goes on to describe the profound

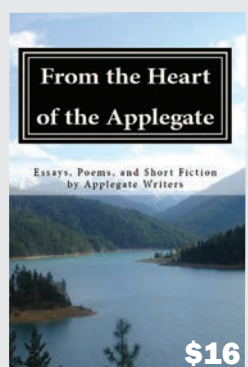


silence "interrupted only by the periodic melodious ring of the prayer wheel bells," the smell of butter lamps burning, and the chanting of the monks that "created a peaceful, bliss-like serenity in this village that recognizes its history of fertility by celebrating all things phallic. Hairy balls and erect pink penises were painted on almost every wall throughout the village," she says, "They welcomed you to the café and the vegetable market." She assures us that the locals found none of this "the least bit strange." As for herself, she "hoped that this town and powerful source of fertility did not bless me."

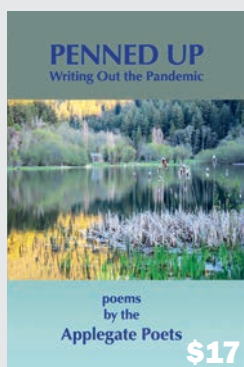
With this book, you will go on journeys and through experiences you've likely never imagined yourself, but which you can enjoy vicariously through the well-wrought words of this first-time author, who bats it out of the park with this book. You can explore the seven continents on a wet winter day by the fire when you get your copy. All proceeds of a signed book purchased directly through Cathy (cathyrodgers55@gmail.com) (\$25 plus postage, with payment options) go to the nonprofit Rooted in Hope (rootedinhope.org) that Cathy and her daughters, Jennie and Katie, have established to fund environmentally sustainable projects combating the effects of climate change around the world. *Trail Mix: Food for the Sole* is also on the shelf at Rebel Heart bookstore in Jacksonville and can be ordered through other local bookstores as well. No need to feed the ugly giant Amazon when you can help create positive change in the world instead.

Paul Tipton
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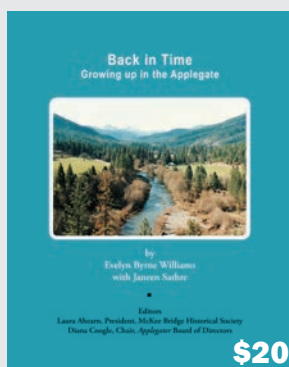
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Our Mission

The goal of the Applegate Valley Community Newspaper, Inc., is to provide the Applegate watershed with a communication vehicle, the *Applegater*, that will provide educational information, increase community networking, and represent all the area's diverse communities. Through honest, constructive, relevant, and entertaining reports on a wide variety of subjects and viewpoints, including our natural resources, historical and current events, and community news, we can work together to enhance the quality of life we have in the Applegate, and continue to make a difference in our valley.

Acknowledgements

The *Applegater* newsmagazine is published quarterly by AVCN and is funded by donations from our loyal readers, matching funds from NewsMatch, a program of INN, and advertisements for local businesses.

Special thanks to Diana Coogle, Margaret della Santina, Haley May Peterson, and Paul Tipton for copy editing; Lisa Baldwin, Diana Coogle, Carla David, Jeanette LeTourneux, and Paul Tipton for proofing; Christa White for bookkeeping; webmaster Joe Lavine; and Michelle McAfee for layout.

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Submissions for the next issue must be received at gater@applegater.org by the deadline (see Editorial Calendar on this page).

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What is a Master Gardener?

BY GRACE FLORJANCIC

Jackson County Master Gardeners are folks interested in learning more about the art and science of growing and caring for garden plants. There is always something new to learn, from different vegetable varieties to new blossoms that we can share with our pollinator pals. Master Gardeners volunteer in their communities to share their gardening knowledge and skills.

There are many ways to volunteer and give back to our county's residents through the Master Gardener program. You might have come across some volunteers out and about at classes and events. Volunteers offer classes and presentations across the county at garden clubs, libraries, and the Jackson County Extension Office. Master Gardeners attend multiple tabling events each year to share informational handouts



Master Gardener volunteers Janine and Marcie and coordinator Grace standing in front of the rose demonstration garden. Photo by Daniela Garcia.

and resources. Plant Clinic volunteers research and answer gardeners' questions about growing plants, identifying insects, and other topics. Volunteers grow fresh produce in the vegetable demonstration garden at the Jackson County Extension Office and donate it to ACCESS food pantries. With more ways to volunteer than ever, you can come share your knowledge. There are endless opportunities to find your niche in the Master Gardener ecosystem. Check out our website's events page at beav.es/SGR to see what's coming up next.

Interested in becoming a Master Gardener volunteer? The 2026 Master Gardener training course takes place on

Wednesday afternoons at the Jackson County Extension Office, 569 Hanley Road, January 21 through April 22. These classes cover a variety of topics, such as vegetables, native plants, pests, and building volunteer skills. The program is a great way to meet and learn from other gardeners around the county. Visit our website at beav.es/N88 to learn more about the program and register for an information session.

Hope to see you at classes and events this upcoming year!

Grace Florjancic
Jackson County Master Gardener
Program Coordinator
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For more information, contact:

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Next deadline: February 1

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Thanks to Linda Kappen for the lovely photo of snow on Humbug Creek.

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Have a photo for the Spring 2026 *Applegater*? Email it in large format at 300 dpi to gater@applegater.org.

Corrections

The *Applegater* is committed to publishing accurate information in its news articles, correcting errors of fact, and clarifying misleading statements. Send suggested corrections to Editor in Chief Annika Hodges at annika@applegater.org.

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Editorial Calendar

ISSUE	DEADLINE
FALL (Sept - Nov) <i>Earth - Air</i>	August 1
WINTER (Dec - Feb).... <i>Holiday - Arts</i>	November 1
SPRING (March - May) ... <i>History - Heritage</i>	February 1
SUMMER (June - Aug) <i>Fire - Water</i>	May 1

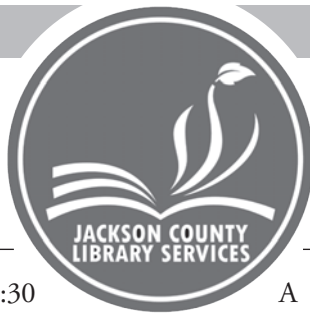
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— Applegate Library —

Get cozy with Applegate Library

BY CHRISTINE GRUBB



Signing up for newsletters with Jackson County Library Services is a fantastic way to stay informed about the latest events, new book arrivals, and special programs at the library. By subscribing, you'll receive regular updates directly to your inbox. Whether you're interested in author talks, workshops, or community events, the library's newsletters will keep you connected and engaged with everything happening at your local branch. Don't miss out—sign up at jcls.org/local/ newsletter today and stay informed about all the great things your library has to offer!

Upcoming events

Holiday Origami Ornaments, 8+ years. Come create holiday ornaments using origami, the Japanese art of paper folding. There will be a variety of ideas to choose from for all skill levels. Origami is 2-4 pm Friday, December 5.

By a Lady: A Look at Jane Austen's World, 18+ years. Living-history performer Tames Alan gives an engaging portrayal of what it was like to be alive during the 1800s, when Jane Austen was writing. In the first half of this program, Tames appears first in an authentic dress like those any of Austen's characters would have worn during the daytime, then changes into an evening dress that would have been appropriate for a ball. Based on quotes and descriptions from Austen's characters, Tames shows how each fashion element, including undergarments, fabrics, and hair and makeup, reflects the reality of the times. 12:30-2 pm Saturday, December 6.

Take & Read: Remarkably Bright Creatures by Shelby Van Pelt. Who says reading isn't hands on? Enhance your Rogue Reads experience by participating in our Take & Read. Each kit has a collection of gifts to open during specific pages or chapters, providing an immersive and fun element to your reading! Book is not included. While supplies last, beginning Friday, December 16.

Holiday Crafternoon, 5+ years. Visit the Applegate Library and choose your holiday craft. Different craft stations—from painting ornaments to making candy cane houses and holiday cards to painting rocks and making pinecone birdfeeders—will provide something to inspire you for gift-giving. 2-4 pm Friday, December 19.

Be an Energy Explorer with ScienceWorks, 6+ years. ScienceWorks will lead this interactive workshop that includes **Electricity Exploration**—learning the basics of electricity, completing challenges like turning on a light bulb, and exploring and comparing different types of batteries—and **Solar Energy**—using a small solar cell to power a light and motor. 1-2 pm Saturday, December 20.

End-of-Life Planning for Your Online Accounts, 18+ years. Have you ever wondered what happens to your digital accounts after death? Or how your loved ones will get access to those accounts to save precious data, such as photos and videos? This program will help you and your loved ones take practical steps to

prepare your digital legacy. 10:30 am–noon Friday, January 2.

Be an Energy Explorer with ScienceWorks, 6+ years. This workshop will include activities about **Hydroelectric Power**—create a model hydroelectric dam to power a lightbulb, learn about the Klamath Dam Removal Project, and engage in discussion about local ecology—and **Wind Power**—explore the mechanics of a windmill and try making your own windmill to power a lightbulb. 1-2 pm Saturday, January 10.

Rogue Reads: Help Marcellus the Octopus Escape the Aquarium—Escape Room, 13+ years. Work together in teams to solve clues and puzzles to help our friend Marcellus the Octopus escape the aquarium! 4-5 pm Thursday, January 29.

Rogue Reads: Oregon Coast Sea Life with John Jackson, 6+ years. Oregon has one of the most diverse coastal ecosystems on the planet, and now it's coming to you! Explore sea life using models and real-life specimens as we discuss the fish, plant, bird, and mammal life along the Oregon beaches. 1-2 pm Saturday, January 31.

Rogue Reads: Learn to Make a Crochet Octopus with The Websters, 18+ years. Amigurumi is the Japanese art of knitting or crocheting small, stuffed yarn creatures. This is an entry-level amigurumi crochet class for making an octopus. We will cover the basics of crochet and building an amigurumi. This project may need to be completed at home after class. *Registration required.* 12:30-2:30 pm Saturday, February 14.

Death Café, 18+ years. An open gathering for discussions about life, death, and the experiences and questions that come with both. Sponsored by SOLADA (Southern Oregon Living and Dying Alliance). 6-8 pm Thursday, February 19.

Country Property Basics, 18+ years. What you need to know before buying or selling property in a rural community. 12:30-1:30 pm Saturday, February 28.

Reminders

A Digital Services representative will be here on Tuesdays from 10 am-12:30 pm on a first-come, first-served basis. You can also make an appointment by email at teched@jcls.org or by phone at 541-734-3990.

The Applegate Library meeting room can be booked for your meeting, program, or event (even when the library is closed) by going to jcls.libcal.com/reserve/ap-meeting. Need a place to rehearse? You can do that here, whether for a meeting or music practice.

Wi-Fi is available 24-7 in our parking lot and available inside during open hours. Preschool Storytime is Fridays from 11-11:30 am.

Christine Grubb
Applegate Branch Library Manager
Jackson County Library Services
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cgrubb@jcls.org
18485 N Applegate Rd, Grants Pass

— Ruch Library —

Winter fun at Ruch Library

BY MEGAN PINDER

A community that reads together, grows together. That's the philosophy behind our annual winter reading program, Rogue Reads. This year, through our programming and our selected book titles, we are focusing on ocean life and on grief and loss. The adult selection is *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby Van Pelt, and the picture book is *The Octopus Escapes* by Maile Meloy. To learn more and to participate, please visit jcls.org, or stop by the Ruch Library.

Take & Read: Remarkably Bright Creatures by Shelby Van Pelt, 18+ years. Enhance your Rogue Reads experience by participating in our Take & Read. Each kit will have a collection of gifts to open during specific pages or chapters. The book is not included in the kit but is available for check out. Available starting Tuesday, December 2, while supplies last.

Wreath Making, 18+ years. Holiday cheer begins at your doorstep—with a beautiful handmade evergreen wreath! Registration is required at jcls.org/events or by calling 541-899-7438. 1-2:30 pm Saturday, December 6, or 4-5:30 pm Thursday, December 11.

Learn to Make a Crochet Octopus with The Websters, 18+ years. Amigurumi is a Japanese art of crocheting small, stuffed yarn creatures. This is an entry-level class where you will make an octopus. Registration is required at jcls.org/events or by calling 541-899-7438. 1-3 pm Saturday, December 13.

Oregon Coast Sea Life with John Jackson, 6+ years. Explore sea life using models and real-life specimens as we discuss the fish, plant, bird, and mammal life along the Oregon Coast. 1-2 pm Saturday, December 20.

World Snack Tour, 10+ years. Discover a new country through music, trivia, games, and the best snacks and candies each country has to offer. We provide the samples; you bring a spirit of adventure and curiosity about the world! 1-2 pm Saturdays, December 27, January 24, and February 28.

Embroidery: Stitching the Sea. Join us for a fun, all-ages embroidery workshop where we will create ocean-inspired designs. Materials provided. All ages welcome. Children under 12 years old should bring an adult guardian. Registration is required at jcls.org/events or by calling 541-899-7438. 1-2:30 pm Saturday, January 10. As an optional

extension on January 17 from 1-2:30, bring your embroidery kit back to the library to finish your project, get help with tricky stitches, and enjoy good company!

The Myth of Skeleton Woman and Other Tales from the Edge of Imagination with Will Hornyak, 14+ years. Master Storyteller Will Hornyak weaves together myths, stories, and poems from around the world that offer unique perspectives on aging, life, death, rebirth, and the many thresholds we cross in this life. 1-2 pm Saturday, February 7.

Civic Book Group: Caste, 13+ years. Explore democracy, civic engagement, and social change through books and discussions. This winter, we are reading *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson. Multiple copies are available for check out—get yours today to prepare for the discussion! 4-5:30 pm Thursday, February 19.

Preschool Storytime, 3-5 years. Bring your preschoolers to enjoy stories, rhymes, songs, and fun at the library. 10:30-11 am Tuesdays.

Community Resource Help. Need help with food, shelter, a medical provider, etc.? Meet with a member of our Community Resource Team by appointment (call the library at 541-494-3284) or drop in. Noon-4 pm Wednesdays.

Computer and Tech Help. Meet with a Technology Education Specialist by appointment by email at digitalservices@jcls.org or by phone at 541-734-3990 or drop in. 10 am-12:30 pm Tuesdays and 2-4:30 pm Thursdays.

Read Play Talk, 0-5 years. Discover how children learn through play and daily activities: singing, telling stories, creating art, and having fun! RPT is open to everyone—young children and their families and caregivers. 10:30 am-noon Thursdays.

Community Yoga, 13+ years. Join us for an all-levels yoga class with Dr. Rachel Stricker. The Community Room will open at 8:45 am and class will begin at 9 am. Registration is required at jcls.org/events or by calling 541-899-7438. Bring your own mat. 9-10 am second and fourth Wednesdays.

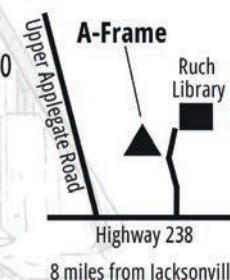
Megan Pinder
Ruch Branch Manager
Jackson County Library Services
541-494-3284
mpinder@jcls.org
7919 Highway 238, Ruch

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— Williams Library —
Winter fun at Williams Library

BY SARAH MEYER

Williams Library events and programs are offered at no charge and are open to the public. Registration is not required, and a library card is not necessary to participate in library events and programs.

Featured events

Williams Weekly Story Time.

Themed story time and craft session in a safe and fun environment. 11 am-noon every Friday.

K9 Reading Buddies. Trained therapy dogs offer a gentle, supportive environment where children can practice reading aloud and discover the joy of language through stories. 3-4 pm on Tuesdays.

Adult Williams Book Club.

Connect with fellow book lovers to dive into compelling stories, exchange ideas, and celebrate the joy of reading in good company. Noon-1 pm the last Saturday of every month.

Virtual communication booth

Community members can reserve the communication booth at the Williams Branch Library for virtual meetings—free of charge.

The booth comfortably fits up to two people for virtual interviews, important calls, or video chats in a private, quiet space. The Zenbooth Solo includes lighting, acoustic insulation, motion-activated ventilation, a height-adjustable desk, and outlets, plus the option to hardwire a device to the library's high-speed internet.

Bring your own device or borrow a library laptop.

End-of-Year Fundraising Drive

Josephine Community Library Foundation raises funds to support special programs beyond the reach of the library's tax-funded operating budget, including technology upgrades and building improvements.

To contribute during our end-of-year fundraising drive, visit jclfoundation.org and make your donation to support the critical work of the library in our community by December 31.

Williams Library art display

Williams Library patrons took a walk down memory lane during November, when the library featured a colorful display of flyers and posters from Williams events and fundraisers over the past 30 years, all from Williams resident Jessie Spero's collection.

If you created any of the artwork, know who did, or attended the events, please stop by and share your memories. Leave a note in our memory book with the year, artist's name, and any stories you'd like to add. The book will stay with the posters as part of our shared history.

Williams Library hours

Tuesday/Wednesday/Saturday, 1-6 pm
Friday, 11 am-6 pm

For more information about Josephine Community Library Foundation or library building projects, visit jclfoundation.org or contact Executive Director Rebecca Stoltz at rstoltz@josephinelibrary.org or 541-476-0571 ext. 200.

Sarah Meyer
Communication Coordinator
smeyer@josephinelibrary.org

Friends support
Ruch Library

BY JANIS MOHR-TIPTON

A bright new coat of paint on the Book Barn and the A-Frame Bookstore at the Ruch Library provides a new cohesive look to the whole campus.

The Friends of Ruch Library (FORL) agreed to help maintain these buildings for their storage needs and for selling books. Funds from book sales support many FORL programs, help support programming by both the Ruch branch library and JCLS (Jackson County Library Services), and provide new books for children and youth in our community and beyond. All this is part of our mission.

Many book buyers now come regularly to the Book Barn and the A-Frame Bookstore. They are very happy with the quality of the used books, the prices, and the opportunity to visit our beautiful setting. We at FORL extend our fervent thanks to them for supporting the things we are able to provide with those funds.

Erin Galbraith, a longtime FORL member, board member, and volunteer, talked warmly about volunteering at the A-Frame Bookstore one Saturday. "It was so nice to see our bookstore being used the way I always envisioned when I volunteered," she says. "I enjoyed watching four kids of one family, each with a free book coupon, go nuts looking all over for the perfect book or puzzle book. The quiet boy took one of the cool castle-model kits in a book. The parents took copies

of our civics programs information and the Declaration of Independence, and a magnet with our open hours! I love that the dad came in, sat right down in the rocking chair, and luxuriated in the space of the cute building.

"We all had a nice chat too. Some days are so memorable, and all days have some type of satisfied feeling about being in this space."

Become a member of FORL and join our lifelong-learning movement! The Friends meet in the Ruch Library's Community Meeting Room on the first Wednesday of the month, September through June, 10 am-noon.

You are welcome to join us and bring your suggestions for community-interest programs and presenters.

Next time you come to the Ruch Library, pick up a free magnet! It lists library and book sale days and hours for your convenience. Remember to also check out the Ruch Library article in each edition of the *Applegater!*

Watch for a Friends of the Ruch Library announcement of an Open House in early 2026. We want you to meet us, and we want to meet you! Together, we can continue building community.

Finish 2025 strong and begin 2026 with the joy of renewal. Good wishes to all!

Janis Mohr-Tipton
FORL president
janis.agapark@gmail.com



The A-Frame Bookstore looks beautiful with the new brown paint and dark green trim and door, like it belongs with the forest greens and a fall setting. Photo by Cynthia Cheney.

Nonprofit organizations in the
Applegate Valley
are welcome to submit news
and event information
to the *Applegater*.
Email gater@applegater.org.



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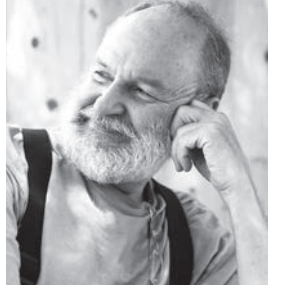
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THE STARRY SIDE

The only still star!

BY GREELEY WELLS



Greeley Wells.

Because the night sky moves steadily over our heads from east to west, crawling along imperceptibly each night, all year long, we would lose our orientation on Earth if it weren't for the North Star. This star, also called Polaris, is the fixed point in the sky because it's very close to the spot Earth's axis rotates from. Everything moves around it. That makes it a great star to find—the only one who will always be there! The one around whom everything else revolves. It's about halfway up the sky due north.

Because the Applegate is in the northern hemisphere, we here on this spot on planet Earth have a great view of the North Star. Fortunately, it's easy to find, with the help of a few easy-to-spot constellations: Cassiopeia, the Big Dipper, and the Little Dipper.

At this time of year, Cassiopeia is above the North Star, with the Big Dipper (a part of the constellation Ursa Major, the Great Bear) underneath it, and the Little Dipper west of and below it. Each points

in its own way to the North Star. At least some of these constellations are almost always visible from the north if there aren't any mountains, trees, or buildings blocking the view.

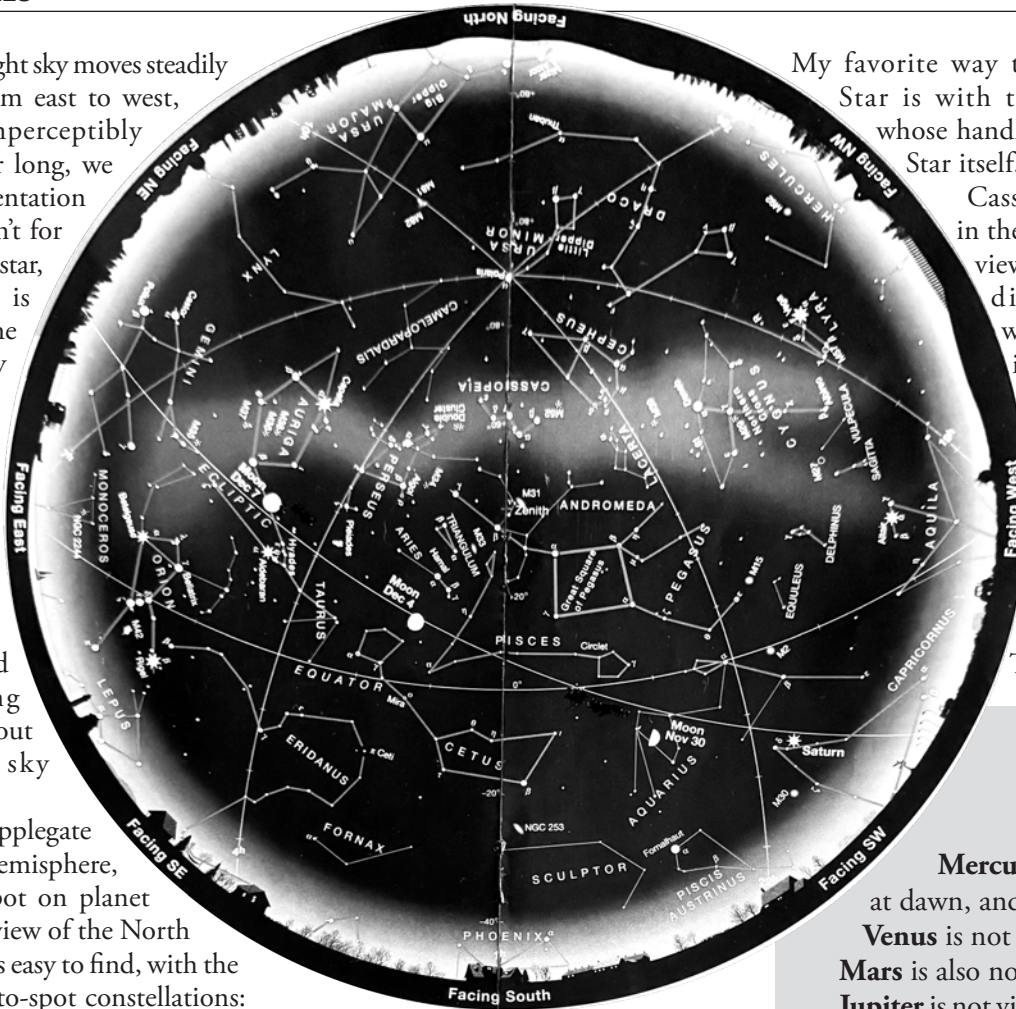


Image: Sky & Telescope (skyandtelescope.org).

My favorite way to find the North Star is with the Little Dipper, whose handle-end is the North Star itself.

Cassiopeia is the “M” in the sky (or “W” when viewed from the other direction). If the wider half of the M is divided like a pie into three pieces, the outside line points directly at the North star.

On the other side of the North Star, and below it, is the Big Dipper. The two stars of its

outer-bowl side point right to Polaris, too. Sometimes we can only see the North Star with the Dipper and sometimes only with Cassiopeia, depending on how clear the northern horizon line is. When they are on either side of it, they both point easily to it.

The North Star and its companions aren't the only vividly visible orbs in the sky in winter. The great square of Pegasus is bright overhead this time of year, and Orion, with his bright, three-starred belt, is rising in the east. The Northern Cross has moved west and is standing upright near the horizon.

Stay warm out there!!!

Greeley Wells
greeley@greeley.me

— OF NOTE —

Planets

Mercury is visible in November at dawn and dusk, in December at dawn, and in January is not visible.

Venus is not visible from November through January.

Mars is also not visible all three months.

Jupiter is not visible in November and December, but up all night in January.

Saturn is visible in the evening sky every evening this winter.

Meteors

Geminids: You might see 120 per hour! The best time is the night of December 13-14, but they're out from November 19 through December 24. They center on the Gemini twins but will appear all over the sky.

Got News?

The *Applegater* welcomes submissions!

We're your newspaper and want to share your news with readers throughout the Applegate Valley watershed's many neighborhoods.

What's going on around you? Let us know! Send your write-up and high-resolution photos to gater@applegater.org. Thanks!

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GARDENING FROM THE HEART

Local seeds are growing our culture into...

BY NOEL RUIZ

Dear gardeners,
You may not be thinking about seeds quite yet, but after winter solstice they'll surely be inching toward the front of your mind, with each sunrise bringing us a little closer to planting time!

I encourage us all to shop local when we're sourcing this season's seeds. Did you know that southern Oregon is one of the most vibrant seed-producing regions in the country?

It's true! We're blessed with a solid number of local seed companies.

Why does supporting local seeds matter?

Here are five compelling reasons:

1. Locally grown seeds are *locally adapted*. A huge percentage of seeds sold in the US are actually grown overseas, but locally grown seeds are more likely to thrive in our gardens than seeds grown far away.

2. Access to local seeds ensures a *more vibrant local culture* for growing plants. For a local culture to be healthy and thrive, it must have access to abundant nutritious food and, by proxy, to quality seeds, clean water, and lively soil.

3. Local seed growers are more likely to *spend money in our local economy*—compared to larger, far-away seed companies, who spend profits elsewhere.

4. Supporting *local seeds is an ethical choice*. Seed farmers are not in the seed game to become rich! Instead, seed growers' motivations include passion for the lifestyle and ethical reasons around sustainability and community health.

5. Purchasing *local seeds directly supports families*. They are our neighbors. They are stewards of local soil and natural

capital. Local seed growers operate family-friendly, community-friendly operations.

Local seeds are a cornerstone for healthy local culture.

Where to find local seeds

What follows is reminiscent of the BizBits column, but specifically for seeds! Are you familiar with these local seed stewards yet?

Siskiyou Seeds. Vegetable, flower, herb, and grain seeds, grown by local farms in southern Oregon. Local pickup option in Williams. siskiyouseeds.com.

Feral Farm. Vegetable, flower, herb, and garlic seeds, grown by Feral Farm in Applegate. Seeds and starts seasonally available in farm stand on Thompson Creek Road. *Woman owned. feralfarmseeds.com.

Hardy Seeds. Vegetable, grain, flower, and herb seeds, grown in Ashland and Talent. growhardyseeds.com.

Restoration Seeds. Vegetable, flower, and herb seeds, grown by local farms in southern Oregon. Based in Talent. *Woman owned. restorationseeds.com.

Strictly Medicinal Seeds. Medicinal herb and culinary herb seeds (live herb plants, too), grown in Williams. strictlymedicalseeds.com.

Klamath Siskiyou Native Seeds. Local native wildflower, shrub, and tree seeds, sustainably wildcrafted in southern Oregon and northern California. Based in Applegate Valley. klamathsiskiyouseeds.com.

Homestead Culture. Perennial veggies, flowers, herbs, and diverse mixes, grown in Little Applegate. Local pickup option in Ruch. (*Humble plug for our family business.*) homesteadculture.com.

Ruch Seed Library. A way to share seeds grown by local gardeners and farmers. Check out seeds for free. Bring in some seeds you save, if and when you can. Located in Ruch library.

Rogue Valley Heritage Grain Project. Growing a healthy, decentralized, resilient local grain culture—one gardener, farmer, baker, or bread lover at a time. Did you know many grains can be grown with *zero* irrigation in our climate!? Want to grow grains in your garden, starting from 100 square feet? These people will share free heritage-grain seeds. Share back



Cacia Huff, farmer and owner of Feral Farm, in Applegate. Photo by Ann Nguyen.

some saved seeds, if and when you can. growhardyseeds.com/pages/rogue-valley-heritage-grain-project.

Williams Seed Swap. Keep an ear out for the local seed swap (and scion exchange), usually on the second Sunday in March at the Williams Grange. Sign up at agrariansharing.net or look out for announcements on the new Applegate Listserv (Jo's List successor); sign up at applegateconnect.org/listserv/.

You and I represent our local culture. We are ambassadors for one another. Every thought we have, every action we take, directly impacts our own lives. Then, our influences ripple out into the community

through relationships with family, friends, acquaintances, and everyday chance encounters. Collectively, we hold the power to shape our local culture.

The joy and connection seeds bring through gardens, food, and plant companions remind me *we are not alone in this modern world—we are all together*. We belong to a magical planet filled with life and beauty—everyday miracles. Thank you, seeds, for offering so many blessings!

Noel Ruiz

hello@homesteadculture.com
Noel offers seeds and writes about homesteading from the heart at homesteadculture.com.



Don Tipping, farmer and owner of Siskiyou Seeds in Williams. Photo by Ann Nguyen.

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Seasonal shifts and stewardship at Cantrall Buckley Park

BY JANIS MOHR-TIPTON

As autumn settled into the Applegate Valley, Cantrall Buckley Park was bursting with the vibrant hues of the season. The landscape was painted in festive reds, yellows, and oranges, refreshed by the recent rains that brought a welcome flush of green to the grounds. Amidst this seasonal transformation, the park has been buzzing with activity, not just from wildlife, but from the dedicated volunteers who continue to care for and enhance this cherished community space.

Throughout October, volunteers gathered in small work parties to prepare the pollinator garden beds for planting. These efforts are part of a larger initiative to support native pollinators and enhance biodiversity within the park. The work was both productive and inspiring, as community members came together to contribute their time and energy toward a shared vision of ecological restoration.

In November, the momentum continued as small groups of volunteers planted native species in the newly prepared garden beds. These plants, sourced from local nurseries, were funded by a grant from the Oregon Xerces Society, an organization committed to the conservation of invertebrates and their habitats. The planting effort marks a significant step forward in creating a thriving pollinator habitat at Cantrall Buckley Park. A heartfelt thank-you goes out to all the volunteers, both locals and visitors from beyond the valley, who made this possible.

Looking ahead, the work is far from over. Maintaining the newly planted pollinator beds will require ongoing care, including occasional watering and weeding. The Park Enhancement Committee (PEC) is actively seeking new members to help plan and lead volunteer efforts. If you're passionate about native plants, pollinators, or spending time outdoors, this is a wonderful opportunity to get involved.

To volunteer, contact Janis Mohr-Tipton at janis@apwc.info. Volunteers receive a free park pass for the days they help, making it even easier to enjoy the beauty of Cantrall Buckley while giving back.

Fall into winter projects with APWC

In addition to the pollinator garden efforts, Caleb Galloway, Restoration Manager for the Applegate Partnership & Watershed Council (APWC), is leading seasonal maintenance projects throughout the park. Volunteers are invited to join Caleb in tackling invasive blackberry removal, a task made easier by the moist fall soil. Mechanical treatments have already begun, but removing the stubborn roots requires many hands.

Trail maintenance is another ongoing need, especially as leaves fall and weather conditions shift. Volunteers can assist with clearing paths, repairing erosion, and ensuring safe access for all park visitors. To lend a hand, reach out to Caleb at caleb@apwc.info. As with other volunteer opportunities, volunteers receive a free day pass on the days they help.



The entrance to Cantrall Buckley Park welcomes visitors with pollinator garden beds and striking sculptures of a Monarch Butterfly, Henderson's Shooting Star, and an Acorn Woodpecker—celebrating the park's commitment to native species and habitat restoration. Photo by Caleb Galloway, Applegate Partnership.

Annual Park Passes now available

With December, it's the perfect time to purchase your Jackson County Parks Annual Pass at a discounted rate of \$40. After just seven uses, the pass pays for itself, offering unlimited access to all county parks for the rest of the year. Simply keep the pass in your vehicle for easy entry.

Important reminder: The pass belongs to the purchaser. If you carpool or ride in someone else's vehicle, be sure to retrieve your pass after your visit. Lost passes cannot be replaced by the county.

Where to buy your pass:

- **Ruch/Applegate:** Ruch Hardware and Cantrall Buckley Park Host (cash/check only)
- **Medford:** Blackbird (both locations), REI, Sportsman's Warehouse, Jackson County Taxation Department, Willy Boats, and Water World
- **Jackson County:** Jackson County Parks Department (in person or by phone at 541-774-8183), White City County Roads Department, and park hosts at all county parks
- **Ashland:** Bi-Mart

A seasonal reflection

As the year winds down, it's a time for reflection and renewal.

*"Realign before this year ends
Re-grow from your own center,
Direct time, energy & thought
Toward what can truly thrive,
Enjoy Community & Winter
Celebrations
Keep reaching for real
conversations,
Finish this year Strong!"*

—Janis Mohr-Tipton 2025

Cantrall Buckley Park is a place of beauty, community, and stewardship. Whether you're planting native flowers, clearing trails, or simply enjoying the crisp air and colorful views, your presence makes a difference. Join us in finishing the year strong and setting the stage for a vibrant spring ahead.

Janis Mohr-Tipton
Chair, Cantrall Buckley
Enhancement Committee
Applegate Partnership &
Watershed Council
541-846-7501
janis@apwc.info

Ruch Holiday Market

BY ALLIE PARKIN

Join us for the sixth annual Ruch Holiday Market, November 29 and 30, from 11 am-5 pm at the Applegate Fire Department Community Hall. Local artisans are working hard to provide unique handmade products for this year's holiday season. You'll find pottery, herbal health and beauty products, whimsical knitted items, handmade greeting cards, gorgeous multi-media paintings, pressed

flower art, McKee Bridge swag, local honey products, and so much more! Black Barn Farm will be in the kitchen whipping up delicious food and LH Coffee Bar and Saloon will be providing warm, tasty beverages. You won't want to miss this!

For inquiries, please contact squirrel.medicine.pottery@gmail.com.

Allie Parkin, event coordinator
[mineekhoorn@gmail.com](mailto:mineeKhoorn@gmail.com)





www.applegatepartnership.org/upcoming-events

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"promoting ecological, economic and community well-being in the Applegate watershed through on-the-ground projects and strategic collaborations."



6th Annual

Ruch Holiday Market

Free admission
Local artisans
Food from Black Barn Farm

November 29-30
11 AM - 5 PM
1095 Upper Applegate Rd
Ruch, Oregon



AGA's pie auction draws a crowd

BY DIANA COOGLE

Ten pies sat on a table outside the kitchen of the Salant Family Ranch—Marion Hadden's pear *crostata*, Kathy Horner's blueberry-peach pie, and Joy Rogalla's Montgomery cherry pie, among others.

Potential pie-auction bidders walked around the display, eyeing the pies.

So did the farm dog, Yosh.

"No, Yosh! Down!"

After that one trial nip, a guard kept firm watch.

Each pie had a card with its story to help the auctioneer sell it: homemade sourdough crust (Kim Zwemer-Margulis); "nothing fancy, just apples from our tree, a little sugar, a little cinnamon, and a butter-Crisco crust" (Priscilla Weaver); "...based on an old family internet recipe that has been in the family for weeks, if not days" (Sam Dennis).

The pie auction itself would cap the barbecue dinner at the Salant Family Ranch, itself the penultimate event of A Greater Applegate's (AGA) Jacksaphine County Fair the third week of September. One hundred diners sat at tables, elegantly set with tablecloths and jars of flowers,

on a green lawn overlooking the bucolic scene of cows grazing under forested hills. "All the fixin's" crowned the star of the dinner, Salant-beef hamburgers. The band, a semi-acoustic version of Electric Eel, kept the mood lively. Wines from Wooldridge Creek Winery and pear cider from Blossom Barn added to the festivities.

After drinks and dinner—the auction. Jim Reiland, auction organizer, explained the process, then introduced Kathy Horner to read Priscilla Weaver's piece about the history of pie competitions in the Little Applegate. It was the Buncom Babes, Priscilla and Kathy among them, who started this years-long tradition. The AGA auction was in that vein.

Appetites, already piqued by the show-off beauty of the pies, were further whetted by descriptions the auctioneer, Collin Braley, a musician and singer with the band, gave each. Collin occasionally encouraged bidders by breaking into a pie-related song.

Competition was keen. Bids over \$100 got a bonus of 1.5 quarts of ice cream, donated by Sam Dennis and Liz Shen. Bidding wars broke out. One bidder



The crowd enjoying hamburgers before pie. Photo by Peter Salant.

even bid against himself, since the more he was willing to pay, the more someone else wanted the pie, thus increasing the gain for AGA.

The winningest pie was Joy Rogalla's cherry pie, which went for a whopping \$275. The whole table of Kim and Joseph Hurley thought the pie was well worth the price, not only for its deliciousness but also for its rarity. Joy had used cherries from her own Montgomery cherry tree—"a well-known pie cherry," she said, "loved by both people and birds, which is why we rarely harvest enough cherries for pie!"

Kim Hurley had herself made a pie, a gluten-free apple crumble, won by Max Unger. It came in a beautiful red pie dish from Born Again in the Ruch Plaza.

Liz Shen's Asian pear pie, her "ode to my ancestors" because it was a family favorite, was happily devoured—with ice cream; it went for \$150—by Tony Branham's table. Liz had called it a "pie lie" because it was actually a pie version of an Italian pear cake, "an incredible pear and almond torte," Tony said.

Chad Sobotha and Rachel Owings, from Ashland, were among the lucky

recipients of Peter Salant's win, Jim Reiland's lattice-top apple pie. They called it a "hiker's pie" ("We're ready to go hiking now!") and praised it for its "hint of lemon that balanced the sweetness of the apples and its wholesome crust."

Paul Tipton bought Kim Margulis's pie—golden delicious apples and Asian and Bartlett pears—"with flourishes," Paul said, adding that it was especially tasty with ice cream.

Joan Peterson's bid won my deep-dish apple pie that had won the Pyrofax Gas Company's Teenage Baking Contest in 1962. "It was absolutely delicious," Joan said. "It put me on another planet." Marion Hadden agreed, adding that "the cheese-apples were so cool"—the little rolled-up balls of cheese made to look like little apples that perched in rows atop the pie.

Thanks to the bidders and the bakers, the ice cream donor, the auctioneer, and the organizer, the pie auction was a great success, not only for the \$1100 it brought in for A Greater Applegate but for the happy grins on the faces of all pie eaters.

Diana Coogle
diana@applegater.org



Checking out the pies before the auction. Photo by Peter Salant.

Creating buzz: Native pollinator gardens at Provolt Recreation Site

BY CALEB GALLOWAY

The Provolt Recreation Site has undergone many transformations over the years, from the creation of new trails to the ongoing removal of invasive species. One

of the most exciting additions in recent years is the pollinator garden, located at the start of the wood-chipped education trail. This garden has steadily grown thanks to the dedication of students, partners, and community members.

In 2023, fourth-grade students from Talent Elementary launched the initial planting and design efforts in collaboration with the Applegate Partnership & Watershed Council (APWC) and the Bureau of Land Management. Since then, students in the APWC's Grow Youth Education Program have continued to build on this foundation.

Thanks to generous support from the Xerces Society and the Endangered Species Coalition and to donations of milkweed seeds and tubers, camas bulbs, and more, we've planted over 250 pollinator-friendly plants and distributed several pounds of native seed.

This fall, we're excited to expand the garden further along the Education Trail and begin restoring upland areas previously dominated by blackberries with a broader diversity of native species.

Community members who are interested in contributing to these efforts are welcome to contact Caleb Galloway at calebg@apwc.info. While we deeply appreciate the enthusiasm and support



Pollinator garden adjacent to the Education Trail at the Provolt Recreation Site. Photo by Caleb Galloway, Applegate Partnership.

of all who help, we kindly ask that only native species be planted and that community members work directly with the APWC or the Provolt Volunteer Team. Recently, seeds from the money plant (*Lunaria annua*), a potentially invasive species, were introduced in the plantings. To protect the integrity of this habitat, we aim to maintain a native-only planting policy.

We're grateful for the positive feedback and continued engagement from visitors and volunteers. Together, we look forward to enhancing pollinator habitat and supporting the ecological health of the Provolt site.

Caleb Galloway
Riparian Restoration Project
Manager APWC
calebg@apwc.info



Flowering camas planted by students at the Provolt Recreation Site. Photo by Caleb Galloway, Applegate Partnership.

Why prescribed fire matters

BY CHRIS WOLFARD

I want to take a moment to speak directly and personally about something that affects all of us—our relationship with fire and the role prescribed fire must play in protecting our homes, forests, and way of life.

Each year, wildfires are becoming more common, intense, and destructive across the west—and the Applegate is no exception. Our fire seasons start earlier and end later than they used to, and they burn with greater severity than the fires most of us remember as we were growing up.

We can all debate the causes—fire suppression, climate shifts, or land-use changes—but those discussions shouldn't distract us from the question that matters most: *What are we going to do about it now?*

There's no single solution, but one of the most effective and natural tools we have is prescribed fire.

Prescribed fire isn't backyard burning or wildfire. It's the intentional use of fire under controlled conditions by trained professionals with years of experience, specialized equipment, and clear objectives. Agencies like the Oregon Department of Forestry, the Bureau of Land Management, and the US Forest Service conduct these burns to reduce hazardous fuels, improve forest health, and restore natural fire cycles to landscapes that evolved with fire for thousands of years.

This winter season, you may see smoke on the hillsides while backyard burning is shut down on the valley floor. That can seem contradictory. How can it be unhealthy for you to burn a brush pile but okay for crews to ignite hundreds of acres?

Here's the key: prescribed fires are planned months ahead with close attention to fuel conditions, elevation, slope, weather, wind, smoke dispersion, and available resources. They're conducted in areas with defensible control lines and monitored by trained fire personnel. In contrast, residential burning often involves dry grasses and debris piles near homes, without safety infrastructure. It's apples and oranges.

From a community perspective, prescribed fire remains the most cost-effective and ecologically appropriate tool for restoring fire-resilient landscapes. No amount of brush clearing, fire engines, or aerial tankers can match the sustainability or restorative power of putting good fire back on the ground—at the right time, in the right place.

And that's important: *good fire.*

Not all fire is bad. Fire is a natural and necessary process in most of our ecosystems. Historically, low-intensity fires swept through oak woodlands and pine forests every few decades, cleaning out brush, rejuvenating soils, and creating habitat diversity. Decades of suppression, however, have left an unnatural buildup of fuels that now burn hotter, faster, and more destructively. Prescribed fire helps us begin to reverse that damage.

Of course, smoke can be a burden—especially for those with respiratory issues, children, or elderly family members. But a little smoke in spring or fall is far preferable to weeks of thick, hazardous smoke in peak wildfire season. Prescribed fire allows land managers to choose when and how smoke enters the air, rather than being at the mercy of an uncontrolled wildfire.

These burns aren't happening in isolation. Every prescribed fire is coordinated with air-quality regulators, weather services, dispatch centers, and nearby fire agencies. There are contingency plans, communication protocols, and rapid-response teams in place before the first torch is ever lit.

Applegate Fire supports these efforts and continues educating our community about their value. We work closely with local partners to ensure prescribed fire is used responsibly, safely, and transparently.

You may even see some of our personnel involved. Live-fire experience is critical for firefighter development—there's no classroom substitute for managing fire under supervision in a controlled environment. When our crews train this way, it enhances the safety and effectiveness of our entire district.

So when you see smoke in the coming weeks, pause before reacting with concern. Ask where it's coming from. If it's a prescribed fire, know that it's being done with our shared safety and long-term resilience in mind.

Thank you for trusting us to serve you and for being part of a community that values stewardship, responsibility, and the long-term health of this place where we live.

Stay safe, stay informed, and stay connected.

Chris Wolfard
Fire Chief
cwolfard@applegatefd.com

Wildfire risk

BY MARK HAMLIN



The 2021 Caldor Wildfire. Photo by Kara Capaldo.

Fires have shaped the Applegate forest ecosystem over the last 10,000 years or so. Humans also play an important role in this forest ecosystem. The landscape we inherit today was shaped by frequent low-to-moderate-intensity forest fires and, since the advent of fire suppression, by a lack of fire. Suppressing fire converted the prehistoric frequent-fire forest into an infrequent-fire forest, a management choice of profound consequence. Whether you believe in "active" forest management or the "don't touch it" approach, either choice impacts the forest.

The first "active" forest managers of this land were the Native Americans, who set fires to favor foods like acorns and to improve game habitat. There was another benefit: frequent fires kept the fuel load low, so the fires were of low to moderate intensity. In those days, fires stopped when the fire ran out of fuel. This is a defining characteristic of a "frequent—fire" forest. Frequent fires also favor the survival of large fire-resistant trees like ponderosa pine while thinning out species less tolerant of fire. The result is an open and parklike forest with low fuel loads, not what we see today.

When European descendants arrived in the Applegate, they inherited a parklike forest maintained by nature's master gardener: fire. Fires occurred on average about once every eight years here in the Applegate, until fire suppression policies began in the early 1900s. Fire suppression had unintended consequences. At first, fire suppression worked well because fuel loads were already low. Yet, without frequent fire, fuels gradually increased. As a result, fires became steadily more intense, destructive, and difficult to control. Today the fuel loads are so high that devastating wildfire is a threat every summer.

Fire suppression had another consequence in western, frequent-fire forests. Shade-tolerant and less fire-resistant species like Douglas fir, white fir, and incense cedar increased. These species eventually overtopped and began shading out the oaks and pines that thrive in frequent, low-to-moderate-intensity fire. As canopies closed, forests became denser, spindlier, and more overstocked. The industrial logging of the 1970s and 80s played a role, too, shifting the forest toward an overstocked condition, reducing species diversity, and increasing the dominance of Douglas fir.

Today, we inherit a sick forest instead of the beautiful park that once was. The understory shrubs struggle to survive in low light, and biodiversity is down. Also largely gone is the mixed condition of a patchy forest canopy with open spots that generate vegetative biodiversity, provide food for fauna, and moderate fire behavior. Live biomass and dead wood are fuel for a forest fire. Generally, more fuel, whether alive or dead, produces bigger fires.

The fuel load in the Applegate watershed is enormous and will support a wildfire catastrophe; however, forecasting when this would happen is impossible. Nevertheless, all or some of the following could come into play in setting off a perfect firestorm: a tinder-dry forest in late summer, drought years and heat domes, stands of dead trees, an east wind with low humidity, a firefighting force stretched thin, and an ignition in the wrong place at the wrong time.

If you think it can't happen here, or that the fire department will put it out, consider Oregon's 2020 Labor Week fires. Over a million acres were consumed and over 4,000 homes destroyed. The relatively nearby Slater fire roared out of the Klamath near Happy Camp and surged 25 miles in a day. Even closer to home, the Alameda fire destroyed over 2,800 structures in a day.

The management choices we make today will influence the future. At a landscape level, active management measures like thinning, fuels reduction, and prescribed burning will help mitigate extreme wildfire behavior, while a don't-touch-it management choice combined with fire suppression only increases our predicament. At a landowner level, residents and businesses can markedly improve building survivability by following Firewise guidelines.

You can learn more by connecting with the Applegate Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) revision, now underway. Take the survey on the website at ApplegatePartnership.org/CWPP. Check the website for scheduled community meetings. Also, plan to attend the third annual "All Things Fire Fair" in March 2026.

Mark Hamlin
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M.S. Wildland Resource Science,
U.C. Berkeley



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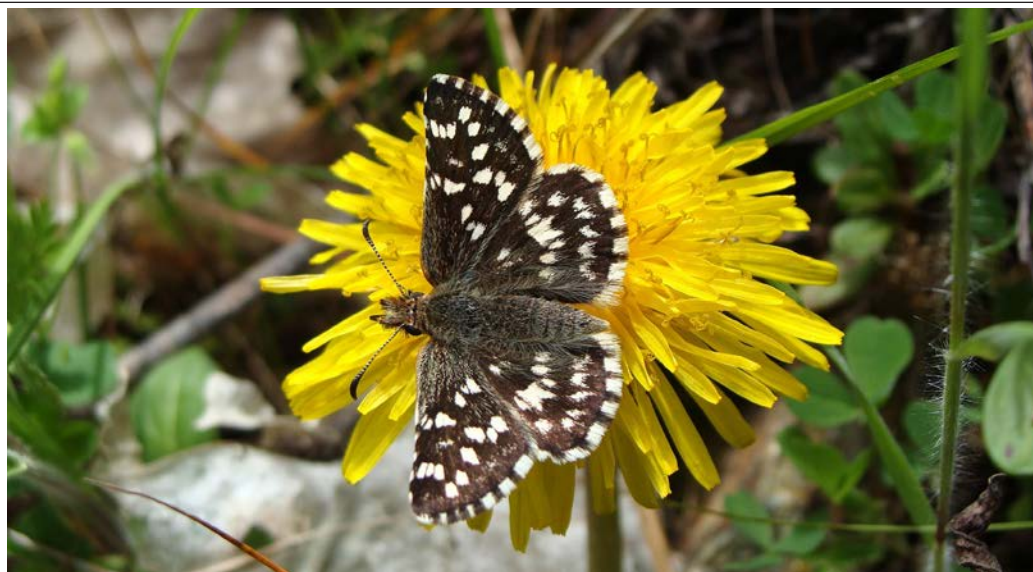


THROUGH THE LEPIDOPTERAN LENS

Two-banded Checkered Skipper

BY LINDA KAPPEN

The tiny Two-banded Checkered Skipper, *Pyrgus ruralis*, is in the skipper family HesperIIDae. It has a wingspan of up to one inch. On the dorsal view (upperside), the forewing has two rows of white spots. The hindwing has white spots with checkered fringes. The background color is dark brown to blackish. The ventral view (underside) has obscured patterns of white, mottled colors of olive, and brownish colors. Depending on altitude, from sea level to 10,000 feet, they can be seen from early March through early September. They are one-brooded. To find females, males will patrol in flight low to the ground or perch nearby. The female lays single eggs on host plants of rosaceous herbs. A few host plants are mallows (*Sidalcea*), strawberries (*Fragaria*), and cinquefoils (*Potentilla*). Caterpillars make a webbed nest on the leaves of the host plant in which they live and feed. Adult food is nectar from flowers.



Two-banded Checkered Skipper enjoying nectar from a dandelion in the Applegate Valley. Photo by Linda Kappen.

Habitats for the Two-banded Checkered Skipper are fields, roadsides, mountain meadows with wildflowers, open forest clearings, glades, wildfire burns, and unsprayed areas. They prefer moist places in mountains and valleys.

They range across the Cascade, Siskiyou, and Klamath mountains. The wider range is from British Columbia to southern California and east to Colorado. The Two-banded Checkered Skipper in this photo is from the Rogue River Siskiyou National

Forest on the way to the higher-elevation Siskiyou Crest in Upper Applegate.



Linda Kappen.

Looking at the various habitats where this skipper lives underscores the importance of keeping our properties, roadsides, and mountain logging projects free of any kind of herbicides. Herbicide use truly has a negative effect on the life histories and food and nectar plants of even our smallest insects.

A fun thing about the Two-banded Checkered Skipper is that it appears to be marked with an X within the two rows of white spots on the dorsal (upperside) forewing, also referred to as the DFW (dorsal forewing).

You can observe the differences between the Common Checkered Skipper and the Two-banded Checkered Skipper in the spring 2021 issue of the *Applegater* on the webpage in the "View Issues" section.

Linda Kappen
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CONVERSATIONS WITH THE LAND

Counting to twelve

BY GAY BRADSHAW

*Now we will count to twelve
and let's keep quiet.
For once on earth
let's not talk in any language
and not move our arms so much.*

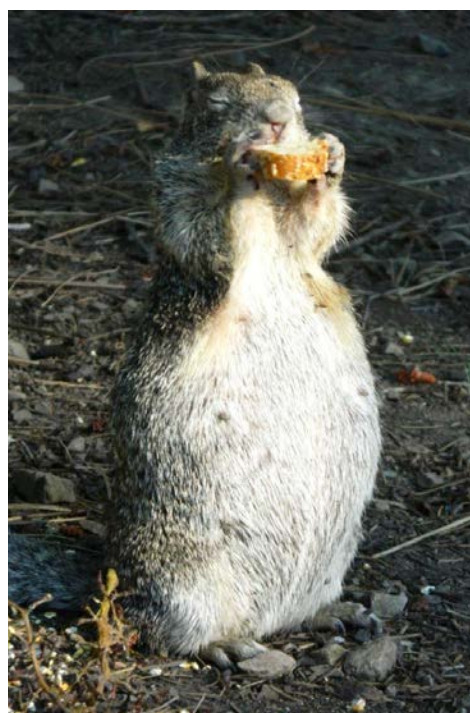
Leaves have fallen. Firs and Pines are winter's solitary sentinels, accompanied by silent Manzanitas, their branches stilled. But even in the sleep of cold and quiet, the earth below is awake and full. The cycle of Nature is ever moving. I am always reminded of Asa at this time because it was she who taught me how to count to twelve.

We met in autumn. She was an elderly female Ground Squirrel, one of many who live here, but unlike others, she had a head tilt. For some reason, she invited me to see her world—her point of view, her sight and sense. Her mere presence compelled me to look beyond the artifice of form, to see beyond mere observation, to drop the veil of human privilege, and to journey into the common ground of just being alive.

In tacit agreement, Asa and I began to rendezvous every dusk. Soon, we were meeting regularly, sharing morsels of baguette and berries (and a glass of wine for me). The other Squirrels obviously understood the exclusive nature of our friendship, as they never tried to partake of Asa's fare.

During these sessions, Asa periodically retreated to her burrow to store some of her meal. After a few moments, she'd emerge and resume sitting beside me. Our evenings of breaking bread continued until it was finally time to stay below and sleep. Come early spring, our ritual resumed. This continued for two years. In the last fall, Asa's visits shortened and became less predictable. Nonetheless, I kept vigil, sitting in our spot every dusk, glass in one hand, baguette in the other, waiting. One day, she did not return.

Winter was coming, and the train of storms had begun to roll in. The Squirrel community had—as their name bespeaks—gone to ground. Since Ground Squirrels sometimes venture out briefly when the cold lifts, I always put a few



Asa the Squirrel eating a baguette. Photo by Gay Bradshaw.

berries and a piece of baguette at Asa's door. Once, I was lucky enough to spot her darting out to retrieve her goods. She looked up—head tilted to one side, the upside eye meeting mine—then dragged the food in and disappeared. It was the last time I saw her.

I don't know whether she died during or after hibernation. She might have been grabbed or dug out by a Fox; she might have simply passed. I grieved for my lost friend. To this day, I mourn her. I hope when Asa and I meet again, I will have evolved to the fineness of her heart and mind.

*Now I will count up to twelve
and you keep quiet
and I will go.*

(Poetry by Pablo Neruda, "Keeping Still")

Gay Bradshaw
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Editor's note: The author feels that all animal and nature capitalizations are integral to the spirit of her writing. We have respected her stylistic choice and retained these capitalizations throughout the piece.

Every donation you make to the Applegater will be doubled, now through the end of 2025, thanks to the annual NewsMatch program!

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BIRD EXPLORER

Northern Flicker

BY HEATHER PALADINI

When the hills of the Applegate Valley settle under soft winter light and the vineyards lie dormant, birdlife remains vibrant and active. The valley's mosaic of oak woodlands, riparian corridors, and open meadows supports an impressive variety of winter birds, many of which migrate here to escape colder northern climates.

Woodpeckers add color and rhythm to the quiet season. Among the most recognizable winter residents is the Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*), a large and beautifully patterned woodpecker that often surprises those who first spot it feeding on the ground rather than clinging to a tree. While most woodpeckers spend their time hammering bark for insects, flickers have adapted to a different niche—they're ant specialists. Northern Flickers, with their spotted plumage and flashing red underwings, probe the ground for ants. Even in winter, they forage on open ground, looking through soil and leaf litter for dormant insects or larvae, occasionally supplementing their diet with berries and seeds.

The Northern Flicker is one of the region's showiest and most familiar woodpeckers: a medium-large, brown, barred bird with a bold black crescent on its chest, spotted flanks, and bright shaft colors on its wing and tail feathers. In the Applegate Valley, the red-shafted form of the Northern Flicker predominates. These birds flash a stunning reddish-orange color under their wings and tail when they fly, a vivid contrast against the muted winter landscape. Males show a distinctive red mustache stripe on the



Northern Flicker. Photo by Dominic Sherony, Flickr.

cheek, while both sexes display a black crescent bib and speckled plumage. Their loud "wick-a-wick-a-wick" call and sharp drumming echo through oak groves and rural neighborhoods and are one of the valley's signature winter sounds.

Northern Flickers remain year-round residents, though some northern populations migrate south, swelling local numbers during the colder months.

Nesting habits are one way Northern Flickers shape local ecosystems. Like other woodpeckers, they excavate tree cavities for nests, preferring soft or decaying wood in live or dead trees, fence posts, or occasionally larger nest boxes. These cavities are valuable real estate: after Flickers abandon them, many other cavity-nesting species, from bluebirds to small owls to bats, may move in. Flickers typically lay relatively large clutches—often several eggs—and both sexes help incubate and feed the young.

Northern Flickers are both a delight and an indicator species. Their presence signals



Northern Flicker in flight. Photo by David Bird, iNaturalist.

that the landscape retains a mix of open foraging areas and standing dead wood or mature trees for nesting—features that support a wide variety of wildlife. Simple stewardship steps can help them—just retain some dead snags where it's safe, preserve oak and riparian trees, and allow some patches of grassy ground and leaf litter to persist. Flickers are adaptable and often tolerate human presence, so they can be enjoyed from a backyard feeder or a vineyard as readily as from a wilderness trail.

To attract Northern Flickers to your home in the Applegate, offer suet and peanuts in large feeders with tail supports, keep fresh water available, and maintain natural habitat with trees, snags, and leaf litter. Avoid pesticides and provide consistent food sources throughout winter to encourage regular visits.

To find flickers, look in the early morning or late afternoon, when foraging activity peaks. Scan the open ground

near oaks and along field edges and listen for their distinctive calls and drumming. Recording sightings on platforms like eBird helps document local populations and seasonal patterns, and it's a nice way to contribute to regional conservation knowledge. Bring binoculars, keep an eye on fence posts and snags, and you'll likely spot one probing for ants or flashing its colorful shafts as it flies to the next tree.

The Northern Flicker is a charismatic and ecologically important resident of the Applegate Valley. Its combination of ground-foraging behavior, cavity-nesting habits, and flamboyant plumage makes it both enjoyable to watch and useful to the landscape. Keep an eye out next time you're out and about in the Applegate—the flicker's "wick-a-wick" call or a sudden flash of red or yellow under its wings is hard to miss.

Heather Paladini
heather47bear@gmail.com

LOCAL STREAMS

Continued from page 1.

area. Crews installed earthen berms to block unauthorized vehicle access in several locations and cleaned up debris and old dumping sites near the creek. These projects capitalized on the restoration work completed in 2022 by the APWC and the BLM. A local resident expressed appreciation for the effort to protect and restore the area, noting that it looks better than it has in years.

Meanwhile, at the Provolt Recreation Site, APWC and contractor Benchwood LLC installed more than 80 logs with root wads along Williams Creek to enhance aquatic habitat. The trees, harvested on-site from the former seed orchard, were placed to slow high flows, reconnect the creek with its floodplain, and create deeper pools and shaded areas. These structures are designed to improve habitat for salmon, steelhead, and western pond turtles, while also

promoting natural channel recovery over time.

These projects were completed in partnership with the Grants Pass BLM Field Office, OWEB, and the Rogue Basin Partnership. They represent an ongoing effort to restore stream health and fish habitat throughout the Applegate watershed. Each project builds on years of collaborative work to make local creeks more resilient and productive for the fish, wildlife, and communities that rely on them.

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APWC Aquatic
Restoration Program Director
luke@apwc.info
541-890-9765



After: New embedded culvert with a natural streambed, allowing fish and water to move freely. Photo by Luke Wimmer, Applegate Partnership.

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New subalpine fir population discovered in the Applegate

BY SUZIE SAVOIE

Until this past summer, it was thought that subalpine fir (*Abies lasiocarpa*) grew in only two locations in the Siskiyou Mountains—on Mt. Ashland and near Tanner Lakes in the Red Buttes Wilderness. However, in August, botanists confirmed a third population in a high-elevation meadow below Dutchman Peak, the first found in the Applegate River watershed.

This is significant because although subalpine fir is common in coastal mountains from central Oregon to the Yukon, these Siskiyou Mountains populations are unusual and are some of the southernmost populations of this species, whose range extends only a little farther south into northern California, where it is one of California's rarest conifer species.

Luke Ruediger, executive director of the Applegate Siskiyou Alliance, a local conservation organization, discovered the subalpine fir below Dutchman Peak, at the top of Yale Creek, a tributary of the Little Applegate River, in the summer of 2024.

"I was helping lead a series of hikes, called the Siskiyou Crest Conifer Field Trip Series, for the Applegate Siskiyou Alliance in the summer of 2024," Ruediger recalls. "I had just been looking at the subalpine fir population on Mt. Ashland—the needle arrangement, color, and habit of the trees. Then, just a few weeks later, we led a trip into the meadow below Dutchman Peak to see another unusual conifer, the prostrate common juniper (*Juniperus communis*), and as we were walking up out of the meadow, this gnarly, shrubby conifer patch caught my eye because of the color and form. I said, 'I think that's a subalpine fir!' and took some small sprigs for identification. When I got home, I looked up the botanical keys and was pretty certain it was subalpine fir."

But Ruediger wanted to field-verify the findings with others, as identification can be tricky for this species. After waiting a year, Ruediger returned to the location with Wayne Rolle and Barbara Mumblo, retired botanists for the Rogue River-



Verifying a newly documented population of subalpine fir below Dutchman Peak. Photo by Suzie Savoie.

Siskiyou National Forest; Julie Kierstead, retired botanist for the Shasta-Trinity National Forest; Cesar Garcia, botany technician for the Siskiyou Mountains Ranger District; and me.

Barbara Mumblo said she was "glad to be able to go to this site and identify the new location for this species with these botanists. Not too many people probably walk down to this location," she said, referring to the steep descent into the meadow. "Thanks to Luke's observation, we were able to realize that it probably was subalpine fir. I noticed right away that the position of the attachment of the needles to the branch stem is different than our Shasta or red firs and white or grand firs. It's always wonderful to find a new location for a rare and uncommon species, especially in the Applegate Watershed," Mumblo said.

"Luke has a sharp eye," said Wayne Rolle, who was instrumental in confirming identification of the subalpine fir after dissecting the tree's needles. "I probably would have walked right past this if I had been along the first time he saw it."

After Rolle's research, identification was further verified from photos that

Cesar Garcia took under a dissecting scope of a cross-section of the tree's needles, which can have distinctive characteristics. Garcia was using sprigs from the subalpine fir trees on Mt. Ashland to compare with the population below Dutchman Peak.

"I looked at the subalpine fir sprigs and confirmed that both the Mt. Ashland and Dutchman Peak samples display resin ducts closer to the midvein than the outer epidermal layer. I cut the needles with a box cutter and stuck them within a pomade container to keep them upright for the photos."

After the field trip and identification, Julie Kierstead submitted voucher specimens to the herbaria at Oregon State University and Cal Poly Humboldt.

With this newly discovered population of subalpine fir, the Applegate River watershed now has 26 documented conifer species. That's a lot of conifer diversity for one watershed, considering the entire Klamath-Siskiyou Mountains have 38 species.

To learn more about subalpine fir on the Siskiyou Crest and in the Klamath Mountains, including information about this newly discovered population and threats to the species, you can go to youtube.com/watch?v=JbqGko4Btm0 to watch a presentation Ruediger gave recently for the Siskiyou Chapter Native Plant Society of Oregon.

"There's always more to discover," says Ruediger.

Suzie Savoie
klamathsiskiyou@gmail.com



Wayne Rolle, Suzie Savoie, Barbara Mumblo, Luke Ruediger, Julie Kierstead, and Cesar Garcia after the field trip to look at the subalpine fir below Dutchman Peak. Photo by Cesar Garcia.

COMMUNITY WILDFIRE

Continued from page 1.

Factors to consider for fuel-reduction planning:

1. Assets: structures, transportation, communication, and utility infrastructure
2. Safety: WUI (wildland-urban interface) fuel reduction and defensible space, emergency service facilities, and ingress/egress routes
3. Recreation: public trails, boat launches, and recreation areas
4. Biodiversity: aquatic, forest, and shrubland habitats for animals and rare plants
5. Ecological commodities: timber assets and tree-seed orchards
6. Wildlands Health: forest vegetation, riparian vegetation, and woodlands
7. Water: surface-water quality and post-fire sedimentation mitigation
8. Science and Culture: historic features and monitoring stations

The survey will ask whether you are registered for one of the emergency alert systems, your evacuation preparation and related concerns, your perceived level of

wildfire risk, and your views on types of fuel-reduction work. The participation of Applegate Valley residents is essential to ensure that the updated plan represents the goals and values of the residents. This is especially true as the plan will be in place for up to ten years.

Our CWPP "Dream Team" also includes SOFRC's Amelia Liberatore, a science communications specialist who will be the primary editor of the CWPP document, and Tucker Grinnan of A Greater Applegate (AGA). An advisory committee comprised of Applegate residents, Chief Brian Mulhollen of AFD and Megan Fehrman, executive director of AGA, is also supporting the project.

Please take the survey at tinyurl.com/avcwppsurvey and attend the January public meetings to lend your voice to the plan that will protect our valley, where we live.

Nathan Gehres
nathan@apwc.info
541-890-9989



Williams Rural Fire Protection District staff and residents marked areas in need of protection during a mapping exercise on October 9, 2025. Photo by Amelia Liberatore, SOFRC science communication specialist.

THE SISKIYOU MOUNTAIN ADVOCATE

The BLM's SOS Project: By the numbers

BY LUKE RUEDIGER

The local Bureau of Land Management (BLM) sank to a new low in transparency and accountability at its most recent timber-sale auction in Medford. Facing threats of arrest by armed law enforcement, members of the public and the media were barred from entry, and the BLM sold our public forests, including two major Applegate Valley timber sales, behind closed doors.

These are the first in a series of timber sales proposed under BLM's controversial SOS Project, which would log over 5,000 acres across the Applegate Valley, from Thompson Creek to Ruch and east to Sterling Creek.

These two timber sales include:

1) The 627-acre Apple Saws Timber Sale above Cantrall Buckley Park on the eastern face of Ben Johnson Mountain

2) The 679-acre Holcomb Hollow Timber Sale in Ruch, Sterling Creek, and along the popular East Applegate Ridge Trail and in its immediate viewshed.

The BLM has already listed additional so-called "salvage" timber sales in their 2026 Timber Sale Plan, including significant portions of Thompson Creek which would be logged under the SOS Project and another separate timber sale near Anderson Butte. Together, this series of timber sales would create one of the largest BLM timber grabs in the Applegate Valley in decades.

Some people suggest that these are benign timber sales, removing only dead and dying trees, but that is not supported by the facts on the ground, the timber sale mark, or BLM documents. According to the SOS Project Environmental Assessment (EA), the BLM identified stands with as little as 10 percent mortality as "dead and



The famous valley views of Ruch would be heavily impacted by the SOS Project, including the East Applegate Ridge Trail, Woodrat Mountain, and Ben Johnson Mountain above Cantrall-Buckley Park. The lower half of Ben Johnson Mountain's forested eastern face, at the center of this photo, would be logged in the SOS Project, removing 82 percent of the trees in project units. Photo by Luke Ruediger.

dying," meaning nine out of ten trees may have survived the recent episodic beetle mortality outbreaks, but they would be "salvage"-logged anyway (EA, 24).

The BLM's Timber Sale Appraisal Summary for the Apple Saws and Holcomb Hollow timber sales specifically lists all timber authorized for removal as "green," rather than "salvage," while the EA also discloses that 67 percent (or 3,000 acres) of the forest proposed for logging in the SOS Project currently maintains between 40-90 percent canopy cover. This demonstrates that two-thirds of the timber sale units are covered with a living, green forest canopy. The EA also discloses that stands were

modeled at between 5 percent and 10 percent canopy cover following logging treatments on 47 percent of the acres treated (EA, 36). This demonstrates that the majority of the large, green trees that survived recent beetle mortality outbreaks would be logged under an assumption that they might die between now and 2055 (EA, 134).

The Timber Sale Prospectus also discloses that across the 420 acres of the Apple Saws Timber Sale, where the BLM is marking trees for removal, an estimated 8,679 trees have been marked for retention, while 40,437 trees would be logged. On average, these stands, which support 117

trees per acre, would be reduced to just 21 trees per acre after logging. The next time you admire the living, green forests of Ben Johnson Mountain above Cantrall Buckley Park on the west side of Ruch, imagine the area covered in stumps and logging slash with 82 percent of the trees removed. According to BLM documents, that will be the outcome of the SOS Project.

Meanwhile, the Holcomb Hollow Timber Sale Prospectus discloses that the BLM is intending to leave only 15 trees per acre while logging 73 percent of the existing trees in "area" units where BLM is actually marking the trees for removal. Yet, on 53 percent of the timber sale, BLM will not be marking the timber sale but will instead provide the purchaser—who has an inherent conflict of interest—a set of descriptions or prescriptions that they may interpret and implement by deciding which trees are logged and which are retained.

These "salvage" logging proposals would heavily log some of the driest forests west of the Cascade Mountains in Oregon, and the BLM acknowledges that many of these sites may never be significantly forested or sustainably harvested again (SOS Decision Record #1, 20). The outcome is a form of deforestation and an increase in fire risks as shrublands or dense regenerating forest or woodland replaces relatively fire-resistant, mature forests. The BLM claims to be responding to beetle mortality, yet their own logging would remove the vast majority of the live trees remaining, creating far more mortality in many stands than the recent beetle outbreaks and logging the very trees or forests that showed resilience.

Luke Ruediger
luke@applegatesiskiyou.org

APPLEGATE COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN (CWPP)

One plan to guide wildfire preparedness and resilience in the Applegate Valley.

applegatepartnership.org/cwpp



JANUARY COMMUNITY MEETINGS

All Meetings 6-8pm

Community	Date	Location
Ruch	Jan 13th	Applegate Valley Fire Dist. #9 Training Building 1095 Upper Applegate Rd, Jacksonville
Wilderville	Jan 15th	Apricity Vineyard 5719 Jerome Prairie Rd, Grants Pass
Applegate	Jan 20th	Applegate Community Church 18960 N Applegate Rd, Grants Pass
Murphy	Jan 26th	Hidden Valley High School 651 Murphy Creek Rd, Grants Pass
Williams	Jan 29th	The Williams Grange 20100 Williams Hwy, Williams



We want your input! Scan the code or follow the link to take a survey on the Applegate Valley CWPP Update.

<https://tinyurl.com/avcwppsuryey>



You Get What You Pay For...

with Tami Quinn Hollenbeck

Your Well Pump, Pressure Tank and Water Filtration Equipment is not something to cut corners on when it comes to cost. When purchasing your well equipment remember, *you get what you pay for!*

A department store can sell something to you for a lower cost, but it doesn't mean they know anything about it.

When purchasing equipment to provide water to your family make sure you are asking all of the right questions: What type of warranty does it have? What kind of maintenance will it need? Is it going to meet your specific needs?

If you are looking for a well pump, consider the depth of the well, GPM, elevation to the house & desired water pressure.

If you are looking for water treatment equipment, keep in mind the chemistry of your water. Has your water been tested by a professional that can help you determine what equipment is needed to condition your water? Your water chemistry may not be the same as your neighbors.

Don't assume you can just buy filtration equipment from a department store & that it will work for your specific needs.

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Upper Applegate is dazzling and delightful

BY LAURA B. AHEARN

McKee Bridge Historical Society welcomes everyone to Christmas on a Covered Bridge on Saturday, December 13, noon-5 pm. This event is so much more than a holiday market. It is a celebration of 61 years of community commitment and hard work to keep McKee Bridge standing and open to the public.

The heavy snows and Christmas floods of 1963 crushed the roof and ripped off the siding of the historic bridge. The community stepped up to fund repairs. In 1985, Jackson County declared it would no longer budget for maintenance. The Save McKee Bridge Committee was formed, followed by the incorporation of the Historical Society in 1999. An emergency closure was imposed in 2012; after \$610,000 in renovation work, the bridge reopened in time for its centennial.

Be part of this tradition! On December 13, you can buy homemade baked goodies and candies and handcrafted gifts. All proceeds go toward maintenance of McKee Bridge and the scholarship program for students with Applegate roots. Sit for a family portrait with Santa and Mrs. Claus. Hunt for painted rocks and maybe win a special prize. Enjoy free hot beverages, caroling, and stunning decorations and lights. You'll see that the Historical Society has also dressed up Star Ranger Station and the community kitchen on the picnic grounds. Dazzling and delightful!

Laura Ahearn
Mckeebridge1917@gmail.com
458-226-0666



McKee Bridge dazzles for the holidays. Photo by Ric Beccera.



Joyous Christmas on a Covered Bridge. Photo by Ric Beccera.

Outdoor learning at Siskiyou Field Institute

BY ALIYAH ZWEIG

This fall, Siskiyou Field Institute (SFI) welcomed over 100 students from schools across the Rogue Valley for hands-on outdoor learning experiences. Students spent the day exploring the wonders of the Klamath-Siskiyou region, building teamwork and confidence on our low ropes course, and hiking through serpentine outcroppings and controlled-burn regions, all while discovering the incredible diversity of local plants and wildlife.

Through interactive lessons, students learned about the importance of fire ecology, local ecosystems, and the natural history that makes this region one of the most biodiverse areas in North America. These field trips successfully provided students with memorable opportunities to learn, grow, and connect with nature. If you know of a local school, homeschool group, or youth organization interested in outdoor education, we'd love to host

them at Siskiyou Field Institute. To learn more or schedule a visit, please contact edmanager@thesfi.org.

Siskiyou Field Institute's Adventure Learning Program also had a vibrant fall season, hosting several successful classes that brought people together to learn new skills and explore nature in creative ways. Participants enjoyed workshops in mushroom identification, nature journaling, and botanical inks.

We also have exciting news about the land restoration here at SFI! On October 5, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) placed a multitude of large Douglas fir logs, root balls and all, in a tributary of Deer Creek that runs through the meadows below SFI. This project, a partnership between SFI, ODFW, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), provides resources and technical assistance for SFI to achieve its management plan's



Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife placing in-stream wood in the tributary of Deer Creek at Siskiyou Field Institute. Photo by Aliyah Zweig.

restoration goals in the conservation easement with OWEB. This is part of the larger meadow-complex restoration of the 140-acre meadow

See **SISKIYOU FIELD INSTITUTE**, page 21.

“Thanks for loving the bread, Applegate!”

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THE GRAPES OF CATH

Time to wine down

BY CATHY A. RODGERS



By early November, fall has painted the hillsides of the Applegate Valley in amber and gold. The grapevines, once heavy with promise, are at rest after surrendering their fruit to the crush pad. There's a quiet satisfaction in the air—a deep exhale after months of tending, watching, and hoping. The hum of harvest has faded into the rhythm of fermentation, where the magic shifts from field to cellar.

The winemakers finally pause to trade pruning shears for tasting glasses. It's the alchemy of autumn, when the valley shifts from the urgency of harvest to the artistry of transformation. It's a time to celebrate, reflect, and let nature and patience take the lead. The valley exhales a collective sigh of gratitude and anticipation, a reminder that every bottle begins with hard work and hope. Our winemakers' attention now turns from the vineyard rows to the cellar barrels, where another season's story, its own special vintage, begins to unfold.

It's also a time to celebrate the people behind the wines, whose work and passion define the valley's identity and create the wines we celebrate and enjoy. This season, two vineyards stand out. One is a testament to half a century of sustainable stewardship and deep connection to the land. The other is a reflection of new energy and optimism as the next generation begins to build their own mark on southern Oregon wine country.

Ted and Mary Warrick, of Wooldridge Creek, Oregon's first combined vineyard, winery, and creamery, have tended their 180 acres for nearly half a century. Ted and Mary have lived in step with the rhythms of the Applegate Valley—pruning, planting, harvesting, and caring for the land—with quiet, steadfast devotion. Long before sustainability became a buzzword, it was their way of life. Every vine they've tended, every tree they've left standing, tells the story of respect—for soil, for water, for balance. Their 56-acre vineyard isn't just a business—it's a living reflection of endurance, patience, trial and error, resiliency, and the belief that great wine begins with great stewardship.

Just down the road, another story unfolds, one that speaks to the enduring

allure of the Applegate Valley. Drawn by its beauty, its soil, and the promise of a community founded on old-fashioned neighborly camaraderie, Jake and Jenny Benford arrived with a dream: to plant roots of their own and craft wines that reflect both their vision and this land's soul. Jake and Jenny bring fresh eyes, new ideas, and a deep reverence for those who came before. In their hands, tradition meets innovation—a reminder that the valley's future is as bright as its storied past. For Jake and Jenny, Wanderlust Vineyard, which opened in the summer of 2024, represents the border between escape and exploration, where savoring a fine wine is sublime delight and getting lost is intentional. Wanderlust is twelve acres of peace and tranquility on Kubli Road, where time moves more slowly, and one cannot help but enjoy the fruits of their labor savored in a glass.

Wanderlust and Wooldridge Creek reflect the new and old soul of Applegate winemaking. Both the Benfords and the Warricks wandered and wondered where they were meant to be. Each of the couples discovered a mutual love of the land and of fine wines. Ultimately, both couples found the Applegate, where they planted their roots and rootstock. They exhibit the same story of commitment to the land, to each other, and to a philosophy and spirit that epitomizes southern Oregon and its pioneering roots. Where dreams begin, hope is cultivated. Each season brings more knowledge, and, ultimately, each harvest reflects the fruits of a labor of love, mixed with a fair amount of tenacity and perseverance. The result is not only wines of character but a landscape alive with history, rooted in respect and resilience. This is the essence of the Applegate Valley, where our wines reflect the distinctive qualities of the land that bore the fruit and the people who craft and create the magic in the bottle. This is where labor becomes legacy. So be sure to visit Wooldridge Creek and Wanderlust Vineyard, which, old or new, offer wine with a view.

Cathy A. Rodgers
cathyrogers55@gmail.com



Mary and Ted Warrick and their grand dog, Charley, of Wooldridge Creek Vineyard, celebrate 48 years of land stewardship and producing fine wines. Photo by Mika Taylor.



Jake and Jenny Benford in the Wanderlust Vineyard during this year's harvest. Photo by Maddie O'Conner.

Living fully, dying peacefully with SOLADA

BY HAYRIYA HANSEN

The Southern Oregon Living and Dying Alliance (SOLADA) is pleased to announce the Community Death Care Workshop series, Preparing Ourselves and Our Loved Ones for the End-of-Life Journey. This four-part series will run from January through April 2026. Each month, SOLADA (and our collaborators) will host one part of this event in both Josephine and Jackson County locations, presenting information from multiple sources, allowing for individual engagement, and providing ample take-home materials.

Please visit the solada.org website for more information about locations, dates, times, and costs. Pre-registration is greatly appreciated, as we want to have ample materials for handouts, seats are limited, and the event will likely sell out.

If you're curious how to live a courageous life and plan for a peaceful death, come to this series. When we don't acknowledge, talk about, and prepare for the ultimate experience that will happen to us *all*—death—then we mute a huge portion of our lives. How can you experience life with unrecognized grief, whether it's personal or generational? When you avoid the inevitable and don't experience the depths of life, then you are unable to feel the heights of life, either. Start now to become curious about this life-and-death journey. Don't miss this four-part series.

SOLADA continues to offer Death Cafe Conversations every month. Death Cafe is a welcoming, open gathering where people can come together to talk about life, death, and the experiences and questions that come with both. Not necessarily a sad

or somber event, it often brings laughter and smiles and a real feeling of support. Please join us at any of our four locations: Grants Pass (last Tuesday), Williams (first Tuesday), Ruch (first Thursday), and Medford (third Wednesday). **Note:** The December Death Conversation in Medford will be held on the *second Wednesday* due to holiday conflicts. Please see our website, solada.org, for more info.

We are deliberating whether to continue offering a Death Cafe conversation at the Ruch location and are entertaining the idea of adding an Ashland location. If you have any input about location, times, or venues, feel free to email soladaoregon@gmail.com.

The Southern Oregon Living and Dying Alliance is a volunteer-driven organization giving Josephine and Jackson Counties hundreds of hours of support and commitment, promoting a positive life and an easy death. If you have found positive support from any of our steering-board members, at any SOLADA event, such as death conversations, or from a SOLADA appearance at a farmers market or another function, please reach out and let us know. We gratefully appreciate your tax-deductible donations, which go to support our ongoing website fees, materials, venues, and promotional costs. Please consider contributing to our labor of love and joining us at one of our events!

Hayriya Hansen
Southern Oregon Living and
Dying Alliance
hayriya1@gmail.com
contact 541-787-7490

Got News?

The *Applegater* welcomes your submissions! We're your newspaper and want to share your news with readers throughout the Applegate Valley watershed's many neighborhoods.

What's going on around you? Let us know! Send your write-up and photos to gater@applegater.org. Thanks! See you in the *Applegater*...



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Yoga with Clair is offering a winter yoga series of weekly classes focused on strength and flexibility for mobility and vitality. In addition, a day-long workshop will include meditation, yoga, journaling, and lunch. Clair reminds us that “practicing yoga together, we create more than movement—we build community.” Learn more about these winter offerings by emailing Clair at yogawithclair@gmail.com or visiting her website at clairityoga.com.

Diana Coogle • diana@applegater.org

BizBits highlights businesses new to the area, holding special events, or offering new products. If you are a business owner, let us know when you move into the area or to a different location, hold a special event, expand your business, or mark a milestone. Email gater@applegater.org.

Thank you for your donations, large and small

BY LAURA DUEY

As secretary, it is my responsibility to process all donations received during NewsMatch. Because we limit the amount of ad space in the paper, advertising alone will never make the newspaper sustainable. Your donations are literally the lifeblood that keeps us going.

We love the large donations because they help us reach our goal quickly, but my favorites are the small donations—a few dollar bills stuffed into an envelope, sometimes with a handwritten note saying, “Sorry I can’t give more.” These donations bring home how important the *Applegater* is to the community and that even readers with limited means still find a way to help.

Every donor is truly special to us, and during the months of November and December, every dollar you give is matched—doubling the impact of your support. Thank you all!

Laura Duey
Applegater Board Secretary
secretary@applegater.org

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

BY ANNIKA HODGES

As the *Applegater* continues to grow and evolve, I want to take a moment to talk about something near and dear to the heart of any community newspaper: our conversations with one another.

Many of you have taken the time to share your thoughts and perspectives through letters to the editor and opinion pieces, and I’m deeply grateful for the care, passion, and honesty behind those submissions. The diversity of voices in our valley is what makes the *Applegater* such a vibrant reflection of this place we all call home.

Going forward, we’ll be making a small—but important—change in how we share those voices. Responses to previously published articles will now appear as Letters to the Editor, rather than as opinion pieces. Our Opinions

section will be reserved for personal viewpoints—your reflections, beliefs, and perspectives on issues that matter to us, whether local or beyond. You’re welcome (and encouraged) to include evidence or research to support your opinion, but heartfelt experience and thoughtful reflection are also welcome.

Our goal is to foster open dialogue and mutual respect, even—and especially—when we disagree. Every voice in this community matters, and it’s through sharing our differing viewpoints that we grow stronger together.

Thank you, as always, for reading, for writing, and for caring enough to be part of the conversation.

Annika Hodges
Applegater Editor in Chief
annika@applegater.org

For Opinion piece and Letter to the Editor requirements, please visit applegater.org/submitting/#articles.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Life’s most precious gift

BY SANDY OLKEN

We most often give gifts during the holidays and on special occasions. The receiver unwraps each parcel with eager anticipation, excitement, and joy. Giving and getting gifts is the best!

The Williams Community Forest Project (WCFP) is working to protect the greatest gift: the most generous giver of all of life—water! Each time we imbibe life-giving water, we are receiving life’s most important and precious offering. May we learn to receive it with the same joy as we do wrapped presents.

WCFP is advocating for our forests, striving to protect them from clear-cutting to help ensure that the trees that protect our water remain standing. Leafy canopies help control the erosion that negatively impacts creeks and rivers.

Here in the Applegate, the mountains we cherish and all they shelter are intrinsic to why we have chosen to live here. Walking in the forests, fishing, rafting the rivers, and enjoying all the options our home offers all depend on the presence of water.

With our presence to these presents received from the earth, we are given the opportunity to become the givers of the most important gift we have to share—our love.

Sandy Olken
Williams, OR

~ IMPORTANT REMINDER ~

In order to assure that your donation is doubled, please be sure to date your check between November 1, 2025, and December 31, 2025.

Thank you for your support!



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Community center programs for Applegaters!

BY JULIE RAEFIELD

Though the cooler months can bring gloomy weather and driving challenges, Jacksonville Community Center (JCC) hopes to become a special source of light and fun for folks out in the Applegate this winter.

You can check out JCC's convenient online monthly calendar of events and programs at jacksonvillecommunitycenter.org/programs to see what is available and to reserve tickets. Many programs are free or very affordable. Scholarships are also available for anyone with financial need (just ask!).

JCC offers a set of weekly repeating classes to support adult health and wellness, and we partner with wellness instructors to offer additional classes through their studios at our center. These include Beginning Yoga (Fridays), Intermediate Tai Chi and Qi Gong (Thursdays), Chair Yoga (with extra balance help on Wednesdays), Flow Yoga (Mondays), and Strength Training (Wednesdays and Fridays). Class costs range between \$10 and \$15.

JCC's youth program offers a weekly Music for Littles class (0- to 5-year-olds with an adult) on Wednesdays, 11 am-noon, for just \$5 per child, with adults free! Enjoy lots of songs, fun dancing and movement, and a wonderful place to connect with other parents.

At least twice a month (and often three times), JCC holds classes for 6- to 12-year-olds in arts, crafts, science, or

cooking—usually on Wednesdays or Saturdays. These range from \$5-10 per student. We also hold a series of summer day camps that focus on hiking local trails, learning about nature, and sharing artistic experiences.

Adults can enjoy a variety of programs either monthly or every two months. These include free house concerts with local musicians, paint-and-lunch classes, Community-in-Action Forums, dance performances, arts and crafts classes, cooking and baking classes, talks from local experts on a variety of topics, and special programs held at JCC as part of community-wide events like Lunar New Year and the annual tree-lighting ceremony at City Hall. Most events are open to youth with an accompanying adult.

Whether you are seeking some fun as a learner or have something you would like to teach, we would love to hear from you, or, better yet, welcome you in person at our center. Come as a participant or volunteer! We want to meet you either way. We invite you to help us build a stronger, happier, and healthier community.

Julie Raefield
jraefield@
jacksonvillecommunitycenter.org



Jacksonville Community Center presents many free community events, classes, and programs. Each year, the South Medford High School Chamber Singers present holiday music to kick off the winter season.



Board members (L to R) David Doi, Sandy Marshall, Laura O'Bryon, Kristine Rose, Sue Miller and Margaret Pashko are joined by Executive Director Julie Raefield in inviting the Applegate community to enjoy events and programs at Jacksonville Community Center.

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Snow on Humbug Creek. Photo by Linda Kappan.

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A Greater Applegate wraps up the year

BY MEGAN FEHRMAN

A Greater Applegate (AGA) has a lot to report on the Holiday and Arts theme this month!

The Applegate Artists Working Group displayed wares at wineries during the spring Uncorked event and at lavender farms for the Lavender Festival in June and July. They also worked with the Grants Pass Museum of Art for a west-side Applegate location for this year's Art in the Garden and rounded out the Jacksaphine Count(r)y Fair with Art in the Vineyard at Wooldridge Creek Winery.

Applegate Artists will be closing out the year at AGA's Applegate Love: Online Holiday Auction, featuring handcrafted ornaments, goody baskets from local businesses, and uniquely Applegate experiences offered by local folks. Check out agreaterapplegate.org and other social media channels in early December to get in on the bidding! It is a great way to do some holiday shopping *and* support AGA's end-of-year fundraising efforts. The auction will go live on

Giving Tuesday (December 2) and end on December 14.

If you are interested in participating with the Applegate Artists group, contact jb@agreaterapplegate.org. The group convenes on the second Monday of every month from noon-1:30 pm at the AGA Office in Ruch or via Zoom.

The AV (Applegate Valley) Business Network will be hosting a Holiday Happy Hour on Thursday, December 11, from 5-7 pm at the Lindsay Lodge for guests to gather, celebrate, and network with other Applegate business owners, old friends, and people new to the valley. Light bites will be provided, and drinks will be available for purchase. Please join us at this most wonderful time of the year to reflect on 2025 and connect to events of 2026. You will also have a chance to network with our new Business Network Manager, Jeff Haas, and share your thoughts on doing business in the Applegate.



Alison Sexauer, AGA's Board President and the Executive Director of Rogue Valley Food System Network, distributing local produce from Blue Fox Farm at the Ruch Food Pantry. Photo by Megan Fehrman.

As much as we have to celebrate, those of us working in the community also recognize that this year has been challenging for many. We are bracing for what happens when hundreds of our neighboring households have delayed or reduced SNAP benefits this winter. Since 2020, A Greater Applegate's Farm to Food Pantry program has delivered over \$50,000 worth of local produce and ground beef to our emergency food pantries in Ruch and Williams. Anticipating increased need and a heavier load at the pantries, we will continue this work for as long as we can.

Despite the challenges facing rural communities and an ever-changing landscape for nonprofit work, AGA stands on a foundation of strong connections, community leadership, the "can-do" attitude of rural culture, and exciting programs and projects guided by the *Applegate Valley Vision* that so many of you helped create.

If ever there was a time to jump in with your community, it's now. Rural America makes up 97 percent of US land area and contributes \$2 trillion to the US economy, yet it receives only 7 percent of philanthropic dollars and is getting hit hard by federal spending cuts. It's

time to rethink how we invest in rural communities. You have an opportunity here, in the Applegate Valley, to join the organizations that make up our social fabric and focus on strengthening connections and building all the kinds of capital available to us.

Are you looking for a meaningful way to support the economic, social, and environmental vitality of our community? A Greater Applegate is looking for board members who bring fresh perspectives, lived experience, and strategic insight to help us sustain and evolve our impact. Please contact our office to learn more about this opportunity.

We are also, as always, accepting donations to help support our work, like the Farm to Food Pantry program, the Applegate Evening Market, Resilience Hubs, WanderApplegate.com, and the new Applegate Listserv that is humbly trying to fill the void left by Jo's List's disappearance. If you miss Jo's List and want to be part of Applegate Listserv, go to applegateconnect.org/listserv to sign up.

You might be surprised how small an organization we really are: eight part-time staff and a budget of less than half a million dollars. We achieve far beyond our size because we believe in the power and promise of the rural community. That belief enables us to accomplish quite a lot for the Applegate Valley. And with your help, we can do even more.

Megan Fehrman (and the rest of the AGA Team)
541-702-2108
info@agreaterapplegate.org



Jb Palasini, the Applegate Artists Working Group coordinator and an artist herself, shares a booth with metal worker Kris Albro at Uncorked. Photo by Rachael Martin.

■ SISKIYOU FIELD INSTITUTE

Continued from page 17.

adjacent to Deer Creek.

The timber placed in the tributary helps slow the flow of water and create habitat for spawning fish, including the coho and Chinook salmon that have been found in Deer Creek. The slowing of water through this tributary will also be a step toward restoring this area to its original state of marshland. The undercutting of the current will erode root balls of invasive surrounding blackberries, which will hopefully soon be replaced with native flora.

We here at the Siskiyou Field Institute are very excited to observe this tributary

as the winter rains come to the Illinois Valley and flood the meadow, helping restore the land to its natural marshland and, we hope, fill it with native wildlife!

Aliyah Zweig
Outreach/Marketing
Coordinator &
Education Assistant
Siskiyou
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outreach@thesfi.org



Outdoor school students exploring serpentine soil during a geobotany class at Siskiyou Field Institute. Photo by Hannah Borgerson.



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OPINION

With charity for all

BY JIM REILAND

Most of us associate the word “charity” with the act of giving—volunteering or making financial contributions to people or organizations in need. As the holidays and year-end deadline for tax-related giving approach, this definition is foremost in our minds.

But I’m thinking of charity in the way that Abraham Lincoln used the word in his second inaugural address, specifically the phrase “with malice toward none, with charity for all.” Scholars have interpreted this speech as a plea to reconcile a war-torn nation just emerging from civil war. To achieve unity without retribution, Lincoln believed we needed a common memory of the war and its causes, which included acknowledging that both the North and South shared responsibility for slavery.

To me, thinking or judging others “charitably” means giving them the benefit of the doubt and looking past our differences to their many positive qualities. Bridging the political divide in our country will need to start with all of us, and what better time than when gathered to celebrate with family and friends?

Over the past few years, I have written a half-dozen opinion pieces for the *Applegater* on this topic. The elevator-pitch summary of that effort would be that we might focus on how much we share in common with our neighbors, that showing contempt for opposing views makes bridge-building more difficult, that bias—an entirely natural and understandable human trait—can also be terribly unfair and unhelpful, that our tendency to divide people into broad categories (e.g., liberal or conservative) or put them in boxes

(e.g., Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, White men, Democrats, etc.) ignores the more complex reality of our varied individual values, and that our word choices can inadvertently repel others.

Today, as we prepare to celebrate the holidays with those who may not share our politics, let’s try to view each other charitably. Talking about politics may be forbidden at family gatherings (it is in my family), but I think it’s possible to discuss public policy, asking “what is the proper role of government?” in, for example, ensuring an educated and informed public, ensuring free and fair elections, striving for public health and safety, guarding against foreign aggression, and more.

No need to mention the president, governor, or any other actors on today’s political stage. That will change, as it always has. The goal of these conversations isn’t to “win.” It isn’t to demonstrate how smart you are or how ill-informed the other side is.

It’s to open ourselves to the reality that we share much more in common than we realize, that we all have destructive biases that we can disable only by acknowledging them, that there are trade-offs inherent in any choice we make, contradictions with any position we take, and flaws in any argument.

The goal is to listen, to view others with the humanity with which we hope they will view us, and to use Lincoln’s words, “with malice toward none, with charity for all,” in our lives.

Jim Reiland
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An Applegate “Barn-Moving” party

BY CHRISTINA AMMON

“Have you ever heard of an Amish barn-moving party?” my friend Andrea asked.

We were on my porch in Ruch, looking at a shelter in front of my house that I had built as a cozy place to hang out in inclement weather. It did the trick. Friends and I were able to sit under it and warm our hands on the little propane fire pit in the center.

It was also stunning. Rather than a simple square, the builder made it with five sides, using beautiful wooden beams.

The only problem: I deeply regretted where I had situated it!

The structure interrupted my mountain view, cast shadows in the wrong places, and just had a weird *feng shui*. Afflicted with “builder’s regret,” I deconstructed the thing in my mind dozens of times: removed the nails, pried the beams, unscrewed the roof. Or I imagined a heavy crane relocating it.

But the fact remained—it was heavy, huge, and set in concrete.

“No, I’ve never heard of an Amish barn-moving,” I replied.

“Check this out.” Andrea pulled up dozens of YouTube videos. One featured a couple of hundred men lifting a giant barn by hand and relocating it. The Amish use this technique to move large things without machinery. It reinforces the Amish value of *gemeinschaft*, or strong community bonds.

I was incredulous—and inspired. Would this approach work with the shelter? It seemed kind of ridiculous... but also irresistible.

I decided to give it a try. I’d host a neighborhood party! A Greater Applegate gives out \$200 grants to support local neighborhood gatherings as part of their mission to enhance community bonds. I’d hosted one before, and it was a great success.

However, I didn’t want to violate the community spirit of the funds for my own personal project, so I offered to make a match with my own money. I’d provide a big dinner and not oblige people to help. They’d be welcome just to watch. It would surely be a spectacle. Besides, what is more neighborly than undertaking such a feat together? The Amish are on to something!

In the days before the party, I grew nervous. Would enough people show up? The Amish have a strong social fabric; ours is comparatively frayed. We don’t get together often, and a “work party” didn’t exactly sound fun.

And I worried: *What if we could only move it partway? What if it broke in transit? Or worse, what if someone got hurt?*

Before the event, my friend Adrian readied the shelter, installing some scaffolding to stabilize it during the move. We speculated on how easy—or hard—it would be to move.

On the day of the party, I made sloppy joes and salads and filled the

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My contact information
Heather Paladini, Program Director
text or call 336-937-2882
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www.wildoakpreschool.com

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Wild Oak Preschool is a member of Natural Start Alliance and Association for Nature Based Education.

Every donation you make to the Applegater will be doubled, now through the end of 2025, thanks to the annual NewsMatch program!



Community members join forces to move a shelter by hand during a barn-raising-style event in the Applegate Valley. Photo by Christina Ammon.

cooler with drinks. People began to show up, and I grew hopeful. Soon, members of the Rogue Valley Paragliding and Hang Gliding Association turned up. It seemed we had enough human power to give it a go!

Adrian guided the effort. We gathered around the shelter and placed our hands on the cross supports. Then we counted: *one, two... three!*

The shelter nearly levitated! I grew confident. In less than 15 minutes, we carried it nearly 70 yards to the new spot and gently set it down on the steel piers that Adrian had meticulously placed.

We clapped for ourselves and admired our work. Magic hung in the air.

Yeah, we’d just moved a heavy project, but the whole effort felt like a powerful metaphor. We were all realizing

what was possible when people came together and combined their strengths.

In a weird way, I’m really glad I put the shelter in the wrong spot initially. Without that “mistake,” I would have never had this incredible, wacky, and magical event.

My only regret is that I hadn’t planted a bottle of champagne to pop at the new site to celebrate our success.

Next time!

You can watch the “barn-moving” on YouTube at youtu.be/XqB1ZQfjPU8. And if you’re interested in hosting a gathering in your neighborhood, let A Greater Applegate support you! Contact them at info@agreaterapplegate.org.

Christina Ammon
christina@
footlooseintheapplegate.com

NEXT GENERATION | SCHOOL NEWS

Ruch 8th graders hike the Pacific Crest Trail

BY AARON FOX

Earlier this fall, eighth-grade students from Ruch Outdoor Community School went on a two-day hike along the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT). Their route took them from where the PCT intersects with Highway 66 at Greensprings Summit to the Pilot Rock Trailhead, covering around 14 miles. The students, accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Fox, and family volunteer Dawny Stockton Dwire, passed through the rugged and biologically diverse Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument and Soda Mountain Wilderness. This section of the trail follows the crest ridge of the Siskiyou Mountain Range, offering stunning views, both north into the Rogue Valley of Oregon and south into the Klamath Basin of California. The intrepid group also took a side hike to the summit of Hobart Bluff, where they soaked in the incredible 360-degree view of this amazing region we call home.

At the eight-mile mark on day one, the students stopped, set up tents, and made camp for the night. It was here that they were met by the Ruch principal, Ryan King, and parent volunteer Veronica Ward,



Eighth-grade students celebrate the end of their 12-mile hike with their teacher Aaron Fox. Photo by Aaron Fox.

who brought overnight gear and supplies. Mrs. Ward, owner of Bambu Restaurant in Medford, made a delicious chili and honey-cornbread dinner, along with brownies and plenty of other tasty treats. Shout-out to Veronica! After a night of games, music, and s'mores, it was lights out. The next morning, everyone rose at first light, broke camp, and hit the trail. The fall colors were in full force, and the misty conditions made the scenery feel like something straight out of a J.R.R. Tolkien novel—truly awe-inspiring. After stopping for lunch above a striking



Students embark into the morning mist on the last leg of the hike from Soda Mountain Wilderness to the Pilot Rock Trailhead. Photo by Aaron Fox.

deep chasm lined with volcanic pillars, the triumphant crew reached the Pilot Rock Trailhead, bringing their adventure to an end (until the next one begins).

Outdoor trips like this are so important for young people for multiple reasons. Not only do they provide meaningful academic opportunities, but they also allow kids to challenge themselves physically, grow their self-confidence, and build positive relationships. At times, the weather on this hike was less than ideal, and the trail was often arduous, but together, the students persevered. In doing so, they supported each other as a group in a way that is impossible to replicate in a traditional classroom setting. The foundation this builds for them to move forward as a team, this year and beyond, is powerful.

Ruch Outdoor Community School prides itself on providing meaningful outdoor experiences for students. Mr. Fox has taken his middle schoolers on multi-day rafting trips on the Rogue River, hiking and biking at Lake Tahoe, snowshoeing at Crater Lake, participating in controlled burns in local forests, and much more. If you have outdoor adventure ideas for Mr. Fox to take his eighth graders on, or if you would like to help sponsor their end-of-year multi-day capstone field trip, please contact him at aaron.fox@medford.k12.or.us or call the Ruch Outdoor Community School front desk at 541-842-3470.

Aaron Fox
aaron.fox@medford.k12.or.us

Changes at Woodland Charter

BY CHRIS CARMIENCEKE

Located on Murphy Creek Road, Woodland Charter School is a kindergarten-through-eighth-grade public charter school sponsored by the Three Rivers School District and guided by a Waldorf-inspired instructional model. We have about 200 students and 25 faculty members. If you have a child who would like to attend, we have openings in several grades. Please visit our website at woodlandcharterschool.org and click on the “Admissions” tab to complete an “Intent to Enroll” form to begin the admission process.

An exciting addition to our school is the establishment of a new foundation to support the school, aptly named the Woodland Community Foundation. This 501(c)(3) has six board members, including Woodland staff and Woodland parents, and is developing plans for out-of-school-time support for Woodland students, fundraising, and possibly even preschool programs using our Waldorf-inspired methods.

Woodland Charter School has enjoyed the first few months of the 2025-2026 school year, starting on the first day of school with a lovely Sunflower Ceremony, where the first-grade teacher, Ms. Herren, told her class a story and announced that they would be known as the Madrone Class. Each first-grade student received a sunflower from an eighth-grade student, a gift made even more sentimental because the sunflowers were grown in the school garden. In addition, we enjoyed our traditional Festival of Courage at the end of September, the honoring of Indigenous Peoples Day on October 13, a celebration of Día de los Muertos on November 3, and our Lantern Walk on the evening of November 13.

We have had several new teachers at Woodland Charter School this year, bringing new energy—both youth and experience—as well as a deep commitment to the education of the children we serve. Our new faculty members include Corban Gotcher as the third-grade Redwood Class



Woodland Charter School sunflower ceremony. Photo by Brittanie McKirachan.

teacher, Amie Wong as the fourth-grade Evergreen Class teacher, Dave Martin as the fifth-grade Canyon Class teacher, Daniel Sloan as the seventh-grade Salmon Class teacher, Alex Kalinske as the Games and PE teacher, and Nanni Richardson as the Handwork teacher. In addition, Lanie Jewell, our previous Handwork teacher, is now teaching the second-grade Osprey Class.

Winter is always an exciting time at Woodland. We are looking forward to several December events. We will be holding our annual Spiral of Light, a unique class-building event where students and teachers enter a dark room filled with quiet music and, one by one, light candles after they walk through a spiral of cedar boughs. This is a representation of the light each student brings to the classroom and the world in the dark months. We are also holding our Winter Assembly on December 18, celebrating the music, dance, and spoken word performances of students and teachers. Lastly, the Winter Faire will again be a community event put on by the newly established Woodland Community Foundation and the Woodland Parent Council on December 13 at Pacifica from 10 am-2 pm.

We continue to enjoy each school day at Woodland Charter School and the lovely learning environment in the Applegate Valley. Thank you for your support and interest.


Chris Carmiencke
Education Director for Woodland Charter School
chris.carmiencke@woodlandcharterschool.org



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Take us with you on your next trip. Then send your favorite "Reading the Gater" photo (must include the physical paper) to gater@applegater.org or mail to *Applegater*, PO Box 14, Jacksonville, OR 97530.



Photos, left to right:

- Jessica Bullard** enjoys the *Applegater* at Jasper National Park in Alberta, Canada—a perfect spot to take in the stunning scenery and some great geological info!
- Steve (R) and Shellie Boyd (L)** on an RV journey up the Alaskan Highway, accompanied by their traveling cat Gypzie.
- Julie Hamner-Hunt (L), Karen Hamner-Hirschmugl (M), and Ida Lawrence (R)** reading the *Gater* while seated in a large keg at Andreas Keller German Restaurant in Leavenworth, WA on a girl's trip.
- Allie Parkin (L) and son Azur (R)** brought the *Gater* to the famous historical Roseman Bridge in Madison County, Iowa—home of Bridges of Madison County.

Keep those articles, letters, opinions, and "Reading the Gater" photos coming in. You are the Gater!

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