

NEXT GENERATION | SCHOOL NEWS

Ruch Outdoor Community School hosts inspiring Art and Wellness Fair

BY SARA BERTOLERO AND KATIE WALKER

This year’s Art and Wellness Fair at Ruch Outdoor Community School was a vibrant celebration of creativity and self-expression, showcasing the incredible work of our K-5 and middle school artists. Families and students got to experience sound-bath healing, yoga, and engagement with a variety of valuable resources provided by our dedicated community partners.

The fair was an amazing experience, bringing together a mix of relaxation, movement, and community connection.

We are deeply grateful to WinterSpring, Options, Community Works, Swindells Resource Center, and Maslow for showing up and generously sharing their time, resources, and expertise, and offering families an art activity. We are also thankful for our Ruch students—Carlie, Riley Jo, Tyler, Harlow, James, Addis, Ari, and Christian—who helped organize and set up our Wellness Fair. Your support played a vital role in making our wellness fair an impactful event for everyone involved.

Since January, students in our after-school art club and middle school art elective had been pouring their hearts into preparing for this event, exploring a variety of artistic mediums, including fiber arts, painting, drawing, clay sculpture, and found-object art. As the months progressed, we witnessed their art skills grow, along with their confidence in expressing emotions, ideas, and personal passions through art. From intricate maps of their imaginations and recycled cardboard weavings to color palettes inspired by nature walks and plein-air paintings of the stunning landscapes surrounding our school, these young artists pushed the boundaries of their creativity.

We were proud to share their masterpieces with families and community members. The fair was an inspiring reflection of the exploration, dedication, creativity, and growth that define our school community. Ruch Outdoor Community School reintroduced art into its curriculum this year through a partnership with Sticks and Stones Studio, a local nonprofit dedicated to enriching children’s lives through creative expression.

Art fosters cognitive growth, emotional expression, and resilience, encouraging



Sound bath immersion with Kelly Peters and Sara Champion. Photo: Jody Hubler.



K-5 students display their art projects in the school courtyard. Photo: Jody Hubler.

innovation and critical thinking in students. Together, we’re working to make art a lasting part of our school and community. To support this effort, please visit gofundme.com/f/help-us-bring-free-nature-art-camps-to-rural-kids.

For more information about our art programs and student wellness offerings, please contact the school at 541-842-3850.

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Student art projects on display for classmates and families. Photo: Jody Hubler.

Hands-on learning at Applegate School

BY RENEE GOURLEY

Students at Applegate School are enjoying learning through STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) and agriculture. An incredible amount of learning happens through hands-on experiences and projects that introduce and develop lifelong skills through various activities.

The kindergarten and first-grade students have been studying baby animals this spring. They learned the names for both the adults and babies for a variety of animal species. They studied the life cycle of a chicken, how a chick develops from an egg, and how to properly raise chickens. For a more hands-on learning experience, the students have been incubating fertilized eggs that their teacher, Mrs. Hirschmugl, brought in from her own chickens. All spring they anxiously waited for the new chicks to emerge from their shells. Some of the students will be lucky enough to take baby chicks home!

Kindergarten through third-grade students were privileged to have a visit from Smokey Bear, who, along with folks from the ranger station and local fire department, taught the students about fire safety. At the end of the presentation, students were rewarded with hugs, high fives, and a class picture with Smokey.

Many of the grades continue to enjoy the Garden Club with White Oak Farm. Through the club, the students have learned the scientific names for wildflowers and how to identify a variety of local trees. They take nature walks, and they get to interact with and hold baby goats and chicks. Ms. Rucker, teacher in the second- and third-grade classroom, led her students in an experiment on how flowers bloom. They made paper flowers that would open when placed in water, giving a visual demonstration of how flowers bloom. Another incredible facet to the Garden Club is that the students get to visit White Oak Farm and learn how food is grown and how it gets to our plates. Students are involved in harvesting food items around the farm and preparing their own lunch. The kindergarten and first-grade students

made shepherd’s pie and a cake on their most recent visit to the farm!

The middle school students who took a gardening elective this spring have been using the school’s greenhouse to grow plant starts. The students, led by Ms. Gourley, have learned how to properly prepare seeds and sow them, as well as how to maintain the right conditions in the greenhouse and keep the plants watered. Students have been eagerly waiting and watching as the seeds sprout. They are excited to be able to sell their starts for two types of sunflowers, corn, green onions, jalapeno peppers, carrots, radishes, and cucumbers. This group has also been weeding a dirt bed on campus, where they will plant flowers.

Middle school students, with their teachers, Mr. Fall and Ms. Gourley, have been developing their STEM/CTE (Career/Technical Education) room over the past couple of years and have been working on some great projects. Students can create their own 3-D designs, print them, and use the laser cutter and engraver on wood projects. Recently, some students were fortunate to participate in two small units of learning from the National Inventors Hall of Fame through the Southern Oregon Education Service District. One group of students did a project called “Duck Chuck,” investigating how slope and angle changed how far a little rubber duckie could be flung. Another group worked on a project called “Marble Arcade” that looked at energy and how to get a marble to roll through a maze they created. Projects like these allow students to learn important skills and help develop their analytical thinking, all while having fun!

Much learning has happened this school year, and even though the year is quickly coming to an end, the students continue to eagerly learn!

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Woodland Charter School is a tuition-free arts-integrated public Waldorf school located in Murphy, Oregon, serving Josephine and Jackson Counties. We offer core academic classes alongside music, nature studies, handwork, and more!

We are planning to offer a remote learning option for the 2025-26 school year.

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION!

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