

# 'WOW' IS RIGHT



**At a rousing final Community Meeting in May, Elementary School Head Janet Salvoni announced that students in kindergarten through twelfth grade donated a total of \$8,975 as part of the WOW projects initiated in the fall.**

Project WOW, under the leadership of Wood River Foundation Chair Morley Golden and WOW director and Community School parent Louise Stumph, gave each school-aged child in Blaine County \$25 to invest in local nonprofit organizations.

Expanding upon its long tradition of serving the community, Community School took Project WOW one — or perhaps even ten — steps further, asking each class in kindergarten through eighth grade to collectively choose a project for the year in which to invest their money, energy, and time.

Upper School students were invited to hear presentations on each of the chosen projects from the lower schools, and buy in to one with their \$25 while contributing their time and support.

At the Community Meeting, Kathy Gibson's third graders proudly announced that they completed their first installations of public art at St. Luke's Wood River Medical Center. Beverly McNeal's fifth graders lined up to show examples of the backpacks they created for children going into the Advocates' shelter for victims of domestic violence. These included necessities like toothbrushes, blankets, and combs, and extras like arts and crafts materials — anything they thought might help children feel happy and safe.

Jo-Anne Dixon, executive director of the Animal Shelter of the Wood River Valley, attended the meeting to personally thank the children on behalf of shelter animals.

Hannah Young's first graders worked on behalf of the Marmaduke Society to help animals find homes. Tricia St. George's second graders held a movie and popcorn night to help raise extra funds for Dollars for Collars, promoting proper licensing of dogs. Trent Herbst's fourth graders made and sold wood-

ABOVE: Three classes worked together to help the Animal Shelter of the Wood River Valley, presenting a check for \$2,550 as well as helping with three long-term shelter projects.



en skis to support their Give Me Shelter project, which funds outdoor shelters for dogs.

Former Community Service Coordinator Melissa Elkins said 5,800 community service hours were dedicated to these and other community service projects during the year.

Morley thanked the teachers and students on behalf of the board of investors of the WOW project, emphasizing that the children's commitment and willingness to go well beyond the parameters of the program made for one "fabulous journey."

## THIS YEAR'S PROJECTS

### + KINDERGARTEN

The Lorax Project  
Wood River Land Trust

### + FIRST GRADE

Marmaduke Society Project  
Animal Shelter of the Wood River Valley

### + SECOND GRADE

Dollars for Collars  
Animal Shelter of the Wood River Valley

### + THIRD GRADE

Student Art Installation  
St. Luke's Wood River Foundation

### + FOURTH GRADE

Give Me Shelter  
Animal Shelter of the Wood River Valley

### + FIFTH GRADE

Pajama Project  
Advocates for Survivors of Domestic Violence

### + SIXTH GRADE

Pollinator Garden Project  
Sawtooth Botanical Garden

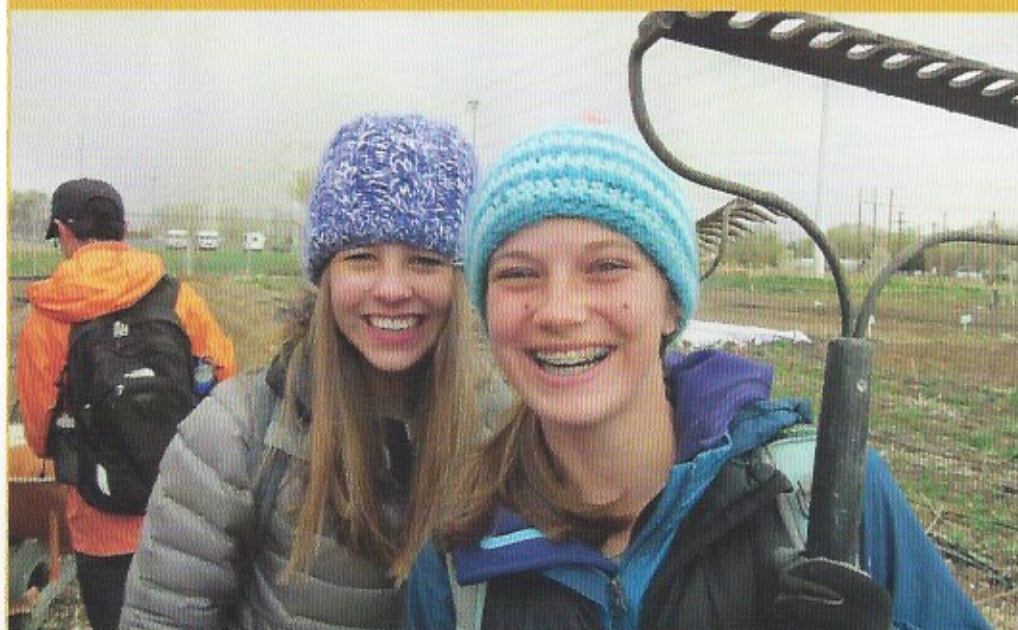
### + SEVENTH GRADE

Wetland Boardwalk and Trail Project  
The Nature Conservancy

### + Eighth Grade

Various projects  
Idaho's Bounty

## SERVICE LEARNING HANDS-ON & EYE-OPENING



As part of a traditional weeklong community service learning trip, Community School's ninth grade traveled to Salt Lake City in April to see firsthand the challenges many face. Students examined the impact of issues such as poverty, food insecurity, lack of shelter, illiteracy, and living as a refugee in a foreign land.

By working on a farm, volunteering at a homeless shelter, touring a food pantry, and serving meals at the food bank, the freshman class experienced an eye-opening glimpse into the broader world.

Upper School Language teacher Calysta Phillips accompanied the class to Utah.

"The freshman trip was a wonderful opportunity for the class to reach out of their comfort zones and experience poverty firsthand," she said. "The students impressed us so much by rolling up their sleeves. They worked all day in a refugee garden doing hard manual labor, and they served more than 700 meals in an hour and a half in the biggest soup kitchen any of us had ever seen."

Student Autumn Fleutsch said the impact of this trip was profound.

"The ninth grade service trip to Salt Lake City isn't like the other outdoor trips at Community School," she said. "There is no sleeping in snow structures, or hiking through heavy rain. But it is as life-changing as these other adventures, if not more so. I will never forget the time we spent at the

local soup kitchen. After hours of work serving food, cooking, and organizing the pantry, a large group of students gathered around three men in the corner of the large cafeteria. They told us about their pasts, about being in the army, and about the places they had lived. For that time, probably about half an hour, I didn't view these men as homeless or poor. I saw them as people who had obviously seen many places and done many things."

Calysta added, "We could see the light go on as students started understanding different shades of poverty. I think the biggest 'a-ha' was that many people who are not homeless still live in extreme poverty. The students started to understand that people struggle not because they are lazy, but because there are so many other factors involved."

"This trip is a rite of passage for students," Autumn said. "We are growing up in such a beautiful place and sometimes need a reality check. As sad as it was to see the three-year-old getting a meal at the soup kitchen, her only hot meal of the day, it is very comforting to know that we played a part in putting that meal in front of him, and that there are so many other ways you can help him and the next person in need."

ABOVE: Grace Palmer and Autumn Fleutsch take a break from working hard in a garden that helps grow food for refugees near Salt Lake City.