February 11, 2016

Letter of support for No Child Left Inside grant

Both the Roslyn City Council and I unanimously endorse the Washington Outdoor School’s request for funds to expand their outdoor immersion programs in our community. The local component, the Roslyn Outdoor School, is in its second year in Roslyn, and many of our families have enrolled their pre-school children.

Our town is located in the Cascade Mountains of Washington State; Roslyn began as a coal mining town which has retained its historic character to the extent that it has been the setting for the iconic 1990’s television show, Northern Exposure and a current Amazon Prime movie, The Man in the High Castle.

Over sixty percent of our town is forested which also made a perfect location for the Roslyn Outdoor School to begin and thrive. It is wonderful to see young children experiencing our forest in all kinds of weather – and this year we have had record snowfall.

Many people who live in Roslyn chose it for the outdoor environment as well as the peaceful, historic town. We want more opportunities for children to learn to respect, play in and nurture the environment. Communities like Roslyn will need citizens who are equipped to handle a changing environment and, at the same time, care enough about it to do so.

As an avid snowboarder and mountain biker myself, I know how important it is for people to spend time outdoors. Spending time in nature strengthens not just our physical bodies – it helps us think and relax.

The City of Roslyn thanks you for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Mayor Geoff Scherer
Subject: Washington Outdoor School Support Letter  Date: Feb 08, 2016

To: No Child Left Inside Grant Committee

This letter is in support of the efforts of the Washington Outdoor School for their request for funds to support the growth of their program and provide outdoor learning activities to more children and families in our community.

The mission of the USDA Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands and to meet the needs of present and future generations. The Washington Outdoor School’s mission: to cultivate a child’s sense of wonder through immersion in the natural world is directly in line with the missions of the Forest Service. The forest service very much values environmental education beginning at a very young age and how these first interactions with nature may have significant impacts in how our future generation will become the stewards of these local public lands.

Michelle Capp
Cle Elum District Ranger
Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest
803 W 2nd St.
Cle Elum, WA 98922
February 10, 2016

Sibyl Fillo
Washington Outdoor School
Re: No Child Left Inside

To Whom it May Concern:

It is with enthusiasm that I support the Washington Outdoor School and their efforts at introducing children to outdoor activities. The health benefits of regular exercise and outdoor activities go far beyond physical health. The combination facilitates mental health, engenders the realization of our connection to the earth, and ties us to our community in a way that cannot be overstated in its importance.

I hope you consider supporting this School with your grant and help it to grow. I regularly encounter children who have no experience with our natural world and whose physical conditioning is abysmal. Organizations such as this are critical to opening young minds to a world beyond the electronic devices we are increasingly becoming attached to. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert Merkel, PA-C
Family Medicine of Cle Elum
February 15, 2016

Sibyl Maer-Fillo
Director
Washington Outdoor School
P.O. Box 327
Roslyn, WA 98941

Dear Ms. Maer-Fillo:

I am writing to express my support for the Washington Outdoor School. My involvement with the school over the past year, both professionally and personally, has given me the opportunity to see first-hand the value of the experiences you offer for local children.

Mid-Columbia Fisheries staff welcomed the opportunity to educate your camp participants on beaver and salmon last year, and are happy to do so again in 2016. They reported interacting with engaged, interested children who were eager to learn more about the natural environment.

My children have participated in the first year of the Ellensburg Outdoor School, a partnership between the Kittitas Environmental Education Network and the Washington Outdoor School. The school currently only meets on early-release Fridays (roughly once a month). My kids have LOVED the experience. They come home happy, muddy, and eager to share their experiences. I am excited by your proposal to incorporate that experience into existing, indoor programs.

Kittitas County abounds in outdoor recreational opportunities, but many children spent the majority of their time indoors. The work that you do to change the norm is critical: we all know that we are happier and healthier when we are outside!

Thank you for work on the proposal, and please encourage the reviewers to call me at (509)281-1311 if I can provide any further information about my support for the Washington Outdoor School.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Wassell
Yakima Basin Program Director
New preschool takes children outdoors

By NICOLE KLAUSS staff writer  Sep 24, 2014

A new preschool in the Upper County will teach kids in an outdoor classroom.

The Roslyn Outdoor School is open this year for preschoolers, ages 2 1/2 to 5, and can be done in conjunction with other preschools or be a primary preschool. Students will have a full outdoor immersion learning experience.

“It’s like a regular preschool, but outside,” founder and teacher Sibyl Maer-Fillo said.

Classes
Families will have the option to choose one day, two days or three days. Each day is a three and a half hour session. An ideal class size as the school gets off the ground is 10 children.

Maer-Fillo said her goal with Roslyn Outdoor School is to help children learn to be in nature.

“The main thing for me is creating that lifelong connection to the outdoors, and feeling safe, comfortable and inspired with being outside,” she said.

Kids will learn colors, shapes, songs, and counting, but will do it outside using natural resources like the Roslyn Urban Forest.

“You’re still building all of those important skills for kids — the early math skills, pre-literacy, color recognition, working together and learning to play,” Maer-Fillo said.

There won’t be a set curriculum as it will vary with the seasons and the outdoor resources, but teachers will guide the children through lessons and help them make connections with previous experiences.

“We’ll ask open ended questions,” Maer-Fillo said. “There’s no right or wrong answer. The kids can come up with creative answers and can talk to each other. ... It’s very organic.”

Maer-Fillo has a master’s degree with certification in special education, and has worked in education for about 20 years on and off.

“I’ve found when I’ve worked in preschool through high school that I desire and the kids really enjoy doing things outside, so I have really been searching for something like this a while,” she said.

Jennifer Bod will be Maer-Fillo’s support teacher. Bod has a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education, and has worked with different ages in childcare. Bod and her son participated in the Roslyn Outdoor School’s pilot program last year.
Maer-Fillo conducted a pilot program for the school from November 2013 to the beginning of February. The coldest day during that time was around 14 degrees, she said, adding that the kids still had an hour and a half lesson.

When it comes to dealing with the weather, the main thing is to make sure families outfit their kids to it and wear appropriate clothes to stay dry and warm.

“Kids don’t notice it (the weather) as much as adults do,” Maer-Fillo said. “They are totally engaged with the experience of being outside.”

The program went well and Maer-Fillo taught a three-week summer camp with preschool to elementary age students in Roslyn this summer.

Eventually, Maer-Fillo hopes to expand to having an after school program for older children.

“I’d like to offer outreach to local schools and maybe go in and take classes out for various experiences and work with local preschools that are already established,” she said.

There will be two informational meetings for parents from 9-11 a.m. Sept. 30 and Oct. 1 in the garden space behind the Spruce Moose Cafe on Pennsylvania Avenue in Roslyn, which is likely where the class will meet regularly. For more information about the school or how to enroll, go to roslynoutdoorschool.org.

**Informational meetings**

**When:** 9-11 a.m., Sept. 30 and Oct. 1

**Where:** In the garden space behind the Spruce Moose Cafe in Roslyn

**Website:** roslynoutdoorschool.org or find it on Facebook by searching “Roslyn Outdoor School”

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**Nicole Klauss**
Outdoor learning program kicks off

By LAUREN TAKORES staff writer  Oct 3, 2015

Kids got an immersive experience in outdoor education on Friday during the kickoff day of the Ellensburg Outdoor School.

Nine preschoolers gathered this morning at Helen McCabe State Park and six elementary school kids arrived in the afternoon to learn about nature by simply being outdoors.

“The main part is nature immersion,” said Sibyl Maer-Fillo of the Roslyn Outdoor School, which Ellensburg’s program is adapted from.
That means “exploring and investigating where we are, being a part of a place, being comfortable in a place, and this park offers a lot of different environments for kids to explore,” she said.

The park’s natural features include a pond, creek, open space and the edge of a forest.

Ellensburg Outdoor School is a program of Kittitas Environmental Education Network. Jill Scheffer, KEEN chairperson, said the group has maintained stewardship of the park for more than 10 years.

The group is testing out the outdoor school in the fall, and hopefully it will continue in the spring, Scheffer said.

Maer-Fillo had seasonal storybooks and a few sensory games on hand, and the preschoolers responded well to repeat-after-me songs, but mostly the kids were allowed to wander. Unstructured time allows kids to pick up sticks, turn over rocks and interact at their level and pace, supervised by adults from a distance.

The group came upon a dead red-tailed hawk and with the help of a smart phone, the adults were able to teach the kids about the animal. They also happened upon some cow pies, and talked about why they were there.

“Nature will present you with lessons all the time,” Maer-Fillo said, “If you look for that, you never know what you’re going to be talking about.”

The program runs Oct. 16, Nov. 6 and Nov. 20. The preschool group meets from 9 a.m. to noon, and grades K-5 meet after school from 1:30-4 p.m.

Tuition is $25 per day per student, or $20 per day per student when paying for more than one day. Tuition assistance is available. Pre-registration is required at www.ycic.org.

Lauren Takores
Staff Writer, covers K-12 education, health care, the city of Roslyn, and the arts.
ROSOLYN – Winter weather may have played havoc with traffic last week, but in Roslyn it provided a perfectly festive winter wonderland for the second annual Washington Outdoor School Winter Solstice Celebration in Roslyn.

The Washington Outdoor School is the umbrella organization for the Roslyn Outdoor School and the Ellensburg Outdoor School.

Held at the Roslyn Yard in downtown Roslyn, the event drew the young as well as the young-at-heart.
Some children arrived on sleds pulled down Pennsylvania Avenue by adults. Other children climbed a small mountain of snow, plowed off the street. Still others tried their hands at making logs and holiday decorations that they would take up to a special tree in the woods to hang. Stories were told and songs were sung all in celebration at a cold winter day warm with good cheer. More than two dozen people did a luminaria walk into the forest.

Two-year-old Session Martin of San Diego stood mesmerized for several minutes by the music of singer/guitarist Marc Brodine. A visit to Roslyn is a holiday tradition, said the youngster’s father, Garrett Martin.

“Every time we visit Seattle for the holidays we come over here,” he said.

A friend, Tyson Chester of South Cle Elum, was there with his daughter Estella. “We had cabins over here our whole life,” he said.

A short distance away, Cle Elum’s Sara Morgan and her children warmed themselves at the metal fire pit. Nearby, 8-year-old Win Bruntjen of Yakima was putting the finishing touches on a yule log.

Enhancing community

Created by Sibyl Maere-Fillo, the Roslyn Outdoor School is a project of R Town Community, an organization that supports programs to enhance the community. The Roslyn Outdoor School offers children and families an outdoor immersion program in the Roslyn Urban Forest.

“It’s connecting kids with nature and inspiring them to be outdoors and be interested in the outdoors,” said Darcy Batura, a member of the board of the Roslyn Outdoor School.

After the celebration, a delighted Maere-Fillo called the event “a huge success.” Some 70 people — children and their families as well as some adults unaccompanied by children — had come by for the event.
“The weather was perfect. We had snow this year,” she said. “I feel people were out celebrating and being outside which is what the Roslyn Outdoor School and the Washington Outdoor School are all about.”

She said the celebration would be repeated next year.

For information on the Roslyn Outdoor School, call 206-898-2041 or email info@roslynoutdoorschool.com.