

Learning Out in the Woods is Fun

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Students working on my family's woodland have rewarded me in many ways. I expect many of you reading this have also found ways to reach out to the younger generations, and not only within our own families. If you have you can relate to the good feelings I am reporting here. But why would it matter?

Unless young folks learn to know and love the forest they are not likely to imagine having a career there. If not enough do, Oregon's forest sector workforce will not be big enough as the old-timers keep retiring. We and our land are valuable resources for such education, if we reach out. This message was brought to us at the annual meeting of CCFFA on April 10. Peter Matzka is a new educator in our midst who is currently working at Hopkins Demonstration Forest. He spoke well about the need and our opportunity. He seemed to get our attention, but now what?

Students and their teachers need our help and I promise you will get more than you give if you get

involved. First, mark your calendar now for September 25 and 26 and be there at the Pacific Logging Congress when it comes to our county (see Julie Woodward's invitation in this issue). You will see a great logging equipment show and should also enjoy seeing some young eyes light up. That happens when you help them understand more about nature up close, or how wood grows and is harvested.

Invite some neighbor kids or some city kids to explore trails or roads through your woodlands, plant trees, or cut and burn limbs. Some who have done so on my land have given me handshakes, thank you notes, and even hugs. My heart glows more though when they later tell me they are going to pursue post-high school studies in forestry or wildlife. We should simply contact local schools and ask how they might want to use our woods, or our words about those woods.

Just four days after I saw that student/teacher-produced video in Peter's after-dinner presentation, one of those same kids from the North Clackamas

District's forestry program told me he expects to start in OSU's College of Forestry next fall. Wow! Those students helped me when I needed fuels reduced down-slope from our house. Lots of good work from them came free, and I gave them many firewood logs. But the word of that student's career plan is more valuable to me and Oregon's forest future, than a full truckload of even the best logs. ■