

PRESS RELEASE

OREGON PALEOLANDS INSTITUTE

401 Fourth Street

Fossil, Oregon 97830

Paleo Lands SAGE program for children plans Winter classes in Spray and Fossil.

For Immediate Release

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The Oregon Paleo Lands Institute, in collaboration with Fossil Community School and Spray Community School, will launch its outdoor program for Wheeler County children in grades 3-6 in early February. The program, called SAGE (Science, Art, Geology Explorations), is a natural resources outdoor program held on Fridays and Saturdays. Program instructor is Michelle Ordway, with assistance from other artists and scientists. Children learn about regional plants, animals and geology through hands-on, outdoor learning.

Thanks to a generous grant from Wheeler County's TITLE III, natural resource education funds, students have the opportunity to learn use of digital cameras, GPS units, microscopes and art supplies. Our SAGE explorers will post their discoveries on a "SAGE PAGE" on the Oregon Paleo Lands Institute web site and create their own nature journal using ink and watercolors. The long-term goal is to produce a children's field guide to the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. All SAGE explorers will benefit from learning in small groups with the close attention of scientists, artists and teachers.

In Fossil, the Winter SAGE program starts Friday February 9, and continues February 10, 23, and 24. The program runs from 9 AM to 1 PM, and meets at the Family Service Building. In the Fossil-based program, children will explore modern animal tracks, foods, and habitat of the Clarno Unit, John Day Fossil Beds, as well as the ancient animals and plants that lived here. The program concludes with a Family Afternoon on Feb. 24th.

In Spray, the Winter program begins March 2nd, and continues March 3, 9, and 10. The group will focus on the Sheep Rock Unit of the John Day Fossil Beds, with a similar program of exploring modern animals and plants as well as ancient life. The group will meet at Spray High School. The program, like that of Fossil, begins at 9 Am and concludes at 1 PM each day. The program concludes with a Family Afternoon on Saturday, March 10th. The Spray School has generously offered use of its science lab facilities.

Transportation will be provided by OPLI from the meeting sites to field trip locations and back each day. Adults and older youth may also participate in the program on a space-available basis. There is no charge. SAGE brochures are available in Spray and Fossil schools, local stores, and Wheeler County offices, as well as a downloadable file from the OPLI website. (www.opli.org)

For additional information, or to register, contact Michelle Ordway at 468-3125 or Ellen Bishop, 763-4480, email ebishop@oregonpaleoproject.org, or send registrations to P.O. Box 104, Fossil, 97830.

Ancient the Clarno Unit of the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. The Winter, 2007 program, SAGE explorers will investigate on February 9th : “Animal tracks & sign – Who lives Here?”; on February 10th : “Animal food sources – They eat What?”; on February 23rd : “Animals in Stone – Bananas and Who?”. The Fossil SAGE program will conclude with a family day on February 24th – “Putting it Together” – where SAGE explorers will share their discoveries with their families and friends.

The winter SAGE program for Spray students will start March 2nd and will include four field trips to the Sheep Rock Unit of the John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. Spray SAGE explorers will travel to the Foree picnic area on March 2nd to investigate “Animal tracks & sign - Who lives here?”; on March 3rd, Blue Basin will be the focus of a search for “Animal food sources – They eat What?”; and March 9th will find Spray SAGE explorers traveling to again to the Foree picnic area for “Animals in Stone”. The Spray SAGE winter program will conclude with a family day on March 10th – “Putting it Together” – where the Spray SAGE explorers will share their discoveries with their families and friends.

for children in grades 3-6 and their families. It engages children in outdoor explorations of local landscapes, plants and animals.

Students involved in the **OPLI** sponsored **SAGE** program met in December to explore a local riparian ecosystem. Student investigations focused on how seeds and berries attract small mammals and birds to an area, and the resulting ecosystem, food web and food chain. Two of Spray’s students, Franklin and Dori Ordway, found rabbit, raccoon, coyote and bobcat tracks in addition to a mysterious nest made of branches in a basalt rock crack. “We made plaster casts of the coyote and bobcat tracks,” Dori said, “It was cool to hold the track in my hand.” The SAGE outdoor activities enhanced students’ classroom learning about ecosystems and local animals. “The seeds looked different under a microscope – there were lots of little pokey spines, and so many different kinds!” Franklin commented. “I liked gathering them to see how many different kinds I could find.”