

Biodynamic Learning at Nova High

By Jessica Prentice

North Idaho has a new alternative schooling option for teens. Nova High opened for its founding class in September 2023 and is offering Waldorf-inspired education in Sandpoint.

Nova High is not your average high school. Inspired by Anthroposophy, rooted in the needs of teens today, and emphasizing the arts and outdoors, Nova brings together North Idaho wilderness practicality and rigorous academics to meet the creative, artistic, or scientifically curious student.

Nova has a four-day academic week with Fridays reserved for internships, community service, and immersion learning. Already this year, our students helped build their own desks, carved spoons for their culinary program, and made their own aprons. In physics class, they learned about heat from handmade thermometers and constructed “potato launchers” fueled by hairspray. (They competed to see which group’s potato launcher would fire the potato farthest into Lake Pend Oreille!) They are knitting themselves wool gloves, experiencing Spanish immersion, and navigating challenging academics. They are currently reading “To Kill a Mockingbird” and in December they will attend the Broadway performance in Spokane.

Nova students began their academic year outdoors with a weekend retreat held by

Twin Eagles Wilderness School, a local educational organization offering nature-based learning programs. Together they established the school’s honor code. Students signed a no substance use agreement and their phones are collected daily to maintain a deep and holistic learning environment.

This learning environment is further supported by the culinary program, which educates students about healthy foods and gives them hands-on experiences with making nutritional foods from scratch. They have taken walking trips to Winter Ridge and to Safeway, looking for products with healthy ingredients and identifying those ingredients that should be avoided. They have cooked wild rice harvested in Coeur d’Alene, cranberries foraged in a nearby bog, grass-finished beef from 7B Ranch, and potatoes grown by one of their grandmothers. They took a farm tour to Mountain Cloud Creamery and Farm in Clark Fork where they learned about regenerative agriculture and raw dairy production.

All of this is designed to engage teens and to awaken their inner capacities to learn. At a time when digital technologies are so sophisticated and social media are so seductive, we believe that education for teens needs to be both active and deep. We want to develop their critical



thinking skills, expand their innate kindness and compassion, and engage their wills—their inner motivation.

We are inspired by the fact that in traditional societies, the transition from childhood to adulthood was a difficult and important task taken up by the whole community. In modern society, high schools are given this heavy burden. We seek to integrate community into this vital task as much as practical, and to come at it from as many angles as possible. Giving today’s young people the inner strength and the necessary skills to become the stewards of tomorrow is our task. We welcome new students and your support! If you have a skill to share, or are able to contribute financially, we welcome your help. Find us and learn more at www.novahigh.org.

What local non-profit are you passionate about? Please email a picture(s) with caption and/or article or idea to Rex Robinson at rrobinson@bestversionmedia.com.

