



Alex Aleman

SUSTAINABLE LEARNING AT THE ORME SCHOOL

BY REVATHI BATOLA

Established in 1929, the Orme School is a distinctive, one-of-its-kind co-educational boarding and day school for grades 8 through 12 spread over 300 acres in rural northern Arizona. Both graduates of Stanford University, founders Charles and Minna Orme believed in the significance of quality education. In order to educate their own children and those of the ranch employees, they opened a one-room school in an old ranch house. This personal deed left a significant mark on the history of the Orme School. “Their initiative gained reputation amongst the parents, and more children started joining the school and attending summer camps,” said Jessica Calmes, the school’s Director of Development.

With a mission to develop sound character, scholastic growth and an intellectual society for its students, the Orme School not only provides traditional classroom instruction, but also generates environmental awareness in students’ everyday lives. “Established under the sustainability program, students are required to have one class period per day to work around the school helping in activities such as gardening, working with park facilities or various projects around the building, helping to maintain flowers, and other tasks,” said Casey Jones, Director of Sustainability. “We also teach them

composting and make use of the scraps that come out of our dining hall.”

The Orme School was recently awarded a \$1.5 million grant from the Burpee Foundation to help expand its garden-to-table program. The grant will provide for the addition of a large greenhouse and renovation of the current one. As part of the sustainability initiatives at the school, students help harvest crops in the 35,000-square-foot organic garden, which has flourished in the past two years. The orchard, planted in January 2015, will feature 200 fruit and nut trees when it’s completed. Jones stated, “Many of the students never had the experience of tending the garden and everything that goes along with it.” He explained how the students enjoy these



Ryan Jones and Khoa Nygen

tasks as they work together, interact in groups and gain skills that will benefit them in the future. “Those are the types of lessons I want the kids to have,” Jones continued.

Whether in biology class or working in the garden, stables, chicken coop, orchard or newly constructed vineyard, the 300-acre widespread campus offers plenty of room for outdoor learning opportunities. Students are also given the fulfillment of living in a small and intimate community – with only about 100 students enrolled at the school – as well as building relationships with roommates, faculty advisors and teachers. With students coming from 16 different countries, the school houses a diverse group of young individuals. The Orme School offers opportunities for students to grow beyond the traditional classroom, preparing them to meet the challenges of college and the world beyond. ■

For more information on the Orme School, visit ormeschool.org.

Revathi Batola is an exchange student from India who was on a scholarship program sponsored by the U.S. State Department. She earned her Associates degree in journalism from Scottsdale Community College and has returned to her home country.

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