



LAST WEDNESDAY morning, Megan Huntley worked on her car for the Lunch Box Derby with the help of Brian Klima. The car had a body made of corn and wheels made from oranges. The driver was a baby carrot with baby corn for arms and a cherry for a head.



TEAMMATES Ryan Bishop and Chase Copeland worked on their pineapple vehicle.

**Herald staff photos and story by Kimberly Brandt**

## Vegetables, fruits hit the raceway

Each year, kids in fourth and fifth grades at Oberlin Elementary School get to test their creativity and handiwork making a vehicle out of fruits and vegetables for the Lunch Box Derby.

The derby, started 11 years ago, has become a tradition at the school. In the beginning, it was sponsored by the Washington Apple Association, but they dropped out and Raye's Grocery Store picked up the ball.

Every spring, store employees haul cherries both red and green, apples, oranges, cucumbers, melons, grapes, okra, sprouts, olives, carrots, potatoes, watermelon, squash, tomatoes and other fruits and vegetables to the school. The edible car parts are laid out on a table at one end of the cafeteria so the students can rifle through them and decide what will best work on their car or what looks like it will taste the best.

What the kids don't end up using on their car provides a mid-morning snack or at least a taste test.

Last Wednesday, the students had the chance to build their cars, eat some fruit and vegetables and work with their parents, who were invited in to help.

Steve Cullen, who teaches fourth grade, said it is a good time for parents to come to school and help their kids. Besides, it's fun.

First to go was the fourth grade. This was the first time for them, so they haven't yet perfected what shape of apples to choose or how to roll the oranges along the table to make them rounder.

After they were done, it was time for the old pros, the fifth graders. Two of the fifth grade groups decided to try something a little different this year.



LAYSHA MEDINA put the last touches on her cucumber car.

Joseph Hirsch and Nolan Peters decided to use a watermelon as the body of the vehicle. With the help of Joseph's mom and grandma, the melon was cut in half and hollowed out.

A pineapple was placed inside the watermelon as the driver. There was a carrot muffler and a face on the pineapple made with green cherries, a small carrot for the nose and a pineapple smile.

The wheels were made of cucumbers with apples on them. The boys said they didn't expect the vehicle to travel very far or fast, but were going for the "most creative" award. They named the vehicle "The Cruisin' Boat," and they did win most creative for the fifth grade.

At the other end of the lunch room was another first. A trio, made up of Dalton Paul, Jasmine Pearson and

Dalton Dolan, was using a spaghetti squash for the body of the car. The team had scooped out the inside of the squash and put a driver inside. They also used a black olive and lettuce on the car.

Mr. Cullen said he had never seen either a watermelon or a spaghetti squash used in the race.

Other students decided to do something a little more traditional with their vehicles.

Rhiannon Davis and Jori Diederich designed "The Bronco," which was made of a cucumber body and apple wheels.

Jori said her older sister, Danielle, won a trip to Chicago to race her vehicle, so she decided to use her sister's recipe to make "The Bronco." The girls were hoping for at least third place.

In the fourth grade, the top three places went to:

- Nolan Henningson and Brooks Cannon for the "Carrot Cruiser," which went 27 feet and 10 inches for third place.

- Darian Bose and Megan Wentz for the "D.M. Racer," 30 feet for second place.

- Saeger Grafel and Brent Juene-mann for the "Hash Slingsher," 34 feet and six inches for first place.

- Amanda Marshall and Serena Stacey took most creative.

In the fifth grade, the top three places went to:

- Tim Larson and Bret Ashley for the "Hot Rod Carrot II" that went 37 feet for third place.

- Chad Williams and Jeb Fortin for the "Dale Earnhart III" that went 37 feet and eight inches for second.

- Davies and Diederich for "The Bronco," which went 37 feet, 10 inches for first.

Seems like that recipe still works.