

Meet my Farmer event draws crowd

By Cindy Weeldreyer
For The Sentinel

Saturday afternoon was unexpectedly gray and drizzly. Inside the cavernous Bohemia Public Market (BPM), on the corner of 10th and Washington Avenue, the atmosphere was warm and inviting for the annual Meet My Farmer event, which heralds the start of the local growing season. Hundreds of people of all ages gathered throughout the afternoon to enjoy live local music, some hearty stew, purchase books and plants and to learn more about the local food movement.

Sustainable Cottage Grove member Beth Pool organized the event and was delighted with the turnout. She acknowledged its roots started at the Cottage Grove First Presbyterian Church in 2009. Members of the Earth and Social Justice committee invited local growers and producers to set up tables in the friendship hall after a Sunday worship service and invited the community to come and learn how to support local farmers.

"In 2015, Sustainable Cottage Grove got involved and expanded the event so much it outgrew the church," Pool said. BPM owner Kim Johnson has been a terrific host for us for the past two years. We're delighted to see all these people here and they are connected by food, which is a basic need for every person and community."

There were 20 booths showcasing local growers of produce, poultry, pork, plants, and explaining the concept of Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs). CSA is a direct relationship with a local farm. It brings stability to a farm early in the growing season when they need it most. You sign up and pay for a share in advance, you commit to the farm for a season, and in return you receive a basket of produce harvested fresh and distributed each week.

Karen Bentson has been the CSA manager at Ruby and Amber's organic farm since 2007. The farm began in 2000 and was named after their two draft horses used in food production.

"We live in a limited rural community," Bentson said. "Meet My Farmer provides an opportunity for producers to be in one place to promote greater public awareness of the importance of supporting local agriculture."

After taking the winter months off, the Cottage Grove's Farmers Market returns to 7th and Main on Thursday afternoons starting on May 4 and continuing until Oct. 26. Erika Peterson of Dorena's Star Ranch said the Farmers Market featured 8-10 vendors last year. Starting this year they are participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which offers food benefits to eligible, low-income individuals and families. The State of Oregon promotes the "Double Up Oregon" program that matches the first \$10 spent on fruits and vegetables.

Grow It Forward is a group of local gardeners that meet monthly in Bohemia Park to swap seeds and gardening advice. Their booth was staffed by Yvonne Gavett and Sarah Encinas, accompanied by Sarah's two sons: seven-year-old Sean and three-month-old Dylan. Both women touted the importance of getting the whole family involved in growing food.

Americana, folk and bluegrass music performed by local bands, Almost Home, Carol Palmer and Company, and the Gause Family Singers, provided a pleasant soundtrack for the afternoon's activities as young and old danced to the music.

Members of the South Lane 4-H Club brought their animals to interest youth in joining their group. Thirteen-year-old Evie Smith's mini Nubian goat, Hazel, was quite shy. The Parson Sisters brought their rabbits to the event. Seven-year-old Ariel named her rabbit "Fuzzy" and her older sister, Jasmine (9), showed off her rabbit, Peaches. They've raised rabbits for three years and joined the local 4-H Club last year.

Mom Lisa Parsons said, "This is a great chance for them to get experience interacting with people and animals and to practice for what happens at rabbit shows."

It was the sixth year of Saginaw Vineyards participation. A cheerful Karen Proden of Saginaw Vineyards spent the afternoon pouring wine samples and describing the character of the locally produced wines.

"It's fun to see everyone with their kids and their homegrown goodies," Proden said. "It's a real down-home atmosphere and the music is always great."



Iylah Molyneaux sells tulips at the Meet My Farmer event last Saturday afternoon.

Armory Continued A1

According to Meyers, the test strips being used on the armory may not be as advanced as more expensive options. "They're not going to tell us the percentage of lead but they're going to tell us if it's there," he said.

Woos McCormic noted that over the counter test strips were an acceptable form of testing saying, "They're actually pretty good. They're more likely to give you a false positive." The trick, she said is to test several layers of paint. Something Meyers said the city is currently doing.

Meyers said there are two different issues noting that the lead could be found in paint but lead dust could be present. "The paint, you could touch a door from the 70s and it will have lead paint on it but you'd have to lick your fingers, rub it against the wall and put in your mouth several times," he said. "The lead dust, you mop it, you clean it." He noted that the boxing class held in the basement of the armory practices in the former gun range but he notes proper procedure was followed in cleaning the space.

Cottage Grove Mayor Jeff Gowing reiterated that the city is not testing on a continuous basis because it is currently operating as

if lead is present and following proper procedure. Mark McIntyre of the EPA noted that without being privy the exact remodeling plans for the armory the department could not comment directly but warned that lead is a dangerous, toxic substance.

"The lead part of the range has been closed down for over 50 years," Gowing said. "Until you go in there with a jackhammer, that lead is never going to be a problem. You don't need to keep going in to monitor it when nothing has changed to warrant that need. Until you do something that you need to test again, it's a cost you don't need to incur." He continued, "I'm comfortable saying that the city is following the standards that it needs to pursue this restoration appropriately."

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