

Statewide forestry skills competition changing

By Jennifer Moody
Albany Democrat-Herald

SCIO (AP) — Kaitlyn Kastet was able to pull herself a good 15 feet up the trunk of the Douglas fir behind Scio High School, but then wasn't sure what to do next.

Arbor climb judge Douglas Livengood indicated the knotted rope holding the Corvallis High School sophomore and showed her where to pull to let herself down. Kastet gave the rope an experimental tug and slid gracefully to the ground, sliding off the harness for teammate McKenna Mulvey to take a turn.

The Corvallis girls were at Scio on Thursday for their first try at the high school's annual forestry competition, which drew close to 200 students from around Oregon.

Scio has been holding the competition since 1976, but Corvallis hasn't had a forestry program, at least not in recent years. Nor has Waldport or Yoncalla, who also were new to Thursday's competition.

Ten schools in all came to the competition, up from six or seven in past years, said Rex Lowther, who teaches forestry and coaches Scio's team. He gives credit for the growth to Future Natural Resource Leaders of Oregon, a new organization dedicated to promoting student experiences with natural resources.

Officially chartered in 2016, Future Natural Resource Leaders grew out of an earlier organization, the Oregon Association of Forestry Clubs. Lowther helped to organize it.

Like FFA or Future Business Leaders of America, the group's purpose is to support students as they explore education and career opportunities. Unlike the former forestry club association, however, the new group expands its reach to include all aspects of natural resources.

Scio senior Grant Ortiz, 18, is state president of the organization this year. Forestry is

changing, and you can see it in the way Scio's annual competition works, he said. Some of the 18 events, such as ax throw and log rolling, are held mostly for fun and to get kids excited about joining in, rather than to teach specific logging skills.

"All of this is kind of nostalgia," he said, "but it gets them interested in it."

At the same time, however, the competition gives participants practice in skills they will use on a daily basis in natural resources careers. Map reading, tool identification, fire hose lay, and compass and pacing all have uses in a variety of careers.

State FNRL Executive Director Kirk Hutchinson said he believes as the organization grows, competitions like Scio's will grow with it. Eventually, he figures, they could add competitions such as wildland backpacking, wildlife identification and tracking, fire science, ecology, recycling, fisheries, national parks — anything that could have a natural resources bent.

"Maybe you're given a scenario where there's this group of trees, or a park, in downtown Albany: What can we as natural resource specialists do to enhance, preserve, care for it, or cut it down?" Hutchinson said.

The arbor climb event, which the two Corvallis teammates tried Thursday, is among one of the newer events, and meant to reflect just such a change in focus, Hutchinson said.

Oregon cities are full of trees, and trees require arborists. Skilled arborists know how to use a rope to climb a tree, either for trimming or assessment. That's what the event is meant to simulate.

As a new team without much of a background in Scio's events yet and none of their own equipment for practice, the Corvallis students

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SCIENCE: Genetics at the forefront of Sisters program

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the forefront of genetic science, guiding research on the human genome toward practical applications in medicine. She recalls the thrill of the first cloning work to isolate genes that cause devastating illnesses such as Huntington's disease and cystic fibrosis; concerned with the ethics of gene therapy, she worried her way through the first craze to push such therapy into clinical trials.

Dr. Handelin will share her thoughts on the current state of genetic science at The Belfry on Tuesday, October 23 for the second lecture in the 2018-19 Frontiers in Science series, sponsored by the Sisters Science Club.

Her curiosity about the influence of genetics on human life is unlimited.

"I marvel at how we really are forced to look at how all of our traits, including some that were thought to be purely nurture — like obsessive behavior and risk-taking — may be more nature after all," Dr. Handelin says.

She is also intrigued by the way DNA can be "reverse analyzed" to reveal a physical profile of a person so clear and detailed that it could be described as a calling card that is always left behind to be collected, analyzed and stored. As a result, the National DNA Index in the United States now contains information from more than 16 million people and has been used to aid in over 387,000 investigations, an important tool in counterintelligence operations and "cold-crime" detective work.

Whether determined by nature or nurture, one of Dr. Handelin's most obvious traits is a love of science and medicine. After earning her doctorate from the OHSU School of Medicine



PHOTO PROVIDED

Dr. Barbara Handelin will talk on genetic science at The Belfry on Tuesday, October 23.

in 1987, Dr. Handelin led the establishment of what became the largest commercial DNA testing lab in the world at Integrated Genetics (later Genzyme Genetics). As lab director, she was a principal advisor to clinical lab regulators on developing standards for clinical DNA testing, a founder of a leadership group on developing ethical standards for genetic testing, and among the first dozen medical geneticists to be board-certified by the American College of Medical Genetics in Molecular and Biochemical Genetics.

Since 1995, her solo consulting practice has provided services to venture capital investors, C-level managers of new technology

companies, and senior business development executives in biotechnology, diagnostics, genomics, pharmacogenetics and bioinformatics companies and biomedical universities.

Dr. Handelin's lecture, "The Good, the Ugly, the Curious: Everything is Genetic," starts at 7 p.m. at The Belfry, with an introduction by genetics counselor Barbara Pettersen of Bend. Social hour begins at 6:15 p.m. (note the new time) with light fare, beer, and wine available. Admission is \$5; teachers and students are admitted free. The Belfry is located at 302 E. Main Ave.

For more information on the Sisters Science Club: www.sistersscienceclub.org; scienceinsisters@gmail.com.

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