

Life *in the* Valley

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A berry fun celebration



Festivalgoers enjoy free strawberry shortcake during the 65th annual Strawberry Festival Sunday at Coolidge-McClaine Park in Silverton.

PHOTOS BY DANIELLE PETERSON / STATESMAN JOURNAL



A slice of the strawberry shortcake served during the 65th annual festival.



Mandi Hauptmann of Salem gives Ozzie, a 3-year-old St. Bernard, a treat during the event.

Pies

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tained ownership of its farms and the pastry-making business it had purchased from LaSuisse Specialty Foods in 1999.

For three years, the two businesses shared the same campus, but space was tight.

Willamette Valley Fruit processes an average of 20 million pounds of fruit per summer, according to its website, and the pie company was making 1,800 to 2,000 pies per shift, Gunderson said. Leading up to Thanksgiving last fall, employees made 2,200 pies in one eight-hour period, she added.

"The fruit company needed more space, and we needed more space," Roth said.

At first, Roth considered building at the 82nd Avenue campus, but getting more electricity out there was cost-prohibitive. Portland General Electric could have add-

ed infrastructure to serve the stoves, freezers and other machines, but for a hefty price.

Silverton Industrial Park, designed with businesses in mind, offered the infrastructure the company needed. So, in January, it purchased the current 6.5-acre parcel for \$1.5 million.

"Coming here - it upped our risk - but we feel it's worth it, for us and for the community," Roth said.

Already, the Silverton facility has allowed Willamette Valley Pie to think bigger. Its production workforce has grown by eight since the move, said Chief Financial Officer Mike Schelske.

That's not counting employees at its main retail store and its location at the Woodburn Outlet Mall.

Now running two shifts per day, the company is hiring to fill a third shift, he said.

Driven mostly by word of mouth, the company's sales are occurring in Oregon, Washington and northern Califor-

nia, said CEO Jeff Dunn. There's a strong demand in Los Angeles, and the future looks bright for expansion into the Midwest. Goodies baked with sustainably farmed flour and filled with whole fruit or fillings that use tapioca instead of cornstarch are increasingly popular.

"People like the artisan, natural pies," Dunn said. "They're spending a little more to get something that's really high quality."

The company preaches a commitment to sustainably farmed flour, natural ingredients, organic and sustainably farmed shortening, locally grown berries, and handmade quality.

"People don't want trans fats or lard, corn starch or GMOs. They want healthy, premium products that support our local and domestic economy, and that's what we'll always produce," Dunn said. "Our goal has always been to support our local farm families, and that's really where this all begins."



FRIENDS OF SILVER FALLS STATE PARK

Covered wagon rides were popular attractions at previous Historic Silver Falls Day events.

History

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list of thousands of names of the 80,000 men who served in the CCC in Oregon.

A miniature canoe race each day will cele-

brate Al Faussett's 1928 canoe trip over the South Falls.

First, second and third place finishes will receive prizes.

A detailed schedule is available online by navigating to the "Events" tab at www.SilverFallsStatePark.wordpress.com.

Silver Falls State Park

is on Highway 214 S about 16 miles southeast of Silverton or roughly 12.5 miles from Sublimity.

Admission to event activities is free.

A \$5 day-use parking permit is required to park at Silver Falls; visitors can purchase a one-day permit or an annual permit for \$30.