

'Our little farm is doing big things'

Bear Branch offers consumers a convenient way to stock the pantry

ANNETTE UTZ
FOR THE STAYTON MAIL

For those ready to get away from the cans and frozen goods and waiting for local produce to crop up, Bear Branch Farms will soon have a convenient way to stock the pantry and curb the appetite for farm-fresh goods.

Bear Branch works on a Community Supported Agriculture basis, which is essentially a farm share. Customers purchase "shares" and receive a weekly box or bag of quality, non-GMO, pesticide-free produce directly from the farm. There are over 60 varieties of vegetables, fruits and herbs available throughout the season. The farm is currently selling 2017 CSA shares, increasing from 50 in 2016 to 125 this year.

"Our little farm is doing big things," said Janis Newsom, who owns and operates the farm with her husband Nate. "It is super exciting. Yes, we're gearing up for an exciting season."

For the CSAs, the season is split into two 13-week sessions to help

families work around seasonal commitments and to lower upfront costs. Summer 1 runs from May 13 to Aug. 5 and Summer 2 is Aug. 12 through Nov. 11.

The farm tries to have at least nine varieties of produce available weekly, up to 14 during mid-season.

There are also three size options and costs are in line with both size and length of membership.

A small share (avg. 5-7 lbs. per week) is \$260 for Summer 1 or 2, medium shares (10-15 lbs.) go for \$325 and large shares (15-20 lbs.) are \$390. The farm is Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program certified to aid in the cost, enabling those facing difficulties to still be able to access fresh products.

To receive weekly Bear Branch CSA goods, pickups are scheduled weekly at the farm, Foothills Church in Stayton and the Salem, Silverton and Albany farmers markets.

The system has changed from last year in that members bring their own bag, box or basket and produce will be in bins with labels that in-



SPECIAL TO THE STAYTON MAIL

Bear Branch Farms maintains a consistent presence at local farmers markets.

struct members to take a certain amount of each item based on box size.

"We tried this out during our winter CSA and the customers loved it," Janis said. "We are very excited about this new style as it gives you more options as far as picking the exact sizes for zucchini, tomatoes, etc. that you enjoy and depending on how you plan to use it."

"You can't actually customize your box but there is a 'swap bin' available so customers can trade out

items if they have allergies or dietary restrictions or simply don't like something."

Boxes can still be washed and prepacked if desired for an additional fee.

Another new development is a "member share" program, rather like a produce checking account. For those who don't appreciate surprise vegetables, customers can buy a \$400 share and visit the farmers markets to gather the produce of their

choice, with the cost (minus a 15 percent discount) being deducted from their deposit.

Either way, Bear Branch sends out weekly emails to all members with recipes for unfamiliar products or new ways to cook old favorites. The email gives farm updates, explains what produce will be received in a given

week and a reminder about pick up times.

"You can also join our Facebook group to swap recipes and chat with other CSA members along with farm owners for tips and tricks," said Kayla Newsom, Nate and Janis Newsom's oldest daughter. "It's a lot of fun. People share their ideas and post photos of their dishes. It also adds a sense of community and community support of agriculture."

In addition to these programs, Kayla pointed out that they have a donation system in place for those in need and a work share program.

With all of this in place, plus supplying local restaurants, the family owned and operated farm has come a long way since beginning operation in Oct. 2015 under the guiding hands of Janis, Nate and their eight children.

"We absolutely love it here," Janis said, "and between the (CSA), the SNAP program and donations we can make sure that everyone can have healthy and nutritious food to eat. That is our passion."

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Wurstfest brings out the best in Mt. Angel

CHRISTENA BROOKS
SPECIAL TO THE APPEAL TRIBUNE

MT. ANGEL – The 9th annual Wurstfest will light up the Festhalle for two days, Friday, Feb. 24 and Saturday the 25. Sponsored by the Mt. Angel Chamber of Commerce, this mini indoor Oktoberfest features beer, wine, sausage, German music and vendor booths.

Friday is senior day, and Saturday morning will bring the Wurst Run & Walk, 5K and 10K races through the streets of Mt. Angel. Race registration is at <http://racenorthwest.com/wurstrun>.

The library is hosting its regular kindergarten corner, where kids can do crafts and take home a free book. Music and dancing will be on show throughout the two-day festival, which runs 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. both days.

Adult admission is \$5, or \$10 with a specialty beer stein. Those under 21, who must be accompanied by an adult, are free.



STATESMAN JOURNAL FILE

The Mt. Angel Kinder Dancers perform at the Mt. Angel Wurstfest in 2015. Mt. Angel schoolchildren also will perform at this year's event Feb. 5-6.

February plans at the Senior Center

CHRISTENA BROOKS
SPECIAL TO THE APPEAL TRIBUNE

SILVERTON – Along with its usual low-cost yoga, Zumba and tai chi classes, the Silverton Senior Center is offering a variety of events to those aged 60 and over during the month of February.

A few are open to all ages, including the Sweetheart Dance on Sunday, Feb. 12. It's \$5 per person or \$7 per couple. The Vintage Boys will play, and refreshments will be served. The event runs from 2 to 4 p.m. On Sunday, Feb. 25, the public is also invited to the commu-

nity pancake breakfast fundraiser. The meal is \$5 for adults, \$3 for kids under 12, and free for kids under 4.

Starting Feb. 4., seniors can get free tax advice every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Coordinated by the AARP, this tax help doesn't end until April 15 has passed. Services will be provided on a first-come-first-served basis.

Also scheduled for Feb. 4 is a free community volunteer fair from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., a chance for attendees to peruse the variety of service opportunities in our area. Local

non-profits and service clubs will be on hand to explain their volunteer needs.

Tuesday, Feb. 7 at 6:30 p.m. is the center's free "Compassionate Friend" grief support group for anyone who's experienced the loss of a loved one.

A free gardening class with expert Dale Small is scheduled for 2 p.m. on Feb. 8.

Tuesday, Feb. 21 will bring a free hypnosis class at 1 p.m. led by Howard L. Hamilton, followed by a free Alzheimer's support group at 2 p.m.

Friday, Feb. 23 is a

chance to get free legal advice appointments from attorney Phil Kelley. Call ahead to 503-873-3093 to reserve an appointment between 9 a.m. and noon.

Mt. Angel resident lands scholarship

CHRISTENA BROOKS
SPECIAL TO THE APPEAL TRIBUNE

PARKLAND, Wash.—Anthony Beyer, a Mt. Angel resident and student at Blanchet Catholic High School, has been awarded a prestigious Pacific Lutheran University Presidential Scholarship worth \$26,000 a year. PLU offers a number of merit scholarships to recognize academic achievement, leader-

ship and service, as well as the promise of continued success in these areas as a PLU student. The Presidential Scholarships are renewable for three additional years of undergraduate study. More than 500 incoming first year students apply for Presidential Scholarships each year, and the standards are high: Students who have demonstrated significant leader-

ship and service and have achieved a 3.8+ GPA or 1310+ SAT (math and evidence-based reading and writing scores) or 28+ ACT are eligible to apply. Pacific Lutheran University, a private liberal arts university in Tacoma, seeks to educate students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, service, leadership and care — for other people, for their communities and for the Earth.

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