

Free seminars focus on farm safety

Justin Much Salem Statesman Journal
USA TODAY NETWORK

Free seminars directed at farm-work-er safety will be taking place in the Mid-Willamette Valley this month.

The SAIF seminars, which began last fall have been conducted in all corners of the state, will take place at 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Woodburn's Legacy Health Wellness Conference Center, 1475 Mt. Hood Ave., and in Salem at the Eola Northwest Viticulture Center, 215 Doaks Ferry Road NW.

SAIF Communications Strategist Lauren Casler said there is still room in two Feb. 13 sessions in Spanish and a Feb. 27 English session in Woodburn, and at a Feb. 22 Spanish session in Salem.

Casler noted that the seminars are designed primarily for people working in agriculture but are open to anyone interested in ag safety and health. Attendees are not required to be insured by SAIF. Topics include mechanical hazards, ergonomics, safety leadership and communication skills, and the difference between safety and compliance.

"We choose topics each year that are relevant to farm owners, managers, and workers, and we purposely host these during the off-season so more people can attend," said Christy Witzke, vice president of marketing, sales, and communication at SAIF.

"The goal is to offer safety education and tools to take back to the shop or farm," she added. "We hope to beat our attendance of 2,300 participants from

last year. These seminars have facilitated the training of thousands ... and helped prevent many injuries."

This is the 23rd year these statewide seminars have been offered. SAIF officials said that while agriculture has its fair share of injuries and illnesses, it's not easy for workers and employers to get away from the fields to learn how to reduce risks.

Seminar times and dates are arranged to accommodate employers with small agriculture businesses. Attendees meet Occupational Safety and Health Administration's instructional requirement. The Oregon State Landscaping Contractors Board has approved the seminar for four hours of continuing education credits and the Department of Consumer and Business Services has



Workers learn how to stay healthy on the job during an agricultural safety seminar conducted by SAIF in Hillsboro. PHOTO COURTESY OF SAIF

approved the seminar for four hours of producer continuing education credits.

For information, visit saif.com/ag-seminars; to register, call 800-285-8525.

Homeless

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there were reports of surveys filled out there as well.

Silverton's hub, held at Trinity Lutheran Church, was well equipped to serve the dozens who stopped in, providing everything from a hot meal, to a decent pair of shoes and socks, to books to a haircut. The town even had some veterinary services available for those with dogs.

"I think we had probably about 25 to 30 individuals come through, but we were only able to count about 14," said Karolle Hughes of Rural Oregon Continuum of Care. "We had some people come in who weren't homeless but were on verge of homeless."

Hughes was the chief organizer for Silverton's Point-in-Time count, which

focused on drawing homeless people to the hub for a meal and services rather than sending volunteers out in the field as they had in previous years.

"It was a great event. As with anything that is a first-year experiment, you learn all the nuances and figure out better ways to improve something," Hughes said. "All the providers got to see people; there were haircuts, some people saw a nurse and some saw a mental-health person... We wanted to be a service for people - and that's what we did."

Erin Boers helped coordinate the Stayton hub where she said a couple of children were among the visitors. She said each survey was completed for "households," so the number of homeless who were helped extends beyond survey counts.

Similarly, Rocky Nylund said that in Aumsville, where the Pentecostal Church of God and local food bank housed the hub, one key resource

shared was information.

"We didn't get a lot of visitors who were homeless, but there were a lot of folks dropping in to see how we were doing and to get information about who would qualify for resources," Nylund said. "It brought a lot of attention to our food bank as well."

A similar word-of-mouth scenario occurred in the Lyons/Mehama area where the Old School Youth & Community Center just off Highway 22 served as a hub, staffed by Angie Torres and Jesus Gutierrez.

"Everybody had a hot meal and we gave away a lot of resources," Torres said. "One homeless person came in, and then he came back several times bringing someone else in."

"I understand that there is a group of people up in the hills who weren't very likely to come down - they like their privacy," she added.

"I think there were lots of lessons

learned that will help next year."

Cherie Girod from the Canyon Crisis Center in Mill City said volunteers there were disappointed in the lack of a turnout. She said the numbers had been significant in recent years.

"We've had a tremendous homeless problem around Mill City for years," Girod said. "Some of them are dangerous; some of them are in dangerous situations."

"It's seemed like a ghost town of homeless these last couple of days," Girod said the day after the count. "Normally you see them at certain places in town, like by the bridge, but they aren't there today."

"The (homelessness) problem is not going anywhere," she added. "As soon as they feel safe, we'll start seeing them again."

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Counselor

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seling and is making "great strides."

In October, Cordy struck a plea bargain with the Marion County District Attorney's Office, which agreed to dismiss three charges against him: using a child in a display of sexual content, second-

degree sexual abuse and third-degree sexual abuse.

Under the bargain, Cordy will have two years of post-prison supervision. He is eligible for early release based on his behavior in prison, but will have to register as a sex offender.

Samuel Carroll, CEO of the YMCA of Marion and Polk Counties, said at the time that Cordy worked as a seasonal employee and had passed a criminal

background check.

Cordy previously worked as a second-grade teacher at Holley Elementary School in Sweet Home.

Cordy's attorney, Lissa Casey, took exception to previous media coverage emphasizing his profession as a teacher, stressing that at no time was the victim a student of his.

In addition, "he intends to try to keep helping when he goes to prison" by tu-

toring other inmates, Casey said.

Cordy said, "I hope that I can be a resource for others."

After prison, he said, "I plan to be an integral part of the community."

Reach Statesman Journal reporter Jonathan Bach by phone at 503-399-6714 or by email at jbach@statesmanjournal.com.

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